

Battle of the Mind 1

by Anton Bosch

Anton Bosch's sermon explores the internal battle of the mind, emphasizing the need for spiritual weapons and personal victory through God's power.

Duration: 50:44

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 10:1-6

Topics: "Mind"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Nebuchadnezzar and the miracles he witnessed in the book of Daniel. The king saw a vision and Daniel provided the interpretation, and later witnessed three young men being thrown into a furnace without harm. The speaker then addresses the problem of finding quick and easy solutions to our spiritual problems, emphasizing that true change requires profound, life-changing solutions. He highlights the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to bring about transformation in our thinking and values. The sermon concludes by introducing the concept of strongholds in our hearts and minds that need to be brought down in order to achieve victory, leaving the audience with a cliffhanger for the next session.

Transcript

And I'm going to read from 2 Corinthians and chapter 10, 2 Corinthians and chapter 10. Now we've been speaking about spiritual war in the evening sessions on a Sunday night in the combined service, and I want to focus this week maybe, certainly for two weeks, maybe we'll take three weeks, to deal with the internal war. In the evenings we're dealing with the external war, but there's also an internal war.

And then also by way of warning, we're hoping during the month of October to begin a series on the second coming, dealing with the major events of the second coming, the rapture, the antichrist, the mark of the beast, the tribulation, Armageddon, all of these things that people are particularly interested in. And we hope to use this as an outreach opportunity to have a banner up in the front garden and to hand out invitations in the area, and to be able to use this as an opportunity to preach the gospel. This is a subject everybody wants to know about.

But in the meantime, for this month we want to speak about the battle of the mind, as you'll see in the bulletin, the battle of the mind. So 2 Corinthians, chapter 10, and from verse 1. 2 Corinthians 10, from verse 1 through 6. Now I fall myself in pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent, am bold toward you. But I beg you that when I am

present, I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. The war that we are fighting is not just an external war.

It's not just against the devil out there and against all of the attacks of the evil one that comes against us, as we've been dealing with and speaking about on the Sunday evenings. Much of our war is in our own hearts and in our own minds. And the problem is that many Christians are so interested in fighting the devil out there, when they haven't even overcome and gained victory in their own hearts.

You know, if we haven't got the victory at home, how are we going to win the victory out there? That's a very, very serious situation. And I think that sometimes we so concentrate on fighting the victory, fighting the battle out there, simply as a diversion. Remember last week we spoke about diversions? As a diversion from the real issues that happen in our own hearts.

And in case you think that I'm just sucking that out of my thumb, this is what Paul has to say from the book of Romans chapter 7 verse 22 and verse 23. He says, I delight in the law of God according to the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. Paul speaks much in Romans chapter 6, 7 and 8, about this war which is constantly going on within ourselves.

And he speaks about the flesh and the spirit, the old man and the new man, the old sinful nature and the new Christ-created nature. These two things being at war with each other all the time. And there is this ongoing war in our hearts and in our minds.

The problem is that many Christians never seem to win that war. They always seem to be on the losing side. It seems that they just don't get victory in their own hearts and minds.

And I trust that by the grace of God, in the next week or two, we'll be able to just deal with some of these issues and be able to find some solutions. And maybe by the grace of God, find some kind of explanation as to how we can gain the victory in this battle that goes on in our own hearts all the time. And the problem is that we often look for easy, quick-fix solutions.

I don't have a quick-fix solution for you. And it's just going to take me this whole morning just to deal with a problem. And I don't like to ever finish a message without providing some solutions.

But it's going to just take me this whole session just to deal with a problem and trying to define what it's all about. And hopefully next week we'll get down to some of the solutions. But none of these solutions are quick and easy.

You can go into any Bible bookstore and find dozens of books that will promise you six quick steps to victory. One quick solution to your problems. And you listen to many of the preachers on the radio and television, it sounds like, you know, you just send them the money, you'll go away and all your problems will go away and you'll have instant victory in your own heart and mind.

But this is an ongoing battle. And when Paul writes about the fact that these two things are warring in his members, he is not a new Christian who is struggling with these things. Paul was a mature man of God when he was still struggling and still fighting that war in his own heart and in his own mind.

This is a war we will constantly be fighting. The problem is that we should constantly be winning and not be losing all the time. The battle will continue, but am I winning or am I losing? That's the question.

The problem is that so many Christians are losing all the time. And one of the reasons why Christians are losing this battle of the mind is because they are using the wrong weapons. They are using weapons that are carnal, they are using weapons that are fleshly.

Paul says, he says, though I walk in the flesh, he says, I'm a man. I'm not a spiritual being in the sense that I'm a spirit floating around. I'm a man, I walk in the flesh.

