

GET CONTROL OF YOUR MIND

- A. Introduction: One of the many promises that God has made to His people is the promise of peace in the midst of life's challenges—a peace that passes understanding. John 16:33; Phil 4:7
1. This peace is actually peace of mind. Peace of mind is freedom from disquieting (troubling) or anxious thoughts and emotions (*Webster's Dictionary*).
 - a. This peace comes to us through the Bible. God's Word gives us additional information about our circumstances that helps us quiet our mind and calm our emotions in the face of trouble.
 1. The Bible reveals that God is with us and for us and that no problem is too big for Him. There is no problem for which God has no solution. Neither is any situation impossible for Him.
 2. The Bible also reveals that everything we're dealing with is temporary and subject to change by God's power, either in this life or the life to come. It shows us that He is able to bring genuine good out of the worst situations and assures us that God will get us through until He gets us out.
 - b. John 14:27—To experience this peace (peace from God), we must learn how to deal with our mind. Jesus told His followers: Let not (do not allow) your hearts (mind and emotions) be troubled (agitated, distressed, disturbed). The Bible helps us learn how keep our hearts from being troubled.
 2. Part of learning how to deal with our hearts is recognizing that we have an enemy and that the main place he attacks is our mind. That enemy is the devil (also known as Satan, the wicked one, and the tempter).
 - a. The devil is a created being (an angel or cherub) who rebelled against God in eternity past and enticed a host of other angels to follow him in rebellion. Ezek 18:13-15; Isa 14:12-17
 - b. The devil and these fallen angels will ultimately be removed from all contact with God's people, but right now they seek to stop the spread of God's kingdom by influencing human behavior.
 1. The Bible never tells Christians to beware of the devil's power. Jesus, through His death and resurrection, broke Satan's power over all who put faith in Him and His sacrifice at the Cross.
 2. The Bible instructs us to be on guard against the devil's mental strategies. The devil presents our minds with lies about God, ourselves, and our circumstances in an attempt to influence our behavior. Our protection against the devil's lies is the truth—the Word of God. Eph 6:11-17
 - c. In last two lessons we looked at what happened to Eve and to Jesus—both of whom were tempted by the devil. While Eve gave in to temptation, Jesus successfully resisted with the Word of God.
 1. What happened to Jesus and to Eve illustrates how the devil works and how we deal with him. The devil attempted to influence Jesus and Eve through words or thoughts presented to them.
 2. The devil and his minions (other fallen angels) work on us the same way, by presenting us with lies. Their lies come to us in various ways—through the culture, through the words of others.
 - A. But they also come in the form of thoughts to our mind. All of us experience thoughts that we didn't consciously initiate. We don't necessarily hear voices. Instead, random thoughts come into our head, seemingly from out of nowhere—but they sound like us. And, they sound normal.
 - B. No one can fully explain the dynamics of how unseen beings are able to influence us through thoughts, but it is clear from the Bible that they can do so.
 3. You can't win the battle for your mind unless you learn to control your thoughts. We have more to say in tonight's lesson.
- B. We must become of what's in our mind, learn to recognize and reject thoughts that are not consistent with God's Word, and then learn to focus on the Truth—the Word of God.
1. In Matt 6:25-34 Jesus did a lengthy teaching about how to deal with the worry that arises when we're concerned about where life's necessities will come from. In this teaching we get insight into what happens to our mind and emotions in the face of lack. We also get insight into how to deal with those

thoughts and feelings. Although Jesus focuses on worrying about provision in His teaching, we find general principles that apply to any situation that makes us feel anxious.

