

Father, this morning, we just come to You – the Author, the Perfector, and the Finisher of our faith; the faithful and the true One; the everlasting Father; the Prince of peace; the One who has the keys of hades and of death; the One who was dead and is alive forevermore. It is to You we come and we surrender ourselves – our spirit, our soul, our body. Deliver us now from the spirit of distraction, from fear, from anxiety and worry. We confess our weakness, but we proclaim Your strength. Enable us, Lord, help us to focus on You, for You are the answer to all our life's issues, for Your Word say that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus in the spiritual realms. Help us to know where we are and with whom we are seated, help us now. For in Jesus' name we pray, Amen!

We go to 1 John chapter 5 verse 19.

1 John 5:19

¹⁹ We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

“We know that we are of God...” He is very sure, are you sure? Do you doubt your salvation? Occasionally. When Jyothi prayed, she used a very familiar verse: “Come boldly, come confidently, to the throne room of grace for mercy.” Mercy is for sinners, that’s what we are, but God says come boldly. When we come to the throne room of mercy, Christ is not your accuser, He is your advocate. You can’t have a better advocate than that, smarter advocate than that.

So, do you know that you are of God? We know we are of God! On the other hand, the whole world where we live, in which we live, lies under the sway of the wicked one – the spirit of the power of air, lucifer, diabolus, satan, the accuser of the brethren, that dragon, that ancient serpent, he has got so many names, the one who opposes that is true. Whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one, but we are of God, okay, note the distinction. How does the whole world lay under the sway of the wicked one? It is through deception! He controls the minds of people— whoever controls your thinking; controls you. The devil has never used a gun, a knife, or a bomb, or even his fist to intimidate anybody, to take any man captive; from the beginning till the end, he takes men and women captives through the power of a lie. It was just one lie that brought the humanity down. So, when the Bible is talking about the enemy that we face, he is absolutely real, you do not see him but he also neither sleeps nor slumbers and he has got millions and billions of his agents controlling the system – what you hear, what you see, and therefore what you say, above all, what you think. Like I said, all it took was just one lie to bring the whole human race down, so understand the power of lie.

We saw last week in John 8 and verse 32, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” It is not one definite moment, it is continuous – you shall keep knowing the truth and the truth shall keep setting you free. You shall keep knowing the truth when we come, anytime, when we gather around the Word of God, or we listen to the Word of God or read the word, we listen to the message online, whatever it is, or you read a book written by some saint about God, about the Word of God – every time we keep knowing the truth, the truth will set us free. Knowing is not intellectual, it is knowing intimately the Word of God.

John 8:34-36

³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. ³⁵ And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.

We are sons and daughters, we are called to abide, live continuously forever, but we know we do not abide forever right now, we are slaves and sons, we are sons who are slaves and slaves who are sons. But God says:

as you progress further and further, you actually realize you are abiding with God more and more if you are walking in the truth. So, John will say, “I am so glad, my children, that you are walking in the truth.”

³⁶ Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

We looked at that—there are two identities here: one is what God has spoken, the other is God Himself, “*The truth shall set you free, the Son shall set you free.*”

In John 1:12 we know,

John 1:12

¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

What is the right? “You can live with Me forever.” That’s the right! What does that mean? “*The son abides in the house forever.*” He says, “You have the right, you can choose to live with Me forever, I give you the right.” And in John 15, verse 7, Jesus says...

John 15:7

⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

So now He brings the Person and the Word together—truth and the Person. He says, “If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, it doesn’t matter what you ask, whatever you ask will be done according to the will of God and the Father will give it to you, there is no contradiction.” Whatever Jesus asked, the Father gave Him except one request, every request was answered. Even when He was asking, He knew that it was not Father’s will. So, get this basic framework because we have to become sons, ultimately sons mean daughters too, who abide with Him forever. So, if you look at all that we read, we will see ultimately there is a battle going on. Even now when I am speaking, you are battling, you are struggling—especially, the young ones are struggling and where is that struggle?

It’s not in your body—if you have a fever, take dolo—the body is not the issue, you know for the body you have solution, the issue is not the body; the issue is the mind. The battle that is being waged is primarily in our mind. If you lose in the mind, you will lose in the body; if you win in the mind, you will win in the body. That’s where the battle is raging even now. So, we will excuse the little ones because the little ones always struggle with concentration, they are just learning, but the older you get, if you struggle to concentrate, you may need deliverance and I am not joking, lot of us need deliverance in different levels. So, the battle field is our mind and all of devil’s lies are aimed at our mind.

And if you look at it, it’s very simple—if you go right to the beginning, right to when the gunda (villain) is introduced to the humanity—Genesis 3—is where gunda (villain) comes.

Genesis 3:1

¹ Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”

Two things – first: God, second: truth shall set you free, the Son shall set you free. So, he will question these two things – one: who God is; Second: what He has said. It has never changed. He will question who God is and he will question what He has said – these two things. And what does truth do? Truth tells you who God really is and what He has said—that is the Bible! Why do we study the Word of God? To know who God really is and what has He said. That’s what Jesus said, “If the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.” As you know the truth, the truth will set you free. So, this is the invisible war that is going on, you cannot see it but you can feel it, and you and I, we all struggle with this all the time. Some are more victorious, some are less, but whether you accept it or not, the battle is going on.

Paul, after Jesus, the most successful servant who applied the principles of the Kingdom of God, who understood how it works, so God used him to write.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. Meaning – there is a war, whether you know it or not, there is a war going. But we do not war like humans do, like people in the world do, we do not fight like them, it is pointless fighting like them because you cannot fight this enemy in that way. He is not hurt by bombs, he is not hurt by knives, he is not hurt by fist, he is not hurt by anything that we consider lethal in the human world, it makes no dent to his army or his tactics. But if you have to fight him, because he is an invisible enemy, you have to go to the invisible realm where God is.

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God (Don't try it on your own, it is only mighty in God) for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God,

That's how he is – he doesn't want you to know who God is, that's how he comes, "You think God is really cool? He is not. You know what, He doesn't want you to be wise, He doesn't want you to know all these things, He has kept the best from you," he messes up our mind.

bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,"

So He tells us: "This is where it has to be fought." We are at war; you and I have been equipped by God and the weapons He has given us are absolutely mighty in Him. So, first note that – we are not on the losing side; we are on the winning side. And the greatest weapon God has given us is Truth.

