

BLESS YOUR HEART

Title: Part 4 – “The Battle for Your Heart”

Date: March 15, 2026

While everyone here in the house is saying “Hi” to each other I want to say “Hi” if you are joining us online or on our app, thank you for spending some time with us! We consider you a part of our church family so let us know how we can pray for you or serve you—we'd love to walk alongside you in any way that we can.

Well, this week Cheryl and I were texting back and forth and apparently I said something stupid because she sends me a text that simply read, “Bless your heart.” How many of you know what that phrase actually means? It's not a compliment, right? It's code for Southern passive-aggressive judgment.

In fact, this week I found this online:

PIE CHART

It is a pie chart for what someone actually means when they say, “bless your heart.” A small percentage means “I don't care but feel like I should.” A big percentage of the time it means “You're pitiful but don't even know it.” My favorite meaning is “Can I bring you a casserole.” About 10% means “I wish I could say what I'm really thinking.” I think that is a little low personally. Then the remaining 30% or so means “I'll be praying for you... because you're an idiot.” Thought that might be helpful for someone.

In case you didn't know it, we're in week four of a collection of messages affectionately called “Bless Your Heart.” We've been redeeming that phrase since so many of us think that's how God sees us. Right? Like He is in heaven just shaking His head in divine disappointment when he looks at the mess we have made of our lives. At our wicked hearts. BUT the truth is the exact opposite of that!

In week one, we talked about the most miraculous heart transplant of all time. God doesn't just forgive your wicked heart—He replaces it with a good heart! That's the promise of Ezekiel 36:26. As a follower of Jesus you get a brand-new heart. A GOOD and NOBEL heart! You're a new creation!

So, in week two, we talked about desire. If you have a good heart now, you can actually trust your deepest desires. Not your surface cravings, but your soul-level longings. Those are breadcrumbs God leaves to lead you to your calling.

Week three, we talked about glory. Your glory! You have something unique to offer the world. You're God's masterpiece—His poem—and it's time to stop hiding and start shining!

If you missed any of that you can get caught up on our app or website as we have been building each week. BUT today we're going to address something that's probably been nagging at some of you for the past three weeks. Because if all this is true—if you really do have a good heart, if you can trust your desires, if you have a unique glory—then why does life still feel so hard? Why do you still struggle? Why does it feel like you're under attack?

Anyone ever feel that way? If your heart is so good, why does life feel like such a war? If God gave you a new heart, why do you still struggle? Here's the answer we don't like to talk about: the answer is because the enemy (Satan) knows your heart is the treasure, it's become his primary target. Yes we live in a love story, God coming for us, but it is set against the backdrop of a cosmic war raging in the unseen realm.

And what I want you to understand today is that the war you feel isn't evidence your heart is bad—it's actually evidence your heart is VALUABLE! Let that sink in for a second. The fact that you're in a battle doesn't mean something's wrong with you. It means something's RIGHT with you. The enemy doesn't waste ammunition on people who aren't a threat.

Let me read three passages that are going to shape what we talk about today. First, 1 Peter 5, verse 8:

⁸ Be of sober spirit, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Now Jesus, in John 10, verse 10:

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

And finally, the Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 6, verse 12:

¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Today I want to preach a message I'm calling: **The Battle for Your Heart**

...and the message God wants you to hear today is that you're worth fighting for! This battle isn't evidence you're weak—it's evidence you're VALUABLE! They're after you because you matter to His Kingdom!

SO, my goal over the next few minutes is to convince you of three things:

1. There is a battle for your heart.
2. You've been given armor for the battle.
3. There is hope because we win.

If you're taking notes, write this down:

Guard your heart because the battle is real.

Let's start with the reality we need to accept: You're in a war. A real war. Not a metaphor. Not hyperbole. An actual spiritual battle. AND the prize is your heart which means we need to be on guard.

Look at John 10:10 again. Jesus says:

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

What's he trying to steal? Your HEART.

What's he trying to kill? Your GLORY.