- a. When hardships come our way, it's normal to experience troubling emotions and anxious thoughts. The problem is that not only do we have an enemy who attempts to influence us through thoughts, we also all have a tendency to let our mind run wild—which makes things worse.
 - b. Does this sound familiar? You receive an unexpected bill that you can't pay. Your mind starts to race and you begin to talk to yourself about the situation. As you think and talk, your thoughts and talk feed each other and you become more and more agitated:
 1. I can't pay this bill. What am I going to do? If I fall behind in my bills, I'll lose my home, and my family and I will starve to death in a box in an alley! This is my wife's fault. She spends too much money. I should never have married her.
 2. This is God's fault. I've served Him faithfully. How could He let this happen? God doesn't love me. I don't matter to anyone. I might as well be dead.
2. You may not realize this, but what I've just described is a mind that is out of control. We don't realize that our thoughts are out of control because this kind of response is normal for far too many of us.
- a. The result is that we have no peace of mind—we're filled with anxiety. There are several reasons why we respond like this in a situation of lack.
 1. Perhaps you do not know or you don't really believe that God will take care of you. The remedy for this condition is the Word of God because it reveals God's desire to provide for His people, and it builds your faith—confident assurance that God will come through for you.
 2. Perhaps you don't realize that there is a very real enemy who seeks to influence you through thoughts that sound like you. Unless you consciously initiated the kind of thoughts listed above, then you probably had some input and help from the devil.
 - A. I once heard a preacher (who had a tremendous impact on my life) say: You can't stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from making a nest in your heart.
 - B. His point was that you can't necessarily stop crazy, random thoughts from flying through your head, but you can learn to recognize and reject them as contrary to the Word of God.
 - b. Matt 6:25—Although most modern translations of this verse say don't worry, the KJV Bible translates the word that Jesus used as take no thought. This phrase conveys several important point about how to win the battle for your mind. You must learn how to reject (not take) certain thoughts.
 1. It isn't wrong to have thoughts about how you will get food and clothing. But, to experience peace of mind, you must be able to answer those thoughts according to the Word of God.
 2. Jesus gave us the correct answer in His teaching. He went on to describe how birds eat and flowers are dressed because our heavenly Father takes care of them, and we matter to God more than birds and flowers. So there's no need to worry because He'll take care of us. Matt 6:26-30
3. The problem is that too many of us engage with these thoughts and go over and over them in our mind. We obsess over them. Instead of recognizing and rejecting them as thoughts that contradict what God says, we allow them to dominate our mind. Obsess means to occupy intensely or abnormally.
- a. Matt 6:31—Notice that Jesus told us: Take no thought saying. We engage these thoughts when we begin to speak them out, either silently to ourselves or to others. Jesus said: Don't do that.
 1. We've said in previous lessons that we harness our mind and mouth by acknowledging God, by talking about Him and what He has done, is doing, and will do. James 3:3-4; Phil 4:6; Ps 50:23
 2. You don't deny the problem that you are facing. You consider it in terms of what God says: I have a heavenly Father who takes care of birds and flowers and I matter to Him more than they do. Therefore, I know He'll take care of me. I refuse to give into these worrisome thoughts.
 - b. You may be thinking: I don't know enough Bible verses to determine if I need to do something about the thoughts in my head. They don't seem ungodly or sinful. They seem normal and

appropriate for my situation.

1. Notice two points that Jesus made in His teaching which will help us analyze our thoughts and determine whether they are godly or not, whether they are consistent with the Word of God or not, and whether they are something we should engage with and make our own or not.
 - A. In Matt 6:27 Jesus said: Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? Of course not (NLT). In other words, why worry and obsess over something you can't do anything about, something you can't change.
 - B. In Matt 6:34 Jesus said: So don't worry about for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today (NLT). In other words, don't speculate about things that haven't happened yet, that may never happen. Deal with what you can fix.
2. Jesus' statements form a guide that help us identify thoughts that are inconsistent with God's Word, thoughts that we need to reject. Honestly consider these points and ask yourself:
 - A. Are your thoughts uplifting and encouraging? Are you thinking more about the problem than on God's promise of help and provision?
 - B. Are you speculating about outcomes you can't possibly know at this point? Are you speculating about other people's motives (something you also cannot possibly know) and then drawing conclusions which affect your mood and your actions?
 - C. Are you working on (thinking about) an actual solution or are you simply going over and over the problem? Is this a situation that is within your power to fix, a circumstance where you can take definitive action, making it worth all your mental energy and angst—or not?
- c. To win the battle for our minds we must learn to control them. That means become aware of what thoughts we entertain. That means not letting our minds run wild. Is it easy to get control over your mind? No, especially if you have let it run wild for years. But it must be done if you want to experience peace of mind. And, it can be done. God never tells us to do something we can't do.
 1. Jesus gave us help with this in His teaching when He urged His listeners to consider the birds and flowers. In other words, He urged them (and us) to take their (our) attention off the problem and put it on an example of God's faithfulness to those who belong to Him.
 2. Remember what Paul wrote in Phil 4:6-8: When you are worried, go to God with it, and then think on (fix your mind) on these things—whatever is true, lovely, praise worthy, and of good report; etc. Remember, the Greek word that is translated think on these things means to take an inventory. Mentally count up what God says and what He has done for you.
4. Jesus' first apostles understood the important of controlling their thoughts. Consider something that Peter wrote. He would have heard Jesus deliver the teaching we've just referenced about not worrying, He would have heard Jesus tell of His temptation by Satan and how He resisted him with God's Word.
 - a. Peter would also have heard Jesus teach that the devil comes to steal the Word of God from people in times of persecution, tribulation, and affliction. Matt 13:18-21; Mark 4:14-17
 1. The people that Peter was writing to were experiencing increasing persecution that was soon going to become severe. He wrote his epistle to exhort and encourage them. Peter knew that the devil would try to take advantage of the situation and steal the Word of God from them.
 2. We've made the point in previous lessons that we are all more vulnerable to the devil's lies when we are stirred up emotionally and physically because of trouble.
 - b. Here's what Peter wrote about resisting the devil. I Pet 5:7-8—Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares what happens to you. Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy (NLT).
 1. Peter acknowledged that Christians experience worries, but urged them to look to God. Then he told them to be careful. The Greek word that is translated be careful (sober, in the KJV) means to be of sound mind. It is from a word that means to be moderate or self controlled. Be

