

ECCLESIA CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST
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Bible Study Series



THE BATTLE IN THE MIND

KEY VERSES: For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. (II Corinthians 10:3-5 KJV)

³ For though we walk in the flesh [as mortal men], we are not carrying on our [spiritual] warfare according to the flesh *and* using the weapons of man. ⁴ The weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood]. Our weapons are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵ *We are* destroying sophisticated arguments and every exalted *and* proud thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought *and* purpose captive to the obedience of Christ. (AMP)

INTRODUCTION

Webster defines the word **mind** as the part of a person that thinks, reasons, feels, and remembers. When Paul warned the Corinthians not to be ignorant of the Devil's "wiles," the Greek word for wiles means "schemes" and is from

the same word used for "mind." *In other words, Satan's primary assaults occur in our thought life. The mind is the main battlefield in spiritual warfare. Every attack of Satan involves the human mind.*

This lesson focuses on the battle for the mind. It discusses the strategies of Satan and gives spiritual counter strategies for victory over his attacks. The battle for the mind is easily summarized:

The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. (Romans 8:6-7 NIV)

Satan wants to make your mind carnal (sinful, worldly, fleshly). God wants you to be spiritually minded.

WHY SATAN ATTACKS THE MIND

The greatest commandment includes loving God with all your mind. This is one of the main reasons why Satan battles for your mind:

Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy MIND; This is the first and great commandment. (Matthew 22:37-38)

Satan battles for your mind because it is closely tied spiritually to your heart and mouth:

But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts... (Matthew 15:18-19)

Satan battles for the mind because the way you think affects the way you act:

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he... (Proverbs 23:7)

Satan knows if he can control your mind, he can control your body, your actions, and, if left unchallenged, your spirit.

FIERY DARTS FROM THE ENEMY

In Old Testament times, fiery darts were used as weapons of warfare. They were hollow reeds filled with material which would burn easily. They were set on fire and then shot from bows. They were excellent weapons against the

walled cities of the time because they could be shot over the walls to ignite the thatched roofs of the houses within.

In Ephesians 6:11-17, Paul discusses the spiritual battle with Satan. He speaks of "the fiery darts of the wicked." The enemy continuously hurls "fiery darts" at you in the spirit world. Most of these "darts" are aimed at the mind.

The Apostle Paul warns that you should not be "soon shaken in mind" (II Thessalonians 2:2). *In the Greek translation, "shake" means to "agitate, disturb, topple, (by implied) to destroy." If you can take hold of something and shake it, you have control over it. Satan wants to "shake" or exert control over your mind.*

SATAN'S STRATEGY: BATTLES IN THE MIND

The mind is one of the most complex and least understood parts of the human body. Because it is so complex, Satan has many subtle methods of attacking the mind. Though it would be impossible to list them all, the following list summarizes the main strategies of attack Satan uses in the battle for the mind:

QUESTIONING THE AUTHORITY OF GOD: The first temptation of man started in the mind. It started with this strategy: Questioning the authority of God. Satan said to Eve, "Yea, hath God said?" Did God really say that you could not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil? Questioning God and His Word leads to doubt, unbelief, and skepticism.

DECEPTION AND SEDUCTION: Deception was also part of the enemy's strategy. When Satan confronted Eve, he was disguised as a beautiful serpent. Satan uses lies, cults, and "religious spirits" to deceive millions in our world today. Some of the deceptions Satan advances include the following appeals:

- "You can become a god."
- "You can know the future."
- "Your future, including eternity, is predestined. There is nothing you can do about it."
- "Everyone is a child of God."
- "There are more ways to Heaven than by Jesus."
- "God is too good to send anyone to Hell."
- "All God expects you to do is live a good life and do the best you can."

- "The Bible should not be taken literally."
- "The Bible contains many errors."

Seducing spirits of Satan attack the mind to distort the truth of God's Word:

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. (I Timothy 4:1)

Satan used this attack on Jesus in Luke 4:9-12. He tried to get Jesus to throw himself off a high point of the temple since God had promised to...

...give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee, and in their hands, they shall bear thee up... (Luke 4:10-11)

THE FLESH: The flesh is a spiritual force of evil that Satan uses to war against the mind:

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (Romans 7:23)

Satan uses your own mouth, your eyes, ears, and even your senses of touch and smell to foster wicked thoughts in your mind.

BLINDING MINDS OF UNBELIEVERS: Satan works in the minds of unbelievers to blind them to the truth of the Gospel:

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (II Corinthians 4:4)

DEPRESSION: To be depressed is to be downcast, sad, discouraged, or in low spirit. It includes feelings of despair, despondency, and dejection. Depression can lead to suicidal thoughts or actual suicide because of the hopeless feelings which produces uncontrollable mental grief, sorrow, heartache, and crying.