What's he trying to destroy? Your TRUST in God's goodness.

See, the enemy can't destroy you. If you're in Christ, you're sealed. You're secure. Your salvation is settled. BUT what he can do is make you ineffective. He can steal your joy. He can kill your passion. He can destroy your confidence in who God says you are.

AND if he can do that? If he can convince you that your heart is still wicked, that your desires can't be trusted, that your glory doesn't matter, that God is holding out on you? Then you'll live your whole life as a castrated Christian. Saved, but powerless. Forgiven, but defeated.

This is why Proverbs 4:23 gives us this warning:

²³ Above all else, **GUARD** your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

Your heart is the most valuable thing in the universe! It's what the whole human story is about! That's why the enemy and all his demons are after yours!

“Well, that sounds scary... so are you like saying that when I raised my hand to follow Jesus that somehow put a target on my back?” YES! “Oh...” But here is the good news. The enemy is predictable. He has a playbook and runs the same four plays over and over and over again. AND once you know these, you can spot them for what they are.

Here take a look at what I mean, the first tactic he uses to attack your heart:

Wound early.

The enemy tries to wound you BEFORE you know who you are. Think about it. When did most of your deepest wounds happen? Childhood. Adolescence. Before you had the categories to understand what was happening.

- You were wounded by a parent who rejected you.
- You were wounded by a bully who mocked you.
- You were wounded by a coach who told you you'd never amount to anything.
- You were wounded by abuse, or neglect, or abandonment.

And those wounds shaped your identity BEFORE you ever heard that God gave you a good heart.

So now, even though God says you're His beloved, there's this deeper voice that says, “You're not wanted. You're not good enough. You're broken beyond repair.” That's not an accident. That's strategy. AND so is this:

Shame constantly.

Second tactic: Once you're wounded, the enemy shames you so you stay hidden. He doesn't want your glory to shine. He doesn't want you to discover your gifts. He doesn't want you to trust your desires and discover God's calling.

So, every time you start to step out, every time you start to shine, he hits you with shame:

“Who do you think you are?”

“You're not that good.”

“Remember what you did that summer? You don't deserve this.”

“If people really knew you, they'd reject you.”

And shame is SO effective because it makes you hide. It makes you play small. It makes you think, “It's safer in the shadows.” So, he shames you constantly AND tries to:

Distract endlessly.

Right? He tries to keep you so busy, so overwhelmed, so distracted that you never slow down long enough to heal.

How many of you feel like you're constantly running but never arriving? Like you're busy all the time but never actually living? That's not an accident!

The enemy knows that if he can keep you scrolling, bingeing, working, worrying, stressing—if he can keep you in survival mode—you'll never stop long enough to ask, “Wait, what am I actually made for? What's my glory? What do I actually want that if I stepped into it would bring God the most glory?”

Distraction keeps you numb. And numb people don't change the world. Amen? One more tactic:

Isolate completely.

Satan will try his best to get you alone. Because you can't fight this battle by yourself.

The enemy whispers: *“No one else struggles like you. No one else would understand. You're the only one. Don't tell anyone—they'll judge you.”*

And so, you isolate. You hide. You fight alone. And isolated people are easy targets.

Why do you think the Bible talks so much about community? About being part of a body? Because we need each other! Because the enemy also knows if he can get you alone, he can take you out.

AND I know what some of you are thinking. Some of you are thinking, “Man, this sounds exhausting. Why is my heart worth all this effort?” Here's why: Because when you discover your good heart, when you trust your desires and discover your calling, when you offer your glory—you become DANGEROUS to the kingdom of darkness!

You're not just taking up space anymore. You're not just going through the motions. You're ALIVE. And alive people set other people free! That's why the enemy fights so hard for your heart. Because a person with a free heart is unstoppable.

So, guard your heart. We have his playbook. When wounds come, when shame hits, when distraction tries to derail, when you are feeling isolated you can be confident that is

not of God and an attack by the enemy. Guard your heart! Tell two people “*Guard your heart!*”

At the end of the message, I will give you ways to fight back, but for now we have this promise in James 4:7. This is Jesus half-brother, and he confidently says what:

RESIST the devil, and he will FLEE from you.