“well-balanced—temperate, sober-minded” (Amp).

2. Peter knew that they needed (we need) to be on guard for mental attacks from the devil. So, among other things, Peter urged them to control their minds.
 3. Then he urged them to resist the devil—steadfast in the faith (I Pet 5:9, KJV). “Take a firm stand against him, and be strong in your faith (NLT). Faith (trust, confidence) in God comes from the Word of God.
5. In Eph 6:11-17 Paul gave a fairly extensive teaching on how to deal with the devil. Paul wrote that the devil’s strategies are mental and we must resist them with God’s Word so don’t we don’t fall prey to him.
- a. As part of his instruction, Paul made reference to putting on a complete set of Roman armor. Roman soldiers were a common sight in that day, and a fully dressed soldier was unbeatable. Paul’s point is that God’s armor (His Word) helps us identify, resist, and counter the lies of the devil.
 - b. Eph 6:16—Note that Paul made reference to the shield of faith which will quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. In context, the wicked is the devil and fiery darts are his mental strategies.
 1. Fiery darts is a cultural reference to an extremely terrifying weapon of war in the ancient world. Three types of arrows were used. The first was a regular arrow. The second was a regular arrow dipped in tar, set on fire, and then launched into the air.
 2. The third was the fiery dart—an arrow that looked like a regular arrow, but it was filled with combustible liquid which exploded in fire on impact.
 - A. It was particularly dangerous because it looked like a regular arrow until it hit. (It seemed normal.) Fiery darts were used to break through and take heavily fortified positions.
 - B. The devil and his legions bombard us with thoughts until one of them lands and causes great damage (starts a fire), and we accept, embrace, and act on that thought. And you can’t tell which thought is the fiery dart until it hits.
 3. We quench or extinguish the fiery darts (lies, mental strategies) of the devil with the shield of faith—the Word of God which we know and believe. The shield of faith is summed up in three words: It is written.
- C. Conclusion: We have more to say next week. Consider these thoughts as we close. Jesus offers us peace of mind. But it isn’t automatic. Remember what Jesus said in John 14:27—Do not let your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid (Amp).
1. Jesus didn’t mean that you never feel fearful or anxious. Those are normal emotional responses to troubling circumstances. He meant that you can’t let what you see and feel drive your thoughts (along with help from the devil). You must get control of your mind and your thoughts.
 2. Your mind is the battleground. It’s not what you see, it’s how you see what you see. That’s why the Bible has so much to say about your mind.
 - a. Not only do you need to renew your mind (change the way you see things by regular Bible reading), you must become aware of what goes on in your mind and get control.
 - b. So much of our thought time is spent going over what we see and feel without giving a thought to God’s help and provision. We speculate about people’s motives and potential outcomes in our situation—things we don’t actually know for a fact and can do nothing about, other than worry and obsess. You must become aware of what is in your mind and deal with it.
 1. Refuse those contrary thoughts in the name of Jesus. Boldly declare: That’s not my thought. I will not accept it or engage with it.
 2. Then make your mind focus on what God says in His Word. It’s not easy and it can be a struggle. But it is well worth the effort to get control of your thoughts. More next week!