

Joke: A guy was walking in his neighborhood when he past a house surrounded by a fence and he heard a bunch of people shouting "13. . .13. . .13"

Curious as to what was going on, he tried to look over the wooden fence, but it was too high. However, he spotted a small gap between the planks just a few steps from where he was, so he looked through and suddenly he was poked in the eye by one of the folks on the other side with a stick, before they all started shouting "14. . .14. . .14"

Here we are another week, another sermon, I hope this one's good. I never feel quite ready, last minute changes. A bit nervous, often a bit insecure. I know God's Word is powerful yet sometimes I feel so weak.

Come on pastor get with it, It's time to roll, smile. What's with the lame jokes? Don't say something stupid, and you certainly better not mix up the stories. It's Job not job.

I'm curious. Does anyone else have an ongoing war in your mind?

I don't know about you, but so often I battle in my mind between thoughts of faith, and thoughts of fear. I want to trust God, and yet sometimes I think I can do better. Maybe it's just that I want to have the control.

Maybe you're like me you can walk in one moment and you feel full of spiritual confidence, with the faith that can mountains, that God is with you, He's for you, and you know He's called you, but then in the next moment, you have this crippling insecurity that paralyzes you, and holds you back.

And here's what I discovered, I have discovered that the mind is a battlefield. Something is always there grabbing for your attention. Trying to get you to think the worst when God has the best. And the truth is most of life's battles are won or lost in our minds.

But here's the good news, God's Word is powerful, not just able to help you, but to also bring about a transformation, and one of the ways that happens is by renewing your mind with truth.

I'm starting a new series today I'm calling Mind wars.

And today we're going to be looking at 2nd Corinthians 10.

And over the next few weeks, we're going to try to get into the mind of the Apostle Paul.

When you look at his life, we get to see part of his journey. We hear about what he was before his encounter with Jesus and we also get to see him become a follower of Jesus. And watch Jesus renew his mind as the transformation happens.

I don't believe it happened instantly, but we see it happen. In Romans 7, you see the battle in his mind.

Now let me say this about these verses in Romans he was describing the struggle he had when he felt the weight of being under the law. We have looked at how Paul was when he understood God's grace. But here in these verses he was describing the frustration as a devout Jew trying to keep the law. It was futile. God's grace on the other hand allows us to walk in the calling God has for us. Paul had to have a change in his thinking to reach the destiny he was called to.

So, let's look at what he says. . .

Romans 7:15–20 (NIV): 15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 18 For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

He almost sounds crazy with the thoughts in his mind.

But what I want to do over the next few weeks is watch him progress throughout his life and ministry, as he learns to wage war against the lies that attack his mind.

We're going to see him capture wrong thoughts, and replace them with truth and win the war in his mind.

This is what the Apostle Paul says. . .

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 (NIV): For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We 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.

The Greek word translated as power, is the word *dunamis*. It means the explosive, miraculous power of God. We get our word dynamite from that.

The weapons that we fight with, they have divine power to demolish, to destroy strongholds.

You probably don't use the word stronghold to often. . .if ever.

But what is a stronghold? It comes from the Greek word ochuroma, and it's a military stronghold. It was like a fortress that was often built in the middle of a city.

This fortress could be surrounded by a wall that could literally be 20 feet deep. And it's where the military officials might be kept during battle to keep them safe, or where prisoners were kept to guard them from the enemy attacking.

And the devil, our spiritual enemy wants to attack your mind, and create strongholds of deception. So you believe something that's untrue, and if you believe those lies long enough they will become your truth, and it will take you away from God's healing, calling, and destiny for your life.

What does the devil do? The devil tries to shape your thinking. One lie at a time, until you're a prisoner of deception.

The devil will lie to you about you. Telling you you will never measure up. He will lie to you about others. Telling you others will never like you. And he will lie to you about God trying to get you to believe God isn't who He says is is.

He tells you that you can't trust people. You'll never succeed. You're always going to be broke. You're never going to have a good marriage. God doesn't hear your prayers. God doesn't care about you. You're never going to make a difference. You're never going to measure up.

So, how do we do battle in our mind?

Well, scripture tells us this. That we demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.

And what do we do? With God's help we take captive every thought and we make it obedient to Christ.

Let's pray, Abba we come boldly to the throne of grace and ask that by the power of Your word, that You would renew our minds with truth. Help us to take every thought captive, we can't afford to have one thought about us that is not from you. Set us free from believing the lies that rob us of the joy, and peace that you provide for us in this abundant life you have given us. We pray this in Jesus' name. And everybody say, Amen.

Hear this church our lives, are always moving in the direction of our strongest thoughts.