We saw last week about the prodigal son. You know where deliverance began? It began in his mind, when he came to his senses, and he started thinking and started thinking right, that was where his deliverance began. Your deliverance begins in your mind, it doesn't begin outside. You could think like him when he went with the bag full of money, "I am free," without realizing he was a slave. From freedom he was moving into bondage, he had no clue until he came to the end of it. All the people who think they are free, who have not been set free by the Word or the Son, will suddenly wake up to eternal fire like the rich man. The rich man thought he was free and in one blinking on an eye he realized he has gone into eternal captivity; he was unlucky because his eyes were not opened before he died. So please remember, none of us were born saved; we were born in bondage, in slavery, that is *Psalm 51* and verse 5 says.

Psalm 51:5

⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

He says, "The only thing that will set me free is truth. If I take those lies out and replace it with truth, I will become a free man."

So, we were not born free; we were born slaves – all of us, nobody was born saved. There was only one person who was born saved, that was Jesus Christ, He was born of the Holy Spirit. Every one of us were born slaves to sin. So what happens? Born slaves growing in slavery, in bondage, falsely thinking it is liberty and as we are growing, strongholds are being established in our minds. Some have few, some have many, but all have strongholds. What is a stronghold? If you go to the old city that side, you will see Golconda Fort – that's the stronghold; that is a fortress. If you have to take Hyderabad in those old days, until you had taken Golconda Fort, you hadn't taken it. When the enemy came, what did the Nizam and his soldiers, where did they retreat? Golconda Fort. Aurangzeb and his armies kept Golconda under their siege for months and months together until that siege was broken, not by force but by somebody from within, treachery from within and they opened the gates.

So we have ancient history, you look anywhere around the world, you have fortresses, castles all over the west. What are these forts? Now we use it to hoist a flag but it was not for that, these were strongholds. And we need to realize, we all have strongholds in our minds. When Israel entered into the Promise Land, the first thing they had to take down is Jericho and Jericho is a stronghold – shut up tightly, nothing can go out, nothing can come in and it resist the advance of God's army. So we have strongholds in our minds which

resist the advance of God's truth and unless those strongholds are brought down, we are saved but we don't abide in the house, we are still slaves. We are like the prodigal son, or the elder son—both are sons, both are slaves. The younger son gets out and goes out and the elder son stays outside, they are not able to abide with the Father. So like I said, we become the children of God because God gives us a gift of salvation, because we believe in the truth, we are born again. That doesn't mean we are free, we are not free until our mind is completely free of strongholds, arguments, every high thing, and every thought. It is stage by stage.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6

³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...

First you bring down strongholds; after strongholds are broken, you go after the arguments; after the arguments are taken down, you go after high thing; finally, final stage of your victory you have control over your every thought to the obedience of Christ Jesus, then you will know that you are free. So, it's a long-drawn-out battle. That's what is salvation, that's when you and I will be free. But the first thing is stronghold. You will say what is a stronghold in the mind? Let me tell you: fear is a stronghold; anger is a stronghold, pride is a very powerful stronghold, you don't know how powerful that stronghold is—I was telling the pastors last week, "The prodigal son went out... it begins in pride 'Give me my share,' I mean the father is alive. The father is humble, so he divides and gives it, he takes it and says, 'I don't want to stay anywhere near, I want to go as far as possible,' He goes further and further. Has a blast, and one day all his money is finished, he has no money, it's all gone. Now his pocket is empty but he won't go home because his pride stops him: "If I go back home, I need to tell my father, 'You are right, I am wrong,' I am not going back." Famine comes, he doesn't go; he hires himself to another man—"I can go back and work in my father's house—but no, I will try it here." He hires himself to another man who sends him to feed the pigs. You should understand with the Jewish mind that is the lowest job that you can ever get. You know what it is? Let us understand it in our term – you become a manual scavenger in Indian term. You know what they are – the ones who cleans the toilet. But he will not go back to his father's house because the pride stops him until, like we say, your belly is sticking to your backbone—and hunger can cause your mind to work in a different tangent, and he comes to his senses.

So, pride is a massive stronghold and many people will go to hell because of the stronghold called pride. Fear is a stronghold; lust is a stronghold; jealousy is a stronghold; anxiety is a stronghold; worry is a stronghold; laziness is a stronghold; rejection is a stronghold; shame is a stronghold. These are all strongholds, there are so many strongholds and depending upon our upbringing and our experiences in life, we have different kinds of strongholds, multiple strongholds which have been established in our lives, and these strongholds have to be cast down if we need to know the liberty of the sons and daughters of the living God. Why? Because the enemy uses these strongholds to control our lives and using these strongholds, he resists the truth and keeps us captive – that is Jericho. See, pride; envy; fear; anger; these are all house of thoughts, out of the thoughts come actions. Lying is a stronghold; alcoholism is stronghold, first in the mind, which goes into the body; smoking addiction; drug addiction; anger problems; these becomes stronghold in your mind and that stronghold takes over your body and your body is just a slave of that stronghold.

So, if you want deliverance, you want freedom, you have to deal with those strongholds and you have to be absolutely honest with God. God already knows, but that's not the point, will you be honest and say, "Lord, I have a problem, I need help." Let me give you an example why it is connected with the mind which goes into the body. Let us look at another stronghold which many people have, probably nobody sitting here has it – anybody has got the stronghold of stealing? Probably nobody has the stronghold of stealing, and if you do not have the stronghold of stealing, you will also realize you never have the thoughts of stealing in your mind. Have you noticed it? You don't have it because it's not a stronghold, you don't have it in your mind. What is not in your mind cannot control your body! It's as simple as that. You may have a stronghold called

lie—lying and fear go together, that's why when we counsel parents, we always tell them: don't intimidate your children, don't discipline them in anger because they will lie. Be firm, be kind, be loving, and you say that consequences are there but don't discipline them in wrath because they are young and their flesh is so weak, they will go the easy way out, they will lie their way through, then it becomes a stronghold. They will fool their father or mother first time or second time, third time and they will realize this stronghold works. What began as an idea or a thought, put it into practice, later becomes a stronghold.

