**The Battleground in Our Minds**

This is going to be a different message for me. I am going to teach from my recently going conversation with the Lord.

* I don’t think I have had a stream of dialogue and revelation like this in my entire life.

**I missed you guys at our last gathering here. I was in Oregon for my sister’s wedding.**

* While back in Oregon where I am raised, you see old pictures of yourself
* I see pictures of me at 4 years old, 10 years old, 15 years old, 20 years old
* I see the pictures, and I know they were me…but it almost is a different life

My wife knows my history and she kind has kinda a hard time believing I experienced the things I did. Because she knows me as me now!

* And if you knew me now, my past would seem pretty confusing.
* Briefly let me clue you in…

**My most vivid memories at the earlies age I are almost completely occupied by fear of abandonment**

* I hated to be alone. As a child, if I woke up in the middle of the night, I would freak out because I was the only one awake. I felt so alone.
* I had horrendous homesickness
* I couldn’t do sleep-overs as a young kid because at bed time I would call for my mommy
* Even at 18 years old, my parents drop me off for college. Kids are planning to go surfing, planning to play volleyball and I go to my dorm to cry.
* Humiliating (and perplexing)

**My innocence as a child was abruptly interrupted as I was introduced to pornography in the 3rd grade.**

* Battling the guilt and shame through my childhood
* So much so, I raised my hand at ***every*** altar call
* I was never convinced that I was really saved
* Left behind series ruined me – I was convinced that Jesus was going to come in the middle of the night and take everyone except me – which flared up all my homesickness insecurities.

**Through middle school and into high school, I developed horrible anxiety as I tried to live up to the accomplishments of my siblings**

* My brother – valedictorian went on to attend an Ivy League college, touring the world with his music, and inventing computer software
* My sister – also valedictorian, 1st team all American in sports, being featured on EPSN, played on the US Olympic volleyball team, went on to play pro-beach volleyball
* And… *I liked dirt bikes.*
  + I didn’t become valedictorian, I got my first B my very semester
* I was crushed by this sense of failure.
* And no pressure from my parents. The comparison that I drew upon myself crushed me.

**At the end of middle school, my freshman year I transferred from my little home town school of 30 people to my class of over 300 people in my class.**

* Not knowing a soul, that was the year I developed horrible cystic acne
  + And then constantly getting little children asking, “what’s wrong with your face”
  + I had to go on Accutane
* I was convinced I would never find a woman who would find me attractive
* So I had awful insecurity and embarrassment of my appearance.

**So I was kinda a mess.**

* I was trapped in anxiety, fear, insecurity, low-self esteem, shame, hopelessness, and deep sense of failure, and ultimately depression
  + I would fantasize about suicide.
  + I remember the only reason it wasn’t attractive was that I wouldn’t be around to hear everyone’s remorse and how sad they felt for me

**But here’s the odd thing: the depth of my despair didn’t match my circumstances. My despair was exponentially worse than it ought to have been**

* I had a amazing parents. They gave me the world
* I was loved, supported, and provided for.
* I didn’t have any drug, substance or alcohol addiction
* I was involved in church
* I was never abused in any form
* I really had the dream childhood
* But yet somehow, I was a dumpster fire inside

**And if you know me today, first 2/3rd of my life are nothing like I am now.**

* I am this pretty positive happy go lucky person
* I am a confident entrepreneurial risk taker
* I love life and love the pursuit of adventure
* I am the one who tries to look on the bright side of things
* If something doesn’t work out, I usually keep moving

**Camille reflects on my past in confusion, “wow, how was that even you…”**

* I never really had an answer. I just said I grew out of it.
* Visiting Oregon, seeing my old photos, and seeing the look in my eyes.
* I was asking God, how and why was I such a mess?
  + God, what was wrong with me on the inside?

