



Sunday, August 3rd, 2025 -TAKING EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE -Pastor John Henry Raskin

Today's sermon emphasizes the importance of controlling and renewing our minds to align with the teachings of Christ through His Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The central theme is the battle within our minds, where ingrained behaviors and thoughts that are not godly persist even after spiritual rebirth.

Here are some key takeaways to remember.

Romans 7:15 reminds us that we are not alone! This scripture illustrates the apostle Paul's transparency about his own struggles with sin. The key scripture, **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**, is used to explain the concept of taking every thought captive and destroying mental strongholds that hinder our relationship with God.

There are two types of strongholds: personal attitudes formed by past pain and broader worldviews that contradict God's truth. I encourage you to use spiritual weapons, such as scripture and prayer, to overcome these strongholds.

Practical examples are provided, such as responding to negative thoughts at work with **Philippians 2:14-15** and managing anger with **James 1:19-20**.

Guard, strengthen, and renew your mind: The battle against sin starts in the mind, so it's essential to guard, strengthen, and renew it with the Word of God 1.

Destroy strongholds: Identify and destroy mental strongholds, which can be personal attitudes formed by past pain or broader worldviews that contradict God's truth

Take every thought captive: Control, conquer, and bring every thought into submission to the obedience of Christ

Respond with scripture: When negative thoughts arise, respond with relevant scriptures. For example, use Philippians 2:14-15 to counteract complaining thoughts at work and James 1:19-20 to manage anger

Meditate daily on scriptures: Regularly meditate on God's Word to align your thoughts with the mind of Christ.

Seek the Holy Spirit's guidance: Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal God's truth and bring it to mind in every situation.

Overcome negativity and anxiety: Use **Philippians 4:6-8** to overcome anxiety and focus on positive, virtuous thoughts.

Remember that there is power in God's word and that it is important to daily meditate on scripture to align our thoughts with the mind of Christ. By overcoming harmful thoughts, believers can become valuable tools in God's hands and experience further transformation through the Holy Spirit.

TAKE EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

In a conversation that I had recently with a couple of my brothers in Christ they urged me to consider two important things in delivering a sermon to believers.

The first being that a sermon should have an uplifting and positive message and secondly that it gives the listener Biblical tools to, as one of them said, address the everyday issues of their lives.

I agree with both of them and have tried to incorporate these qualities to the best of my ability, as consistently as possible, in the sermons that I present here at Abundant Life.

I'm going to try to do both of those things today.

In the spirit of all transparency, today I am going to try to address something that all of us struggle with.

Specifically, there are ingrained behaviors in all of us that are not godly or helpful and that remain after our spiritual rebirth, if they remain unchecked, these behaviors will cause us to stumble in our walk with Jesus.

Today I'm going to offer some tools that are scriptural and also practical that are intended to uplift you and give you the hope that you are not alone and that these tools will work for you if you apply them.

We who are in Christ have three enemies.

The flesh, the world and the devil.

Let's start with first things first. Ourselves.

A famous cartoonist, Walt Kelly, wrote these words on an Earth Day poster in the 1970s. "We have met the enemy, and he is us."

The enemy that we are talking about today wages war in the battlefield of our mind.

One of the things that I am asked frequently by believers is "If I have the Mind of Christ, why do I think the way I do?" and "Is there something wrong with me? I can't seem to concentrate when I pray or when I read the Bible."

Our first scripture today is the apostle Paul speaking to the Roman church, a church that he had never been to, and he is writing to people he never met that addresses those questions.

I love his transparency, his humility as he says this...

Romans 7:15

15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

I have seen what it is like when people who love God are unable to hear God because their minds are broken by the dysfunction of their past experiences and cannot seem to connect to God even when they want to connect to God.

If you recall, I have spoken many times to you about how we who believe in Jesus have access to the mind of Christ.

Yet the reality is that we are still in our flesh and the carnal mind that we had before Christ is still wanting to call the shots.

Therefore, one of the most important things we need to learn is how to guard, strengthen, and renew our minds, because the battle against sin always starts in the mind.

