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Battlefield
of the
mind

Winning the Battle in Your Mind



New York Boston Nashville

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The Mind Is the Battlefield

Chapter 1

From this Scripture we see that we are in a war. A careful study of this verse informs us that our warfare is not with other human beings but with the devil and his demons. Our enemy, Satan, attempts to defeat us with strategy and deceit, through well-laid plans and deliberate deception.

The devil is a liar. Jesus called him “the father of lies and of all that is false” (John 8:44). He lies to you and me. He tells us things about ourselves, about other people and about circumstances that are just not true. He does not, however, tell us the entire lie all at one time.

For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the despotisms, against the powers, against [the master spirits who are] the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) sphere.

EPHESIANS 6:12

He begins by bombarding our mind with a cleverly devised pattern of little nagging thoughts, suspicions, doubts, fears, wonderings, reasonings, and theories. He moves slowly and cautiously (after all, well-laid plans take time). Remember, he has a strategy for his warfare. He has studied us for a long time.

He knows what we like and what we don't like. He knows our insecurities, our weaknesses, and our fears. He knows what bothers us most. He is willing to invest any amount of time it takes to defeat us. One of the devil's strong points is patience.

TEARING DOWN STRONGHOLDS

For the weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds.

[Inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

2 Corinthians 10:4,5

Through careful strategy and cunning deceit, Satan attempts to set up “strongholds” in our mind. A stronghold is an area in which we are held in bondage (in prison) due to a certain way of thinking.

In this passage, the Apostle Paul tells us that we have the weapons we need to overcome Satan’s strongholds. We will learn more about these weapons later, but right now, please notice that once again we see that we are engaged in warfare, spiritual warfare. Verse 5 shows us clearly the location of the battlefield on which this warfare is waged.

The Amplified Bible translation of this verse says that we are to take these weapons and refute arguments. The devil argues with us; he offers us theories and reasonings. All of this activity goes on in the mind.

The mind is the battlefield.

SUMMARY OF THE SITUATION

Thus, so far we have seen that:

1. We are engaged in a war.
2. Our enemy is Satan.
3. The mind is the battlefield.
4. The devil works diligently to set up strongholds in our mind.
5. He does it through strategy and deceit (through well-laid plans and deliberate deception).
6. He is in no hurry; he takes his time to work out his plan.

Let’s examine his plan more clearly through a parable.

MARY'S SIDE

Mary and her husband, John, are not enjoying a happy marriage. There is strife between them all the time. They are both angry, bitter, and resentful. They have two children who are being affected by the problems in the home. The strife is showing up in their schoolwork and behavior. One of the children is having stomach problems caused by nerves.

Mary's problem is that she doesn't know how to let John be the head of their home. She is bossy—she wants to make all the decisions, handle the finances and discipline the children. She wants to work so she will have her “own” money. She is independent, loud, demanding and a nag.

About now you may be thinking, “I've got her answer. She needs to know Jesus.”

She does know Him! Mary received Jesus as her Savior five years ago—three years after she and John were married.

“Do you mean there hasn't been a change in Mary since receiving Jesus as Savior?”

Yes, there has been change. She believes she is going to heaven even though her bad behavior causes her to feel constant condemnation. She has hope now. Before she met Jesus, she was miserable and hopeless; now she is just miserable.

Mary knows that her attitude is wrong. She wants to change. She has received counseling from two people. She takes every opportunity to be prayed for and asks for victory over anger, rebellion, unforgiveness, resentment, and bitterness. Why hasn't she seen more improvement?

The answer is found in Romans 12:2: “Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire]

renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].”

Mary has strongholds in her mind. They have been there for years. She doesn't even understand how they got there. She knows she shouldn't be rebellious, bossy, nagging, etc., but she doesn't know what to do to change her nature. It seems that she simply reacts in certain situations in an unseemly way because she can't control her actions.

Mary can't control her actions because she doesn't control her thoughts. She doesn't control her thoughts because she doesn't even know that doing so is an option for her. There are strongholds in her mind that the devil set up early in her life.

Satan begins to initiate his well-laid plans and to sow his deliberate deception at a very young age. In Mary's case, her problems started long ago, in childhood.

As a child Mary had an extremely domineering father who often spanked her just because he was in a bad mood. If she made one wrong move, he would vent his anger on her. For years, she suffered helplessly as her father mistreated her and her mother. He was disrespectful in all his ways toward his wife and daughter. Mary's brother, however, could do no wrong. It seemed as if he was favored just because he was a boy.

