

**I. Introduction**

- A. My sermon today is the last message in a series. Today's a wrap up. The series is called **The Christian in Complete Armor**. I hope you have been blessed by this series. I hope you have been filled and encouraged. I hope that your faith is stronger because of these messages.
- B. My talk today is part 17, and is the final part, the closing message.
- C. When we wrap up a series like this, I always want to think hard about what is the main takeaway. If there is one message, one theme, one trumpet blast I can leave ringing in your ears on this great theme of spiritual warfare, what would that be.
  - 1. *"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."* (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)
- D. This verse lifts the veil and lets us see what's going on in the background... the spiritual realities behind all history, and behind the story of our lives.
- E. We live every day of our lives in the crossfire of at the invisible cosmic conflict battle between Satan and God. This is spiritual warfare on an epic scale.
- F. Which in this Scripture is not just called warfare, but OUR warfare.
- G. Can you imagine what we would see, if God lifted the veil, and let us see the spiritual realm right now, here in this gathering of the church? How angels and demons battle, and how the glory of God shines down on our praise.
- H. It's OUR warfare too.
  - 1. *"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."* (Ephesians 6:10-12)
- I. We wrestle against spiritual armies of wickedness in heavenly places. And so we are to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.
- J. This is not about other people. This is not just about super-saints. This is one of the basic and most fundamental facts of life for every child of God.
- K. Throughout this series I have suggested that this cosmic conflict plays out in every conflict of our lives. Emotional. Spiritual. Psychological. Physical.
  - 1. Where there is human brokenness, the devil is not far away.
  - 2. Where there is pain, where there is addiction, where there is drunkenness, adultery, pornography, idols, suicidal ideation, hatred, bitterness, and cruelty... all of these things go deeper than human origin. They are spiritual at the core.
- L. So, you are called as a Christian soldier.
- M. You are called to demolish strongholds.
  - 1. And you are called to "take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." That is my focus today.
- N. Our verse today gives a huge open secret about you living your life in the victory that Christ has already won in his cross and resurrection.
- O. If you want to be whole, happy, and blessed. If you want to live out the abundant life Jesus promised you. If you want to have a bigger impact in your life for Christ and the gospel. And if you want to really brandish the holy weapons of your warfare, then you need the open secret openly revealed in this verse.
- P. So, my message today is called:

**1. One Thought To Rule Them All**

**II. Verses on the Obedience of Christ**

- A. I'd like to go back to that phrase, "the obedience of Christ." Taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.
- B. It's an interesting phrase and a little bit tricky. That word "obedience" indicates submission and respect. And of course, that should be true of our lives.
- C. But before we can talk about our obedience to Christ, I want to talk about the obedience of Christ.
- D. So here is our first lesson for today:
  - 1. **1. OBEDIENCE | Jesus came into this world as Lord of All, but he submitted himself to the Father's plan that he might save his people from their sins.**
  - 2. How does that work?

