

Winning the Battle Within

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[0:00] So winning the battle within. Let's pray. Father, we do love you. I thank you for this time that you allow us to come into your house and to open your word. Father, I pray that you just be with me tonight, Lord, as I present your gospel, Lord, that you give me power and clarity to speak, Lord, that if there be someone in here tonight that doesn't know you, Lord, all jokes aside from the opening, Lord, but if there's someone here that has never accepted you as the Lord and personal Savior, that tonight be that night, that they would come down to this old-fashioned altar and allow us to show them from the word how they can get saved.

Lord, I just pray that once again you be with us tonight, open our hearts and ears to what you have to tell us. It's in your precious name. Amen. Thank you. You may be seated. Winning the battle within.

You know, every battle is won or lost somewhere long before the outcome is ever seen. I mean, just take a look at any kind of battle.

Now, where does it, and really what it comes down to is you look at it and Brother Garrett and I being sports fanatics, I get, I understand there's not a whole lot of sports people here, but a championship team doesn't become champions because they happen to play well one night. No. They become champions because thousands of unseen hours of practice. or back in, well, long, long time ago.

[1:24] Many of you probably know when the Cowboys were winning. You know what happened there. I was not. So I've never seen a Cowboys championship.

I don't even know if they're true. I'm just kidding. Kidding. I'm kidding. But a soldier doesn't survive because he learns during the battlefield or during the battle.

He survives because he prepared long before the battle ever begun. A farmer doesn't reap a harvest because he wishes for one. Just look outside.

It's hot. He probably is wishing for a great harvest right now. But he doesn't just go outside and just hope and pray that there's going to be a harvest. No, he plants. He waters.

And he patiently waits. But the same is true spiritually. You see, the victories that we see on the outside are first one on the inside.

[2:22] Every sinful action begins with a sinful thought. Every act of obedience begins with a surrendered thought. Every addiction begins with entertaining a thought.

Every step of faith begins with believing a thought. You see, that is why Satan always attacks the mind. He knows that if he can control what you believe, he can eventually control how you behave. Many Christians think the greatest spiritual battle is with the devil. Others think it's with temptation. Some think it's with the culture that we're around.

But scripture repeatedly points us to a different battlefield. The greatest battlefield in all of battlefields.

And that is our mind. Paul spent 11 chapters in Romans explaining the gospel. He explained, one, that we're sinners. He explained, secondly, that Christ died for us.

[3:31] He then later on explained that salvation is by grace through faith. Then he said, we're justified by that. And lastly, he states that we have peace with God.

Then we jump into chapter 12 and it begins with one word. I beseech you therefore. That word therefore. You see, that word therefore is there because of everything God has done.

Here's how we should live. Verse 1 says, to present your bodies a living sacrifice. Verse 2 tells us how that sacrifice begins. It begins with a renewed mind.

You cannot consistently live differently until you begin thinking differently. You don't get anything out of this message.

Here's the truth behind it all. Transformation occurs when God's word changes the way we think. That's the whole point. Transformation in our lives begins when we allow God's word to change the way that we think.

[4:47] So that jumps us into our first point tonight. The world is constantly trying to shape your thinking. The world is constantly trying to shape your thinking.

Verse 2 begins, be not conformed to this world. That word conformed. When you think about it, there's a lot of very different things that could pop into our mind.

But the main idea behind it is to be squeezed into a mold. Have you ever played with clay before? Or Play-Doh? I know a lot of you are probably like, no, Brother Colin, I'm an adult now.

Well, I still play with Play-Doh sometimes. I have a five-year-old. But, or just take anything.

Squeezing something into a mold. Picture a lump of soft clay.

Right? By itself it has no shape. It's just a lump. Of, I don't even know. Right? But whatever mold it's placed into determines that appearance.

[5:57] Right? By the way that you press it. Or by the way that you shape it. By how much pressure that you put around it. And that's exactly what the world attempts to do. Every day the world says, you don't need God.

Just follow your feelings. Hey, live your truth. Or, you deserve happiness. Or the world will tell us, well, if it feels right, just do it.

Not the Nike slogan. The world will also tell us, hey, if they do something wrong to you, hey, won't you get even with them? The world will also tell us, hey, take care of yourself first.

