

Introduction

As a review, we started looking at walking in a worthy manner of our calling a few weeks ago. We have looked at walking humbly, walking patiently, and walking in unity. Last week we saw that our walk is to be different than it was prior to coming to Christ. We are not to live like the world. We must do two things in order to live a renewed life. First, we must put off the old self and second, we must put on the new self.

Putting off the old self means that we must change the source of input into our minds. We have to be very careful about what we allow into our hearts. Jesus said that our actions and words come out of the heart. Therefore, if we put the same things into our hearts that the world puts in, then the results will be the same as the world. Unfortunately, that is where much of the church is today. We are living like the world.

Last week I gave the example of a prison statement about same playground, same playmates, and same results. There is some Scriptural support of that. Paul says that we are not to be deceived, bad company corrupts good morals. Solomon also said something to this effect. He said that the companion of fools suffers harm, but he who walks with the wise will become wise.

(1 Corinthians 15:33) "Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals.""

(Proverbs 13:20) "He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm."

This principle lets us know why it is so important for our children to pick good friends. But, this principle is also important in helping people get free from their old way of life. When I was a pastor at Discovery Church in Orlando, Florida, we had a number of Disney employees coming to our church. The statistics that were quoted to me were that 70% of the employees were gay or lesbian. When we were helping people try to get free from that lifestyle, it was important to get them out of that environment. We had to get them off of that playground and away from those playmates. One of the talented entertainers became a travel agent. They all took different jobs so that they could leave their old environment.

In Romans 13, Paul also talks about the principle of putting aside the old self and putting on the new self. He says to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. For these Disney workers, this meant that they had to get away from the environment. For an alcoholic, it would mean taking some other precautions so that there was no provision for the flesh.

(Romans 13:14) "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."

The second thing that we must do is put on the new self. We do this by transforming our minds. I gave you a four step process. First, we must identify passages of Scripture that deal with the battles that we are fighting. Second, we should memorize those passages. Third, we should meditate on these passages. Fourth, we should make application of the passages.

James gives us a similar message. He tells us to put aside all filthiness and all that remains in

wickedness. Then, he tells us to receive the word implanted, which is able to save our souls. We are to prove ourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. Then, he shares with us about looking intently at the word, rather than casually glancing at the word. A person who looks intently, and abides or lives in it, or who is an effectual doer of the word shall be blessed. When we memorize, meditate, and apply the word, we are looking intently and becoming doers of the word. This is how we renew our minds. This is how we transform our minds.

(James 1:21-25) "Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. {22} But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. {23} For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; {24} for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. {25} But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does."

I am convinced that most believers do not spend enough time in the word of God. We listen to Christian music, and that is great. We read Christian books, and that is also good. We read our Daily Bread, and that is an excellent devotional. But, I do not think that most Christians are internalizing the Word of God. I do not think that most Christians are looking intently at the Word of God. I do not think that most Christians are abiding by the word of God and become effectual doers of the Word of God.

Jesus said that His disciples would abide in His word, and know the truth, and the truth would set us free. Obviously, if our lifestyle looks like the world rather than Christ, we are not abiding in His word. Otherwise, we would be free from the sins of the world. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for us to be men and women of the Word.

(John 8:31-32) "Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; {32} and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.""

If you and I are going to walk in a manner worthy of our calling, we must have our minds transformed by the Word of God. If we are going to be a temple for the Holy Spirit, we must fill our minds with truth.

Look at what Jeremiah says. "Thy words were found and I ate them, and they became for me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I have been called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts." Notice that as Jeremiah ate the word of God, it became a joy. Second, he says that he was called by God's name. In other words, as he began to chew and eat the word of God, it changed his life. His life was transformed and people began to see God's character in him. Therefore, he was called by God's name.

(Jeremiah 15:16) "Thy words were found and I ate them, And Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts."

This is what all of us want for our lives. We want to be Christ-like in our character. When people

see Christ in us, the world will be turned upside down. When people begin to see authentic Christianity, hearts will be softened, eyes will be opened, and there will be revival.

One Scripture that the Lord gave me to share with you last week that I failed to give to you is found in 2 Corinthians 10:3-6. Paul shares about this battle that we face as believers. Let's read it together.

(2 Corinthians 10:3-6) "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, {4} for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. {5} We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, {6} and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete."