It doesn't begin as a stronghold, it begins as a thought, thought into action, thought into action, thought into action; it becomes a stronghold, now that controls your life. Nobody became drunkard with one drink, it began with a thought I can handle it, I need to be cool, everybody is doing, all began with a thought. This is what people say it feels like, let me try it or I will try it once and give it up. All begins with a thought, then you continue it, continue it and it becomes a stronghold. Understand that.

When we were saved out of this world, this world of lies, it all begins with a seed of truth – James 1:18.

James 1:18

¹⁸ Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

How were we born again? Because this web of lies was penetrated by one ray of light – truth – we received that, we believed that, we humbled ourselves, bend our knees before that truth, we were born again. That's how deliverance began, salvation began, our journey to freedom and liberty began. That's how it began. There was a Person and there was a message about that Person. Jesus came, Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose again – it was all to set us free. We were sinners headed towards eternal destruction. You don't have to go that way, humble yourself, repent—change your mind, that's what it means in Greek, change your mind about the way you are thinking and going, in hindi – man firao, change your mind—and turn to God, believe in His works; He is merciful, He is gracious, He will save you.

So, one truth – we understand the entire Gospel, we believed it when we heard, believed in what was spoken to us, (which are words) and the Person's work, we were saved. What were we saved from? We were saved from the penalty of sin—eternal destruction—and after that the journey begins: how to be delivered from the power of sin which is the result of lies. The devil comes and lies, Adam and Eve believed, they listened to that lie, they act upon it and the power of sin comes over them. So, we are being broken by the power of sin which is the power of lies. So, when the truth came to us, the first truth is about who we are—born in sin, shaped in iniquity; truth about this world; truth about God, who is God—"The kindness of God will cause you to repent, otherwise the severity of God will one day cut you off," both kindness and the severity well balanced. It is not like what some people say: "Ultimately, everybody will be saved." No! If you forsake the kindness of God, then the severity of God will come. He is longsuffering, He can wait for a long time but He will not wait forever. The truth about eternity—it is either heaven or hell, there is no third place—and the truth of God's way out— *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, I will give you rest."*

So we heard, it cut through the dark haze in our mind and we believed, we didn't understand the whole thing but we believed and we surrendered to that truth and what happens, God got a foothold in our mind. If you know about the second world war, the tide, it was called the D-Day landing, on the beaches of Normandy in France, tens and thousands and thousands of soldiers were airdropped behind enemy lines, many, or I would say if my memory is right, most of them died but one set of people in the enemy area controlled by the Nazis got a foothold, a beachhead, they got it and from there the allies started landing their troops, from there the victory of the allied forces began, little by little they started pushing back, pushing back, and then one day by 1946, Europe was free. So, when you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and repented, God got a foothold in our brain, in our mind, in our life, now the battle begins to set us completely free. This is how it happened in the book of Joshua—little by little, little by little. And you have to be consistently willing to fight this battle. These are the real pictures in the Old Testament, shown there, given there, very graphically, man fighting man, so in the New Covenant we will understand we are not

fighting flesh and blood, this is a battle we either win or lose, and we have been equipped by God to win and if we lose, it's only because of ignorance. That is why God says, "My people perish because of lack of knowledge," of what God has done for us and what God is willing to do for us, every day. So every time we hear the truth...

2 Corinthians 10:4-5

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ 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...

Strongholds are there and from that stronghold arguments start going out, they are built into our thought life. Are you getting the picture? It can be pride — "Why does it have to be that way? Why can't it be another way? I will go back to the church but let me try a little more." That's the prodigal son.

Luke 15:15-17

¹⁵ Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.¹⁷ "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

"Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine." Why? It can be either pride or shame. Pride and shame go together. Adam and Eve, instead of running towards God, ran away from God, and what did he say? "I was afraid, I was ashamed." He was ashamed. He (prodigal son) was ashamed to go back to his father and his elder brother, and all the servants in the house. "You know how I went, I looked so cool, and all my friends in the village are like, 'Boy, you got your break, you got a green card, you are going to US? Really, you are going?!' and now I go back!" I remember one of my profs in IFLU, he was a big-time prof in US, he said, "Everything went topsy-turvy." He was married to an American-Jewish lady, divorced, everything went topsy-turvy, finally when he came to India, he just had enough money to fly back and not the direct flight, the cheapest flight and that was the Afghan airlines. He said, "I came through Kabul back to India and in Kabul airport, we were put like sheep with guards guarding us." He said, "I had to come back eating humble pie." But shame—shame is stopping him.

Shame stops lots of people, fear stops lots of people, pride stops lot of people, all the arguments start, "If I go back, what will people say? They will mock me, they will laugh at me. I don't know about my father, but I know my elder brother very well, even the servants will laugh at me." You know what, these are strongholds and arguments in our mind. And ultimately, like I said, he has to hit rock bottom then he comes to his senses, and when he comes back to his senses—what happens in the senses? He starts talking, discussing, thinking truth— "You know what, this is what my father's house is like, this is what my father is like." Not in all cases— like I said to my pastors on Tuesday—not in all cases. There are two things which you need to be delivered. Look at Matthew 27.

Matthew 27:3-5

³ Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, ⁴ saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" ⁵ Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

You see, the issue here is – his mind was right, his thought was right, "I have betrayed, I will not be guilty of innocent blood, please take your money back," but his heart was proud. That's what Philippians 2 verse 5 means:

"5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," have this heart, mind, meaning – attitude of Jesus Christ, humble yourself. You need two things: you need right thought life, but that alone is not enough, you

need the right attitude. You can have the right, absolutely on the mark with truth, but because you are proud, you go and kill yourself. He should have gone to Jesus, but he didn't go to Jesus. His pride wouldn't allow him to go to Jesus. So what did the devil do? He gets him to hang himself. Absolutely right, he has an encounter with truth but the truth won't set him free because the heart is proud. The stronghold is pride. If you look at the other example, I gave you in 2 Samuel 17...

2 Samuel 17:23

²³ Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, he saddled a donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died; and he was buried in his father's tomb.

