



I. The Battle For The Minds Of Men Is On

A. We Live In “Perilous Times”

1. The Apostle Paul warned us to know that...

...in the last days perilous times shall come.

2 Timothy 3:1

2. The prophet Daniel spoke of those who would rise in the last days...

And...speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws...

Daniel 7:25

- a. Feeling “worn out” lately? It’s because of those all around us who are speaking out against God, who want to change the times and laws to go against God’s clear words.

3. These times remind me of Lot living in Sodom and Gomorrah...

God also rescued Lot out of Sodom because he was a righteous man who was sick of the shameful immorality of the wicked people around him. 8 Yes, Lot was a righteous man who was tormented in his soul by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day. 9 So you see, the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials, even while keeping the wicked under punishment until the day of final judgment. 10 He is especially hard on those who follow their own twisted sexual desire, and who despise authority.

2 Peter 2:7-10

- a. All this takes a toll on us!

4. Just in the past few months, I've suffered watching a Pastor friend divorce his wife without cause; another Pastor friend's son has come out as gay; another Pastor friend's wife take her own life.

5. We must not be judgmental of these dear people; we need to recognize that not one of us is above stronger levels of testing than ever before.

6. These are warnings to us all, as I preached last week...

"If you've run with the footmen and they've worn you out, how can you contend with the horses?"

Jeremiah 12:5

7. The Lord is calling on every one of us to step up our game and fix our minds on Jesus, the one who endured much worse!

For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Hebrews 12:3

a. Make no mistake!

B. The Primary Battlefield For Our Souls Is In The Mind

1. Solomon, the wisest man of his day, said...

"Guard your heart with all diligence, for it determines your life."

Proverbs 4:23 NLT

a. But I like the New Century Version translation...

"Be careful about what you think. Your thoughts run your life."

Proverbs 4:23

b. Solomon also said:

"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."

Proverbs 23:7

2. None of us can rise above the level of our thought life.

3. Jesus first sermon began with...

“Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.”

Matthew 4:17

a. Repent does not mean “be sorry for your sins.”

b. **The word is “metanoia” in Greek; literally it means, “Change your mind!”**

4. Life in God’s Kingdom requires a change in our thought life, where the battle is.

II. Know The Battlefield Basics

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;)

5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

A. Thoughts > Imaginations > Strongholds

1. There is a 3 fold progression of warfare here: thoughts > imaginations > strongholds.

2. **THOUGHTS not taken captive to the obedience of Christ become IMAGINATIONS that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God and build themselves into STRONGHOLDS that require more serious warfare.**

a. Example of a man whose mind is attacked by lust:

- Thought: Wow...she’s really sexy
- Imagination: I wonder what it would be like to have sex with her; how could I arrange that
- Stronghold: I’ve got to have her

b. The battle always follows this pattern!

c. For a woman, it might look like this:



Thoughts > Imaginations > Strongholds

- You're a mess > People don't like you > paranoia personality disorder
- You are fat > I've got to get thin > bulimia
- You aren't pretty > low self-esteem > allowing yourself to be used by men

3. God's battle strategy:

a. Strongholds must be "pulled down"

b. Imaginations and everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God must be "cast down"

c. Thoughts must be "taken captive to the obedience of Christ"

4. The easiest place to win the war is at the "thought level"!

a. It's one thing to pull up an oak seedling when you bring it home from the nursery; it's another thing to try to pull it down 50 years later.

b. Some of the strongholds we deal with as adults were planted in us as a single thought when we were children; that thought grew into other thoughts that created powerful imaginations or self-images. That is where strongholds come from.

"A stronghold is a house of thoughts."

Francis Frangipane

c. A thought is nothing more than an idea or a concept. Believing one lie can lay a foundation for what can become a stronghold where you can really suffer a lot of pain. As English philosopher Francis Bacon once said...

“It is not the lie that passes through the mind, but the lie that sinks in and settles in that does the greatest hurt.”

Sir Francis Bacon, English Philosopher and Statesman

III. A Battle Strategy For Victory

A. Build A Wall

1. America has a problem with illegal immigration.
2. Millions of illegal immigrants are already here and it’s a problem that needs to be dealt with.
3. But before we try to deal with what’s here, we need to build a wall to stop any more from streaming in!
4. So it is with the warfare in our minds; we’ve got to build a wall to shut off the inflow of any more illegal thoughts.
 - a. Media
 - b. Evil companions
 - c. Chemicals
 - d. Whatever that’s been feeding the enemy troops
5. You have to build a wall.

B. Second: You Have to Take Authority Over Your Every Thought

1. Any thought or “high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God” must be cast down.
 - a. Evil thoughts come to all of us; it’s our job to cast them down.

“You cannot prevent the birds from flying over your head; but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair.”

Chinese Proverb

2. We have to renew our minds with the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit, able to separate right and wrong and good and evil.

3. There is NO shortcut to knowing the Word!

a. **Even Jesus was attacked in His thought life in the 3 wilderness temptations; His response to every test was, "It is written!" If Jesus had to know the Word of God to defeat the devil, what makes us think we don't?**

b. It's interesting to see how the devil quoted the word to Jesus; some of the greatest deceptions of the enemy come when he twists the scriptures to support what would have been sin! You have to know how to rightly divide the Word.

C. Finally, Remember How High The Stakes Are

1. The mind is a fertile field that can grow wheat or tares.

2. What's growing in the garden of our mind will determine our eternity.

"Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny."

Chuck Swindoll

3. Where you spend eternity begins with thought! So how important is it to win the battle of the mind?

D. Closing And Prayer

For we* are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil.

Ephesians 6:12-13 NLT