You're the most important. But if you read this book, turn to any page, and God says something completely different.

Because Jesus says that if any man will come after me, let him deny himself. You see, the world says happiness comes first. But God says holiness comes first.

[7:05] The world says you only find success in how much money you obtain. Or how much money that you have. God says success is found in faithfulness.

How many souls were you able to help lead to the cross? Not by how many doors you knocked. Or how many flyers you passed out. No, how many people were you talking to?

Sharing the gospel with them. Sharing your testimonies with. How many people were you trying to impact their life by the way that you lived your life? That's the key.

You see, the world says that your identity comes from how you're feeling. Or just your feelings in general. But God says your identity comes from Christ alone.

You see, the pressure is constant. Many people think worldly influence only comes through obvious sins. But the pressure is much more subtle.

[8:05] Because it comes through entertainment. By what we like to do with our friends. With our families. Where we like to go. What entertains our minds.

But not only that, what entertains our kids. It comes through advertising. You see billboards all the time lined up along the highway. How many times do you have to turn an eye?

Because you're like, whoa. That's not what I want to look at. Or you try to get your kids' attention. Kids' attentions are like squirrels already.

How many times have you been driving down the highway? And you've said, hey, look over here. This is really cool. And it's just some random building. Right? But advertisement. They try to gain your attention.

They try to get you to look at and see what is most appealing. I mean, you see, man, the McDonald's billboards. They make those burgers look the best.

[9:03] Or in pastor's instance, the Taco Bell billboards. And those commercials. No punch thrown at our pastor. But Taco Bell always looks good until it's not. Right, pastor?

I mean, they always get you to get up off the sofa and go get that burger because it looks amazing. And then you get it and you open the box and you're like, I really don't want to eat this right now. Why did I pay \$12 for it? But what other pressures? What about music? What kind of music do we listen to? And look, I understand.

The setting plays a part, right? I'm a coach. I'm a football coach. So I sit there and during games we'll play instrumental band music. And there will be some songs that people know.

And there's some songs that other people are like. Whatever the case is. But what kind of music influences our life? Because if we allow some music to come into our ears or to be played on our

radio that has certain words to it, eventually it'll just become a lifestyle.

[10:12] And eventually it's the way we'll talk. What about social media? For those of you who are techno savvy and have Instagrams and Snapchats and TikToks.

Mainly the young people. What about social media? What kind of pressures do we allow social media to play on our life? We look at all these actors and actresses and all these sports people and see how the way they live.

And these influencers on how they live their life. And we're like, man, I want to be just like them. And we have no idea what kind of lifestyle they're actually living beyond the camera. We only see the highlights.

This next one. What about friends? Who are the friends in your life? Now this obviously pertains to everybody. Because, well, I hope we all have friends.

But I've had to get rid of some really close friends in my life at times. Because of the way that they were acting, the way that they were talking, the way that they were presenting themselves.

[11:20] Wasn't drawing me closer to Christ. So I had to cut them out. Was it hard? Oh yeah. Because at the time we were like this. We couldn't separate us. We were basketball teammates.

We were this. We were that. We'd go hang out at each other's houses all the time. But think about your friends. What kind of pressures do your friends or just people that you're acquainted with, what kind of pressures do they bring on to your life?

What about the news? I try to turn off the news as much as I can. Because it's just depressing. But what about the news around us? How much pressure does that put on our life?

It definitely puts a lot of pressure, well, financial wise, right? With gas prices jumping up to close to \$4. What about podcasts?

How many of you are podcast listeners in here? A few of y'all. I love podcasts. What kind of pressures do those put on your life? We listen to them quite often. Put a headphone in.

[12:23] Go do whatever. Go work. Go on a walk. Whatever the case is. What about schools? For the longest schools, you weren't allowed to even pray in school. Let alone bring a Bible to school.

And now, by the good graces of the Lord above, they have now made it required that all schools have the Ten Commandments in classrooms. I think that's a win. But for the longest, you couldn't even bring a Bible.