3. Jesus was two natures in one person. He was truly God, that's his divine nature. He was truly human, that's his human nature.
  - a) Some things in the life of Jesus flow from his human nature.
  - b) Some things flow from his divine nature.
  - c) Some things flow from the union of two natures in one person.
4. So the Bible teaches us that Jesus actually obeyed God the Father.
- E. *"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."* (Philippians 2:8)
  1. Jesus submitted to the Father. He condescended. He humbled himself.
  2. Specifically, he became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the Cross.
    - a) That is what saves us. That is what gives us eternal life.
    - b) That is what makes us Christians, when we believe.
  3. All of the obedience, all of the submission... everything that happened that day that the Son of God laid down his celestial crown, set aside his shimmering robes, and stepped down to this cold cruel world... all of that obedience to the plan of God was laser-beam focused on one place, one time, one event...
    - a) He became obedient to the point of death.
  4. The obedience of Christ is another way of talking about that moment of death, his saving work on the Cross.
  5. We can see the same thing here in another place:
- F. *"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous."* (Romans 5:19)
  1. By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners... who is that one man? Adam. What was his disobedience? Eating the forbidden fruit.
    - a) Then flip it over...
  2. So also by one Man's obedience... who is that one man? Jesus Christ. What was his obedience that makes us righteous? His sacrificial death on Calvary's cross.
    - a) He became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).
  3. The way the Bible authors write, they use the phrase, "the obedience of Christ" to point to the abject humiliation of his death on the Cross.
  4. When the Bible talks about the obedience of Christ, that's the focus. Calvary. Grace. Salvation.
  5. We have this same connection again...
- G. *"though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."* (Hebrews 5:8)
  1. Again, Scripture links the obedience of Christ with the sufferings of Christ on the cross for our salvation.
  2. You have a Savior. His name is Jesus.
  3. There is a specific thing that Jesus did to be your Savior. And that specific thing is that he shed his precious blood and died on the cross. This death was horrific. Punishing. Painful. It was the epitome of human suffering.
  4. And yet Jesus died. Why did he die? He died because he loves you and this was the only way to pay the penalty for your sins, to satisfy the demands of divine justice, so that a holy God could love you without compromising his character, so that you could be reconciled to God.
    - a) He was thinking of you when he was nailed to the Cross.
    - b) He knew you by name, and he had you in mind, when he absorbed your sins.
    - c) And he did it because he loves you.
  5. The heart of everything that matters is the obedience of Christ to the point of his death on the cross. We cherish the old rugged Cross. We preach the old rugged cross. He cling to the old rugged cross.
  6. That old cross makes our hearts tender. That old cross, when we hear of it and really think of it, brings a tear to our eye. The cross of Christ is everything.
  7. And what I'm saying is that...
    - a) All of the glory, all of the suffering, all of the history, all of the meaning, all of the blessing, all of the horror, all of the pain, all of the theology, all of the doctrine, all of the love, all of the graciousness, and all the gifts of that one, stupendous, never-to-be-repeated act is summed up in one transcendent and paradoxical phrase: the obedience of Christ.
    - b) **2. THE CROSS | The Obedience of Christ is another way of focusing on the Finished Work of Christ on the Cross**

H. Now, let's bring this back to spiritual warfare. I want to bring in two episodes from the life of Jesus, and then bring it all together.

### III. Spiritual Warfare

A. *"But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.'"* (Matthew 16:23)

1. What is this?
2. Jesus whirls around and actually calls Peter Satan. Peter is one of his core disciples. And yet, Jesus calls him Satan.
3. Why?
4. Because Peter said something against the Cross of Christ.
5. Let's look at the two verses right before this one:
  - a) *"From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."* (Matthew 16:21)
6. Jesus is teaching his disciples the heart and soul of his whole ministry: that he will suffer and die and then be raised again. Calvary is the main thing. Jesus teaches that, and then Peter objects.
  - a) *"Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!'"* (Matthew 16:22)
7. And that's when Jesus whirls around and calls Peter Satan.
8. Why? He says why:
  - a) Because you have in your mind not the things of God, but the things of men.
  - b) Your mind has thoughts in it, Peter, that come from Satan.
  - c) They are not reality, they are unreality.
  - d) They are not truth, they are lies.
  - e) Those thoughts go exactly opposite of the gospel, Peter.
  - f) Jesus is saying that when you look at God's plan from a human perspective, instead of from God's perspective, you are displaying a profound problem.
    - (1) That profound problem is that a satanic philosophy has taken root in your mind.
  - g) And the proof that a satanic philosophy has taken root in your mind is that you actually speak out *against* the cross of Christ, and against the sufficiency of Christ's death. "Far be it from you, Lord, this shall not happen to you."
  - h) This is what happened in Peter's mind, and Jesus saw Satan lurking in the shadows.
9. So he turns on Peter and calls him out for letting the devil stick that thought into his heads.
  - a) One more episode showing the same thing:

B. *"And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him..."* (John 13:2)

1. And then it says that Jesus knelt down and washed his disciples' feet... an emblem of the spiritual work he was about to do.
2. I don't know how this works. I'm not sure of all that this means.
3. But according to his verse, the devil was able to put something into the heart of Judas... which was to betray Jesus.
  - a) Satan can put thoughts into your mind, thoughts into your heart.
4. I don't think that the devil can *read* our minds. The Bible says that *only* God knows the human heart (1 Kings 8:39).
5. However, the devil *has* had thousand of years of surveillance of the human race. He watches. He observes. He sees. His hosts of demons take notes. They can read us like a book, even if they can't know our thoughts.
6. So no, I don't think Satan can read our minds.
7. But I do see in Scripture that he can put thoughts into our minds.
  - a) He did it here with Judas. It says so. The devil put it into his heart to betray Jesus.
  - b) He did it with Peter, and put it into his heart to try to talk Jesus down from the Cross.
    - (1) [Later on, he did it with two horrible people named Ananias and Sapphira. "But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...'" (Acts 5:3)
    - (2) [Centuries earlier, Satan put evil thoughts into King David's mind (1 Chronicles 21:1).
8. So the devil can't read our minds, but he can put thoughts into our minds...

