**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes 3-12-2023
The Battlefield of the Mind**

Friends, there are moments in life when we are faced with especially important decisions. While every day is filled with decisions to be made, some decisions in life are simply much bigger than others. Perhaps you can think of a few big decisions that you’ve been faced with which have had a significant impact on your journey in life.

For most people, one of those times of big decisions is what to do after high school. Do we seek employment, pursue more education through a college, or perhaps enlist in the military.

For me, following my graduation in the year 2000, I choose college. For my best friend in high school, Jon Besaw, he chose the military. He enlisted in the Marines. I remember corresponding through letters while he was navigating boot camp. It doesn’t seem like that long ago.

But neither of us would have guessed how just a year later the world seemed to change so much. September 11, 2001 came and it was just a matter of time before Jon was over in Iraq, fighting in war. Jon had training with various weapons and he would then be using them.

Certainly, on 9-11, something shifted in our nation. Our country quickly went from a time of peace to a time of war. And we were all impacted in one way or another by this reality.

But something that may surprise us is that spiritually we have been in a time of war long before 9-11. In fact, we were actually born into this conflict. This spiritual war began way back at the fall of Satan and it continues today.

 And the sobering truth is that all of us started off on the wrong side in this war. This was because our first father and mother sinned against God and that sin had a ripple effect on everyone that would follow them.

Cute and adorable as babies are, we were all born selfish and predisposed to sin. All of us would quickly align with God’s enemy without our even realizing it.

But God knew this, of course. And long before any of us came along, God had already brought about a plan to rescue our fallen race. This plan culminated with God Himself and would become one of us and bear the penalty of humanity’s sins upon Himself. And then this God-man would defeat death by rising from the dead.

This was Jesus Christ. And Jesus invites all people to follow Him. He invites people to switch teams.

And so, we come back to this topic of big decisions again. Far more important of a decision than what to do after high school is what to make of Jesus Christ. If He dismissed or if He submitted to. There is no middle ground. And this decision makes all the difference in the world.

And when someone surrenders to Jesus, at the moment an amazing thing happens. They switch teams. They join the winning side.

And someone surrenders to Jesus through repenting or turning from their sin, to the best of their understanding, and also putting their full trust in Jesus and His gracious sacrifice and resurrection on their behalf to make them clean and pure. We celebrated this earlier today with baptism and in remembering our baptism. Water Baptism is a sign of switching teams.

But the war does not stop when people join God’s team. It continues. And Satan is not pleased to have anyone slip through his grasp. The enemy goes after Christians hard to try to get them to turn their back to Christ or at least to minimize their impact on others.

The good news, though, is that Christians are given weapons from the Lord with which to fight. These weapons are powerful, but they are much different than the weapons Jon was trained to use.

Paul wanted the young church in Corinth to be spiritually armed to live the Christian life successfully. Paul knew that living the Christian life was certainly against the grain in this world and God’s people are called to fight the good fight of faith.

Please turn with me to a very important passing in 2 Corinthians. We will be hearing from 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

**3For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**

Perhaps the Corinthians were as surprised as many Christians today to learn that when they said yes to Jesus they were enlisted in the Lord’s army.

But Paul was making it very clear that they needed to learn how to wage war successfully or they will be in dire shape. Sometimes this war is referred to as the battlefield of the mind. This is most often the area where the battle takes place.

When someone becomes a believer in Jesus, whether it was in 1st century Corinth or 21st century Pennsylvania, they become spiritually alive. Their spirit becomes united to God’s Spirit.

But just as people are physically born as babies, we are also spiritually born as babies in the faith. The mind is not automatically renewed or transformed to think like Jesus thinks. The lies people believe do not automatically go away.

And so, there is this battle that takes place. And Jesus wants all of a person. He wants not just someone’s heart, but their mind and the strength of their body to all being working together for God’s purposes.

In this passage, Paul speaks about how the weapons Christians are given have divine power to demolish strongholds.

A stronghold in the natural is a place that the enemy has a good grip on. We can think about WWII and the strongholds that the Nazi and the Japanese held. It was as the allies would take over these strongholds that the war moved towards its end.