You couldn't even pray in a school. You couldn't even talk about God in a school. So, let alone, what kind of pressures do those bring on to kids in today's time? When they can't even do that. They can't even stand up for what they believe in because they're afraid they might be sent to the principal's office or expelled. What about your workplace? How much pressure does your workplace put on your life?

I know when I was in college and I had my jobs to help pay off school and different stuff like that, they always wanted me to come in on Sundays. And they always wanted me to work.

[13:24] And that was a pressure that was put on my life. Why? Because, well, I wanted money. I needed money. I needed to pay off school. I wanted food. I just did.

And so, in order to get food, you have to have, well, money. And so, they're like, hey, why don't you come in? And I said, no, I have to work on, or I have to, I'm going to church. Well, it'll be just for a few hours.

No, I'm going to church. Well, Colin, if you don't do this, well, then we're going to have to write you up and blah, blah, blah, and this and that. And I said, okay, fine, here. I'll come in from this time to this time, and I'm leaving here because I'm going to church.

Long story short, well, let's just say I didn't last long there. But none of those things are automatically evil just because we bring them up. But every one of them is teaching you something. You see, the question isn't, am I being influenced? That's not the question here tonight. Because regardless of whether you want to admit it or not, you are. You are already being influenced by one of these things.

[14:26] No, the real question is, is who is influencing me? Because Proverbs 23, 7 says, for as he thinketh in his heart, so is he. Whatever goes on in here, that's what you're going to become.

What you allow in here is what's going to come out. You don't simply become what you do. No, you become what you repeatedly believe. Eventually, your beliefs shape your behavior.

They just do. You see, imagine filling a glass or a clear glass with muddy water. You're like, why would you do that? Here's the point. At first, the clean water is still visible.

But you keep pouring. And eventually, every single drop of water in that glass becomes dirty. You see, many Christians wonder why they struggle spiritually.

It's because then they spend six hours every day consuming worldly thinking and five minutes reading a scripture. Or reading their Bibles.

[15 : 33] You see, whatever you continually pour into your life, eventually will fill it. Like Brother Garrett said this morning. How many of you, he asked the question. How many times have you sat, you've gone throughout your day and you get to, you get at home and you're like, I really, I forgot to read my Bible, I'll do it tomorrow.

Those things eventually start adding up. Tomorrow comes. The days still go on. Your life is still filled up. And then you're like, oh, well, I'll get to it later. And then later comes and life still fills up and you're like, okay, yes, I'll get to it later.

And then so on and so forth goes on. And then this book finds itself on a shelf just catching dust. Never to be open. Then you go to church on Sunday expecting the pastor just to change your life like that.

You expect a recharge on a Wednesday night because, well, that might be your only free night. To just be like, all right, well, I'm ready to get my life back on track. Well, then what happens Thursday? Well, you go back to your lifestyle and you're like, I've got my recharge.

I may go strong for a few hours. Well, then this finds the shelf again. And we allow our lives to be filled that way on a constant schedule like that. We allow the world to tell us how we should live our life.

[16 : 48] You see, if the world is constantly shaping our thinking, how do we fight back? Well, Paul answers that next. How? Because he points us in this second point.

God's word renews our minds. God's word renews our minds. How is that? Well, it says it right here in Scripture. Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed.

By what? By the renewing of your mind. You see, that word transformed is where we get the English word metamorphosis. Think about a caterpillar.

See, it crawls everywhere. Or sometimes I crawl on your door and it freaks you out at night because you have no idea what it is. Right? Then something incredible happens, right? It enters a cocoon.

And when it emerges, it becomes something completely different. See, it doesn't simply have a new behavior. No, it has a new nature. It becomes something new.

[17 : 52] And that's what God wants to do in us. You see, Christianity is not a behavior modification. It's not you slap on the word Christianity or you say, well, I do go to church.

And your whole attitude changes or this and that. No. Christianity isn't a behavior modification. It's a heart transformation. Notice something important here.

Paul doesn't say, be transformed by trying harder. No, he says, by the renewing of your mind. What is Paul saying here?

He's saying salvation changes lives. When we are saved, God gives us a new heart. He doesn't let us keep the old one.

No, when we repent of our sins, when we've asked God to forgive us, he throws our sins as far as the east is from the west. You see, the Holy Spirit then comes to live within us.