Four Stages Of The Battle Plan

1. Preparing Our Hearts For War

There are four specific things that the Lord put on my heart to share, and I felt led to share these things with you before we move on to the next section. First, we must prepare our minds for battle. We are in a battle. Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. We are in a war. We are in a battle. Our minds must be prepared for war. We must have a militant mindset. We must have a kingdom aggressiveness, because we are in a war. We cannot be laid back and have a casera sera attitude. We cannot be complacent. Complacency in war will get you killed. We must be alert and on guard.

When my son David went to Afghanistan a couple of years ago, he was stationed at a remote Combat Outpost or COP. These remote COPs usually had about a dozen Marines in them. They were so remote that their food and water was parachuted in every few weeks. David and his unit were bored because it was pretty quiet in that area. Personally, I was pretty happy about it.

I cautioned David a number of times not to become complacent or lax. I told him to be on the alert at all times. Our military were losing quite a few lives in these COPs to ambushes. The Taliban would lay low for a while and then ambush one of the remote COPs when they were not expecting it. Therefore, our military began consolidating some of these remote COPs into bigger units that were not as vulnerable to these deadly raids.

Scripture tells us to have our minds girded for action. Notice the context of this passage in 1 Peter. As obedient children we are not to be conformed to the former lusts, but we are to live holy lives. This is the same message that Paul is preaching to us in Ephesians. We are not to live like the Gentiles, but we are to put off the old self and put on the new self. But, Peter says that part of the solution is have our minds girded for action and to be sober in spirit.

(1 Peter 1:13-16) "Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. {14} As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, {15} but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; {16} because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.'"

The Greek word for gird is *anazonnumi*, which means to gird up. The root word means a belt. We are to wrap our minds with the truth. In Ephesians 6:14, we are to gird our loins with truth. Our loins are the area between our hips and our ribs. It is where we wear a belt. We wrap a belt around our loins. Here we are wrapping a belt of truth around our loins.

G328. *anazonnumi*, an-ad-zone'-noo-mee; from G303 and G2224; to gird afresh:--gird up. [G2224. *zonnumi*, dzone'-noo-mi; from G2223; to bind about (espec. with a belt):--gird.]

(Ephesians 6:14) "Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,"

Peter is telling us to wrap our minds with truth. When we surround our mind with truth, we renew our minds. The battle ground for each of us is in our minds. We must gird our minds for action with God's word.

When a soldier is out in the battle, he must be alert at all times. His mind must be alert, and focused on the job at hand. He is not in a relaxed state. He is keyed up and ready for combat at a moments notice.

Let me give you an example. Most of you know me as this laid back and easy going person. How many of you have ever played ping pong with me? In the heat of battle, you will see a different Bill than at other times. There is a different mindset in battle. You are fighting to win. You are fighting for your life. There is an aggressiveness and a go-for-the-jugular mindset.

One day a pastor named Danny came to our house in Atlanta. Karen and I had been part of his church for a couple of years in Orlando. Standing in the foyer of our house, he told me that I did not have a sense of humor and needed to learn how to laugh. I just listened and did not say a word. What Danny did not realize is that I laugh a lot. Karen and I laugh a lot together. What Danny did not realize is that he was talking to a soldier in active duty. About thirty years ago the Lord impressed upon me that I was a soldier in active service. Look at 2 Timothy 2:4 with me.

(2 Timothy 2:4) "No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."

No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. My mindset is that I am in a battle. While some are at the pool sipping cocktails, there are soldiers out on the battlefield being shot at. I am a soldier in active service and my radar is going all the time. My mind is alert, sober, and girded for action.

In Psalms 78, Asaph shares with us about preparing the hearts of the next generation. He tells us that God established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel that we should teach our children God's laws and commandments. We are to teach them to put their confidence in God. Our children are not to be a stubborn and rebellious generation that did not prepare its heart and whose spirit was not faithful to God. Because their hearts were not prepared, they turned back in the day of battle. Church, we must prepare our hearts and our minds for battle. We must be alert and sober in spirit. We must gird our minds with truth. If we want to live victoriously, we must prepare our minds for war.

(Psalms 78:5-9) "For He established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers, That they should teach them to their children, {6} That the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, That they may arise and tell them to their children, {7} That they should put their confidence in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments, {8} And not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not prepare its heart, And whose spirit was not faithful to God. {9} The sons of Ephraim were archers equipped with bows, Yet they turned back in the day of battle."

Now, this is a spiritual battle that we are in. The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We will get into some of the weapons in Ephesians 6. In fact, Jack Webb will be sharing a message with our body about spiritual warfare out of Ephesians 6. Some of these weapons include: the Sword (Word of God), prayer, fasting, prophecy, dancing, worship, preaching of the gospel, testimonies, etc.