**And the Lord answered, *“You were being demonically tormented.”***

* Whoa. Really? How was that? Where? That doesn’t sound right.
* ***Can I get a second opinion on this?***

When we think of people being demonically tormented, we think of people in the bible who are breaking chains, growling, gnashing their teeth, foaming and eating live chickens

* I was raised in a Christian home. I went to church every week
* And I had a pretty normal life from external appearances

***So I am like, how, what, where, and why?***

* Surely if it was demonic tormenting someone would have noticed
* my experiences seemed normal from the outside
* And the Lord replied…

***“Not all demonic tormenting is public nor visible”***

**But wait a minute, in the Bible it is!**

* In the New Testament, demonic activity was very public.
* If you were being demon possessed, the whole city knew who you were
* You didn’t even need to believe in God to believe in a demon in those days.
  + So when Jesus sent the disciples out to go cast out demons they probably had a lot names to come to mind.
* That means in Jesus days, **demonic tormenting was very public.**

**Does it seem odd to you we have almost none of the similar encounters with the demonic today like during the days of Jesus?**

* Why is it different now? What happened?
* Two important things in what changed about demonic warfare

**First, everything changed after Jesus gave us authority to cast out demons.**

* This meant any public demonic tormenting would become a target of a Holy Spirit empowered believer.
* I think after Jesus whopped the butts of all the demons, the demonic started to rethink their strategy
  + Foaming at the mouth and gnashing your teeth became bad for business
  + Spiritual warfare was like whack-a-mole back then.
* In other words, **when we received authority to cast out demons, the devil changed strategy so he would be harder to identify.**
  + Colossians describes the devil’s kingdom as the power of ***darkness***, which means he is going to operate outside the light.
* And this makes an important statement about **Satan’s goal**...

**The devil’s goal is not to make a scene in your life. It’s to make a stop in your life.**

* Satan’s primary goal is to stop you. Everything he does is to stop you.
* Satan is not trying to build a reputation for himself, he is trying to oppress a people
  + Satan is totally fine if something else gets the credit as long as you remain oppressed and neutralized.

**The devil would rather oppress you in secret, than humiliate you in public**

* That way he remains unopposed for as long as possible.
* And because of this, a lot of people are being oppressed and they don’t even know it …
  + I will get into the how and why shortly)

**So I am wondering in what way was I being tormented, Lord?**

* **How? I did I have a demon? I know it’s in the darkness, but I never detected it at all.**
* God didn’t specify if it was an evil spirit or an actual demon, he just said you were being tormented. (it doesn’t matter to me)
* Well how and where?
* ***“You were being tormented in your mind”***

**The plagues I experienced: Fear of abandonment, anxiety, comparison, low self esteem, insecurity, hopeless, depression, self hatred, shame…**

* All experiences exclusively ***held in my mind***
* I spent probably my entire life up until I was 21 being tormented in my mind
* And I never knew it.

**That’s the second thing that happened that is different in from the days of Jesus**

* We made the temple of the Holy Spirit and God’s spirit dwells in us (1 Corinthians 3:16)
* We were given the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16)
* And so like any decent thief or criminal, Satan changed the strategy for where he would wage war against us
  + He moved largely from physical oppression, to mental oppression

**And so, I suggest Satan is still controlling and oppressing lots of people. But instead of doing it through the flesh, he is doing it through the mind.**

* If he can influence your mind, he can operate through your flesh.
* And it will go undetected.

**Here is the most important thing to know: The spiritual battleground of our times is in our minds**

* **Harassing and tormenting thoughts are the most private form of demonic oppression one can have.**

For me as I am coming to this realization, it’s starting to make sense.

**So I started to think on my thoughts and experiences.**

* I remember the experience vividly. But the odd thing is, I don’t even think I am capable of feeling those thoughts or thinking them.
* I remember doing it, but it was like they weren’t even my thoughts!
* And the Lord replied, ***“because those weren’t your thoughts”***

**You hear us a lot saying, your feelings are not the truth. We need to add another one into the rotation…**

**Not every thought in your mind belongs to you.**

* We know this because we have the mind of Christ. And the mind of Christ cannot have a sinful or self-hating thought.
* But we have those thoughts!
  + Yes, they are in your head, but they are not your own.

***But my question to God was, how did I tolerate 20 years of torment and not do anything?***

* Surely I heard a message, got prayed for or something?
* Surely I was exposed to powerful people who could have helped during those years. Why was it until my 20s did I remain oppressed?

