

Winning the battle for hearts and minds

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[0 : 00] Winning the battles for hearts and minds. This is a phrase that politicians use when it's election time. Winning the battles for hearts and minds. When they're talking about running! their campaigns, whatever they're offering, they're trying to win people over to their ideas, their way of thinking. Military strategists think the same too. How do they win a people over? By their propaganda, they want to win the hearts and the minds. And they have these convincing crafted messages to do that. Winning the battle for hearts and minds. It evokes the sense of thoughts, of philosophies, of cultures, of values, and things that are in conflict.

Even motivational speakers and mystic gurus talk about trying to win over the hearts and minds by their mantras and their magic. There's many voices out there that are bombarding us, trying to win our minds and our hearts. Who will you follow? The question is, what will win the battle for your heart, for your mind? What is that all-consuming truth that ultimately will be victorious? There's a battle raging for your heart and for your mind. And we've only one lifetime to live to decide which loyalty will win over our hearts and minds. It's like if you like to think of it in a way, there's like two kingdoms, basically. There's two kingdoms.

And they're all after our hearts and our minds, aren't they? Two kingdoms. I was talking with someone as we were witnessing yesterday, Barry was with me. And Barry said something really significant while we knocked on the door of a Buddhist gentleman. And Barry told the man, you only get one chance at life.

And eternity is a very long time to be wrong. Sadly for many, life without Christ comes to a close and they have a hopeless end. Exactly one month ago today, Bob Hawke passed away. Bob Hawke, I knew him only in passing, but he was one of our former prime ministers and he visited the town of Mount Isa in 1987 while Julie and I were living there. And I was part of a group of locals that were inviting him and welcoming him to the town. And I shook his hand and I looked Bob Hawke in the face.

I looked him in the eye and I told him how our children at the Christian school in the town were praying for him. I said, our children are praying for you in this school. And he said, thank you.

[2 : 36] I don't know where Bob Hawke is today. They made a big fuss at his funeral, but one thing's for sure, he's somewhere today. He's somewhere today, either in heaven or in hell. Fact is, those who die outside of Christ have a hopeless end. But for we that know Christ, he's changed our hearts and our minds.

He's put a blessed hope in us such that we have an endless hope. Our hope will never end. It's everlasting. But in the meantime, we live in a planet, let's face it, where there's a lack of hope. People have lost hope. It says in Ephesians 2 verse 12, in part of those, it says that they were without Christ, having no hope and without God in the world. Having no hope without God, without Christ.

Many have lost hope, haven't they? I spoke with a man in Elizabeth North this Wednesday, last gone. His name was Steve. His name is Steve. He hasn't changed it since the last book. But Steve told me about how he had been serving a lengthy prison sentence for serious crimes. They'd locked Steve up in Her Majesty's prison at Pentridge.

[3 : 53] And this prison was home to some of Victoria's worst criminals. And Steve was deserving of his punishment. He'd done something pretty bad. Steve graphically told me how one day, those years back, he had lost hope. And he deliberately placed some plastic garbage bags in the bin in his cell to catch the blood. He then slashed his wrist in the prison cell and just waited to die. Now, it's a pretty graphic picture, isn't it? He didn't want to make a mess. Thankfully, a guard by chance opened the door and glanced in. This chance look by the guard was what saved Steve from certain death.

The guard saw what was happening and he saved him. And since going through that experience with death, Steve has since seen the hope that Christ can give. Steve is now a motivational speaker with quite a story to tell. There's a battle going on, a battle going on. And it's a battle for these two things.

Hearts and minds. Hearts and minds. Some people exit this life before they find the answer. They have no hope. But we can have a sure hope, a glad hope that have put our trust in him. Where is your hope tonight? Where is your hope found? I trust that your hope is in Christ, in Christ. You might say, preacher, I do have this hope and yet things are hard for me. It's a hard time in my life. I've got some trouble going on. Things seem hopeless. I want to assure you, dear believer, if that is you tonight, that you can know that you will never enter a hopeless situation. Why? Because Christ, your hope, is always with you. Amen? Isn't that true? Nothing is ever hopeless for you, no matter how hard it gets. No matter what the trouble, God will carry you through that. And you that have this hope in Christ, it sustains you through what you face. Sure enough, you won't be immune to your share of troubles. But we know for us that hope will see us through. [6:19] Paul says, and we'll get to 2 Corinthians 4, where I'll spend the much of my time here. Paul says how we can be troubled on every side, yet not distressed. There's a great comfort there.