2. Clearing Out The Enemy

After girding our minds for battle, the second thing that Paul tells us in this passage is to destroy speculations and every lofty thought raised up against the knowledge of God. We are clearing out the enemy from land in this stage. Every enemy stronghold is being destroyed. Any speculation or lofty thought that has a different flag flying than Jesus must be taken out.

In David's training, they included a number of exercises to help them quickly identify the enemy and take them out. They would have targets pop up and the soldiers would have to immediately determine if they are enemy combatants or friendly forces. If the pop-up target was an enemy, they would have to shoot and destroy the enemy. If they made a wrong assessment and shot at their own forces, they would lose points. It was critical that they learned how to make quick and accurate assessments and decisions. Their lives were on the line. If they hesitated, the enemy could take them out, so they had to act quickly.

They also had to do this in a different setting. They had to learn to clear buildings. Again, there would be things that came up that forced them to make very quick decisions.

Paul said that we have to destroy speculations and every lofty thought raised up against the knowledge of God. The way that we know what is a speculation and what thoughts are raised up against the knowledge of God is by knowing the truth. We have to know what the word of God says. We have to quickly recognize if something is of God or not of God. We are in a battle and we have to make quick assessments and decisions, so that we can take out speculations and every lofty thought raised up against the knowledge of God.

John shares with us some characteristics of different maturity levels in the church. Notice how he addresses young men. "I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one." We must know the word of God if we are going to overcome the evil one. We must be strong in the word of God, and the word of God must abide in us, so that we can defeat the enemy. The destruction of speculations and every lofty thought raised up against the knowledge of God requires us to be strong in His word.

(1 John 2:14) "I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one."

Here are some things to help us in making these assessments and decisions.

- What does Scripture say about this matter? In Jeff Schiller's Saturday morning study they are looking at the Holy Spirit. Many of the men have been taught speculations and lofty things against the knowledge of God. As they are reading what the Bible has to say about some of these things, it is shocking some of them. They are finding out that the Bible says not to forbid the speaking in tongues. It says that Paul wished that all spoke in tongues. It says we are to zealously desire the greater gifts, like the apostle and prophet.
- What is the appearance of the matter? Last week, my friend Rich Piper asked me about the burning of the Korans in Florida. I told him that we have an example in Acts 19:18-19, where people were repenting of their false worship and practices. They were burning their books of magic as an act of repentance. In Florida, these people were not repenting of Islam and burning their own Korans. They were burning the Korans as a statement to the world that Islam is wrong. Islam is wrong, but our attitude should be to season our speech and actions with grace so that we will know how to respond to people. We are to build bridges with people, not walls. The spirit of what the church in Florida was doing was not right.

(Acts 19:18-19) "Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. {19} And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver."

(Colossians 4:6) "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person."

- What is the fruit? John told the Pharisees to bring forth the fruit of repentance. Jesus told us in Matthew 7:15-20 that we will know them by their fruit.

(Matthew 3:7-8) "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? {8} "Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance;"

(Matthew 7:15-20) ""Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. {16} "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? {17} "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. {18} "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. {19} "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. {20} "So then, you will know them by their fruits."

- Does thing line up with God's wisdom? James gives us some insight about discerning the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God. Again, we look at the fruit. He says that a fig tree does not produce olives. Salt water does not produce fresh water. Bitter jealousy and selfish

ambition are not the wisdom of God. This is a lofty thing and is against the truth. He says that where there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there is disorder and every evil thing. This is earthly, natural, and demonic. These things must be destroyed. The wisdom of God is first pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, and without hypocrisy. He gives a final way of discerning – peace. The seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

(James 3:12-18) "Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Neither can salt water produce fresh. {13} Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. {14} But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. {15} This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. {16} For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. {17} But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. {18} And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

Did the actions in Florida make peace? No, they brought violence and violent reactions by our Moslem neighbors. Was it full of mercy and good fruit? No, there was no grace and the fruit was bad. We have to use these instructions that James and others give us to make quick and accurate assessments of situations.

Why? Because we must destroy speculations and every lofty thought raised up against the knowledge of God. We must clear the battlefield of our mind of all these things. We are in a battle and our minds are actively engaged. Second, we are clearing out the enemy forces. We are destroying their positions to bring the territory under our control.