AND here's the good news: You're not going into this battle unarmed. God has given you everything you need. That's my second point today, write this down:

Wear your armor because you're not defenseless.

You're not defenseless! God is not sending you into a battle unarmed. He has given you everything you need.

In Ephesians 6 Paul lists what he calls the armor of God. But I want you to see it differently than you've probably heard it before. Most of us think of the armor as tools we use to fight. But what if the armor isn't just tools—what if the armor IS the battle?

Let me show you what I mean. First let's read what Paul writes:

¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Here's what I find fascinating about what Paul writes. Every piece of armor Paul lists protects one of two things: Your IDENTITY or your ACCESS to God. Right? Because think about it: The enemy can't destroy you as a friend of Jesus. So, what does he attack? He attacks who you think you are and your connection to God.

Let's walk through the armor with that lens:

First Paul talks about the **BELT OF TRUTH**. What is that? That's knowing who you are in Christ. The belt holds everything else together. And the truth is: You're a new creation. You have a good heart. You're God's beloved.

The enemy's lie? "You're still desperately wicked." So, the armor is truth about your new identity in Christ.

Then put on the **BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**. That's knowing you're right with God. The breastplate protects your heart—literally, your chest, where your heart is. And what protects your heart? Knowing you're righteous in Christ. Not because of what you've done, but because of what Jesus did.

The enemy's lie? "You're guilty. You don't deserve grace." So, the armor is the righteousness that's already yours.

Then he says lace up the **SHOES OF PEACE**. Meaning stand on solid ground. Your feet determine where you stand. And what gives you a solid foundation? The Gospel of peace. You're not standing on your performance. You're not standing on your feelings. You're standing on the finished work of Jesus! Amen?

The enemy's lie? "You're on shaky ground. One mistake and you're done." So, the armor is the peace that comes from knowing it IS finished!

Are you seeing this? Then Paul talks about the **SHIELD OF FAITH**. That's trusting God's goodness. The shield protects you from incoming attacks. And what is faith? Trusting that God is GOOD. That His plans are FOR you, not against you.

The enemy's lie? "God is holding out on you. He's not trustworthy." So, we put on the armor of faith in God's goodness. Next:

The **HELMET OF SALVATION**. This is about protecting your thoughts. The helmet protects your head—your mind, your thoughts. And what is the helmet? Paul says our salvation. The assurance that you're God's, and nothing can snatch you away.

The enemy's lie? "You're going to lose your salvation. You're not safe with God." So, we put on the armor of security in Jesus.

How many of you have heard these lies? We all have, right? So, we next take up the **SWORD OF THE SPIRIT**. Meaning we speak truth. This is the only offensive weapon Paul lists. And notice—it's not just knowing the Word. It's speaking the Word. Jesus didn't just think Scripture at the devil in the wilderness. He SPOKE it. Out loud!

The enemy's lie? Whatever he's whispering to you right now. So, we speak God's truth against all attacks out loud!

AND here's what I need you to get: The armor isn't something you earn, it's something you put on. You don't become righteous by trying harder. You ALREADY ARE righteous—now put on that truth. You don't create peace by controlling everything. You ALREADY HAVE peace in Christ—now stand on it. You don't manufacture faith by positive thinking. You ALREADY HAVE access to God—now trust His goodness.

What I'm saying is the battle isn't about becoming something. It's about remembering something.

- You already HAVE a good heart. Now BELIEVE it!
- You already HAVE God's approval. Now REST in it!
- You already HAVE everything you need. Now USE it!

Wear your armor because you're not defenseless!

John Eledegde writes about it this way: “Make them so busy, they ignore the heart. Wound them so deeply, they don't want a heart. Twist their theology so they despise the heart. This is the last thing the enemy wants you to know.”