That's what he says in verse 3. Although we walk in the flesh, we're people, we're flesh and blood people. But he says, we do not war according to the flesh. Yes, we are human beings, but our battle is a spiritual one.

And it's in the spiritual realm that we need to win that victory. And then he says, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal or fleshly. Same word really.

Our weapons are not human, but they are powerful in God, mighty in God for pulling down strongholds. The weapons that we have are not human weapons. And this is probably one of the first and most important things we need to understand in fighting this battle of the mind.

And that is that the weapons are not human. Now, many of the books that you will read, that give you six easy steps or five steps or ten steps or however, seven is probably the perfect number. Many of those things are human wisdom.

They are based on popular psychology. Not even serious psychology, just pop psychology. Just think positive thoughts.

And everything will be wonderful. Now that sounds great. But that doesn't solve the problem.

And you know, these many solutions that are offered are very much like the many diets. I'm amazed when I switch on the television here and see the constant stream of advertising for this diet and this pill and this thing and everything promises instant solutions to your weight problem. And we know that none of them really work.

Most of them will, you'll lose a little bit of weight for a while but you're not going to keep it off. So it's a quick fix solution which doesn't last. And the same with the solutions that are presented for our spiritual problems, for our spiritual war.

Yeah, they sound great and they may make you feel good for a day or two or a week or three but they're not going to bring about profound life-changing changes. They're not going to change the essence of who you are. And yet this is what the gospel is about.

Paul says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ because it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. The solutions that God presents are powerful. They are mighty and they are able to change who we are.

They are able to change our thinking. They are able to change our values. They are able to change whether we win or whether we lose.

And so what we need is the power of God in operation in our lives and not some kind of human system that will make me feel a little bit better. Let me also give you a caution on the other end. And that is that there are many preachers who try and say, well, you know, just come up to the altar and I'll pray over you and you'll be delivered and you'll never think a bad thought ever again in your life.

Now that's not biblical either. The Bible doesn't promise us that either because we will constantly be fighting this battle. And so the solution does not lie in human ideas and human solutions.

Neither does the solution lie in some instant quick fix thing whereby by the laying on of my hands or by some kind of prayer that you pray that suddenly your problems are going to go away and you'll live in victory forever afterwards. Now the solutions that the Bible presents have to do with an ongoing doing the things that God wants us to be doing. And just a little bit of a hint because we'll deal with this next week.

But you'll see that he speaks in verse 5 about casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity, bringing every thought into captivity. In other words, this is an ongoing struggle. Now remember in the book of Romans, Paul speaks about the fact that he found himself being brought into captivity.

But now in fact what he says is, I should not be brought into captivity but my thoughts must be brought into captivity. My thoughts need to be brought into control, but every thought. And as long as we think thoughts, those thoughts will have to be brought under control.

You will never be in a position or in a time when you say, my thoughts are now totally under control, I don't have to worry about that. You will constantly have to bring every thought that comes into your mind under control to the obedience of Christ. It's an ongoing thing.

But there is a solution, there are tools, there are weapons that are made available to us and those weapons are mighty. And you'll see that he says that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal or fleshly, but they are mighty in God for the pulling down of strongholds. They are mighty in God.

They are not mighty in themselves. You see, many of the solutions that are offered seem to, the power lies in the solution. The power lies in the formula.

Just apply the formula, do these five steps and you know, everything will be wonderful. But Paul does not say that the power lies in the weapons, but the power lies in the one who empowers those weapons. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they are mighty in God.

They are mighty in God. And you know what we have at our disposal is the power of God to change our lives, to change our values, to change our thinking, to change who we are. And this is what God is able to do.

Paul says if he was able to raise Christ from the dead, he can change me also. If he was able to raise the dead, he can do everything else as well. The problem is that we often times say, well, you know, that's God's power.

He was able to create the world. He was able to raise Christ from the dead. He's able to sustain all things by the word of his power.

But we somehow never get to translating that into our own hearts and lives. And so somehow God is powerful out there, but he is weak in here. And we don't seem to get these two things together, that the same God who created the world, the same God who raised Christ from the dead, is the same God who's at work in my life.

And if he's able to do those things, he's able to do great and mighty things in my own life. We've been studying the book of Daniel in the Bible class this morning. We just considered Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon.

And how that he saw these mighty miracles. He saw this vision. And Daniel gave him not just the interpretation, but told him what the vision was.

And then he sees these three young men thrown into the furnace. And nothing happened to them, just the ropes were burnt off. And they, you know, were walking around in the furnace.