By the time she was sixteen, Mary had been brainwashed for years by Satan who had told her lies that went something like this: “Men really think they are something. They are all alike; you can't trust them. They will hurt you and take advantage of you. If you're a man, you've got it made in life. You can do anything you want. You can order people around, be the boss, treat people any way you please and nobody (especially not wives or daughters) can do anything about it.”

As a result, Mary's mind was resolved: "When I get away from here, nobody is ever going to push me around again!"

Satan was already waging war on the battlefield of her mind. Play those thoughts over and over in your head a hundred thousand times or more over a period of ten years, and see if you're ready to get married and become a sweet, submissive, adoring wife. Even if by some miracle you should want to be, you won't know how. This is the kind of mess in which Mary finds herself today. What can she do? What can any of us do in such a situation?

THE WEAPONS OF THE WORD

If you abide in My word [hold fast to My teachings and live in accordance with them], you are truly My disciples.

And you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free.

John 8:31,32

Here Jesus tells us how we are to win the victory over the lies of Satan. We must get the knowledge of God's truth in us, renew our minds with His Word, then use the weapons of 2 Corinthians 10:4,5 to tear down the strongholds and every high and lofty thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

These "weapons" are the Word received through preaching, teaching, books, CDs, DVDs, conferences, and private Bible study. But we must "abide" (continue) in the Word until it becomes revelation given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Continuing is important. In Mark 4:24 Jesus says, "The measure [of thought and study] you give [to the truth you hear] will be the measure [of virtue and knowledge] that comes back to you." I repeat, we must *continue* using the weapon of the Word.

Two other spiritual weapons available to us are praise and prayer. Praise defeats the devil quicker than any other battle plan, but it must be genuine heart praise, not just lip service or a method being tried to see if it works. Also, praise and prayer both involve the Word. We praise God according to His Word and His goodness.

Prayer is relationship with the Godhead. It is coming and asking for help or talking to God about something that bothers us. It is fellowship, friendship, and an opportunity to express gratitude for all that God is and does.

If you want to have an effective prayer life, develop a good personal relationship with the Father. Know that He loves you, that He is full of mercy, that He will help you. Get to know Jesus. He is your Friend. He died for you. Get to know the Holy Spirit. He is with you all the time as your Helper. Let Him help you.

Learn to fill your prayers with the Word of God. Psalm 9:10 says that we seek God on the authority of His Word and the right of our necessity (need).

So, our weapons are the Word used in various ways. We can pray the word, speak the word, sing the word, and study the word. As Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians, our weapons are not carnal (fleshly) weapons; they are spiritual. We need spiritual weapons because we are fighting master spirits, yes, even the devil himself. Even Jesus used the weapon of the Word in the wilderness to defeat the devil. (See Luke 4:1-13.) Each time the devil lied to Him, Jesus responded with, "It is written," and quoted him the Word.

As Mary learns to use her weapons, she will begin to tear down the strongholds that have been built in her mind. She will know the truth that will set her free. She will see that not all men are like her earthly father. Some are, but many are not. Her husband, John, is not. John loves Mary very much.

JOHN'S SIDE

The other side of the story involves John. He, too, has problems that are a contributing factor to the situation he and Mary face in their marriage, home, and family.

John should be taking his position as head of the family. God intends for him to provide spiritual leadership in his home. John is also born again and knows the proper order for family life. He knows that he should not allow his wife to control the household, the finances, the children, and him. He knows all this, but he doesn't do anything about it except feel defeated and retreat into TV and sports.

John is hiding from his responsibility because he hates confrontation. He prefers to take a passive attitude, thinking, "Well, if I just leave this situation alone, perhaps it will work itself out." Or, he excuses himself from taking real action by saying, "I'll pray about it." Of course, prayer is good, but not if it is merely a way of avoiding responsibility.

Let me clarify what I mean when I say that John should assume his God-given position in the home. I don't mean that he should come on like "Mr. Macho," ranting and raving about his authority. Ephesians 5:25 teaches that a man should love his wife as Christ loved the Church. John needs to take responsibility, and with responsibility comes authority. He should be lovingly firm with his wife. He should reassure Mary that even though she was hurt as a child, as she releases herself to God through trusting Him, she will gain confidence that not all men are like her father was.