And even in hopeless times, we have a hope that will surely endure after the passing of time. We are in a world impacting the world and yet looking for a new world yet to come.

Question is, are you impacting your world or is your world impacting you? You know, there's these two kingdoms, the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, if you like. Just illustrating this very basically here. But this clash of kingdoms and they're fighting for your hearts and for your minds tonight, through your lifetime.

In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul tells us how we're manifesting truth in our world and of this battle that we're right in the thick of, this conflict of kingdoms. Really, there's only two. You know, you might say, well, there's lots of philosophies. There's lots of religions. There's lots of belief systems. But it boils down to two, two only. One is the kingdom of darkness and the other is the kingdom of light.

Question is, what king will you follow? And there's a cost to the truth, to following the truth. Paul says that he was beset by trouble, trouble on every side. But if we lay hold on the truth, on the word of God, we lay hold on that word of God and God's promises, if we lay hold on the truth, the truth also lays hold on us. But there is a cost to truth.

And some who follow Christ, they suffer great loss. One of the chaps we were talking to, Barry and I, yesterday, when we went witnessing, as I say, this Buddhist man, and he spoke to us yesterday and he said, look, all my family are Buddhist. My dad's a Buddhist. My mum's a Buddhist. My grandparents and this family and that family member, they're all Buddhists.

[8:40] But if they're all lost, you want to go to the same place they're going to go. Why follow them there? They're in the kingdom of darkness. Better to stand for Christ and be in the kingdom of light. It may be costly for you, but we must be sure that we are saved. There's a price to pay, but a payoff that's out of this world. The cost of the truth. What does the Bible say in Proverbs 23, 23? Buy the truth and sell it not. Also wisdom and instruction and understanding.

Proverbs 23, 23. You can't put a price on this. It's priceless. Paul tells of a world in blindness. A blindness such that the mind is blinded. The mind is blinded. There's this wrapper around the eyes, the blindfold. A world blinded in their minds. And we'll pick it up from 2 Corinthians 4, verse 3. The context is of ministering of the truth, of manifesting the truth, he says in earlier parts of 2 Corinthians 4. And it starts off here from verse 3.

But if our gospel be heard, it is heard to them that are lost. In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them, which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. Paul tells of the God, small g, of this world.

He's a small g God. Small g God. The God of this world. And the mind gripping truth is this, that the majority are in this category. They're in the kingdom of darkness. Their minds have been blinded such that they believe not. The majority are without Christ, without hope. They're in darkness. Yet we who see know there's a glorious light.

The light of the glorious gospel of Christ. Now I've seen some adverts lately about some super bright torch. And they demonstrate it and say it just outstanding in the brightness of it.

[11:00] Nothing compares with the brightness of God's light, doesn't it? That can penetrate the darkest of darkest souls. And friends, we've got that message ourselves. Don't hide your light under a bushel. No. Let it shine.

Let it shine. It gripped me lately, just that thought, that the vast bulk of humanity are in this kingdom, aren't they? The kingdom of darkness. Stumbling along in a world of darkness, blinded. They grope hopelessly, aimlessly, their arms flailing. Have you ever seen someone who's blind come into an unfamiliar place and they're bumping into things and tripping and stumbling and that's what the world is without Christ? Hopeless, in a spiritual fog. Their minds clouded, blinded. Their heart darkened, it says. Not only is their mind blinded, Satan, the God, small g, has blinded the minds of them which believe not. It says in Romans 1.21, their foolish heart was darkened. They've got a dark heart.

Their heart is darkened. They're in darkness. It tells us in Ephesians 4.18, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart. Ephesians 4.18, yet the glad news, friends, tonight is there is a shining light, the glorious gospel of Christ. Christ who is the image of God. It goes on 2 Corinthians 4.5. We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus our Lord, the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. We've got a glad message. We've got a saviour that is the only alternative, truly. The only true alternative is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the King of glory.

And we are bearers of his message. Wherever we go, whatever we do, that essential message, you are carriers of that light, messengers of God. Verse 6, for God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. The glory of God. The glory of God. The glory of God. The glory of God.