The fourth man, like unto the Son of God, walking around with them. He witnessed that with his own eyes. And yet, not very long after that, he walks around on the palace walls and he says, I am the man.

Is this not great Babylon which I have built? You see, he somehow did not translate and transfer the knowledge that he had gained of this great God of Daniel, the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. That that in fact was also the God who had brought him into power. And that was the God who was sustaining him in his position of power.

The two things just never came together. And in the same way, we somehow just don't get the fact that the creator who created the world, the one who raised Christ from the dead, is the same one who is dwelling within our hearts. And he is the same power who is able to change us and to make us new creatures.

But it's the same God. And if he is able to do these great things, he is able to change us. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.

They are mighty through God, through the pulling down of strongholds. What are these weapons? Well, there are many and maybe in time we'll deal with them. But there is the word of God.

Obviously in Ephesians chapter 6, the passage that we've been dealing with in the evenings, the sword of the spirit, the word of God. And that word is quick and powerful, the book of Hebrews tells us. And sharper than any two-edged sword.

Able to divide between the thoughts and the intents. Between the bone and the marrow. And so the word of God is powerful.

It is able to change our lives, if we allow it to do so. Now again, let me just give you a caution here. Because we'll come back to this.

But it's not powerful as a little mantra which you say. It's not powerful in that way. It is powerful in its ability to change us as we are obedient to it.

The word of God will give you solutions to your situation. To your particular problem that you're struggling with. But it is only powerful to the degree that you are obedient to it.

And Paul says that there are these two voices. The flesh and the voice of the spirit. Depending which one I'm going to listen to.

Will determine whether I'm going to win. Or whether I'm going to be losing. There's no verse that I can give you.

And as long as you memorize that verse. You're going to have victory in your life. The word of God is only powerful when I submit to it.

And when the word of God tells me to do something. And if I do that. It will change me.

Then he'll give me the next step. And as I listen to that. And as I'm obedient to that.

He'll give me the next step. It's as simple as that. Well it's not simple really.

Because the problem is that. I don't. Most of the time don't like what the word of God tells me.

Some of us have problems with worrying. I'm one of them. Somehow.

I don't think I enjoy worrying. But I feel it's something I have to do. And so when the word of God says.

Don't worry because he takes care of tomorrow. Well you know. I just don't.

I just don't like that. Because I feel. You know.

I have to do my bit. And I have to worry. And so if I could only.

Be obedient to the word of God. And take no thought for tomorrow. Because the same one who takes care of the birds of the air.

And takes care of the grass of the field. Which today is and tomorrow is not. The same one who takes care of.

He's taking care of me. Now if that reality can just dawn on my heart. If I can just live in obedience to that.

It will change the area that I struggle with. That many of us struggle with. And so we can go on.

Every area of struggle that you have. The word of God addresses it. And these are not glib easy solutions.

I understand that. I believe that God understands that. But at the same time.

He is giving us tools with which to change our lives. But we don't like the tools. Because we want some kind of instant solution.

And that's the problem today. We want instant everything. Everything has to be changed immediately.

And we expect God to just change our minds. When in fact he says. No I'm not going to change your mind.

I'm going to give you the tools with which to change it. But you have to do the changing. You have to apply those tools.

And that's the problem. We want things to be done for us. And he says.

I'll help you. I'll empower you. I'll give you powerful tools.

But you have to apply them. We still have to fight the battle. He's not going to fight our battles for us.

But he gives us powerful weapons. The word of God. Prayer.

Ephesians chapter 6. You know he gives us that whole armor of God. And we have the shield of faith. And we have the breastplate of righteousness.

And we get about the belt of truth. And our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Somehow in all of that.

Prayer is not one of the weapons. And yet you'll see at the end. He says.

Praying with all perseverance. So one of the weapons. And in fact the warfare is fought on the grounds of prayer.

And without prayer. We will never win the battle. So there's the word of God.

There's prayer. There's the anointing of the spirit of God. But Jesus said in Acts chapter 1 and verse 8. You will receive power to be my witnesses.

He didn't say you will receive a little bit of an inclination. Or maybe an aptitude for. But you will receive power to be witnesses.

Now we spoke about that a few weeks ago. Not power to witness. But power to be witnesses.

And a defeated Christian life is not a witness to the power of God. Is not a witness to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so the Holy Spirit will empower us to be those people who live in victory.

And those people who have victory over these areas. In order that we might be witnesses to him. So there's the word of God.

There's prayer. There's the anointing of the spirit. And there is the church.

That's one we don't like very much. Because God uses people to give us the victory. God uses our brothers and our sisters.

To help us in times when we are struggling. And that's one that often times we don't like. It's good to say I'll be dependent on God.