Sometimes Satan uses circumstances of life to lead to depression. For examples, a great loss or fear of loss, suppressed anger, a low self-concept, unfulfilled expectations, and a negative attitude can all be used to cause depression. In Proverbs 24:10 we are warned about "fainting in the day of adversity" (troubled or distressed circumstances).

Sometimes depression is caused by the negative attitudes of those around us through which Satan works. In Deuteronomy 1:28 God's people admitted, "*our brethren have discouraged our hearts.*"

We read in Numbers 21:4 that the soul of God's people was much discouraged. King David often reflected discouragement in his Psalms (see Psalms 69 for an example). The Apostle Paul also had times of deep depression:

For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life... (II Corinthians 1:8)

If you do not conquer depression it can also lead to oppression by Satanic spirits. This is a deeper form of depression where Satan gains more restrictive power over the mind.

DISCOURAGEMENT: Discouragement means to be "without courage." Satan wants to discourage you because if you are "without courage," you are ineffective in warfare.

WITHDRAWAL: Another way Satan attacks the mind is through withdrawal. *The purpose of this strategy is to isolate you from the rest of the Body of Christ.* Since believers function together in ministry as a body, *withdrawal makes you non-functional.* Examples of men of God who were attacked mentally by Satan and withdrew are Elijah (I Kings 19) and Jonah (Jonah 4:5-11).

IMPROPER MOTIVES: A motive is your reason for doing something. Motives are important because although man looks on the outward appearance (actions), God looks on the heart:

But the Lord said unto Samuel, look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. (I Samuel 16:7)

But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men.

And needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man. (John 2:24-25)

Many people enter Christian ministry for the wrong reasons. *God is more concerned with motive than ministry.* This is where you should place your concern also, *for when motives are proper then ministry will naturally follow.*

Satan will try to create wrong motives for Christian service by putting them subtly in your mind. Satan causes wrong motives for desiring God's power. You can find an example of this in Acts 8:18-23 in the story of a man named Simon.

You can have vindictive motives for your actions. (Vindictive means that you want to get even with someone who has done you wrong or who you do not like). Biblical examples include the disciples wanting to call down fire from heaven (Luke 9:54) and Jonah wanting Nineveh destroyed (Jonah 4). David also had a wrong motive in the numbering of the people:

Satan (an adversary) stood up against Israel and stirred up David to number Israel. (I Chronicles 21:1 The Amplified Version)

WRONG ATTITUDES AND EMOTIONS: Satan causes wrong attitudes towards others. He inserts fiery darts of envy, jealousy, suspicion, unforgiveness, distrust, anger, hatred, intolerance, prejudice, competition, impatience, judging, criticism, covetousness, and selfishness.

He also tries to cause wrong attitudes of greed, discontent, pride, vanity, ego, importance, arrogance, intellectualism, and self-righteousness. Wrong attitudes lead to wrong emotions and both stem from your thoughts.

These attitudes and emotions render you ineffective in spiritual warfare. For example, James 4:6 indicates that "God resisteth the proud." When you are filled with pride, you are actually arrayed in battle against God.

REBELLION: Satan also inserts rebellious thoughts into your mind. Rebellion is willful disobedience against God's authority. Rebellion includes self-will, stubbornness, and disobedience. Remember that rebellion was the original sin of Satan. His five statements of "I will" demonstrated his rebellion (Isaiah 14:12-14). The "I will" spirit is a way to recognize the operation of Satan through rebellion.

ACCUSATION AND CONDEMNATION: Satan is called "the accuser of the brethren" (Revelation 12:10). He sends fiery darts of accusation into your

mind, makes you feel inferior, and condemns you. He will give you guilty feelings of shame, unworthiness, and embarrassment.

One good way to tell the difference between the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the condemnation of Satan is to remember that Satan always generalizes. For example, he speaks into your mind like these: "You are no good," "You can never live a Christian life," "God couldn't love you because you are too great of a sinner."

When the Holy Spirit is convicting you, it is specific. For example, He brings to your attention that you have a problem with anger or dishonesty, etc.

SEXUAL IMPURITY: Satan will insert thoughts of sexual impurity, lust, and mental sexual fantasies.

CONFUSION: Satan also causes indecision, confusion, and frustration in your mind. When you are confused, indecisive, and frustrated, you obviously cannot be a good Christian soldier.