It says, God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. He's shined in our hearts. This one who we know and love. And not only that, but he's given us that knowledge, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. He's taken the darkness away and he's put light, as it were. I know this is pretty basic, but just trying to picture it so you can picture it. Sometimes it helps to see it. That revelation light goes on. The light bulb goes on in our minds. As the kind of picture, the icon shows of a light bulb going on. That's what happens. That sweet knowledge, that life-changing knowledge that we receive. And he shines in our hearts. He takes the darkness away and he replaces it with light. He's turned the light on. He's turned night into day for us. Once I was blind. Now I can see. That's the transformation. And where is it found? It's found in that face. The face of our King. That face. Marred more than any man. That face. His face. His face bruised. His beard torn. His face. His face bleeding.

[14 : 58] His face. His face spat upon. His eyes of compassion. His lips bearing that glad, glorious truth of salvation, of his wonderful redemption. His face. That face marred more than any man's. His face. We see the glory of God in the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And his face speaks to us, doesn't it? Don't you see his face with the mind's eye? His face. His face looking with compassion. His face. His face. His face. His face. His face. His face. His face.

His face torn. Bruised for you. Look upon his face tonight. Consider this great treasure that you have. Verse 7. It goes on, but we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God may be of God and not of us. Now, you have a treasure and even though you are an earthen vessel, now, it's been worked out that your body is comprised of really just some simple elements. I could have gone out to the flower bed out there and just grabbed a handful of it, you know, some basic elements as it were. Science confirms that, and this is the profound truth, science has confirmed the fact. You could say like they tend to say the science is settled on this one, that we are all dirt. We are all dirt. Sorry to disappoint you. You might feel like you're a bit more important than a piece of dirt, but you are all dirt, at least physically speaking. And God has made us out of the very dirt of the ground that he stooped down. Genesis 2 verse 7. And the Lord formed man of the dust of the earth, of the ground, and he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. So what they reckon is almost 98% of the mass of the human body is just six elements. Oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium, and phosphorus. In fact, about 60% of you is in the form of water.

Yeah, just a lot of water. That's amazing to think, isn't it? And there are 11 main elements in the human body. And strangely enough, all of these 11, and there's more than that, but there's 11 main ones, all of these 11 are necessary for life. Funny about that, isn't it? That's how amazing evolution is. But no, yes, you have been wonderfully designed by your maker, as the Bible tells you, you have out of the dust of the ground, just an earthen vessel. Yet without Christ, you are incomplete. Now, tonight, I know my vessel is not much to look at. My wife's vessel is much better looking than me. But it's not so much the vessel. It's what's inside that matters, isn't it? It's whether you've got Christ

in your heart, whether you know his saving love, whether you receive the knowledge of God. We are all vessels of clay for the meantime, aren't we? And I like to think of these vessels as like pots that you pour things out of.

And it's as if we've got a spout on us, that we should walk around and pour out to others, that he can pour out through you, through me, as if we like channels, channels only of God's blessing to our generation, our world. He wants us to transfer what we have, the light of the glorious gospel, the knowledge of God. He wants us to transfer that message, that critical message that our world desperately needs, because most of them are in darkness still, a message that will win hearts and minds. Not only are we vessels, earthen vessels, vessels of clay, not much to look at, but it says you're going to face some battles. You know, some Christians think, I'll become a Christian, everything's going to be easy now. It's sort of, you know, and some preachers preach that. Everything's going to be rosy and fine and a bed of roses for you. But really and truly, the Bible tells us of a battle. And this battle is going on between these two kingdoms, the battle with the small g of this world, and the real g, God. The battle for hearts and minds, it's waging. And even as a saved man, a saved woman, we face this battle of life. What does Paul say?

[19 : 59] And you can say, I can identify with that. Verse 8, we are troubled on every side. That's the bad news. Yet, not distressed. We are perplexed, but not in despair. Verse 9, we are persecuted, but not forsaken. We are cast down, but not destroyed. Paul's telling you, hold on. Brother, sister, if you're battling, keep on battling. Amen? Hold on. There are things that are going to knock you down, but they're not going to knock you out. We are troubled on every side.

God, yet we're not distressed. We're perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, no, but not forsaken. God is with us. Cast down, but not destroyed. We will carry on. We will get through. This committed enemy, this false God of this world, he doesn't want to let those blinded minds know this light that we carry. But we must relay it. It's our duty.

The small God of this world, the small G God, doesn't want to set people free. He wants them to stay in prison in their darkness of unbelief. And he will do everything he can to deter you from telling others. And yes, it will cost you to do so. But it's worth it, isn't it? To be his witness, his hand extended. Verse 13, Paul writes of the spirit of faith. The spirit of faith. Trust in the Lord that he can use you. He can use you. He can flow through you as his vessel.