Likewise, our sly enemy has cleverly built strongholds in people minds, in their belief systems. These may be different arguments or thoughts that stand in opposition against God. Things like doubting God’s goodness. Questioning God’s forgiveness. Being uncertain about God’s promises.

So what exactly were these powerful weapons that God wanted the church in Corinth to wield?

I believe that all of these weapons relate to one word - truth. It is as these Corinthians would understand the truth of who God is and the truth of who they now are as Christians, that the lies of the enemy would begin to weaken.

It’s truth that replaces lies. Jesus said ‘**you will know the truth and the truth shall set you free**.’ The Bible is truth. The more that people get into the Word, the more God’s Word gets into them.

Paul would want the church in Corinth to read his letters deeply and prayerfully and also read the rest of Scripture as truth to receive.

When the Bible is not grasped and taught in this way, it can become a weapon that blows up in our face. It can be something that the enemy uses against us. This is common today when people try to twist the Scriptures to say what they want it to say, rather than to proclaim what it says.

But when the truth of God’s Word is handled rightly, it is a powerful weapon for the tearing down of the stronghold of the enemy.

Christians arm themselves not only in the truth of the written Word, but also by tending to their walk with God. The Lord is a God of truth. Jesus declared Himself as the truth. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth.

The more that Christians tend to their relationship with our Triune God through prayer, the more that the Lord will help them to tear down the strongholds of the enemy and replace the enemy’s lies with the truth of God. And the Lord will always equip people in ways that are consistent with His inspired written Word.

And finally, the Christians in Corinth were called to remember who they are. Because of their trust in Jesus, they have switched teams. Their primary identity was no longer as people of Corinth or perhaps as Roman citizens, but rather, their primary identity was to be as a Christian. It would not be in their jobs or their family or in their successes, but as a follower of Jesus Christ. These Christians in Corinth were called to discover who they are because of their faith in Jesus. They are now children of God, they are forgiven and born again and set apart for a holy life.

So what is the main takeaway for us today from all of this? It is that God wants us to win the battlefield of the mind just as much as He wanted the Corinthians to do as well.

And we win this battle by consistently replacing the lies of the enemy with truth.

We are to be people that love and cherish the Bible. A little goes a long way, when we read God’s Word with humility and a desire to let the truth of God shape us and transform us and to tear down strongholds that may remain in our mind.

We do this through prayer, as we attend to our relationship with our God who is truth Himself. Talk to Him every day. Give Him permission to reveal lies that you believe and to help you replace them with truth.

And finally, it is so important to grasp who we are in Jesus Christ. Our primary identity must be in Him alone, not in anything else.

I would like to share a clip for a movie with you. This is from the movie *Overcomer*. If you haven’t seen this film, I would encourage you to do so. It is a great message.

***Share the clip from Overcomer:***

As the man in the film stated, **“Something or someone will have first place in your heart. But when you find your identity in the One who created you, it will change your whole perspective.”**

Friends, we must find our identity in the One who created us. This is where the battlefield of the mind is either won or lost. This is where we wage war and demolish strongholds. This is where we learn to take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

**It is all about our embracing truth**. The truth of God’s written Word. The truth that is God Himself. And the truth of who we are through Jesus.

In this world, the lies around us are strong. Lies about God. Lies about God’s Word. Lies about who we are.

But through Jesus Christ we can live in victory over these lies.

And finally, it is important to remember that we are called to help others in this battle. It is not just about us being successfully and willing this battlefield of the mind.

We are all in this war together. The Lord calls us to actively support others in their battlefield of the mind. We are like a band of brothers.

“How can I pray for you this week” is a good thing to ask one another. “How can I be an encouragement and spiritual help to those around me” is a good question to ask. In the movie clip, the one man was helping the other man to remember the importance of his identity as a Christian.

The Lord has called us to support each other. Earlier today, we committed to support the growth of Damien, Patty, and Deborah. We need one another in order to grow in all the ways that God has called us.

And lastly, we are called to help those outside the church as well. They may not even realize that they are in a war zone and that Jesus is the only One that can help them. Pray, reach out, invite, share Jesus. Our Lord wants everyone to win this battlefield of the mind.

Let’s pray…

[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l94zeq7iGVk&list=PLZbXA4lyCtqqMBeadBM3Dy0WaJ3geYAUw>