I'll trust the Lord. But when I have to trust people. When I have to rely on others to help me.

In times of struggle. In times of battle. In times of doubt.

Well that's a very hard thing. And we'll talk about that when we get to that later on. So the weapons of our warfare are not carnal.

They are not human. They are mighty through God. To the pulling down of strongholds.

Now I want to deal with this little word strongholds. And I think that's as much as we'll be able to deal with this morning. When he uses that word strongholds.

He means a fortification. A fort of some kind. A stone building which is powerful.

And from which the enemy is able to launch its attacks. And of course in those days this was a very important thing. When they didn't have B2 bombers that could fly over and drop bombs from the top.

And so if you were able to have a strong fortification. And we've been, as I said, we've been looking at the book of Daniel. And Babylon had three great walls.

That you had to get through. And if you got through the first one there was still the second. And then there was still the third before you could get into the city.

And so those days you needed these huge fortifications made up of stone. Or sometimes of sand and mud. But mostly of stone.

In order to have a strong position. And it's interesting when Paul uses this word. And I don't want to bore you with details of words.

But this is a word which was used by Philo. Philo was a philosopher, a religious philosopher. Some people say that he was a Christian.

I'm not sure whether he was, it doesn't matter. But he was a religious philosopher. And he lived in about the time of Paul.

Though he lived, he was quite a bit older. He was about 20 years older than Paul. Now Paul being a learned man as he was.

I have no doubt that he had read Philo's writings. And Philo uses the same word. And he uses it in the context of the Tower of Babel.

Now you remember what the Tower of Babel was. It was a building built out of stone or out of bricks. And its purpose was to rise up to heaven.

And it was a symbol of man's arrogance. Of man saying, I can do it my way. I can do this without God.

I can save myself. I can reach up into heaven. And you remember God came.

And he brought confusion amongst them in their languages. And the whole work came to nothing. But it's the same word that Philo uses.

When he uses this word strongholds. Referring to this huge tower which was built. And it's a symbol of man's arrogance in his thoughts.

And in his arguments. Saying that I can do it my way. That's the word that is used here.

And he is referring to strongholds in our own minds. Not strongholds out there in the world. Strongholds to do with the devil.

But strongholds in our own minds. These are fortifications in our lives. Strong places.

From which the enemy is able to launch the attack within ourselves. How are these strongholds created? They are built brick by brick. Stone by stone.

Until eventually they become these huge strong places. Which are impregnable. Which cannot be broken down.

Which cannot be entered into. And you know in our own hearts and minds. There are these strongholds of many many things.

Of doubt. Of various fears. Of various lusts.

Of all sorts of complexes. Inferiority complexes. Superiority complexes.

The list goes on and on and on and on. These are strong things in our minds. Which seem to be a point from which.

Or a thing which we do not seem to be able to get the victory over. But how are those fortifications built? They are built stone by stone. And as we feed that system.

As we feed that lust. Or we feed that fear. Or we feed that doubt.

Little bit by little bit. It becomes stronger and stronger. And in most of our lives.

These fortifications have been built over a lifetime. Of reinforcement. Many times this begins when we are children.

And so one thought. And then another thought. And slowly but surely these towers are being built in our minds.

And in our lives. But you know what he says is that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. But they are mighty through God.

To pulling down those strongholds. And then you'll see bringing every thought into captivity. You see our thoughts are inside of these strongholds.

And these fortifications. And so our world view. The way we see things is from the perspective of that stronghold.

And so if your stronghold is doubt for instance. Or your stronghold is fear. Or your stronghold is lust.

All of your thoughts are from that perspective. Whatever it is you see. Everything you do.

Everything you think about. Is from that perspective. From that stronghold.

Now Paul says what needs to happen is those strongholds need to be torn down. And the thoughts need to be brought under control. To the obedience of Christ.

No longer being under the control of the stronghold. Or being in that place of strength. But being brought into obedience to Christ.

And so what is he saying? He wants every one of our thoughts. To be obedient to Jesus. Is that true of our lives? Well I don't need to be a mind reader to know that.

That's not true of any of our lives. Some of our thoughts are obedient to Christ. Sometimes we think the right things.

Most of the time we don't. Most of the time we think from the perspective of that particular stronghold. Some of us have many strongholds.

Many areas that are just so powerfully controlling our lives. Because that's what a stronghold does. It controls the area.

And so sometimes you would have to build. Back in South Africa you find next to all the bridges. There was a time when our ancestors fought against the British Empire.

Quite a story. But it was a guerrilla type terrorist war. And so the British built forts on just about every high place they could find.