9. So let's put that down as our third big lesson for today.
  - a) **3. COLONIZE | Satan's endgame is to colonize our minds through high-sounding nonsense masquerading as philosophy or religion.**
10. Satan is a teacher. Satan is a philosopher. Satan is a culture warrior. Satan is a community organizer. He is a social media influencer. A news anchor. And a preacher.
11. They used to call this brainwashing. Today, I think the word would be grooming. Or indoctrination.
  - a) **Satan's diabolical passion is to normalize unreality.**
    - (1) Which is another word for evil.
12. He has a gradual way of infiltrating the deepest parts of your thinking with ideas and opinions and moral values that crawled out of the sewers of hell, and were wrapped in popular, nice-sounding packaging.
13. The devil's strategy is to colonize your mind with with high sounding nonsense.
  - a) I don't think the devil does this directly. Most of the time, it's indirect.
  - b) Most of the time, the lies come into our minds through the gates of culture, art, media, social media, music, government, academia, entertainment, online, digital, and on and on.
    - (1) The whole world-system is the devil's misinformation campaign.
  - c) When a culture turns away from God, it believes demonic lies. These demonic lies are institutionalized. And the whole cultural system of values and beliefs gets demonized... a condition the Bible calls "strong delusion" (2 Thessalonians 2:11).
14. Let's look at some Scripture on this.
  - a) *"This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic."* (James 3:15)
  - b) *"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons."* (1 Timothy 4:1)
  - c) *"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the [satanic] world-system, and not according to Christ."* (Colossians 2:8)
15. Have you ever considered that there may be whole structures of thoughts in your mind that have been constructed by the dark side, and are in sync with the devil?
  - a) How would you know?
  - b) First, by the Word, and second...
  - c) By their fruit:
    - (1) Addiction, depression, hostility, broken relationships, unresolved anger, bitterness, sexual addiction, sexual perversion, religion, legalism, self-righteousness, a fractured heart, and finally a heart that is not tender toward Jesus Christ.
  - d) God loves you, and you have some rehab to do.
    - (1) By the way, these are called strongholds, and I taught two messages on strongholds.
16. Which takes us back right where we started, and to the one thought to rule them all.

IV. *"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,"* (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

- A. All those thoughts...
- B. All of that stream of internal dialogue...
- C. All of those uncontrollable drives, and persistent ideation...
  1. Bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.
- D. I am saying that this is the biggest truth I want to leave you with after sixteen messages on spiritual warfare.
- E. But what does it mean to bring a thought captive to the obedience of Christ? What is that?
- F. It's a tricky little phrase. Different Bible translations go in different directions.
- G. Translations
  1. **NIV: we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**
  2. **NLT: We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.**
  3. **ESV: and take every thought captive to obey Christ.**
  4. **NKJV: bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.**
  5. **NASB: and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.**
- H. The grammatical structure here can go in two directions, and both options are grammatically legit.
  1. Option one: bring every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ. (This is called the objective genitive.)