Church, you need to understand something, the reason you're tired isn't because you're weak—it's because you're at WAR! The reason you feel attacked isn't because you're doing something wrong—it's because you're doing something RIGHT! The enemy doesn't waste ammunition on people who aren't a threat!

BUT you're not going into this battle unarmed! God has already given you everything you need! You just have to put it on!

Again, more on that at the end. One more:

Fight confidently because the war is already won.

You are going to have countless battles in your journey with Jesus against the enemy. Some you are aware of and some you are not. Some battles you will win and some battles you will lose. But we go ahead confidently because the WAR is already won—OR as I said in week one—we fight from victory not for victory.

Let me explain the difference: Fighting FOR victory says, “If I just try hard enough, if I just resist enough, if I just white-knuckle my way through temptation, THEN I'll win.” And can I be totally honest with you? That's exhausting. Amen? It's exhausting because it is performance-based. Because it's you carrying the weight of the whole war. Every time you struggle, you think you're losing. Every time you get attacked, you panic. Every time

temptation shows up, you feel like the outcome is uncertain. You're constantly asking: "Am I going to make it? Am I strong enough? What if I fail?" Right?

BUT fighting FROM victory says, "Jesus already won. The cross already defeated the enemy. My job is to enforce what's already been accomplished." Do you see the difference?

Let me give you an analogy: Think about a police officer. When an officer shows up at a crime scene, they're not there to MAKE the law. The law already exists. It's already been established by the government. The officer's job is to ENFORCE what's already true. They're there to remind everyone, "Here's what the law says. Here's what's already been decided. Now everyone needs to comply with it." That's what you're doing in spiritual warfare.

When you fight FROM victory, you're confident, "Jesus already won the war. The enemy's already defeated. I'm just standing on ground that's already been taken."

- When the enemy attacks you with shame, you're not fighting to EARN righteousness. You're ENFORCING the righteousness that's already yours in Christ.
- When the enemy whispers that you're worthless, you're not fighting to PROVE your value. You're ENFORCING the truth that Jesus already declared you valuable.
- When the enemy tries to convince you that you're still desperately wicked, you're not fighting to MAKE your heart good. You're ENFORCING the reality that God already gave you a new heart.
- You're not CREATING truth. You're DECLARING truth that already exists.

SO, what does this look like practically? How do you fight from victory instead of for victory? Let me give you a framework. When you're under attack here's the process I want you to begin to use from now on:

1. Recognize the attack.

You've got to actually name what's happening. Like, "This thought I'm having right now—that I'm worthless, that God's disappointed in me, that I'm never going to change—that's not my thought. That's an attack." Name that! "This feeling of shame, or despair, or hopelessness—that's not random. That's warfare." Name it! Out loud.

Most of us don't even recognize we're being attacked. We just think, "Oh, I'm having a bad day." No. You're under attack. Name it.

2. Refuse any agreement (in Jesus name).

Refuse to agree with the lie. This is huge. Hear what I am about to say. The enemy can't MAKE you believe anything. He can only suggest. But when YOU agree with the suggestion, when you let it become YOUR thought, now he's got access.

So, refuse any agreement, say "No. I will not believe I'm worthless. I will not believe God's given up on me. I will not believe I'm still desperately wicked. I break all agreements in Jesus name!"

3. Renew with truth.

You have to now speak the truth out loud. Don't just think it. SPEAK it!

- I am a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come.
- I have a good heart. God placed His Spirit in me.
- I am deeply loved by Jesus, and I don't have to earn it or deserve it.
- My heart is not my enemy; it's the treasure Jesus died to redeem.

Say it OUT LOUD. Your ears need to hear it. And the enemy needs to hear it. AND finally:

4. Receive God's presence.

We have to remember we're not alone in this. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives IN you. You're not fighting this battle in your own strength. You're fighting WITH the One who already won.

So, pause. Breathe. Pray: "Jesus, I need You right now. I can't do this alone. Fill me with Your presence. Restore our union."

And then receive it. Don't just ask and run. Actually, stop and let Him minister to you. Pause and be with Jesus. When you spend time with Him—when you hear His voice, when you experience His love—the enemy's lies lose their power.