Every river where there was a railroad crossing. They would build a fort. And so you would find these forts all over the country as you drive.

You just see these stone forts again and again and again. Because wherever they had that fort they could control that immediate area. But anything beyond that they could not control.

And you know the strongholds in our minds is exactly the same. It controls areas of our lives. And the more strongholds you have in your life.

The more areas of your life is being controlled by those strongholds. Now all of them need to be brought down. So that all of my life can be in obedience to Christ.

So that all of me can be the kind of person that he wants me to be. And so those strongholds need to be torn down. But the fact is that they are there.

And these strongholds are our thoughts. Because you'll see that he says in verse 4. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God. For pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments.

Pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments. So as you pull down the stronghold, what are you doing? Casting down the arguments. So he's saying the stronghold is made up of arguments.

Now if you have the old King James, you'll have a little bit of a problem here. Because he uses, for the word arguments, he uses the word imaginations. Which is not exactly what this verse means.

The Greek word there is logismos. Logismos. Now you don't have to be a Greek scholar to hear that that's the same word as logic.

Logismos, logic. And so these arguments, these things that make up this fort. These various bricks, these various rocks are arguments.

Why can I not trust God for tomorrow? Well you know the economy is going down. And the government doesn't want to give me a visa. And the devil is out to get me.

And we have all these arguments. They make up all these little bit of arguments. Each one in itself is not a fortification.

You can't fight much of a battle behind one boulder. But as you begin to stack these boulders on top of each other, you eventually have an impregnable place. And those arguments need to be brought down.

Those arguments need to be destroyed in order that the victory might be won. And so there are all these arguments that make up these fortifications, these strongholds, these fortresses in our hearts and in our minds. And those arguments need to be brought low.

Those arguments need to be brought under control. And that's where we will get the victory. And so how is it? How are we going to win the victory? Well, you'll have to come back next week for that.

In the meantime, if we can just come to a point where we're able to recognize and say, yeah, there are strongholds in my life. There are areas that are controlling me. There are areas that are controlling how I am, what I do, how I act, how I respond.

And I've been fighting with these things for a long time. Many people think by ignoring them that they'll go away. They just don't go away.

They need to be brought down. They need to be conquered. And so the first step is just to acknowledge and say, yeah, Lord, there are these areas and whatever they may be.

And you know what they are. Again, I don't want to give you a whole list because if I miss the one in your life, you'll say, oh, well, you know, he's not preaching at me. I'm preaching to every one of us, to myself included.

And so whatever it is that you are fighting, whatever it is that is controlling and dominating your life, the first step is to say, that is where the issue is. That is the area that is controlling my life. And I need to get the victory.

You see, because without a determination, without saying, without recognizing that we want and that we will get the victory over it, you're never going to win. Many of us are happy the way we are. Many of us are happy to be defeated, to be constantly on the run, to be constantly being down, to be constantly being lusting, to be constantly being feeling inferior, to be constantly being whatever it is.

But God's not happy with us the way He's come to change us. So we need to come to a place where we say, Lord, I recognize that there are these areas in my life and I want the victory. Now that's the beginning.

By the grace of God, next week we'll deal with the solution. I'm going to close in prayer and then after that we'll break bread. And so I would encourage as many as possible to remain behind.

But if you have to go, we understand. Please leave quietly after the conclusion of the prayer. And the rest of us will meet together around here as we normally do on the first Sunday and we'll remember the Lord.

Father, we thank You for Your Word. And Father, we thank You that even thousands of years ago You understood the issues that go on in our hearts and minds. We thank You, Lord, that You don't just declare them and make statements about them, but, Lord, that You have answers and solutions to our lives.

Help us, Lord, to have within us a desire for victory. So many of us, Lord, have been fighting some of these battles for such a long time that we've given up and we feel that we can never win. But, Lord, we pray that You would create new desire and new hope within our own hearts this morning, Lord, and to recognize that there is victory in Jesus.

That there is an opportunity for us to get control in those areas by Your grace. Because, Lord, our weapons are not carnal. They are not human.

They are not weak, but they are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Bring this truth home to us, Lord, as we look to You during this week and as we begin to fight this great battle within our own hearts. And, Lord, we pray that as we come to Your table now to remember the Lord Jesus, we pray that even this truth, that He died to secure my salvation and to buy me back to God, we pray, Lord, that that truth may be real in our hearts, that the victory that was gained when He rose so powerfully and gloriously on the third day, that that would be real in our hearts as we break bread.

And, Lord, for those who part from us now, we pray that You would be with them. Protect us all as we go our different ways. Bring us together safely again this evening, that we may enjoy fellowship with one another and hear Your word and worship You.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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