And through the pages of Scripture, we have much encouragement. Through God's working in men and women who had that same spirit of faith. Romans 15, 4, it tells us that these things were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Think of the men and women of Scripture. We can learn from their stories. Men, for example, like Moses. At the first, God called Moses. And what did he say?

[22 : 17] Oh, you've got the wrong man here. I can't. I'm just a bumbling. I can't put two words together. Basically, pick Aaron. When God called Moses to be his messenger, Moses made excuse after excuse, didn't he? Why he wasn't the right man for the job. But God empowered Moses.

And later on, Moses confronted Pharaoh boldly. And on behalf of God, he says, let my people go. Moses.

He even battled with his own congregation. Many of them murmuring and complaining. Moses, he was weak and failing. He just couldn't keep his hands up. He had to get Aaron and Hur to hold his hands up.

As that battle unfolded and he had to keep the rod uplifted as a sign of God's power. And Aaron and Hur stood by him. Most others scarcely helped.

Moses knew his own frailty, that he was but an earthen vessel. And we have the same spirit of faith as did Moses. And as did David. Look at David. 1 Samuel 17.

[23 : 29] The Israelites were facing this nine foot tall giant, teasing them, mocking, scorning. Send me a man. And they send David.

What? This small shepherd boy? Couldn't even fit the armour that they gave him. David comes, runs to Goliath.

And Goliath mocks him. You come to me with a sword and a spear and a javelin. Rather, David says. Rather, sorry. David says, you come to me with a sword, a spear, a javelin.

But I come to you in the name of the Lord. And he takes this stone and throws it and knocks the giant down. The heart of the battle.

The sweeter the victory, isn't it? You're going to face some battles. There's a battle raging for hearts and minds. And even as a saved man, a saved woman, there's trouble on every side.

[24 : 27] Paul says, press on. He says, we face all these things, but we faint not. Verse 16 of 2 Corinthians 4.

For which cause we faint not? Though our outman perisheth, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. Paul knew this personally. Look what Paul had to cop in his life.

Troubled on every side. What happened to Paul? He had perils of multiple kinds. In 2 Corinthians 11, there's a big long list of them. Perils.

He had prisons. He had painfulness. He had weariness. Paul knew even of a thorn in his flesh that just ground him down. It was wearing him out. This thorn in the flesh, this constant irking and issue that whatever it was, that he was having to bear this difficulty, this suffering.

Paul knew even of the internal battle, the flesh and the spirit. He could tell of that going on, that battle within his own spirit, his own heart. Yet Paul could testify personally.

[25 : 33] As it reads here, the inward man, the inward man is renewed day by day by day. The inward man.

There's a day by day dying to self, a day by day victory. And so we faint not. Verse 17. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Your affliction is working for you. That's kind of hard to get your head around, isn't it?

But even when trouble comes, Paul's saying, your affliction is working for you. And there will be a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

I can't really explain that, how that works. But God says it does. Amen. That your affliction is working for you.

[26 : 36] A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. I don't have a theological doctrinal dissertation to elaborate what that is, but I'm just taking it as read.

That there is a payoff. There is a... God knows what he's doing. You are getting blessed even by your affliction. Sure enough, there's a battle going on for hearts and minds.

But there's an exceeding eternal weight of glory just ahead for you. It tells us as we read further, as we're closing, verse 18, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. He gives us a new heart, a new spirit, a new mind that's renewed daily, a renewing of the mind.

And he gives us new eyes to see that which is eternal, a new vision. Our hearts and minds are turned into an everlasting channel. And we have the same spirit of faith.

[27 : 41] As did Moses. As did David. As did Isaiah. Isaiah the prophet. He got new eyes. This is some 2,800 years ago that it tells us of Isaiah the prophet.

And he still speaks to you today. Isaiah. We can have faith like Isaiah had. It says in Isaiah chapter 6, He saw the Lord. And he knew then his own frailty and lack.

He knew only too well. Isaiah knew. He was just an earthen vessel. He knew what he was. Isaiah 6, verse 5, he cried out. I see the Lord. And he says, woe unto me.

Woe is me. For I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips. Mine eyes have seen. The King. The Lord of hosts. And then God asks, who should I send? Who will take this message? And Isaiah says, here am I. Send me. He's just saying I'm a man of unclean lips.