Also receiving God's healing. The wounds from childhood. The betrayals. The shame. The rejection. You can't just ignore those wounds and expect to live free. You've got to bring them to Jesus and let Him heal them. Receive His healing.

AND part of receiving that healing will come from other Christ-Followers. This is the piece we can't skip. You need people. You need safe people who know your story, who fight for your heart, who speak truth when you forget. The enemy wants you isolated. God wants you connected so you can receive His healing.

Recognize, Refuse, Renew, Receive (you guys would have been so let down if the last one didn't start with an R). Recognize, Refuse, Renew, Receive. Say those with me...
Recognize, Refuse, Renew, Receive.

As we bring this to a close, let me speak to someone today who feels under attack. Maybe you have felt under attack for years and you've interpreted that attack as evidence that something's wrong with you. You think: "If I were a better Christian, I wouldn't struggle this much. If my heart were really good, this wouldn't be so hard." Today, in Jesus name, STOP IT!

The reason you're under attack isn't because you're WEAK. It's because you're DANGEROUS! The reason the enemy is coming at your heart, your joy, your peace, your confidence in God—it's because he knows what happens when you discover who you really are. He knows that when you believe you have a good heart, you stop living in shame! He knows that when you trust your desires and discover your calling, you stop playing small! He knows that when you offer your glory, other people start waking up! And that terrifies him!

So yeah, you're in a battle. But that battle is PROOF you matter! That battle is evidence you're valuable! The enemy doesn't waste ammunition on people who aren't a threat! He doesn't spend time attacking people who are already defeated! If you're under attack, it means you're worth attacking! It means there's something in you that threatens the kingdom of darkness!

You're in a fight because you're worth fighting for! Amen?

SO, as the worship team comes and helps me close this out, I've got three things I want you to do this week. Because here's the truth. You do have a target on your back. You are a threat. AND now you have the knowledge of the enemy's plan. But all that is useless unless you do something with it. So, this week:

Identify your current battle.

I want you to actually name where you're being attacked. Where are you feeling the most shame? The most fear? The most discouragement? What lie are you believing right now about yourself? About God? About your heart?

Write it down! Bring it into the light. Name it. Because the enemy's power is in the darkness. When you name the attack, you take away half its power.

Second, I want you to: **Speak truth out loud.**

Practice speaking truth. Not just thinking it. SPEAKING it!

Find the Scripture that addresses your specific battle, and speak it out loud every day this week.

- Under attack with shame? Speak Romans 8:1: "There is now NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
- Under attack with fear? Speak 2 Timothy 1:7: "God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind."
- Under attack with worthlessness? Speak Ephesians 2:10: "I am God's masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works."

Are you with me? Speak the truth out loud every day until you feel the attack dissipate.

Finally, get into community: **Tell someone about your battle.**

Find one safe person this week and say: "I'm under attack. Here's what I'm struggling with. Here's the lie I'm believing. Will you pray for me? Will you speak truth over me?"

The enemy wants you isolated. So, the most powerful thing you can do is confront him in community. Don't fight alone. A soldier would never go into battle alone and neither should you!

SO, will you do those three things this week? I know we don't like to think about this because it seems scary and out there. BUT we have nothing to be afraid of in the seen, or the unseen realm. The Apostle John reminds us of why, he says:

4 You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

He's speaking about the Antichrist and those with his spirit. He's speaking about the forces of darkness, and he says we have already conquered them! Why? Because greater in the One in you than the one in the world!

SO, stop interpreting your battles as failure. They're not. They're evidence you're valuable.

Stop fighting with your own strength. You don't have to. Jesus already won.

Put on the armor. Speak the truth. Get in community. And fight FROM the victory that's already yours.

Because church, you have a GOOD heart. And the enemy knows it. That's why he's after it. BUT greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world!

Yes, the battle is real. But the war is already won! It's time we started living like it.

[PRAYER TIME]