2. Option two: bring every thought captive to Christ's obedience to the plan of God. (This is called the subjective genitive.)
- I. I spent hours working on this one phrase, this one bit of Greek grammar. I can tell you that the Bible commentaries are unanimous in Option one. Bring every thought captive so that your thoughts, and therefore your life, can be obedient to Christ.
  1. If anyone asks, there is truth in that, and I am pro obedience.
- J. But I can say that I respectfully, and humbly, disagree with the commentaries. For one, I have yet to find a commentary that even bothers to make the case for option one, or even considers option two. They just assume it.
  1. I'm not going to bore you, but the librarian over at Simpson University, after several hours, finally helped me get hold of a **scholarly journal article from 2011** by a Bible professor from Wheaton College.... Which says:
    - a) "In grammatical terms, I will argue that τοῦ Χριστοῦ should be read as a subjective rather than an objective genitive. I prefer to say "Christ's obedience..."
    - b) "This essay will suggest that the phrase τὴν ὑπακοὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ in 2 Corinthians 10:5 refers to "Christ's obedience" rather than "obedience to Christ."
      - (1) [Footnote: Michael Kibbe. "The Obedience of Christ": A Reassessment of τὴν ὑπακοὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ in 2 Corinthians 10:5. Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters 2(1):41-56. 2012-04-01. 21592063]
  2. Listen, this isn't a seminary classroom, I get that, so no details. I just feel an obligation that if I'm going to go out on a limb all alone, I owe it to you to at least tell you there's a strong case for this interpretation. I am convinced that the strongest case can be made against the common interpretation, and for the one I'm giving you today.
  3. Which is this:
- K. When the Bible tells you to tear down the demonic strongholds, and to clean out all the toxic crud that has infiltrated your mind, and when the Bible tells you to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ... it is not talking about you obeying Christ, it's talking about Christ obeying the divine plan of eternal salvation.
- L. It's Christ's obedience.
  1. What does this mean??
- M. Let me say it as lesson, and I'm going to go superhero here.
  1. **4. GOSPEL | The power of the Gospel is the divine kryptonite to vaporize the dysfunctional strongholds the devil has snaked into your heart.**
- N. Touch the devil's lies with Gospel truth, and they vaporize.
  1. Bring every thought into alignment with his sacrifice.
  2. Bring every thought into adjustment with the finished work of Christ.
  3. When your thoughts of guilt touch Calvary's love, they vaporize.
  4. When voices of condemnation run into Romans 8:1, they are muzzled.
  5. When your doubts and fears meet "the Lord is my shepherd I shall not lack..." they lose their power. (Psalm 23:1).
  6. When devil and nearby demons see you running through Ephesians 6 and putting on your armor, he will flee from you (James 4:7).
  7. When your temptations come under the sound of Calvary's Love, they lose the power because "Sin shall not have dominion over you for you are not under law but under grace." (Romans 6:14)
- O. I am saying that...
  1. **5. ONE THOUGHT | The one thought to rule them all is the Finished Work of Christ, along with the rich tapestry of interconnected, transcendent truths that the Cross entails.**
- V. Captivated
  - A. Keep growing in grace. Keep going deeper in the Word of Christ. Keep your heart in the love of God.
  - B. Bring all your thoughts to the foot of the Cross, and lay them there. Some will be affirmed. Some will melt. Some will explode.
    1. And the thoughts that are left standing will make you a champion of grace and truth in a culture of confusion and pain.
  - C. So...
    1. Tell your thoughts of guilt and shame and tell your self-punishing drives... "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
    2. Tell all your fears that the Savior who shed blood for you will never leave you or forsake you.
    3. Tell your inner Victim that God has declared you more than a conqueror.
    4. Tell your voices of addiction and "stuckness" you've been redeemed by the blood, and you are FREE.

- a) You're bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.
- 5. Tell that script in your head that says, "I'll never change," that your God makes all things new.
- 6. That thought that says your doomed, that voice that says you'll never be happy, that whisper that tells you life's not worth living... tell them all you have a Savior who shed his blood for your abundant life, and you claim that life by faith.
- 7. And that thought that keeps telling you God has let you down... take that thought by the hand, and show that thought...
  - a) Jesus Christ, bleeding on that Cross, and then look together at that empty grave... then take that thought and look up into the heavenly realm, and see Jesus, enthroned there, representing you, and making intercession for you, and building a mansion for you, and being your mediator, and your protector, and your ever-present help, and your friend, and your guardian, and your guide, and your provider, and your victory, and your all-sufficiency, and your sacrifice, and your Savior, and your Supporter, and your soon and coming King... And ask that voice to tell you again how God has let you down.
- D. Victory is the day when every thought is held captive by Calvary, captivated by the love of God made possible by the obedience of Christ.
- E. That is the weapon of our warfare.
- F. That is the armor that is mighty in God.
  - 1. That is psychological wholeness.
  - 2. That is the end of addiction.
  - 3. That is the depth of forgiveness.
  - 4. That is demonic deliverance.
  - 5. That is the power of love.
  - 6. That is the glory of Grace.
  - 7. That is the fight of faith.
  - 8. That is the believer's authority.
- VI. So let's put on the armor of God
  - A. **Almighty God, today, I put on the full armor of God.**
    - 1. **I put on the BELT OF TRUTH, to understand the times in which I live.**
    - 2. **I put on the BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, to guard and protect my heart.**
    - 3. **I put on the BOOTS OF THE GOSPEL, for my mission in a hurting world.**
    - 4. **I take up the SHIELD OF FAITH, to believe my God no matter what.**
    - 5. **I wear the HELMET OF SALVATION, to guard my mind from delusion and despair.**
    - 6. **I carry the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, to defeat the darkness and lift high the Cross.**
  - B. **I declare myself a soldier of the Cross.**
  - C. **I stand in the Victory of Christ.**
  - D. **I make you, God, my stronghold today.**
  - E. **Amen.**