His mind was absolutely on the money, his counsel was like counsel from God, he knew it all on his mind but his heart would not allow him to go to David and ask for mercy, and David would have forgiven him because David even forgave Shimei. You know what, that's why we need these two things: It's not enough to have your mind right, and I am telling you, most people sitting here who have been hearing for years, your mind is right, but sometimes your heart is not right, or if your heart is right, your mind is not right. You need to get both of these right, if you want liberty. The mind of Christ! Truth sets you free. The heart of Christ, the attitude of Christ, humility to acknowledge I am wrong and I will go to that person—not to the pharisees—I will give pharisees the money back and I will go to Christ and say, "Lord, I am sorry. I can not free You, it's no longer in my hands, all I ask is – forgive me, I did wrong." And Ahithophel wouldn't do that.

So, think today what are the thoughts that occupy our minds—I am including all of us here, there is nobody who is absolutely totally free. These are your strongholds—whatever it is! Is it fear? Is it worry? Is it anxiety? Or is peace your stronghold? We saw in *Colossians 3:15*, "Let the peace of God rule your heart," "Be anxious for nothing but in prayer and supplication, make all your prayers known unto God and the peace of God will rule," "Guard your minds and hearts." Meaning: peace has become your stronghold—who is writing this? The fellow lying in prison, the apostle lying in prison. His stronghold is not the stronghold of the enemy; his stronghold is the stronghold of God. So, God also establishes strongholds in our mind like the devil establishes. So God is saying whenever we hear something, how do we react? Because we have to win this battle and God says, "You can win this battle, you have been equipped for this battle." Everything that you and I need in this battle is already given to us. You go to Ephesians chapter 6, the most famous chapter about warfare.

Ephesians 6:10-20

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

"...stand against the wiles of the devil," that fellow is a deceiver, he is full of lies and he is very cunning, he is so subtle that he can cause you, who is proud, to wear a false cloak of humility and you may not even be aware of it, you may think you are humble when you are actually proud. He is so subtle. The only one who can cut through and show it to you is the Word of God, and the Spirit of God. He is absolutely subtle— "The wiles of the enemy."

¹² 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.

We are not fighting flesh and blood, then it would have been easy. After twenty years, US is withdrawing from Afghanistan without ever knowing victory. You know why? It is because they were fighting an unseen enemy. We can fight an army you can see, but you cannot fight terrorist whom you cannot see. Three hundred thousand Afghan soldiers are retreating before seventy-five thousand Taliban soldiers—retreating, retreating, and waiting for Kabul to fall. Because it is an unseen enemy, he looks like a civilian, he doesn't wear a uniform, a soldier can fight another soldier – the Chinese soldier can fight the Indian soldier; Indian

soldiers can't fight Indian soldiers because they are uniform, they know each other but this fellow you don't even know whether he is a male or a female because he is walking in a burka – how do you fight?!

Now this is worse than that, this guy is invisible, you cannot even see him, you cannot know him unless God's Spirit identifies him. And you know where he is? Most of them live inside us. We have rented him free space in our brains. He occupies our mind and we pay the rent. But he is a squatter, you are a child of God and he has no rights. Please understand what the Word of God is saying.

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

We have to withstand him and having done all, we should be still standing there and not having crushed, not having been overcome.

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— 19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

We know these verses very well, if we go through the whole thing, we know it begins with – “Girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, shoes, helmet,” you know it all. But do we really know it all? We all know it in theory. The question is not whether you know it in theory, the question is whether you know it in practice. Every item in the armor, including one weapon given to us is truth. Every item is basically the Word of God – the truth. What is the belt? The truth. What is the breastplate of righteousness? What God has said about you, you are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, not your righteousness but His righteousness. What is the helmet of salvation? Your thoughts that are controlled by the Word of God. What are shoes of your peace? That by the Word of God, you believed you have peace with God and you have peace with man and therefore, Satan is under your feet and your sole of the foot is on his neck and not him reigning over you. Everything is connected with the Word of God which is the truth, absolutely everything.

So, as we saw in 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 5,

5 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...

When the enemy brings a thought, if you and I do not take it captive; the thought will take us captive. It's the battle. You don't take him prisoner; he will take you prisoner. And ultimately it will become a stronghold, and the pictures are there in the Old Testament, you look at the picture.

1 Samuel 27:1,6

1 And David said in his heart, "Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul."

It's just a thought—he did not speak, he is thinking. It is not that in one day he thought, he dwelt on that thought and he acted on that thought. Once you have dwelt in a thought, and you act on that thought, that thought becomes your life.

6 So Achish gave him Ziklag that day. Therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day.

What is Ziklag? That is his stronghold. “David, where do you live?” “In Ziklag and in Ziklag I have everything. My wives are there, my children are there, my men are there, we have plenty of loot.” Now that stronghold, which is a physical stronghold, a picture of a stronghold in your mind protects you from liberty, going back. So the only way God can deliver this person is by burning their stronghold down. Is he a son? Yes. Is he anointed? Yes. Is he the next king of Israel? Yes. Will he become any of these things? No, until the stronghold is broken down. Do you see the picture? This is the stronghold. Are we children of God? Yes. Are we

anointed? Yes. Are we destined to rule one day? Yes. Will we? Depends—the strongholds are demolished or not. That is David. Ziklag is his stronghold.

How did the stronghold begin? It began with one thought. And who gave him that stronghold? Verse 6 – Achish. Who gave you the stronghold? The devil—the fellow you were supposed to defeat, the fellow you were supposed to conquer, he gave you the stronghold. And he feels so good but he did not know that he was serving Achish. What are you known as? Not the servant of God, you are known as the servant of Achish. So, in the spiritual realm, it doesn't matter what you are known on earth, what matters is, what are you known as in the spiritual realm – servant of God or servant of devil. What are you known as? That's why God says, "Anyone who is a slave of sin is a slave. Whoever practices sin is in bondage, he is not a son, though he is a son, he is a slave." "David who are you?" "I am Achish's servant." Is he anointed? Of course, Samuel anointed him. Has he fought his battle? Yes. Can he fight? Yes. Is he fighting for God? No. Are you brilliant? Yes. Do you have your promotions? Yes. Are you living for God? No. That's why God burns down that stronghold, Ziklag is burned down, and from there his deliverance begins.

Let's look at another simple story.

Luke 10:38-40

³⁸ Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me."