The next scripture that I'm going to read to you today has been used extensively from the pulpit to address how we are able to take our own thoughts captive. The scripture is 2 Corinthians 15:3-5.

Many theologians, however, are quick to point out that Paul was actually addressing the Corinthian church which had some teachers in their midst who had crept in during his absence and were changing people's minds about the pure gospel with many other teachings about Jesus that contradicted the truth of the gospel that Paul had taught them.

But today, we are going to apply this scripture that we are about to read to the battle between our ears.

One of the wonderful things about the scriptures is that they are a living Word and they are powerful and able to divide soul and spirit.

That's why it's so important to know the difference between soul and spirit.

Once we understand that our spirit is the part of us that is able to hear from God through His Holy Spirit in Christ

and that our soul is that part of us, the mind, the emotions and the will, that is the operating system for our bodies,

Then we can better understand the power that the Word of God has to give us clarity as to what is Godly and spiritual and what is merely soulish and worldly which is how we were in our lives before Jesus.

Because the word of God is living and powerful, this scripture is also able to bring us clarity as to our part in the battle against the flesh or in this case our carnal minds.

Here are Paul's words...

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

Though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh

in other words, we don't fight with armor,

we don't fight with guns,

we don't fight with our fists,

we don't fight with politics,

we don't fight with money,

we don't fight with any of the world's defensive or offensive weapons.

The apostle Paul says here that our job in this battle is to “destroy strongholds.”

You know what a stronghold is in this case? It's a mental block. It's a place where your mind is stuck.

It's a place where you got hurt once, or maybe repeatedly and your carnal mind developed kneejerk defenses to avoid getting hurt again.

Before you knew Jesus, the stronghold was used by the enemy to keep you blind to the reality of God's love in Christ.

Now to you as a follower of Jesus, the same stronghold is used against you to keep your mental chains in place even though they have been broken in Christ Jesus.

Paul says, "Destroy these strongholds."

In Greek, the word Paul uses is Ochroma.

A stronghold can be one of two things:

As we just saw, a stronghold can be a personal attitude or reaction formed by the pain of your past that you have made an idol.

Remember, an idol is anything you trust more than God.

Anxiety can be a stronghold.

Seeking the approval of other people can be a stronghold.

Anger, fear, guilt, resentment, insecurity, unforgiveness, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, self-righteousness.

You fill in the blank.

That's the first kind of stronghold which we are told we can destroy with the spiritual weapons that are now available to us in Christ.

The second kind of stronghold is more subtle.

It can be a worldview, such as materialism, hedonism, Darwinism, secularism, relativism, communism, capitalism, atheism, etc.

All of the different -isms are mental strongholds that people set up against the knowledge of God.

All of these isms are idols set up to control your mind and confuse you about the truth. God's truth.

Remember that Paul says that our spiritual weapons are also good for **casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God,**

All of these things can be strongholds in your mind. And the Bible says that we are able to tear them down.

How are we able to do this? Be encouraged beloved.

Now look at the very last phrase in the passage: **“take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”**

Take captive every thought. The Greek word **aichmalōtizō** Paul uses here means **“to control, to conquer, to bring into submission.”**

We take the thoughts captive. We make them submit. Every thought obedient to Christ.

Make it obedient. Paul says we can **“bring our thoughts into submission, bring them under control.”**

See what is happening here? It's just like a battlefield. For those of you who like to play war games on your computer.

It's very simple. The enemy wants to bring you under submission and conquer you... capture you. But the object of the game is to bring the enemy under submission.

It's a will issue. Remember that I said that **your soul is your mind, your emotions and your will?**

Your emotions will often dictate to your mind how you must think and how you think is the way you will act.

The good news for all of us is that we have access to the mind of Christ through the Holy Spirit and there is scripture that tells us that if He is for us no one can stand against us.

That includes you and me.

Paul tells us in Romans...

Romans 8:26-27

26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

And THEN he writes...