[18 : 52] But our thinking has been shaped by years of sinful habits. Years. Think about how broken you were before you asked Christ to come into your life.

Think about how sad you were. I remember the day like it was yesterday. April the 19th of 2015. I was at Grace and Bible Baptist Church and I walked down front to talk to Greg Ross and I, my, at the time, basketball coach.

And now he's my boss. And I walked down front and I knew it wasn't even a salvation message. But God, I could just feel, was tugging at my heart. And from that day forward, I allowed God to change my life and I would not be the same.

I wouldn't want to go back. Because I look at my life when it was then. And the messed up, and the messed up mistakes that I made time and time and time again to what I'm doing now.

And I'm like, God, this is because of you. I get to come here and serve at Central Baptist Church and get to preach behind this pulpit because of you.

[20 : 02] I get to be a godly influence to not only the people that are around me, but to my very own kids because of you. And I couldn't thank you anymore.

But you see, our thinking, even though it's been shaped by years of sinful habits and many people think, well, that's just it.

Well, I can't, God can't use me now. No. That thinking must now be renewed. Because it's a lifelong process. It's not something that we're just going to wake up and change just like that.

I know 98-year-old people that are still learning about God's word. That still, I could talk to and be like, man, I got this something out of the message.

It's the same text. Same verse. I really wish he was still alive today. Brother Tyler knows exactly who this young, well, I say young man.

[21:09] He felt young. Brother Tremel. A very dear man. When I first came into Brother Tyler's youth group. A man that was always, he couldn't see. He couldn't hear that well.

But he was always there in his spot. At the back of the room. Serving. Helping kids grow. Helping people come to know Christ. And even Brother Tremel would tell us, keep going.

You're still not done. You still haven't learned anything. He said, I am 90 plus years old. And I'm still learning the Bible. And I can't even see it. I think about that.

I sit back and I take a step back and I'm like, you know, out of all the mistakes, out of everything that I can stand back and say and look in a mirror and be like, why are you, like, why?

How am I worthy? The answer is, we're not. But God loved us so much that he sent his only begotten son to come and to die on a cross for our sins.

[22:10] Why? Because he loved us. He wants to see us have a renewed life. John 17, verse 17, Jesus prayed, sanctify them through thy truth.

Why? Thy word is truth. God's primary tool for changing our thinking is his word. Are you in it?

You're probably sitting there thinking, well, I don't really understand. Before I even said that, I don't even know how to renew my thinking. I don't even know what the first step is. Just open this and allow it to transform your life.

You see, if we neglect scripture, our thinking will slowly drift toward the world. You know, you hear it all the time. Read your Bible every day.

Are you reading your Bible? You hear a pastor say it. You hear Brother Garrett say it. You hear all these, you hear all people around you say it. Read your Bible every day. Well, why does daily Bible reading really matter?

[23:12] Well, suppose someone only ate one meal every week. Eventually, they would become weak. Spiritually, many Christians are starving.

Think about that. We wonder why we're discouraged. Why temptation seems stronger. We wonder why anxiety overwhelms us.

We wonder why joy is often missing. Well, yet we rarely feed our souls.

Church is essential. But Sunday cannot sustain you all week long. Why? Well, the Bible tells us, it's simple.

In this, well, reminder prayer. In the prayer that Jesus tells us. In the example prayer, give us this day our daily bread. Not a weekly.

[24:16] Not a bi-weekly. Not a monthly or annually bread. No, our daily bread. It's a daily process. Jesus didn't teach us to pray. No, he said, give us this day our daily bread.

Each day is different. Each day may seem harder than the other, but it's going to be different. How are you preparing for it? The book of Philippians, chapter 4, verse 8.

You don't have to turn there. You probably know the passage. You know the passage like it's the back of your hand. I know who I'm speaking. Philippians, chapter 4, verse 8.

Paul says, 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 good report.

If there be any virtue. If there be any praise. Think on these things. See, Paul gives believers a checklist here. Ask yourself.

[25:21] Is your life true? Is it honest? Is it just? Is it pure? Is it lovely? Is it a good report?

Is there virtue? Is it worthy of praise? Because if not. Why are we feeding our minds with it? If the things that we see on a daily basis aren't any of these things on this checklist.