TORMENTING THOUGHTS: There is a whole category of tormenting thoughts Satan sends into your mind including worry, anxiety, dread, apprehension, and nervousness. *Mental torment can also come through an overactive mind that will not "shut off" or an under active mind that cannot function properly.* Tormenting thoughts also include fear. Paul speaks of the "spirit of fear" in II Timothy 1:7 and the "fear of death" in Hebrews 2:15. *Tormenting thoughts also include bitter memories of events that should be forgiven and forgotten.*

COMPROMISE: To "compromise" is to settle conflicting principles by adjustment. The principles of God and Satan are in opposition. Satan tries to get you to compromise and lower your spiritual principles. For example, he will tell you it is not necessary to be so holy, to believe the Bible literally, etc.

WRONG MENTAL FOCUS: Satan will constantly try to get your focus on things of the world rather than things of eternal nature:

Do not love or cherish the world or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. (I John 2:15 The Amplified Version)

The cares of the world can actually cause the Word of God to be ineffective in your life. (See the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8).

Cares of the world can make you unaware of the short time before the return of Jesus:

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with...cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. (Luke 21:34)

Satan will occupy your thoughts with materialism rather than with eternal values. Read the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21:

For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (I Timothy 6:10)

Paul warns there are many who "mind worldly things" (Philippians 3:18-19).

MENTAL CONDITIONS: If you allow Satan to persist with thoughts of depression, suicide, torment, accusation, etc., it can lead to mental illness. This could include a nervous or mental breakdown and various medically recognized mental conditions. Satan can actually possess the mind of unbelievers and backsliders; those who have once known God, then turned away from Him.

SPIRITUAL COUNTER STRATEGIES: VICTORY IN THE MIND

What an arsenal of weapons Satan has targeted for the mind! Left unconquered, these thoughts lead to sinful actions. For example, hatred can lead to murder. Adulterous thoughts can lead to the act of adultery. Divorce starts in the mind. Covetousness can lead to stealing.

There is no doubt...the greatest arena of spiritual warfare is the mind. But do not fear! God has given some tremendous counter strategies for overcoming attacks of Satan on the mind:

- 1. LET THE HOLY SPIRIT SEARCH YOUR MIND:** First, ask God to search your mind and reveal to you any wrong attitudes, motives, and thinking which has been inserted by the enemy: **Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalms 139:23-24)**

As the Holy Spirit reveals things to you, act upon the revelation. Ask forgiveness for wrong thought patterns and use the Word of God to develop new thought patterns.

2. USE YOUR SPIRITUAL ARMOR: Two pieces of spiritual armor defend you from attacks in the mind. These are listed in Ephesians 6:16-17. One piece of armor is the helmet of the hope of salvation. A helmet is worn on the head and implies protection to the mind.

Paul is not only speaking of your present salvation in Jesus Christ which can cleanse your mind, he is speaking of the future salvation:

...for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. (Romans 13:11)

Salvation is also your hope for the future. The believer who has the "helmet of salvation" in place understands God is working out His eternal purpose of salvation. He is not disturbed by the attacks of the enemy. He has hope not only for the present, but for the future.

The other piece of armor for mental protection is the shield of faith. As you learned when you studied about your weapons, a shield was a piece of heavy material which a soldier held in front of himself to keep arrows from hitting him. The arrows bounced off the shield and fell harmlessly to the ground.

The shield for the Christian soldier is called the "shield of faith." The word "faith" not only refers to the basic truths of the Christian Gospel but to your confidence in God.

Another piece of spiritual armor is the girdle of truth (Ephesians 6:14). The truth of God's Word will defeat any false accusations the enemy brings to your mind.

3. USE GOD'S WORD: In the temptation of Jesus when Satan misused God's Word, Jesus met the attack with the Word of God. When Satan comes with accusations of guilt, use this Scripture:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:1)

When Satan comes with tormenting feelings such as fear, use these Scriptures:

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. (I John 4:18)

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (II Timothy 1:7)

When Satan tries to discourage you, use this verse:

Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. (Joshua 1:9)

When Satan brings false guilt to your mind, remember...

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (I John 1:9) ...and use all the other verses about the mind given in this lesson to war against the attacks of Satan in your mind.

- 4. CLAIM A SOUND MIND:** Claim a sound mind as God's will for you. To eliminate tormenting thoughts, claim the peace that is rightfully yours:

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. LET NOT your heart be troubled, NEITHER LET IT be afraid. (John 14:27)

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and MINDS through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

These are examples of how you can develop a whole "arsenal" of Scriptures applicable to the various mental attacks of Satan. As you study God's Word, continue to identify specific verses to defend your mind against the invasion of the enemy.