Science, behavior psychology tells us, that a lot of problems, are actually related to wrong thought processes. Some relational challenges. Some eating disorders. Addictions, some forms of anxiety are actually a direct result of toxic thinking. That's what science says.

Here's what God's word says. And how many know God's word is true?

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

Here's what I believe the life we have so often is a reflection of the thoughts that we think.

What we think. An often times determines who we become.

In other words, if you tend to think I can't do something, I'll never be able to do something. I don't have what it takes. If you think you can't, you probably won't.

If you dwell on your problems, the world is bad, it's getting worse, those problems are going to overwhelm you.

So, instead look for some solutions, if you believe you can have faith, walk in righteousness, you'll find some solutions, your faith will increase, and you will walk in a way that pleases God.

But, if you always feel like you're a victim, you will likely become a victim. In the same way if you believe that you can overcome, by the power of Christ within you, you will overcome.

As a matter of fact God's word tells us we are not just over-comers, but we are more than conquerors.

So, what I want to do today, is we're going to audit our thoughts, and think about what we think about.

Let me start by looking at three different categories and what I want you to think about is where you might fall on the list.

So, let me ask you this, Are you characterized by worried thoughts, panic, anxiety, or fear. Or would you say, that your thoughts are typically characterized by being full of peace?

Do you tend to wake up and have your mind drift toward fear?

What could go wrong? I'm worried about my kids. I'm worried about my health. I'm worried about the economy. I'm worried about the state of the world and the direction that our world is heading because our countries are out of control.

Or do you find yourself even if things are bad, and complicated, you find yourself casting your cares upon God, and recognizing there is a peace that passes all understanding.

And you sense His presence, His goodness, and His spirit with you, even when things aren't the way you want or hoped that would be?

What would you say if you're auditing your thoughts? Are you more characterized by worry or peace? What do your thoughts gravitate towards?

The second category is this. Do your thoughts drift toward the negative? Or do they drift toward the positive?

Do you wake up and find yourself negative and critical of people? Assuming the worst, instead of believing the best? Do you look at your day and say, Oh it's going to be hard, and it's going to be bad, times are tough. It's supposed to rain, weather looks lousy, I'm always so busy. There's not enough of me to go around. And the world's going to hell in a hand basket.

Or do you wake up with positive faith? And again, even if things are difficult, you say you know what, things may be difficult in the world, but I'm thankful for a God who is working in all things to bring about good to those who are called according to His purpose.

The third category is when it comes to what you think about, are your thoughts more toward the things of this world, oh in case you forgot they are just temporary, or do they drift toward that which lasts forever?

Are your thoughts more concerned with what you have? What you look like? Who liked your post or how many followers you have? About what everybody thinks about you?

Or do they drift toward the eternal? What God has said about you, what He has given you, the blessings in your life, the spiritual gifts he has bestowed upon you to use for His glory. And how you can use them to make a difference in the lives of the people around you.

What would you say characterizes your thoughts? What we think about matters more than you can imagine. What comes into your mind, comes out in your life.

No matter what you do, or what you have, or who you know, or what you buy, or where you live, or where you travel, you cannot have a positive life, when you have a negative mind.

Why? Because your life is always moving in the direction of your strongest thoughts.

The question I want you to ask yourself is this. If your life is always moving in the direction of your strongest thoughts, are you excited about the direction your thoughts are taking you?

And the truth is church, I had to ask myself that question not that long ago. Because I did not like the direction they were taking me in. They were often consumed with fear, and self-doubt, and my inner dialogue would often be discouraging.

And I still at times get thoughts that are not in line with what God says and so I'm learning to take those thoughts captive and bring them into obedience of Christ.

And so over the next couple weeks, we're going to go on a journey. And we're gonna look at the Apostle Paul, and we're gonna ask God to renew our minds with truth.

Today I want to lay a foundation, that we'll build upon that foundation in the weeks to come. So we can win the war in our mind and change our thinking, so God can change our life.

Two foundational thoughts that we're going to build upon.

The first one is this. What I want to do is just encourage you to identify the biggest stronghold, that is holding you back.

Remember what a stronghold is, that thought that keeps you a prisoner locked up by a lie.

What is the biggest mental stronghold that's holding you back?

You might think over and over again. I'm not good enough. Or my past is too bad for God to use me. Or I can't trust the people around me. Or I'm never going to be good with money. Or I can never be close to God.

And let me pause here and just say this about that. . . If you are a follower of Jesus the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead lives in you. And God said I will never leave you or forsake you. So, if He never leaves us, and His spirit lives in us. I'm not sure how much closer you can get to God. But once again a wrong thought will get you to believing you're not close.