John should be doing a lot of things; but, like Mary, he also has "mindsets" that open the door for the devil to hold him captive. There is also a battle going on in John's mind. Like Mary, he was verbally abused in childhood. His domineering mother had a sharp tongue and frequently said hurtful things to him, things like, "John, you're such a mess; you'll never amount to anything."

John tried hard to please his mother because he craved her approval (as all children do); but the harder he tried, the more mistakes he made. He had a habit of being clumsy, so his mother told him all the time what a klutz he was. Of course, he dropped things because he was trying so hard to please that it made him nervous, and so he defeated his purpose.

He also experienced some unfortunate rejection from children with whom he desired to be friends. This type of thing happens to most of us at some time in our lives, but it devastated John because he already felt rejected by his mother.

And there was a girl whom he really liked in his early high school years who rejected him for another boy. By the time all of these things had tallied up in John's life, and the devil had worked on him, building strongholds in his mind for years and years, John simply had no courage to be anything but quiet, shy, and withdrawn.

John is a low-key type person who simply chooses not to make waves. For years he has been having thoughts directed into him that go something like this: "There is no point in telling anyone what you think; they won't listen anyway. If you want people to accept you, you just need to go along with whatever they want. Just leave things alone, nothing you say will make any difference anyway."

The few times he tried to stand his ground on an issue, it seemed that he always ended up losing, so he finally decided that confrontation wasn't worth the effort.

"I'm going to lose anyway in the end," he reasoned, "so why even start anything?"

WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon Me, because He has anointed Me [the Anointed One, the Messiah] to preach the good news (the Gospel) to the poor; He has sent Me to announce release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to send forth as delivered those who are oppressed [who are downtrodden, bruised, crushed, and broken down by calamity],

To proclaim the accepted and acceptable year of the Lord [the day when salvation and the free favors of God profusely abound].

Luke 4:18,19

With John's and Mary's conflicting problems, it is not too hard to imagine what their home life is like. Remember, I said there was a lot of strife in it. Strife isn't always open warfare. Many times, strife is an angry undercurrent in the home that everyone knows is there, but nobody deals with. The atmosphere in their home is terrible—it is filled with tension and the devil loves it!

What will happen to John and Mary and their children? Will they make it? They are Christians—it would be a shame to see their marriage fail and their family ruined. Actually, though, it is up to them. John 8:31,32 will be a key Scripture in their decision. If they continue to study God's Word, they will know the truth, and acting on the truth will set them free. *But* they must each face the truth about themselves and their past as God reveals it to them.

The truth is always revealed through the Word; but sadly, people don't always accept it. It is a painful process to face our faults and deal with them. Generally speaking, people justify misbehavior. They allow their past and how they were raised to negatively affect the rest of their lives.

Our past may explain why we're suffering, but we must not use it as an excuse to stay in bondage.

Everyone is without excuse because Jesus always stands ready to fulfill His promise to set the captives free. He will walk us across the finish line of victory in any area if we are willing to go all the way through it with Him.

THE WAY OUT

For no temptation (no trial regarded as enticing to sin), [no matter how it comes or where it leads] has overtaken you and laid hold on you that is not common to man [that is, no temptation or trial has come to you that is beyond human resistance and that is not adjusted and adapted and belonging to human experience, and such as man can bear]. But God is faithful [to His Word and

to His compassionate nature], and He [can be trusted] not to let you be tempted and tried and assayed beyond your ability and strength of resistance and power to endure, but with the temptation He will [always] also provide the way out (the means of escape to a landing place), that you may be capable and strong and powerful to bear up under it patiently.

1 Corinthians 10:13

I hope you see from this parable-type example how Satan takes our circumstances and builds strongholds in our lives—how he wages war on the battlefield of the mind. But, thank God, we have weapons to tear down the strongholds. God doesn't abandon us and leave us helpless. First Corinthians 10:13 promises us that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear, but with every temptation He will also provide the way out, the escape.

Any one of us may be Mary or John. I am sure that most of us relate in some way to the scenario. Their problems are internal—in their thoughts and attitudes. Their outward behavior is only a result of their inner life. Satan knows well that if he can control our thoughts, he can control our actions.

You may have some major strongholds in your life that need to be broken. Let me encourage you by saying, “God is on your side.” There is a war going on, and your mind is the battlefield. But the good news is that God is fighting on your side.