Is she able to hear anything Jesus is saying? Are you able to hear what I am saying? Are you distracted? It's that simple. It could be worry, it could be anxiety, it could be anger, it could be jealousy—why is she sitting there? She should be helping me. You know, Jesus is right there, she welcomed Jesus. Derrick welcomed you when you came into the church; come to the house of God, be seated at the feet of Jesus – listen. Are you distracted? It's simply a stronghold. And you know what the problem is? She is not able to listen! It's simple stronghold. You have here the Prince of universe, the Creator of all mankind, you have Him in your house and speaking, and there are few people at His feet who are not distracted and you are the hostess who is distracted. And the problem is the argument. She thinks her sister is the problem while she is the problem. Do you see how subtly the enemy has stronghold in our mind? Jesus says, "You are worried about too many things, and now what has happened is, in your mind she is the problem but I am telling you, Martha, you are the problem." You may think she has a problem because she had seven demons but she's absolutely free now and she is sitting at My feet. Nobody cast out any demons from you but you got a stronghold. You need deliverance. So we think only from whom demons are cast out, they need deliverance. We do not realize; we need more from our minds. That's what *Ephesians 6:16* is talking about.

Ephesians 6:16

¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

What are these fiery darts? Have you ever seen a fiery dart hitting you? Those are the thoughts he puts into your mind, that are his thoughts. He is able to put a thought into your mind, you won't even realize that he has put it over there and before you know you are gone in another direction. That's what he does. I like *Ephesians 6:14*.

Ephesians 6:14

¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness...

NKJV uses "...girded your waist..." KJV uses the old term "Gird your loins with truth." I like these old-time pastors who would put it across beautifully.

1 Peter 1:13

“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ...”

So when it says “Gird up your loins,” it’s basically talking about girding up the loins of your mind, but uses the term ‘loins’ and these old-time pastors will explain it this way – loin is specific for two things: one, it is the area from where you reproduce; second, it is the area from where you eliminate waste. If you gird your loins with lies, you will reproduce lies and anger and anxiety, and all the works of the flesh which is from devil and eliminate truth; if you guard your loin with truth, you will eliminate lies and worry and anxiety and fear, envy, jealousy and lust and all these things. He says it’s your choice what you guard your loins with, because either you will reproduce accordingly and eliminate the other or you will eliminate the truth and reproduce the life of the devil. You can choose to reproduce the life of God and eliminate the lies and life of the devil or you will reproduce the life of the devil and eliminate the life of God. That’s why the loins are put over there but it’s basically your mind.

What happens every time we receive a lie like Adam and Eve did? You know what they did? They eliminated truth and started reproducing the life of the devil—first reflection: pride, shame, fear—by the time you come to chapter 4, it is anger, denial, murder; and by the time you come to chapter 6, every evil thought and imagination reproducing continually, multiplying-multiplying and the earth is full of violence and God says: “I have to step in, I have to intervene.” Because violence doesn’t come first, it first comes in your mind. That’s how it happens. This is not a joke for teenagers who are sitting over here, it’s a very serious thing. Ultimately, we are all reproducing something and eliminating something. The question is, what is that we are reproducing? Truth and the life of God and eliminating the lies and life of the devil or are we reproducing the life of the devil and eliminating the life of God? What are we?

So, God says, “Gird up the loins of your mind with truth and eliminate one-by-one, break down the strongholds, break down the arguments, pull down every high thing and ultimately learn how to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” Just not the thought, but the thought plus action, the humility into action is the obedience of Christ. You have the thought life of Christ, you have the heart of Christ and you have the action of Christ, you have the obedience of Christ. So the battle in the Garden of Eden, and the battle Jesus fought in the wilderness after forty days, both were fought in the mind. It was either won or lost in the mind, and Jesus, for our sake, did not do anything other than say, “God said. It is written.” Devil will try to cast doubt on what God has said, he will try to bring his suspicions and lies, your only way to defeat him is to say – what did God say? All that it takes is to say – what did God say? The solution was so simple. “Did God really say you cannot eat from all the trees in the Garden?” No! It was very simple. “You know what God said? God said, you can eat of all the trees, this alone don’t eat. That’s what He said.” “Are you questioning my Father? You must be crazy! I have known Him from the time I was born, I have walked with Him every day evening – you are questioning Him and His words? Just get lost!” And that’s what the Jesus told, “Get thee lost, satan! Are you question My God and what He has spoken?” It’s simple as that.

That’s what Jesus said: “Son will set you free, truth will set you free.” And Jesus says, “I came so that you may know My Father. The Father is not at all like the devil has been telling you and his spokesmen have been telling you and many of My servants have been telling you, none of them knew the real picture of My Father. I have come from the Father’s bosom to reveal to you what My Father is like so that you will know you can absolutely trust your lives into His hands. Believe every word He has spoken; you will be free.”

If you look at the principle in Joshua chapter 1 verse 8,

Joshua 1:8

⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

He says: You just need to do something—just get a hold of your brain, of what you think. First get your thought life in order, think what it is written, what has been spoken by God, meditate upon it day and night. It's not just memorizing—we need to memorize and if you are young, you can memorize, hats off to you, memorize—but think about those things, think according to what God has said, think about life the way God has spoken about it, meditate upon it and when you open your mouth, when you speak, because your thoughts become your words and your words become actions, so think right according to what God has said, speak according to what God has said and act according to what God has said. You know what, you will be always successful, you will be always prosperous and your state in life is irrelevant, you will be always successful and you will be always prosperous. The enemy will try to control your situations using his manpower but Joseph is prosperous and successful as a son, he is prosperous and successful as a slave, he is prosperous and successful as a prisoner, he is prosperous and successful as a prime minister – you know why? Because he had a hold on his thoughts. So don't look at Joseph as a poor fellow, no, he is extremely successful slave. The devil may use circumstances to change your position from point A to point B, don't compare, in point B, ask—am I prosperous? Am I successful? Among the slaves he is successful. You know why he is successful? Because he has got a hold on his thoughts and therefore hold on his words, and hold on his actions and God is with him—that's what the Bible says, "God was with him." You will say – how will you know God is with you? Remember what the father told the older son? "You are always with me." It's not "I am always with you," right? What does it mean?