Why are we even allowing our minds to be fed with it? Why are we feeding our minds to be fed with it? Why are we feeding our minds to be fed with it? Why are we feeding our minds to be fed with it? See, imagine your computer has a virus. You don't

fix it by buying a nicer keyboard.

Be nice. Maybe less cost, right? But you remove the corrupted software. You see, many people try to fix sinful living by just changing their appearance.

Changing the way that they look or the way that their house is or whatever the case is. But God changes the operating system. A lot of people think, well, if I just change my hairstyle, if I just change the way that I dress, if I just wear a suit and tie every once in a while at the church, well, then I'll be fine.

[26:37] Then that'll fix my issues. No, no, no, no, no, no. We missed the point. Because man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. That's what God worries about.

God says, hey, you can look all fine. You can put makeup on. You can fix your hair. You can style it a certain way. You can wear the nicest shoes. You can wear the newest Jordans or whatever the case is.

But where's your heart? Is it with me or is it against me? You see, when God changes the way that we think, everything else begins changing too.

And that leads us into our third point tonight. Whatever fills your mind will eventually direct your life. Whatever fills your mind will eventually direct your life.

Luke 6.45 says, Out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaketh. You see, whatever fills the heart eventually comes out. Thoughts become words.

[27:43] Words become actions. Actions become habits. Habits become character. And character shapes the course of your life. Nobody wakes up planning to destroy their family.

Nobody suddenly just falls away overnight. No. Begins with the little compromises. The little thoughts.

The little lies that we allowed ourselves to believe. Likewise. Great faithfulness begins with little daily choices.

Great faithfulness begins with little daily choices. Proverbs 4.23 says, Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

What is that verse telling us? It's telling us to guard our hearts. Guard our minds. Not everything deserves access to your thoughts.

[28:54] Because if you are guarded, if you guarded your home, the way many Christians guard their minds, your front door will never close. If you guarded your home. If you guarded your home, the way many Christians guard their minds, your front door will never close.

So how do we win the battle? Well, first, evaluate your media. Well, first, evaluate your media. And no, I'm not just talking about the social part.

We live in a society where we stream everything. What are you watching? What are you listening to?

Evaluate your media. Ask yourself, is this helping me love Christ more? Does it stir gratitude? Does it stir gratitude? Or does it stir jealousy?

Does it promote purity or impurity? Does it produce peace? Or does it promote anxiety?

[29:57] You see, social media is not evil. But it sure is powerful. Don't just monitor the screen time.

Monitor your soul time. Don't just monitor the screen time. Monitor your soul time. We can pull up on our cell phones or our iPads all the time about how much you spend on a certain app.

Ask yourself, how much have you spent in this? Secondly, evaluate your entertainment. You see, every song teaches theology.

Every movie communicates values. Every show normalizes something. I was watching a show the other day. I'm big into crime shows.

Anybody else like crime shows in here? I love crime shows. I was watching this crime show the other day, and I only got a few episodes into it. The first one was really good.

[31:01] They usually always call it the pilot episode because it's the takeoff, right? And I'm sitting there. I'm like, man, this is good. And there's my wife. Go to bed. I'm about to.

It's getting good. Right? And I'm sitting there, and I'm like, she's asleep. Next episode, we watch the next one.

Well, then what happens? It's really good. It's picking up. You're like, we're going to watch the third one. Well, then the third episode comes in, and then that's when they start pouring in some stuff.

Catches you off guard.

I was watching this crime show, and I was sitting there, and I'm like, man, this is really, really good. And then all of a sudden, two homosexual people come on the screen. And I'm like, what? I like almost jumped out of bed. I was like, you've got to be kidding me. This is a really good show so far. First two episodes were intriguing.

[32:04] And then I get to that third one, and I'm like, why? But, you know, some people can just skip through it a couple of times and be like, I just don't pause.

I don't just watch that. And they skip through the 10-second fast forward or 30-second fast forward and just move on and be like, I never really watched it. Or they can turn it off.

And they can just be like, I'm going to find a different show to watch. How many times do we allow ourselves to be okay with what's being presented? That's not my lifestyle. I don't follow that.