**Then I remembered that during the entirety of that time I was being tormented I held a particular theological belief…**

* ***I was taught a Christian could be mentally ill but a Christian could not be influenced by a demon.*** 
  + By the way, I do not believe (like some) that all mental illness is a demon or a spirit
* **But I believed once you have Jesus, that’s it!**
* **John 8:32** – you will know the truth and the truth will ***set you free***. He is free.. indeed.
  + So I lived most of my life never believing anything could oppress me.
  + But that’s not the truth

**A few years ago, I did a series on Christians and demon possession.**

* It will educate you. The conclusion is
  + **Being a Christian does not make you immune to the demonic**
  + You don’t become a Christian and then live in the pope-mobile like protective glass bubble.

**Just because you belong to God does not mean you cannot be influenced, controlled, inhabited by the devil, a demon or an evil spirit.**

* Jesus rebuked the Satan speaking through Peter – *“Get behind me Satan”*

**The truth is, God says he purchased you.**

* You are His. You are a people for **His own possession** and purpose.
* **You belong to God.**
* **This where people get confused, they think that because they belong to God, they cannot be harmed by the demonic.**

**But that is very thing that makes the devil a thief…**

* He is accessing and pursuing something that doesn’t belong to him.
* **The devil is called a thief because he is stealing from God’s possessions: What does God call you? A people for His own possession.**
* Satan wouldn’t be a thief if you didn’t belong to God
* Satan wouldn’t be your enemy, if you didn’t belong to God

**Let me give you an analogy…**

**If you came here and left a window or a door open and you return home and find a thief inside, does that thief own your house?**

* No. but guess what, he is in your house.
* He has control over your house until you arrest him and take him out in handcuffs
* While he is there, he will steal, he will kill, he will destroy
* You are not owned by the Devil, a demon or a spirit… but you can be inhabited, influenced, manipulated, controlled by one.
  + Make sense?
  + Go find that message to hear more

**So here’s the thing…**

**The years I was being tormented were the exact years, I believed that Christians were immune to demonic tormenting.**

* **In other words: I was actually taught out of my deliverance.**

**I believe you can be discipled and taught in ways that prolong your oppression**

* Intellect gave cover to the enemy to operate in my mind and go undetected
* My oppression was hidden behind something I learned and believed
* **Demonic strongholds like to hide themselves behind intellect**

**Intellect doesn’t have to be knowledge. Intellect can be in the form of disbelief**

* In other words, the things you ***don’t*** believe in
* *“The devil doesn’t do that”* – well he did.
* *“where do you find that in the Bible.”*
* These are places where intellect takes the form of *disbelief.*

**And because we don’t find something in the Bible, we think it is impossible.**

* Here’s the thing about the Bible: All of the Bible is about the God. But not all of God is in the Bible.
* The same is true about Satan. Not everything about the evil spirits, their strategies, and how they operate are in the Bible

**What I believed was impossible for the devil to do, gave him the exact permission to do that very thing.**

* **What we believe is impossible for the devil to do, can give him the exact permission to do that thing.**
  + Not only did it give him the permission to do it also gave him the cloak to hide under
* If the devil can find an area of your life to hide himself, it’s means he has found a place where he will be uncontested (and you’ll likely blame God).

**The devil is looking for places to attack where there will be no opposition.**

* That’s why James 4:17 says, ***resist*** the devil and he will flee.
  + Suddenly this passage makes more sense to me
* Satan is looking for places where there will be no opposition
  + A good place he can find no opposition is the place you think is impossible for him to enter.

**If you believe you are fully immune from the devil, you probably already are oppressed**

* That was me. I thought I was immune and totally free
* But I was totally oppressed
* I thought my mind was immune…

**But it’s amazing at how scriptures warn of this exact thing…**

**2 Corinthians 11:3 *But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray…***

**We need to live as though our minds are the battleground with the enemy.**

* Not a battleground for warring against ourselves, but against an enemy.
* That is what I was missing …
* **I was taught that my thoughts belonged to me**

**I was taught I was in a battle and *my flesh* was the enemy. I need to get MY thoughts under control.**

* In the Christian journey, I believe almost all of us are fighting against ourselves.
* **We have a theological term for it: *sanctification*** 
  + Where you are working towards holiness of your life
  + You engage yourself in a struggle and fight to develop self-control, discipline, commitment, purity,
* **But here is the thing…**

**The reason demonic oppression of your mind is so damaging is because it comes in the form of your own voice and your own thoughts.**

**Not every thought you have is your own.**

* Do you want to know when happens when you believe every thought is your own?

**When we believe every thought is our own, we war with ourselves.**

* All those years: **I was fighting… but I was fighting the wrong enemy**
* **You cannot win a war if you engage the wrong the enemy**
* I was battling my old self
* The reason I remained in torment was because I never engaged the right enemy.

**When the Bible says we don’t fight against flesh and flood, it’s also talking about your own flesh and blood**

* I don’t think I ever grasped the fact that my old man was gone
* In the book of Romans, 46 times it says, “You’re dead”
* Your old man is gone.

**How many people are struggling the Christian life against the old man never realizing that they are fighting something that no longer exists.**

**The problem with making yourself the enemy is you develop self-hatred. Which explains my suicidal thoughts.**

* **Self hatred could be a sign of demonic torment where the demonic spirit has convinced you that you are the problem**
* The enemy’s plan is to torment you, and convince you the problem is **you**.
* So that you will chase your own tail.

**When the enemy tricks you into believing you are the problem, he is actually teaching you how to self-sustain your own oppression.**

* I actually don’t think I had a demon inhabiting me at all.
* But my oppression was self sustaining like a cycle
* You’ve heard us say from Christ Life…
* **A lie unchallenged becomes truth. A lie accepted defends itself.**
* it cloaks itself through rationalization, logic, reason
  + And it makes space for the others lies. And invites them

Fear invited Anxiety… Anxiety invited Insecurity… Insecurity invited comparison... Comparison invited hopelessness… Hopelessness invited Moral failure... Moral failure invited shame… Shame invited self-hatred... Self-hatred invited self-destruction.

* Its like every mental dysfunction had a family reunion in my head
* They all sustained each other through a cycle.
* Then the demonic can establish a lie that produces a cycle… and then he can slowly walk away, giving you a thumbs up: “you’re doing great!”

**It was like a fortress in my head**

// Time Check //

**The Lord took me to two passages…**

Perhaps the best passage in all the Bible about the battlefield field of your mind is this one..

**2 Corinthians 10:4-5:** *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ*

**First off, notice that it says, we take captive every thought.**

* Again, that means that not every thought is your own. Otherwise you wouldn’t be the one taking captive thoughts in your own mind.
* You have trespassing thoughts in that mind of Christ.

**But I want you to look at the word there for “Strongholds”**

* The word there for strongholds is actually translated as **castle** or **fortress**.
* We have divine power to demolish castles and fortresses… *(he is not talking about physical castles / kingdoms)*
  + **What do Castles represent? A kingdom.**
  + Paul is saying there are kingdoms of thought in our mind which have created castles and fortress that needs to be demolished.

**Castles or Fortresses… what are they made of? Bricks or stones**

* It takes a lot of bricks and stones to make a castle or fortress
* I believe **Each lie we believe is used in creating a fortress in our minds for another kingdom.**
* What do castles and fortresses do? They provide cover and safety to those inside.
  + Satan builds his kingdom in your mind with lies. He does that until he creates a safe space in position and torment you

**If you are going to build a castle or fortress, you not only need bricks and stones, you need mortar. You need glue to hold them together.**

(note for Liz: go back to showing 2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

**Look at the word “Arguments”**

* This does not mean you win the argument in a debate. I used to think that this means we should debate people.
* Paul is talking about our own minds

**The word for “arguments” means: reasoning, judgments, and decisions.**

* The glue and mortar that holds a lie in its place in your mind, is reasoning, judgements, and decisions.
* **In other words, lies are hard to remove because they are held in place by logic, reason and belief.**
  + “I need more self control” or “It’s my fault” “It’s my own flesh”
  + “Its impossible for a Christian to be influenced by a demon” in your mind
* **Lies are believable for a reason. They need to make sense to be believable**
  + The lies in my head were so hard to dismantle, because the glue that held them there made so much sense.
  + If something makes sense, then we usually don’t suspect the devil

**You can’t simply remove a castle or fortress. You have to demolish it.**

* It’s great to challenge a lie in our mind. But that one lie might just be one brick that’s part of a huge structure.
* In demolishing a castle, you need to do it brick by brick
* As you dismantle one lie, ask how did that one got there? You will probably find another.

**But I was still troubled by Jesus’s words “You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free”**

* And I felt the Lord telling me to look at his words

***John 8:32 – you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free!***

* I always thought that you know Jesus, you would be free. I knew Jesus but I was still deceived.
* **First off, your freedom is measured by how you use it.** 
  + A judge can declare you free from prison, but until you walk out of the jail, you are still a prisoner

**The word truth here is …Aletheia – (All-lay-thay-ah)**

* Means “true, truth, or … ***in reality***” –
* the root word *alēthēs* – (All-lay-thace) – means are you ready for this? ***“not hidden, not concealed. Or in reality.”***
* So you could translate John 8:32, you shall know the reality, and the reality shall set you free.

**There is difference between knowing a truth and *knowing the reality*.**

* You can have Jesus and believe in him, but still live in deception.
* I knew the truth, but I didn’t permit the truth to expose what was concealed
  + I never really knew what was going on.
  + I added knowledge, but that knowledge to reveal the reality
* ***Truth is not an additive process. It is a replacement.*** 
  + We add truths to our mind, but never ever ask, what does this replace?
* **Truth is not complete, until it has exposed the corresponding lie**
  + Truth provides freedom only when it exposes and dismantles the lie.

**You will not be free until you use truth to expose what is really going on.**

* The reality of what really was going on is what set me free.

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**So what are we to do? If you are enduring something like this, how do you get free?**

**First, let me say that I believe we can fight the devil through biology.**

* I believe man partners with God to bring about healing in the physical realm with medicine
* Some things are biological and the devil is exploiting infirmity in biology.
* We should not reject medicine that can help close a door biologically

But spiritually, I think we have two options

**1) Dismantle the lies brick by brick.** The best one I am familiar is Christ Life phrase 1. You start back at birth and retrace your history and expose lies from birth until now

* You get added to the interest list for the next Christ Life on our website
* We also have a lie detector template you can download
* I will email out a link for Christ life and a lie detector download

**2) Open up your life to someone with spiritual authority.** Notice I didn’t say someone who is really bible smart (these are the “hyper spiritual” ones)

* You can be Bible smart and have zero spiritual authority
* You can be intellectually strong, but spiritually weak.
  + This was my problem. I had a lot of people in my life who could tell me a lot of Bible verses but no one who could speak to my oppression.
* No one had the spiritual vision to see what was going on nor had the authority to kick it out

**Someone with spiritual authority in your life is very important**

**Luke 11:21-22** *When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. But when* ***someone stronger*** *than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied*

**You need someone who is stronger than you and stronger than what’s in you**

* For my two people stand out: Eric Waterbury and Roman Amundson
* Met at their house early on. Probably at age 23 or 24
  + Meet with both of them almost every week
  + I even remember Roman would pray and pulled out swords from my back as he prayed.

**CLOSING**

**Now let be clear, not everything is the devil**

* If you look for the devil, you will find him every time.
* But your mind could be the largest spiritual battleground we will ever face and we need to be prepared for how that battle is fought.

**My goal in this talk is to first and foremost bring awareness to you about the battleground of your mind.**

* Not all your thoughts are your own.
* And therefore, **Your responsibility is not on having the thought. Your responsibility is what you do with it.** 
  + Do you act on it or not?
  + Do you let it stay or let it go?

**And this should give us new language for how describing what’s going on in our head**

* “I am having thoughts that are not matching reality.”
* “My reaction to the situation is disproportionate and unreasonable”
* “I think something is going on with what is happening in my mind”

**And finally I want to give you a different definition of victory**

* I used to think victory was freedom from any attack
* That is not the case nor the expectation
* Jesus warned us that we are going to face opposition.

**Victory over demonic oppression is not the absence of attack. Victory is being able to identify when an attack is occurring.**

* strongholds develop and exist because we give them permission to exist.

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