We have five children. Do you know they are always with us though we are not always with them? First thing we think in the morning is about our children, last thing we think about is our children. They are always with us. How is God always with you? If you choose to think about Him, and think how He thinks about you, and how He thinks and how He talks and acts, He is always with You. "I will never leave you nor forsake you; I will be always with you forever" – it's true as far as God is concerned, if we are not able to experience that truth is because of our thoughts. See, Martha is not able to enjoy the physical presence of Jesus in her own home because of her thoughts, she is distracted by so many things. Therefore, though He is physically there, she is not able to enjoy. So the Spirit of God is right here with us because God is not a man that He should lie— "If two or three are gathered in My name, I will be in your midst." The question is: are we experiencing Him? Or are we sleeping? Or are we wandering all around the place? It's as simple as that. That is *Amos 3:3*.

Amos 3:3

³ Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?

God doesn't have to agree with me, I have to agree with God. If I agree with God—that's my thought life—you know what, God walks with me. Bible says God was with Joseph, why? It is because he agreed with God. God was with Joseph in prison because he agreed with God. He had a hold over his thoughts and did not allow his terrible situation to control his thoughts; he allowed his thoughts to control the situation. So real freedom is not in money and success or popularity, no, you are a slave still. The young boy was a slave when he had all of that when he left his father's house, he was already a slave. So Bible says, "Meditate upon the Word of God day and night..."

Joshua 1:8

⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Think! How does God think? Every thought that comes to your mind take it captive. You got an ear gate, you got an eye gate and you got a mouth gate, and your mind—this is where they get in, your mind—and you are the gatekeeper. As the thoughts come in, you have to take it captive, hold it there and check, if it doesn't agree with the Word of God, do not receive it! And the Spirit of God is there to help you, He is not asking you to do without a will power or anything, that's what grace comes before truth, the Spirit of God is there to help you.

So there are absolute lies of the enemy, then in the physical world we live, there are facts, and then there is truth. The problem with facts is that, facts and feeling go together and they are real but they are not true. They are only true if they align with the Word of God. Facts and feelings are only true if they align with the Word of God. Oppose the lies, deal with the facts and receive only the truth. Let me give you examples how we have strongholds in our minds and we live by fact and not by truth.

2 Corinthians 6:14

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

Now this is truth—all unmarried people lift your hands—if truth is your stronghold, you will never entertain the thought of getting married to an unbeliever, you will never ever entertain it. But if truth is not your stronghold and fact is your stronghold— “She is so nice, she is so cute, and I feel so much.” Is it true? It’s not true, it’s real, truth is God’s Word, and the arguments start. What is that argument? But all these believers’ marriages are breaking. What has it got to do with the truth? Marriages may be breaking because of hundred and ninety-nine different reasons. You know how the arguments start? But even believers’ marriages are breaking, if you look at the statistics, more that 50% of the Christians’ marriages are breaking, so what’s the big deal about marrying a believer? You see, arguments start. Maybe she will get saved after I marry her, but none of these arguments stand before truth—what is the truth? ***“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”***

Are you getting the pictures? Most of the arguments are facts. Are believers’ marriages breaking apart? Yes, it is a fact. Is your feeling for the unbeliever boy or the girl real? Yes, it is real. The question is, is it true? It is not true. So how do you protect yourself? You protect yourself by casting it down and say, “Yes, she is a nice girl. Yes, I feel so much, but it is not true because *it is written* and therefore, I will go by what is written because that is what is true!” and what happens is you save yourself of lot of heartache. If you have doubts, go to *1 Corinthians 7:39*, the greatest concession for a widow or a divorcee – what does it say?

1 Corinthians 7:39-40

³⁹ A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. ⁴⁰ But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment—and I think I also have the Spirit of God.

Let us put it in the other picture – a divorcee – who is allowed to remarry under the framework of God’s Word, it should be a believer. So, God says, the truth doesn’t change according to your situation. You are a young girl, she is divorcee – truth always remains the same! What is that? You should always marry a believer. Simple! Truth doesn’t change because that is the life of God; truth is who God is, it never changes. You cannot negotiate with it. “Will you make a concession; I am a divorcee?” “No!” “Can you make a concession; I am a widow for 18 years?” “No.” “Please, I am already 60 years who is looking for a partner. Will you not make a concession for a widow who is 60 years?” “No.” Truth doesn’t change; it’s fixed for God is not a man that He should lie. God never changes, so truth doesn’t change.

Do you see how enemy brings strongholds and arguments in our minds and plays with our feelings? And feelings are real—I am not saying the feelings are not real, the feelings are real but they are not true. That’s the power of God’s Word, the truth will set you free. So the question comes – “I am getting older and older. Lord, what is happening?” what will you do? You say, “Lord, if I don’t find anybody with whom I can get equally yoked, I am not going to get married. I am not bending the truth for me; I am lifting up Your truth. I believe You will bring a man or a woman into my life, but if it doesn’t happen, I am not going to be unequally yoked.” It’s as simple as that. It’s like Daniel’s three friends—God can deliver us out of that situation, He can, if He doesn’t, it is the sovereignty of God. We only know one thing: we bend our knee only to truth and not to any idol and marriage is not an idol, truth is, before whom I bend, and truth is that, if I marry, it is somebody who is a believer and if that doesn’t come up, I remain single. I am good with it because I only worship God. You know what, you are free. And then the attacks comes because he cannot directly attack

you, he starts attacking you through inner circle, second circle, third circle, mocking, pressure, intimidation, will hog-tie you and take you and get you married. You say “No.” The truth sets you free, the Son sets you free and I am not going to be there, you cannot. That’s how it works.

Like yesterday’s question—because now there are parents and it’s a different world all together, I know you all have the young children, there is no guarantee which way your children will go. You can be the best parents in the world but the world is so wicked today that you can’t even send them to schools. Schools have become the most dangerous places in the planet earth. It is unbelievable what the curriculum in USA in a government schools are in K1, K2, K3 where the little children are being taught masturbation and transgender. The most dangerous place on planet earth where children are destroyed and most places in US or many parts of US or most states of US, prostitution is illegal, consumption of drug is illegal, driving without a license is illegal, you cannot steal, most things are illegal but not abortion – even a teenage girl to abort her baby doesn’t need permission from the parents. She can go to the school counselor and get it. Murder is legal – do you want to send your children to schools? Think!

So, what’s the promise? Promise is what we gave you yesterday.

1 Corinthians 7:14

¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.