I don't support that. It's going to be okay. And then we allow it to appear. And we allow it to appear again and appear again. And eventually, we allow it to happen so much that when it comes out in public, we may still sit there and be like, oh, I'll never allow that to happen.

Until it does. I'm not just saying what I witness, but what about what you see? The things you see on your TV shows or on your advertisements on YouTube or whatever the case is.

[33:12] Some of you probably are sitting there and be like, but I just don't watch TV. Hey, amen. I can't do that. I wish I could be like you. But ask yourself, would Jesus enjoy sitting beside me while I watch this?

I'd ask myself quite a bit that sometimes. Not that I'm looking for it. But because I'm sitting there, I'm like, oh, it's not that bad. One cuss word isn't bad.

I fast forward it or whatever. It's not that bad. Well, then it happens again. Do you turn it off? I just fast forward it again. And I ask myself, would Christ enjoy sitting beside me watching this?

You know, but that's not just that. It's young people. It's video games we play. How often do we hear maybe words that pop up? Or maybe people that we play online with?

Some of you are like, oh, my parents never let me do that. There's a reason. Be grateful for it. How often are we allowing things to come into our mind and to shape the way that we think about certain things?

[34:26] Not because Christ is absent there, but because he's already there. Would Jesus enjoy sitting there? He's already there. But thirdly, evaluate your friendships.

1 Corinthians 15:33 says, be not deceived. Evil communications corrupt good manners. You become like those you consistently spend time with.

Teenagers, your friends matter. Adults, your closest influences matter too. How many of you are really close with your boss?

Their influence matters. Shapes the way that you think. Choose relationships that strengthen your walk with Christ. Sometimes you have to cut out those friends that seem good, but that aren't leading you closer to Christ.

Fourthly, build holy habits. Build holy habits. Spiritual maturity rarely comes through dramatic moments. No, it comes through ordinary faithfulness.

[35:41] Open your Bible. Pray. Attend church faithfully. Serve. Ooh. Hold on now. My Saturdays are important.

So is everybody else's. What about this? Share the gospel. Memorize scripture. You see, those small habits become a lifetime of faithfulness.

No, they're not just something you do at VBS. So that you can earn points. And I say that because many of us went through VBS together.

They weren't just times where we got to memorize verses to earn points. No, it's a habit to create that's going to last a lifetime of faithfulness. Why?

Because our adversary, the devil, is always seeking out whom he may devour. He's always trying to throw those fiery darts at him. And how are you going to combat him? Just sit there and let it happen?

[36:48] Are you going to throw scripture back at it and say, no, I'm not going to allow you to do this? See, imagine two gardens.

One is cared for daily. The other is ignored. But neither stays empty. One flower grows. Or one grows flowers. The other grows weeds.

Your mind works the same way. If you don't intentionally plant truth, the weeds of the world will grow naturally.

Why is that? Well, because the battle never ends. Winning isn't a one-time decision. It's a daily surrender. Every morning you answer one question. Who will shape my thinking today? The world? Or Christ? Joshua said, choose you this day whom ye will serve.

[37 : 54] I feel like we just heard that this morning. See, that decision starts before your feet ever touch the floor.

Whom this day will you serve? See, an old illustration tells of two wolves fighting inside a man. One wolf represents anger, pride, lust, bitterness, envy, selfishness. The other represents joy, peace, love, purity, humility, and faith.

Someone asked, which wolf wins? The answer? The one you feed. While this story isn't found in scripture, it illustrates a biblical principle.

What we constantly nourish grows stronger in our lives. If we continually feed our minds on God's truth, the fruit of the spirit has room to flourish.

[38 : 55] See, many people spend their lives trying to fix the outward behavior. God begins somewhere deeper. He begins with the mind. When your mind changes, your speech changes.

Your attitude changes. Your marriages change. Your parenting changes. Your friendships change. Your priorities, they change. And lastly, your future changes. Transformation is not instant.

It's daily. It's daily by one prayer. One chapter. One surrendered thought. One act of obedience at a time.

You see, God isn't asking you to become perfect overnight. No, he's asking you to let him renew your mind today. Would you stand with every head bowed and every eye closed?