Does that mean I always feel close. No. It just means I am close in spite of my feelings. . . There's a thought for you.

Maybe you think I'll never be in a job that is fulfilling with something that I love, whatever it is.

Here's the thing when you think a positive thought, you get a surge of rewarding neurotransmitter's releasing a legal drug called dopamine.

And every time your brain drops some dopamine, you get a thrill, some excitement. Someone you like and respect comments on your posts. You get some dopamine. Someone says, Ooh, you look good. Dopamine. Awesome sermon. Dopamine.

It's that positive surge of release in your brain. And what's so interesting is the more often you think a thought, science tells us it's easier to think that thought again.

Stronghold. If you believe a lie for long enough, you start to be impacted as if that lie were true. You get stuck in a rut.

Think about it this way, If I walked the same path in my yard, every day for a 100 days straight. What would happen? I would create a path in my yard. Grass would be trampled down. If you came by my house you would know my route by looking at the path.

And in my mind if for a 100 days straight, I think on a lie, I start to believe the lie, and I create a neural pathway through my brain.

So, with God's help, what we're going to do is renew our minds. We're going to stay off that old path. And if I stay off that path long enough what happens? The grass grows back.

There will be resistance for sure It's not always as easy to walk. But ultimately the truth sets me free.

Romans 12 Paul said it this way.

Romans 12:2 (NIV): Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Don't be conformed to the patterns of this world. In other words, don't be conformed to the wrong ways of thinking.

He continued and said, but be transformed. How? By the renewing of your mind.

We're staying off the destructive, negative paths and we're creating new paths of truth.

I don't know how this will play out in your life. But maybe your path is this. It's a frustrating day at work, and you come home, and it's been crazy at home, and your old path says, yell at your spouse, take it out on the family.

But we're on a different path so you capture that thought, and you might count to three, 10 or if it's a real bad day 100. And you say a prayer, and instead you walk a different road, and you come up and say, I'm sorry, it's been a difficult day. And you hug your spouse and you change the tone by changing the path.

When you're bored, what do you do? You pick up your phone, you look at Facebook, and you scroll through all those posts and you see all your friends, and you get so disappointed because their life seems better than yours. And you feel like a loser.

So what you might do is create a new path. You open up the Bible and scroll through it instead, and you put something different in your brain that renews your mind.

Here's a challenge for you this week identify the biggest stronghold that's holding you back. Just one. Don't try to figure out all 35 of yours just pick one.

What is it for you? Maybe you battle with identity and you might feel like I'm just not lovable. That's your one. Or you might wrongly believe because you've said it for so long, I'll just never be good enough. Or I don't deserve anything good. Or I'll always be broke. And you feel helpless, hopeless, and worthless.

My past is too bad, God surely can't forgive all of what I've done.

And let me pause once again to address that. . . God is satisfied with the sacrifice of Jesus. So, my question is for you if God is satisfied, are we? If the God who created the world is fully satisfied that your sins have been dealt with then why are you trying to deal with them? Why are you trying to fulfill some requirement when God says all the requirements have been fulfilled.

And let me just add this and it relates to what I'm sharing today. When you and the creator of the universe disagree who do you think is right?

So, identify, that biggest stronghold. And then the second thing I want you to do is this. Name the truth that demolishes that stronghold.

Why does the truth matter? We'll simply put. . . because it does.

John 8:32 (NIV): Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Jesus said that. . .

The lie puts you into spiritual bondage. And some of you you're living a life based on a lie. Something a parent, a teacher, or someone you respect said something to you that was not the truth about you, and you have believed it for so long that it's become your truth. But I want you to know God says something different. And when you know the truth, the truth will set you free.

Once again 2 Corinthians 10 verses 3 - 5

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 (NIV): For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We 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.

Whatever that stronghold is, that's holding you prisoner in your mind, what do we do? We demolish it. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.

And here's what we do. We take it captive. You are not prisoner to our thoughts. We take our thoughts captive and we make them obedient to Christ.

In fact, the Greek term that's translated as take captive, it's a term that means to attack with a sword or with a spear. And this is good watch this.

When you talk about the weapons we fight with are not the weapons of this world. Ephesians 6 tells us that we have spiritual armor.

Ephesians 6:10–17 (NIV): Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

What do we have?

The belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, our feet are fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, we have the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation.

All of those are defensive weapons. They protect us from the attacks. When a lie comes we have God's truth.

And when you understand you are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus you walk different because you put on the breastplate. When all hell comes against you and the storm seems overwhelming you can still walk in peace because you put on the right shoes. When the enemy comes and says see you can't even believe God for the small things you pick up the shield of faith. And when you begin to question your salvation because you don't think you've done enough to earn it. You put in the helmet and cover your thoughts with truth and remember it's not about what you have done it's about what Jesus did.