Ultimately you will see one—let us say, one straw of truth is all you have, you are a dying man hanging on to that straw, that straw will take you across. You will say, “You know, Lord, I see nothing, I see my children going nowhere, they are not interested but You said, ‘They are holy. They will come back and they will serve You.’” I am not looking at the evidence of my eyes, I am not looking at what the world is saying, I am hanging on to that one word in Your Word. What is that? My children are holy. Why? It is because You said so. My children will return and they will serve You, they will not die unsaved, they will die saved. You see the power of truth to set you free!

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

⁶ “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

When He is talking about heart over here, it is basically your thought life. That’s where you think. Nobody thinks with their heart, you think, you feel, you will, everything, that’s the center of your being, okay.

⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

What is God saying? God is saying, the Kingdom of God governed by the Word of God should be absolutely real for your children. They live in an atmosphere where it is the Kingdom of God, the world stops at your door. As they enter the Kingdom of God through the doorway, it is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit where the truth of God governs. And then about winning battles, there is something mentioned over there in verse 7.

Four times are picked. “You shall teach them diligently,” when?

*“... and shall talk of them when you **sit** in your house, when you **walk** by the way, when you **lie down**, and when you **rise up**.”*

Four times are picked. It’s a lesson to us in the New Covenant. When you sit in your house—when is that? You come back from your work—take the children out, just think about yourself—you come back from work and you are **sitting**; nice to have a cup of chai and catch up on the news. Either this way or that way, God says, “Wait! Be careful of times of ease! Those are times the enemies are looking for.” Second: **“When you**

walk by the way.” In your terms – you are in your cab going to your office, or you are in a school bus or college bus. Meaning – you have left your home, haven’t reached your workplace; in between your mind is free, the devil comes. I like all my young people all of them got earphones on listening to a message and the cab people ask, “What are you listening?” You are listening to a message. These are dangerous times when you are doing nothing. **“And when you lie down.”** Meaning – when you put your head on the pillow—unless you are like my wife who will sleep in like around 3 seconds, flat, but most of us are like me who takes half an hour to fall asleep—so by the time you put your head on pillow and by the time you go to sleep, it is right time for the enemy, because if he can get your thought during that time, you will go to sleep on it and so many people write to me, “Pastor, could you please interpret my dream?” What were you thinking?

And then you **wake up**. Now, when you wake up, you are not like me – eyes open, I am out of the bed. Most people don’t wake up like that— “turn to the left and turn to the right” —we know that song in Sunday school, right? We wake up, and between we wake up and we get up, there is 25 minutes. Are you getting the picture? What is the principle over there? Let me take my own example—in your term, I am working. When you are absolutely at your work, you never get tempted. If you get tempted at your work place, you are not working. When you are working, you do not get tempted because you are busy working; it is when you are not working, the hours of ease, are very dangerous period in your time each day. God says, “Guard your mind!” what should you be thinking about? God! God’s Word, and every thought that comes in, take it to captive.

I am not saying you should not watch TV, but be careful about what you watch; I am not saying that you should not read news, but be careful. You know it’s interesting, there are so many newspapers in India, around the world, but there is one local news—I mean online—it’s called Telangana news; you know that news is very positive, maybe it’s a TRS newspaper, but it doesn’t matter. Very rarely you will see it giving you a negative view of Telangana. Actually, when you read Telangana news, you feel good about Telangana and that’s how news should be because if you look with rational mind, good always outweighs the bad. There are always good things happening, but most newspapers will always put the bad news first—I am not saying you should not report the bad news—but you don’t put the bad news first, you should put the good news first.

So you choose what you are going to listen, what you are going to watch, and you take each thought captive. You don’t have to read everything—usually, all you have to read is skim through the headlines, you are not preparing for the civil services, right? Much of the news make no difference to you, so go through the headlines so you are well informed and move on to other things. Watch your mind when you are at ease. The other thing God is saying in between that verse 7 is – be a hard worker. Meaning – when you are working, give it everything. What does it mean? When you come back, you are tired and tired people have no time to get tempted, they eat and go to sleep. The antidote to the devil’s temptation is work and controlling your thought life. Eve was simply sitting looking at that tree, Adam was also beside her, the devil came! That fellow was supposed to be working, what is he doing over there? “What are you doing there? I told you to take care of the Garden and tend it, and you are the only two workers I have.”

Young people, the Bible says, “Whatever you do, do it with all your strength as unto the Lord.” Good antidote – work hard! You should work hard like Jesus that even in the midst of the storm, He falls asleep because you need a power nap cause you don’t know when your next sleep will come. You should be so tired that when you take your shoes off and go to bed you should be knocked out. Practical ways. During times of ease, be on your guard! David did not fall when he was fighting; David fell when he was at ease. You have been in the NCC or you have been in the army, you will see when they are in “Attention!” their eyes don’t wander, when he says, “At ease,” he starts looking around. That is the problem. When do you wander? When you are at ease. God says, ‘Don’t be at ease, when you are at ease, be very careful. Keep your eyes fixed on Christ Jesus.’

Now let me tell you this so that you can understand—to be tempted is not sin—please understand the difference. To be tempted is not sin, to have a thought going through your mind which is not according to God’s Word is not a sin; if to be tempted was a sin, do you know who was the greatest sinner who lived? *Hebrews 4:15.*

Hebrews 4:15

¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

No one was ever tempted more than Jesus, yet He was without sin. So, please understand, to be tempted is not sin but if you dwell on your temptations, it becomes your thought life, it will become your action, then you have sinned. So when that thought is coming in, grab hold of it, take it captive, bring every thought to captive. Our temptations are not the same though they may be the same, they are not the same. Let me explain to you—the more money you have, the more temptation has power over you; the more knowledge you have, the more power temptation has over you; the more money, knowledge you have, even more power temptation has over you. Let us say; a villager from Suryapet, he lives there, he doesn’t go to a city, he has got one crore and there is another man in Hyderabad who has got one crore too – both have the same money, is the level of temptation same? No, because their knowledge is different. The guy in the village, if he doesn’t have TV specially, he is protected from lot of things though he has the same amount of money, his level of temptation is not the same because it is not just the money alone, it is the knowledge, your exposure. So you have two people who have the same thing—he has money, he has knowledge, both are the same but one doesn’t have power, the other has power. Suddenly it changes.