[28 : 48] I'm undone. I'm an earthen vessel. But he says, here am I. Send me. He volunteers. Be available.

Have the same spirit of faith. As did Daniel. He had a more excellent spirit. Daniel in the lion's den. In chapter 6 of Daniel, he's an accomplished leader in the government.

And then he faces this attack from those jealous of him. He had his share of troubles in that battle for hearts and minds. They didn't want Daniel or Daniel's God in that heathen nation.

And the pagan king was convinced to make this law, to make prayer illegal. Now, they haven't made it illegal in Australia yet. But Daniel kept on praying, didn't he?

He kept on giving thanks to his God. And then he was forced by the king's decree to be thrown into the den of lions. The next morning, the king found Daniel alive.

[29 : 54] The lions had not harmed him. Friends, there's a battle going on. And as a Christian soldier, as a Christian witness, you're going to face that battle. And there's a battle raging for souls, for men and women in this kingdom of darkness.

Their eyes blinded. Their hearts darkened. And there's a hard-fought battle even for us that believe. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed. We are perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken. Cast down, but not destroyed. The glad news is we will win. God will win.

This king is undefeated and never will be defeated. He is victorious. You might feel like, preacher, I'm hearing you say this, but look, you don't know my situation. You don't know how difficult things are for me right now. Perhaps, like happened to Elisha's servant. We can feel outnumbered, outgunned, outmaneuvered, overrun.

[30 : 59] The enemy just is coming in like a flood. 2 Kings 6 verse 15. The servant of the man of God was risen early. And he said, behold, a host comforts us to city, both with horses and chariots.

He says, look, the horses and chariots are all around us. We're doomed. And his servant said unto him, unto Elisha. This is 2 Kings chapter 6.

Alas, my master, how shall we do? We can feel like that with ungodly laws and ungodly government and increasingly so.

What shall we do? Verse 16. Elisha answered, fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. Verse 17.

And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw. And behold, the mountains was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

[32 : 15] We're troubled on every side. The battle presses. Believer, it's a fight. God says it would be. It will be.

It is. It is a battle. A battle for hearts and minds. Difficulties press us too. We can feel like it's hard. Even hopeless.

But as I say, we can never enter a hopeless situation. Because he is our hope. And he is always with us. He never leaves us nor forsakes us.

And humanly we might feel these frail human vessels. We just cry out like Elisha's servant. What are we going to do? Elisha tells you today, fear not.

Paul says, faint not. Trust in the Lord. Be faithful. Stay strong. Elisha prayed and his eyes were opened. The God of this world wants to keep us from seeing the truth.

[33 : 18] And you might say, preacher, I don't think I'm in this kingdom yet. I'm over here somewhere in some other belief system. Because really, as I say, there's a clash of cultures.

There's only two belief systems. Either you try to save yourself by religion or good works. Or you let Jesus save you. You trust Jesus to be your saviour and Lord.

And yet many are still staying in that darkness of unbelief. This culture is so rotten and ever more so. The Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw.

Sometimes we need to pray like Elisha. Open my eyes. Open my eyes. It can seem like we have such little power. We're just earthen vessels after all.

But we've got this treasure in earthen vessels. We've got this treasure. The light of the glorious gospel. We will face hard times. But we can know the blessing of God.

[34 : 20] Helping us through. I urge you tonight. In this battle for hearts and minds. Let Christ be your king. Let Christ rule over your heart. Let him give you a new heart.

Let him take the blinkers away. The blindness away. What's the other word? Yeah, the blindfold away. Thinking of what Paul had. The scales away.

Whatever it is. Open your eyes so you can see. And truly see. And God can open your heart like he did for Lydia.

God can take the blinkers off our minds so that we can see and know him. Him to know is life eternal. Let's pray. Lord, we bless you that you've taken us from the kingdom of darkness.

And you've translated us into the kingdom of your dear son. Lord, we thank you for the grace that took you to the cross for us to pay our sin. To lay down your life in the person of your son, Lord, that we can know life everlasting.

[35 : 23] Lord, we pray for any that are still in that kingdom of darkness. Lord, in this battle for hearts and minds, we'd see that you are the only true one worthy to have ownership of our heart and of our mind.

Lord, help us to see, to know, to realize, to have our heart changed, transformed, to become new creatures in Christ. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen.