

I. Introduction

- A. I want to talk to you about the lies that have tried to keep you small. These are part of the spiritual warfare we all face.
- B. I grew up in a church in Chicago, and in my formative years, I was taught a version of Christianity that took a true teaching from the Bible and pushed it too far. That true teaching was the virtue of being humble.
- C. My version of Christianity pushed it too far, to a point that left no room for my dreams.
- D. My version of Christianity...
 - 1. Left no room for greatness, because good Christians were humble.
 - 2. Left no room for wealth, because good Christians were poor.
 - 3. Left no room for achievement, because good Christians were lowly.
 - 4. Left no room for ambition, because good Christians were meek.
 - 5. Left no room for toughness, because good Christians were mild.
- E. And it's not just the church.
- F. And the world preaches the same sermon, just with different words: that you don't matter because you're not pretty enough, strong enough, or good enough.
- G. The message from both sides is the same: Fold your hands. Sit still. Lower your expectations. That is the story of your life. The end.
- H. And, tragically, one of the primary weapons they use to keep you in that prison is the Bible itself. They'll take a verse like the one we're looking at today and twist it. Here it is:
 - 1. *"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,"* (Philippians 2:3-5)
- I. Hearing that, you can see how they do it. They use verses like this to make you believe that God wants you to be a doormat.
- J. I am here today to tell you that is wrong. Dead wrong. It is a radical misinterpretation of Scripture.
- K. Here is the truth of the Gospel. Please let this sink in:
 - 1. You matter, and therefore your choices matter.
 - 2. You matter and therefore your desires matter.
 - 3. You matter and therefore your hopes, your dreams, your prayers, your plans... it all matters ...
 - a) ...because God made you, and when he saved you, he put a crown on your head, set you as the captain of your ship, and said, now go get the life of your dreams... and then he promised:
 - (1) *"Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart."* (Psalms 37:4)
- L. How would you feel if the desires of your heart came true? What would your life be like? Your relationships? Your mental health?
- M. So it all comes down to this.
 - 1. **The only thing that changes your life is making a decision. So the only thing the devil has to do to keep you from your heart's desire is to distract you, tame you, deflate you, or isolate you out of ever making the decisions.**
- N. That's what this whole series, is about.
 - 1. Series title: **Quit Telling Yourself I Can't**
- O. It's about tapping into the power to make those high-agency, dominion-unleashing, life-changing decisions.
- P. And that brings us to our message today, which I'm calling:
 - 1. **Quit Waiting Around in the Prison of Brokenness When You've Already Been Set Free**
- Q. So let's look at this verse together and see how Paul exposes 4 plays in the devil's playbook, and gives you the path to your dreams.
- R. Let's get into it.
- S. Here's the first play in the devil's playbook:

II. Four Plays in the Devil's Playbook

A. Play 1: He DISTRACTS You

- 1. **"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition"**
- 2. There are 4 words in the New Testament for ambition (*philotimia*, *zēlos*, *spoudē*), and this is the only negative one, selfish ambition (*eritheia*).
- 3. Ambition is a good thing. God put a fire in your belly. He gave you a holy ambition to build, to create, to lead, to provide, to make a mark on this world for your blessing, the world's benefit, and His glory. That is a good and powerful thing.
- 4. The devil hates ambitious Christians, so he made a counterfeit.
- 5. The Greek word for selfish ambition isn't for an emotionally healthy drive; it's *eritheia*. This is a clawing, scheming ambition rooted in rivalry. This is the mindset of people so desperate for power that they would burn down the whole village just to rule the ashes.
- 6. Selfish ambition doesn't spring from the desires of your heart, it comes from the woundedness of your heart. From the script saying...
 - a) You're not enough. You're falling behind. You don't have what it takes, so you better start scheming. You're stupid so you better fake being smart. You're weak so you better bully your way into looking strong. You're unlovable, so you better manipulate that relationship and exploit that person... or hide in the shadows all your days.
- 7. Here's the difference:
 - a) **SELFISH AMBITION** reflects an insecure **DRIVE** for validation through dominance or withdrawal. It is rooted in painful wounds of the **PAST**—arising from a fractured sense of identity and worth.
 - (1) It leads to relational breakdown, fractured community, moral compromise, and lingering pain.
 - b) **HOLY AMBITION** reflects an energized **CALL** toward service and beauty. It is rooted in an appealing vision of the **FUTURE**—arising from a noble sense of identity and worth, secured in Christ.

(1) It leads to relational closeness, healed community, moral integrity, and enduring love.

8. Which one do you think will lead you to achieving the deepest desires of your heart? Which one will lead you away from the deepest desires of your heart?
 - a) The only thing that changes your life is making a decision.
 - b) So... **Making the decision to bring your heart to Jesus again and again is the one decision that makes every other decision possible on the journey to your dreams.**
9. In the first play, the devil distracts you. In the second play...

B. Play #2: He TAMES You

1. **"Or conceit..."**
2. If the devil can't distract you with a selfish ambition, he will try to TAME you.
3. The Greek word is *kenodoxia*, and it literally means "empty glory."
4. The story of the human race is the story of lost glory. You were created in the image of God. Given dominion. The king and the queen of the world. Glorified by God himself. Even the mighty angels were dazzled by the radiant brilliance of human glory.
5. But all of that came crashing down in that terrible, horrible, no-good, very bad day called the Fall. When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost their crowns, their thrones, dominion, and their glory.
6. And in that moment, the human heart was left with a deep, aching craving for its primal glory.
 - a) Following?
7. You still see hints of it. It's that glimpse you see in a child who wants to be an astronaut, a symbol for a longing to break out of limits and explore the boundaries. Or a child who wants to be president, a symbol for a desire to rule the world for the common good. That is the echo of the Garden of Eden in an innocent child's soul.
8. But then the taming process begins. The brainwashing of a fallen world starts whispering the rules of domestication:
 - a) Be reasonable.
 - b) Don't sing so loud.
 - c) Don't dream so big.
 - d) Lower your expectations. Tame your desires.
9. And so you contract. You learn the rules of the cage.
10. And this is where the devil sets the trap of *kenodoxia*.
11. He offers you "glory" for being a good pet. He gets the world to applaud you for being "reasonable," for playing "safe." But this is empty glory because it's applause for the tame house cat, not for the lion God created you to be.
 - a) **If you need to shrink yourself so your friends feel better about themselves, you need to upgrade your friends.**
 - b) **And if you need your friends to shrink themselves so you can feel good about yourself, you need to upgrade your game.**
12. When Paul says you should do nothing for empty glory, he's saying quit aiming too low, quit playing it safe.
13. You need a Redeemer to restore your true glory. And when you get saved, that is exactly what happens. The Father in heaven doesn't just forgive you; He swings open the door to your cage. He looks at you and says:
14. "Justified! I approve of you. I am proud of you. You are my child, and in you I am highly pleased!"
15. That is your glory. That is all the glory you will ever need. This is the platform for your victory. It's the platform for THE LIFE OF YOUR DREAMS. You don't work for glory; you work from glory.
16. So listen to me. I am telling you today: Quit asking for permission to be the lion God made you to be.
17. The applause of the world will always be for the house cat, because the lion scares them. Stop purring when you were made to roar. Stop apologizing for the fire God put in your soul. Unleash that primal genius. You cannot build the life of your dreams while you are begging for the world's approval. Your Father has already approved you. He's opened the cage and set you free. Go after it.
18. Here's play number 3 in the devil's playbook.

C. Play #3: He DEFLATES You

1. **"Lowliness of mind/humility"**
2. If he can't distract you with selfish ambition or tame you with empty glory, he will try to DEFLATE you.
3. How? He takes the most powerful, liberating word in our arsenal—humility—and he twists it into something ugly. He wants you to hear "humility" and think "doormat." He wants you to think "weakness." He wants you to think "loser." He wants you to think "little." His goal is to pop the balloon of your God-given confidence, leaving you deflated on the floor.
4. But this is where we expose the lie. Biblical humility is the ultimate power move. It is not playing dumb, keeping silent, or playing small. Here it is:
 - a) **Biblical humility is a radical orientation to grace.**
 - b) **It is the settled, emotional confidence that because of what Jesus has done for you on the Cross, you have everything you need and more. It is the new mental programming, the anthem of a grace-filled heart that sings:**
 - (1) **I am proud of myself, and I hope you're proud of yourself too.**
 - (2) **I am valued, and so are you.**
 - (3) **I am cherished, and so are you.**
 - (4) **I am awesome, and so are you.**
 - (5) **I am worthy of honor and respect, and so are you.**
 - (6) **I am richly blessed, highly favored, and deeply loved, and in Christ, so are you!**
5. This isn't pop psychology; this is deep theology. It's Paul saying, "I am what I am by the grace of God." It's him saying, "I can do all things... through Christ who gives me strength."

6. So I am telling you today: REJECT THE DEFLATION.
 - a) Reject the lie that makes you play small because you think that's what good Christians are supposed to do. Stop apologizing for your blessings. Quit shrinking back when God has called you to step up.
7. I am giving you permission to be proud of what God's grace is doing in your life.
 - a) So be proud of your achievements, because that pride is just gratitude on fire. Take satisfaction in the family you are raising. Feel the pride of getting in shape, of breaking an addiction, of just staying alive another day.
8. That's not arrogance. That is you agreeing with God about the good work He is doing in you. That is the superpower of a soul saturated in grace.
9. Now, let's look at the devil's final play, the one he uses to keep you from chasing your dreams.

D. Play #4: He ISOLATES You

1. **Let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.**
2. Have you ever held a door open for someone, and they get angry? They snap back, "I can get my own door, thank you!" We've all seen it, and maybe we've even felt that impulse ourselves. That reaction, as common as it is, is a sign of a heart that has learned to protect itself at all costs, of a heart that has been isolated by fear. And on the flip side, the person who gives help with a smug sense of superiority is just as broken, isolated by their own pride.
3. This is the devil's masterpiece. He isolates you by destroying your ability to give help without pride and to receive help without shame.
4. Paul's vision was revolutionary.
 - a) He saw Jesus as creating a new society where the wealthy patrician and the impoverished plebeian take communion side-by-side as equals.
 - b) There's no hierarchy here, just brothers and sisters in a family.
5. When he writes that you should consider others better than yourself he doesn't mean they are morally better.
 - a) He means that you should be so secure in your own identity that you don't always have to go first, you don't always have to win, you don't always have to be in control. You are so fully validated, you don't care where you stand in line. You can give. You can receive. You can be in front, in back, in the middle, so what?
 - b) You can care about the interests of others, because your Father has of fully cared for the interests of you; there's nothing to lose.
6. This is important because we're talking about your dream life, and I'm telling you your dream live requires this crazy little thing called LOVE.
7. I get it that for many people this is really hard. Especially if there has been trauma or pain in your past. You've got your shields up, and rightly so. Relationship, yes, but not too close. Love, yes, but not too intimate. Keep your distance. Shields up.
8. And love requires vulnerability. So the devil whispers the lie that sounds like wisdom: "The world is not safe. People are not safe. To love is to hand someone a weapon. The only smart move is to protect your heart."
9. The great writer C.S. Lewis understood this terrible choice better than anyone. Listen to what he wrote:
 - a) "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable."
10. But the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the story of a God who chose vulnerability.
 - a) Jesus did not keep His heart intact. He did not wrap it in the luxuries of heaven. He did not lock it up safe. He came down, He loved, and He let His heart be wrung and utterly broken on a cross for you.
11. The Gospel does not promise you a life free from heartbreak. It promises you a God who will be with you in the heartbreak. It doesn't promise you success in every venture. It promises you a Father who will be proud of you for having the courage to try.
12. And when you are secure in that, you are finally free.
13. But let's be absolutely clear. The Gospel is not primarily a call for you to muster up the courage to love others. Above all, it is a declaration of the unshakable love of God for you. Jesus didn't just die to show you how to love; He died to make you eternally safe in the love of the Father. The cross was a rescue. When you finally rest in that vertical love, you are freed from the coffin of isolation.
14. The decision, then, is not to try harder to love, but to finally, fully rest in the finished work of the cross and receive the love of your Father.
15. That is the only path where the life of your dreams is found.

III. Conclusion

- A. Paul finishes: *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."*
- B. Do you understand what Paul just said? This isn't poetry. This isn't a nice thought for your refrigerator magnet. This is the nuclear option of heaven. This is God saying, "I'm about to download into your operating system the same fearless confidence, the same unshakeable security, the same world-conquering courage that drove My Son to stare down death itself and WIN."
- C. The mind of Christ doesn't whisper. It ROARS.
 1. It's the mind that walked on water while everyone else was drowning in doubt.
 2. It's the mind that touched lepers while everyone else crossed the street.
 3. It's the mind that flipped tables in the temple because sometimes holy anger is the only righteous response.

4. It's the mind that hung on a cross, bleeding and broken, and still had the audacity to shout "IT IS FINISHED!" – not "I am finished" but "IT is finished" – the work, the victory, the total demolition of every chain that ever held you back.
- D. And here's what's about to blow your mind: That same resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead? It's not in heaven waiting for you. It's IN YOU. RIGHT NOW.
 1. And...
 2. **If you keep on coming to him, Jesus will upload his own psychology into your psychology and you, for the first time, will be whole in power, love, and a sound mind.**
- E. So let me declare over your life right now:
 1. That dream that's been whispering in your heart for years? That's not wishful thinking – that's the voice of God calling you to greatness!
 2. That business you're afraid to start? That relationship you're afraid to pursue? That addiction you're afraid you'll never break? That giant standing between you and your promised land?
 - a) The giant doesn't know it yet, but it's already DEAD. Because greater is He that is in you than ANYTHING that stands against you!
- F. Some of you have been sitting in the waiting room of your life for so long, you've started decorating it. You've made friends with your limitations. You've gotten comfortable with your cage.
 1. But I'm telling you – your waiting room days are OVER!
 2. God didn't save you to be safe. He saved you to be DANGEROUS!
 3. He didn't redeem you to be reasonable. He redeemed you to be REVOLUTIONARY!
- G. You want to know why the enemy has been fighting you so hard? Because he sees what you're about to become! He knows that the moment you realize who you really are – the moment you stop asking permission to be powerful – the moment you step into the fullness of your calling – his kingdom starts crumbling!
 1. So here's my question: WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
 2. Are you waiting for the fear to go away? It won't! Do it afraid! Are you waiting to feel qualified? You never will! Are you waiting for permission? Heaven is giving it to you RIGHT NOW!
 3. This is your moment! This is your time! This is your divine appointment with destiny!
- H. Tomorrow, the sun is going to rise, and you have a choice. You can wake up the same person who walked in here today, or you can wake up as the warrior God created you to be.
- I. You can keep telling yourself "I can't," or you can start declaring "I CAN do ALL things through Christ who strengthens me!"
 1. You can't have an extraordinary life without making extraordinary choices.
 2. It's time to put to death contentment with ordinary.
- J. You can stay in the boat, or you can step out onto the water!
 1. You can keep living in the prison of your past, or you can walk through the door that Jesus ALREADY kicked down!
 2. The decision that changes everything isn't coming someday – it's here NOW!
- K. So say your yes you're ready to make it! Say your yes if you're done playing small! Say your yes if you're ready to stop waiting and start LIVING for Jesus.
- L. Because the Champion of Heaven is with you! The armies of Heaven are backing you! The Spirit of God is empowering you! And NOTHING – absolutely NOTHING – can stop what God is about to do through you!
 1. The prison doors are open! Go! Step up. YOUR VICTORY STARTS NOW!
 2. DO THE THING! MAKE THE MOVE! TAKE THE TERRITORY! CLAIM YOUR PROMISE!
 3. Your dream life isn't waiting for you in the future – it's waiting for you to SAY YES right now.. and every day.
 4. So what do you say, church? Are you ready to LIVE?
 5. Then let's GO! In Jesus' mighty name – LET'S GO!

IV. Prayer

- A. Father, We're done waiting! We're done hiding! We're done playing small! Fill us with the mind of Christ! Fill us with resurrection power! We declare that TODAY everything changes! We declare that fear no longer owns us! We declare that we are FREE, we are POWERFUL, we are CHOSEN, we are VICTORIOUS! Send us out of here as warriors! Send us out as champions! Let Hell tremble at what's about to be unleashed! In the ALL-POWERFUL, MOUNTAIN-MOVING, CHAIN-BREAKING name of Jesus! AMEN!