We have one offensive weapon you know what that weapon is?

It is the sword of the spirit which is the word of God.

And It is the word of God that sets us free. It's His powerful living word of God that is sharper than any double edged sword. And it cuts away the lies of the enemy.

We let God's Word take captive any lies that have held us hostage.

What's your stronghold? What's the dominant lie that your spiritual enemy has tried to use to destroy your faith?

Rob you of the intimacy that God wants you to have with Him?

What's your stronghold?

For me the the lie that I've always believed is that, I am never enough. I can't live up to your expectation. Or more importantly to God's.

And the challenge with that lie is that there is some truth in it which makes it easy to believe.

Oh, by the way often that's what the devil does. He twists what God says just a touch to make it appear as truth.

That's why if you remember those series of messages I did on the grace of God , the once for all forgiveness of God. Those were truths that set me free.

And thankfully I don't have to rely only on what's inside of me. There is a power greater than me that absolutely and completely is more than enough.

So here's my truth. And it's from the word of God. 2nd Peter 1:3

2 Peter 1:3 (NLT): 3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life.

Let me make it a bit more personal. God's divine power has given me everything I need He's given me the strength to do what He's called me to do. When I'm weak, His strength is made perfect in my weakness. I've got the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwelling inside of me.

So it might sound something like this. . .

2 Peter 1:3 (WEB) -³seeing that His divine power has granted to *George* all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called *George* by His own glory and virtue;

His power is there for me when I don't have what it takes. He has given me everything I need for life and godliness. And can do what He has called me to do because He has equipped me with the spirit to walk it out.

I can walk in righteousness because God has given me everything I need for living a godly life.

What's the driving lie that has held you back? And what's the truth that will set you free?

Maybe you think I can't get it all done. I never can get it all done. And your truth is, I can do all things through Christ, who gives me strength when I'm weak. He makes me strong.

Maybe you feel like I'm never going to be attractive enough. I don't like the way I look. No, you are fearfully and wonderfully made by the grace of God. And He's given you gifts to make a difference in this world.

Maybe you feel like I'm always going to be miserable. I'm always going to be depressed. No, not at all. The joy of the Lord is your strength.

The moment the lie tells you you're going to always be alone, No, my God is with me. He will never leave me. He will never forsake me.

Maybe you feel like you're just nothing but a victim. No, you're not. God's Word says, I am an overcomer by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.

I am not who others say that I am. I'm not even who the lies in my own mind say that I am. I am who God says that I am, and when you know the truth, the truth will set you free.

Your life in so many ways is moving in the direction of your strongest thoughts.

What comes into your mind comes out in your life. You cannot have a positive faith-filled life, when you have a negative fear-filled mind.

So what are we going to do? We're going to capture those lies, and replace them with truth.

And by the power of God, you will not stay locked in a prison. because Jesus holds the key that sets you free.

You will know the truth. And truth isn't just a concept, truth is a person. His name is Jesus. He'll set you free.

So Father today, we ask by the power of Your word, renew our minds with truth.

Papa I pray right now that You would begin a work of renewing our minds. God give us the faith to walk this journey with You, to stay off the old paths of lies and destruction, and create a new path of truth. Renew our minds.

Change our thinking.

Stay in the place of prayer but let me say this maybe there's someone here or watching online that perhaps the biggest lie that's impacting you right now is a distorted view of who God is.

Maybe for years, you've had a wrong view of God. You thought He's angry at you. He's mad at you. He could never love you after what you've done. You've just used up goods. You've been too bad. Let me try to help you replace those lies with truth.

Let me tell you about who God is and how He sees you. Our God is a loving Heavenly Father. And He loves you more than you could ever imagine. Even if you've done some really shameful things, there's nothing that you could do that would make God love you any less, or even if you're trying your best to be perfect, there's nothing you could do to make God love you more. He simply loves you. Why? Because God is love it's not just something He does it's who He is. And He loves you so much that He became like you in the person of His Son Jesus.

And I said this earlier but it bears repeating.

God is satisfied with the sacrifice of Jesus. And if the God who created the world is fully satisfied that your sins have been dealt with and that all the requirements have been fulfilled. Then I need to be satisfied with His solution to my problem.

And Jesus died in our place gave His life that we might have life.

That's how much God loves you. No matter what you've done, He loves you. And He wants you to know that love.

That's why we read in Romans. . .

Romans 5:8 (TPT): But Christ proved God's passionate love for us by dying in our place while we were still lost and ungodly!

Prayer