- 5. LET CHRIST'S MIND BE IN YOU:** Paul wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:5)
The word "let" means to permit or embrace. You are to let your mind become like the mind of Jesus. What was the mind of Jesus like? It is possible to achieve this because Paul wrote... ..But we have the mind of Christ. (II Corinthians 2:16)

6. **GIRD UP THE LOINS OF YOUR MIND:** Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind... (I Peter 1:13) In the natural body, the loins are the central portion of the body below the waist. The loins are the strongest parts of the body. Peter is saying you should prepare your mind to be strong. Again, it is something YOU do.
7. **TAKE WRONG THOUGHTS CAPTIVE:** We are told to bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience to Christ" (II Corinthians 10:5). If thoughts were not enemies, then there would be no need to take them captive. Think about how a soldier takes an enemy captive in the natural world. Apply these ideas spiritually as you "take captive" every thought.
8. **CAST DOWN WRONG THOUGHTS:** One of the main defensive counter strategies to protect the mind is that of casting down. To cast something means to throw it with great force. Paul said:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. (II Corinthians 10:3-5)

You are to cast down evil imaginations Satan puts into your mind. You are to cast down thoughts that exalt themselves against God. You are to bring every thought into captivity and obedience to the Lord.

You "cast down" by consciously taking control of your mind and refusing to dwell on the thoughts Satan inserts. Note that YOU are told to cast down...It is not something God does for you.

9. **THINK ON THESE THINGS:** One way to "gird" up the loins of your mind is to think on proper subject matter. Paul said:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Philippians 4:8)

- 10. RENEW YOUR MIND: And be renewed in the spirit of your mind. (Ephesians 4:23) And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind... (Romans 12:2)**

You renew your mind by prayer and meditation on God's Word.

- 11. ENCOURAGE YOURSELF IN THE LORD:** David encouraged himself in the Lord:

And David was greatly distressed; ...but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God. (I Samuel 30:6)

Again, YOU must take action. You must encourage yourself in God. Do not wait for others to do it. Do it yourself with God's help!

- 12. RECOGNIZE THE SOURCE OF CONFUSION:** Recognize that confusion is not of God:

For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace... (I Corinthians 14:33)

Since confusion is not of God, refuse to accept the spirit of confusion in your mind.

- 13. CONTROL THE GATES:** In Old Testament times cities were surrounded by walls for defense against enemy forces. The walls had gates where guards controlled the entrance. Whoever controlled the gates of the city controlled the city.

A similar situation exists in terms of controlling the mind. The "gates" to your innermost being are the five senses. It is important that you do not allow anything to enter that has the ability to destroy from within. This means you must control your fleshly nature.

Avoid things that would open the gates to your mind. These include things like drugs and alcohol which reduce your ability to think and respond.

Pornography inspires sinful relationships and sex crimes. Certain kinds of music, witchcraft, cultist activity, and mind control all open the "gates" to your mind.

Put off all the works of the flesh and let God develop in you the fruit of the Holy Spirit (See Galatians 5:19-26). **NEVER GIVE IN** to the mental attacks of

the enemy. If you give in, God may give you up. See Romans 1... God sometimes gives people up to what they have given in to. Ask Jesus to help you. Remember that one of the Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus said He would "control the gates of His enemy." Let Him exert this control over your spiritual "gates."

- 14. KEEP YOUR MIND STAYED ON GOD:** Keep your mind "stayed" or centered on God: Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. (Isaiah 26:3) This is a great promise! If you keep your mind centered on God, you can have peace despite every attack of the enemy.

APPLICATION:

1. In the battle for the mind, Satan tries attempts to cause:

- A carnal mind: Romans 8:6-7
- A mind alienated from God by wicked works: Colossians 1:21
- A defiled mind: Titus 1:15
- A fleshly mind: Ephesians 2:3
- A hardened mind: Daniel 5:20
- A doubtful mind: Luke 12:29
- A vain mind: Ephesians 4:17
- A blinded mind: II Corinthians 3:14
- A seared mind and conscience: Titus 1:15
- A spiteful mind: Ezekiel 36:5
- An evil mind: Acts 14:2
- An unbelieving mind: II Corinthians 4:4
- A fainting mind: Hebrews 12:3
- A reprobate mind: II Timothy 3:8
- Double mindedness: James 1:8; 4:8
- A corrupt mind: I Timothy 6:5; II Timothy 3:8; II Corinthians 11:3 2.

2. Positive mental qualities you should develop:

- A ready mind: II Corinthians 8:19; I Peter 5:2; Acts 17:11
- A pure mind: II Peter 3:1
- A stayed mind: Isaiah 26:3
- A renewed mind: Ephesians 4:23; Romans 12:2
- A humble mind: Colossians 3:12; Acts 20:19
- A sober mind: Titus 2:6

- A sound mind: II Timothy 1:7
- A mind of love: Matthew 22:37
- A serving mind: Romans 7:25
- A fully persuaded mind: Romans 14:5
- A fervent mind: II Corinthians 7:7
- A willing mind: II Corinthians 8:12

Lesson adapted from A Manual for Spiritual Warfare, Harvestime International Institute