Romans 8:31

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

See beloved? God WANTS to have His way in you, with you and through you.

HE is destroying the strongholds in your mind with your permission.

HE is revealing the truth about the stronghold of lies that the ISMS have set up in your heart. (again with your permission)

That is why I say it is a WILL issue.

That's the WILL part. That is YOUR part.

We have a saying in our house. Feelings aren't facts.

It is a helpful phrase when one of us reacts emotionally to something that the other has said.

Unwarranted anger at others often comes from our past painful experiences that we unleash unexpectedly.

We all have triggers. Our natural minds are broken by sin. Which means we cannot trust even what we think. We shouldn't trust ourselves just because we think something.

Jeremiah 17:9 says,

**“The heart is deceitful above all things,
And desperately wicked;
Who can know it?**

We have an amazing ability to lie to ourselves. You do it all the time. So do I.

We tell ourselves that things aren't as bad as they really are.

We tell ourselves that things are better than they really are.

We tell ourselves that we're doing okay when we're not doing okay.

We're telling ourselves it's no big deal when it is a big deal.

Just because you get a thought doesn't mean it's the truth.

John 8:44 says Satan is “the father of lies” . And if he can get you to trust in a lie, he can get you to ignore the Holy Spirit.

Anytime you sin, it is because you are thinking that you know better than God. God has said this, but what about that?

And so you have to question what you think and bring it to the foot of the Cross.

1 John 1:8 says,

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

We deceive ourselves all the time.

However, if we remember intentionally, that all truth comes from God and that all scripture is God-breathed, and make time daily to read and meditate on God’s Word, we will always have truth to enable us to access the Mind of Christ.

In our everyday life, this will enable us to stop when our fleshly mind is REACTING to something and RESPOND with the Mind of Christ simply by bringing to our mind the scriptures that apply to our feeling-fueled thoughts.

Let’s consider a typical daily situation where you might have the opportunity to take your thoughts captive:

Perhaps your supervisor at work gives you a task you hate, and negative, complaining thoughts come into your head.

These thoughts are temptations –

Now you have a chance to do something about them before they enter your heart and become a part of you.

It is these types of thoughts we need to take captive by instead choosing to obey the words of God. In this case...

Philippians 2:14-15

14 Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

I love this scripture for a number of reasons.

First of all, verse 14 gives us simple instructions to counteract our whining first reaction.

Do all things without complaining and grumbling is what it is basically saying...

I've known more than a few people who have gotten raises just because they stopped complaining and started just simply doing what they were asked.

but then Paul goes on to give us an even greater reason in verse 15 WHY we should do things God's way...

So that we can show the people around us who don't know Jesus what the light of the Kingdom of heaven looks like.

Here is another example...

If we are prone to anger, especially self-righteous anger... we can arm ourselves with James' exhortation:

James 1:19-20

19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; 20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

It is human nature to want to think that we know better than everyone else but it is the God nature that we have in Christ that knows best.

We just have to agree with HIM not our adversaries.

The words of God are our weapons and will give us power to take all reactive, impure and ungodly thoughts captive.

The Holy Spirit and the Father and the Son all agree, and scripture and they will never be at odds.

Meditate daily on the scriptures!

Seek the Lord and desire His Will!

ASK for the Spirit, your Counselor and Guide to reveal Himself to you and bring His truth to mind in every situation.

1 Corinthians 2:16

For “who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

By the Holy Spirit we can get grace and power to bring our thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and in this process, we become transformed into the person He wants us to be.

Holy Spirit acts as a direct link to God's thoughts and intentions, enabling believers to understand and align with Christ's perspective.

This process involves actively cultivating this mindset and surrendering to the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Finally, here is how we can overcome the negativity and anxiety that is part of our daily life when we let it.

Don't let it!

God's word says...

Philippians 4:6-8

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

In Christ we have the wonderful hope that by overcoming sin in our thought life, we can become a little more like Christ as each day progresses. In this way, we become valuable tools in God's hands. His Word is power. His Word is life.