3. Taking Every Thought Captive

The third step given by Paul is to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Once the land has been cleared, any thing that begins to rise up must be taken captive. Any thought of fear or anxiety must be taken captive. Any and all doubting thoughts must be arrested and taken captive. Any immoral thought must be taken captive. Any vengeful or malicious thought must be taken captive. We cannot let these thoughts run freely in our minds. They must be immediately stopped, apprehended, and taken captive. Again, there must be a militant mindset. We cannot allow the enemy to run around freely. We must take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Practically, how do we do this? If we have a thought come across our mind that is not in line with God's will, His ways, or His character, we stop the thought. We tell the thought that it has no right or place in your life. You rebuke the thought. You replace the thought with what God's word has to say.

If a man happens to see a woman who is not dressed modestly, which is quite frequent. Karen and I went to the Verizon store a few weeks ago to get her a phone. It appeared as if the women there were having a contest that day of who could expose the most. The enemy will whisper thoughts to men to look and enjoy the scenery. Job tells us that he made a covenant with his eyes that he would not gaze at a virgin. John tells us that the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eye are not from the

Lord, but of the world. This is a worldly thought that must be stopped.

So men, we tell ourselves, “no.” I will not look or lust at this woman. I will not gaze at this virgin. I will not lust with my eyes. These eyes belong to the Lord Jesus. Then, we must make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts thereof. So, we walk away. At the Verizon store, I went and looked at phones and other devices while Karen took care of her business.

(Job 31:1) ""I Have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin?"

(1 John 2:15-16) "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. {16} For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."

(Romans 13:14) "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."

Sometimes, we have to ask God to show us a way of escape. God promises that He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able. So he provides a way of escape, that we may be able to endure the temptation. We may have to say, “Lord, where is the way of escape? How do you want me to handle this?”

(1 Corinthians 10:13) "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."

Every one of us face attacks from different fronts. One person may have thoughts of depression. Another person may be fighting a battle of shame. Still another may be fighting thoughts of food. We all must stop, arrest, and take captive whatever thoughts that are contrary to God. They cannot keep going unchecked and free. And these thoughts must be subjected to God’s word and His ways.

4. Maintaining Control and Dominion

Paul’s fourth and final order to the troops is to punish all disobedience, when there is complete obedience. Once the battle has been won, we will maintain control. In physical battles, once the enemy has been destroyed and the land taken over, our Marines leave. There are other troops that will be brought in to maintain control over the area. In Iraq and Afghanistan, the plan is to train the local troops so that they can take over. They will be charged with maintaining control.

Once the battle of depression has been fought and you have come out victorious, you cannot ignore the enemy. He will try and bring depressing thoughts to you again. That is why every thought must be taken captive to the obedience of Christ. We cannot allow pockets of rebellion to form and develop.

Punishing all disobedience when our obedience is complete means that we will maintain control once the battle has been won. We will not allow fear, depression, shame, immorality or any other thought to set up another stronghold. We punish all disobedience.

Conclusion

God wants us to be victorious. God wants a bride that is spotless and without wrinkle. He wants a church that is holy and a dwelling place for His Spirit. He wants a church that is properly representing Him and His kingdom here on earth. We are His ambassadors. He is looking for a church that is going to walk in a manner worthy of the calling that He has given us. He is looking for a church that will put aside the old self and put on the new self.

This putting off and putting on is a battle. This renewal process is a war. We must recognize that we are in war. We must prepare and gird our minds for action. We must prepare ourselves for the day of battle, so that we will prevail and not turn back in battle.

Second, we must clear out the enemy from the territory of our lives. We cannot allow any enemy occupation of our territory. Therefore, we must destroy speculations and every lofty thought raised up against the knowledge of God.

Third, after clearing the land, we must take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. The enemy strongholds have been destroyed, but the stray thoughts must be taken captive.

Finally, we must maintain control and dominion over the land that God has given us. We must be ready to punish all disobedience.

This morning, as I have shared, you have identified with something that something that I touched on. If you would like for someone to pray with you, we will pray for you. We are committed to praying for one another. We are committed to standing with you in the battle that you are fighting.

If you have anything that you would like for us to pray with you about, come now. Don't put off what the Lord may be wanting to do for you. Come now. Let's believe God for a breakthrough in your life.

Let's pray.

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2. We must clear out the _____. (1 John 2:14)

Here are some things to help us in making these assessments and decisions.

- What does Scripture say about this matter?
- What is the appearance of the matter? (Acts 19:18-19, Col 4:6)
- What is the fruit? (Matt 7:15-20, 3:7-8)
- Does thing line up with God’s wisdom? (James 3:12-18)

3. We must take every thought _____. (Job 31:1, 1 John 2:15-16, Ro 13:14, 1 Cor 10:13)

4. We must maintain _____ and _____.

Applications for my life:

- 1.
- 2.

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