That is what Bible is talking about – “Jesus was tempted at all points but He did not sin.” Here is the man who was tempted most and gave into every temptation because this man had money, the man who had knowledge, the man who had power and his name was Solomon. Get all three – he was king, most powerful king; he had knowledge like no man, he went after it; and he had power and he was tempted, and he did not allow any temptation to be wasted, made full use of every temptation. You know what Jesus says in the Gospel according to Luke?

Luke 11:31

³¹ The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.

Jesus—the gold and the silver belong to Him; He had knowledge and the wisdom of God Himself; He had power unlimited; and He was tempted at all points and He did not sin. You know why? Because He took every thought captive, brought it to the obedience of what His Father had said and He showed us it can be done. So the temptation comes through the ear, the eye, the mouth, it comes, and God says, “You can win; you are a winner; I have already spoken over you; you are more than a conqueror in Christ Jesus; you can!” But He says, ‘It’s very practical, simple practical ways.’ Shall I put it in practical ways? You are having biryani for lunch today, and it’s true, there is biryani for lunch today and Sajid is making it – the succulent chicken that will just come off the bones, this aroma of Hyderabadi biryani into your nostrils – are you salivating thinking biryani? Yeah? Stop thinking about biryani! Can you stop? No, you can’t. Okay, I am changing. We are going to give biryani over to someone else, we are going to order pizza – veg or non-veg, your preference. Extra cheese topping. If you want spicy, we will have spicy, layers and layers of cheese with French fries. Have you notice nobody was thinking biryani? Everybody was thinking pizza. You cannot take a thought out, you have to replace it. Stop thinking! Stop thinking! No, you replace it. That’s only what God is saying, replace it – about what? About God and what God has said. First you need to know about God—*Jeremiah 29:11.*

Jeremiah 29:11

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

See, whenever you think about God, don't think about the school principal. God is a God of peace, all the thoughts He has towards His children are thoughts of peace. You may be violent, but He is peaceful. Why is Satan under His feet? Because He is the God of peace puts Satan under His feet. His thoughts towards you are always good thoughts, always to prosper you, not to destroy you. So you need to think good about God, gracious God, loving God, kind and merciful. Even when He whacks me, I will run towards Him and I will not run away from Him because He is my Father. Have good thoughts about God!

Second: meditate upon His Word. Think about what He has said, don't think about what it is written—it is written but who wrote it? God wrote it, your Father wrote it. You keep in your mind these two things and keep replacing. You know what? You will overcome, I will overcome, we will overcome. It is not complicated, it is not calculus and algebra, then only Pastor Vijay will overcome; it is very simple, it is as simple as addition. Now don't say addition is difficult for me.

Let's look at the three examples quickly – one from the Old Testament, two from the New Testament.

1 Samuel 30:6

6 Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

They are desperate, discouraged, they are facing destruction, they are facing death, everybody's mind is down. They all wept and cried, no strength at all and everybody gave into their feelings and they picked up stones. 600 men gave into their thoughts because of what they saw; one man at that point stood up—he took control of his thoughts. One man stood there, situation is the same for all but first he took hold of his mind, he started thinking good about God, otherwise you cannot encourage yourself— “You know what, my God is a gracious God, kind, longsuffering, merciful. I have goofed-up and all, but I know if I go to Him, I will receive mercy.” Do you see that? ***“But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.”*** What does it mean? David talked to himself. Do you talk to yourself? You need to talk God to yourself. That's David. He will always talk God to himself. You need to learn to talk to yourself, anyway you are talking to yourself. What are the thoughts in your mind? You are talking to yourself. David also started talking to himself, he started talking about God. It's not enough—the prodigal son came back to his senses, step 2, he moved into action. Verse 8.

7 Then David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, “Please bring the ephod here to me.” And Abiathar brought the ephod to David. 8 So David inquired of the Lord, saying, “Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?”

And what happened? God spoke! It didn't stop over there. What did he do? Verse 9 and 10.

9 So David went, he and the six hundred men who were with him, and came to the Brook Besor, where those stayed who were left behind. 10 But David pursued, he and four hundred men; for two hundred stayed behind, who were so weary that they could not cross the Brook Besor.

You see, the entire history of Israel is going to change because one man thought right. He had the right thought about God and he thought right about God in the midst of depression, and death and destruction and discouragement, and from that thought went a series of actions which says at the end, “David recovered all.” If you and I don't win in our mind, we are not going to win outside—I am not saying thinking alone; you first think, then speak words, words into action, at the end you have victory. That's how he does every time. Let's look at the other fellow.

Luke 15:17-18

17 “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to “him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you...”

What is that? He is speaking to himself. What is he speaking? About his father. What are we speaking? About God. My God is good! That is what it means to meditate on the Word day and night; you know what, God is good! Worst case scenario— I die—I go home and I got a mansion waiting for me there, I am not afraid to go home. If the thoughts of God towards you are of peace and good, how can your thoughts toward Him be violent?! It should be peaceful, good, loving and kind!

That's where it all started: "He talked to himself about his father," in our place, it's about God. He spoke about God. You talk to yourself all the time anyway; you are talking to yourself all the time, talk to yourself about God and talk good. And you know what happens? Verse 20 says...

20 "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

Thoughts—words—action—deliverance. You are free. The enemy has lost his grip over you.

Third illustration, Mark chapter 5.

25 Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, 26 and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse.

Worst case scenario – money gone, health gone and you are old.

27 When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. 28 For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well."

What is she talking? She is talking to herself. Her issue is 12 years old, lost all her money, lost her health, but she heard something, she meditated upon it, talked to herself— "You know what, I am going to reach out, touch the hem of His robe," her thoughts became her words, and her words became action and she was set free. In life every issue is the same, whether you are in a problem and you want to get out of it or a problem is coming and you don't want to get into it, it's always the same.

The principles are there – times of ease always be careful. Don't say, "I am chilling." That's when you fall. Are you getting it? Is it complicated?

Okay, let me put another practical example—that's why I brought this another book with me. I have had it for 30-years because I did not grow up with the Bible; I did not grow up in a home where there was the Bible that was read; I did not go to a church where the word was preached. So, my background is different, your background is different. You have been born again into a church that preaches and encourages on the Word of God. Let me ask you: you have been taught—I hope you follow—you get up in the morning, you pray, you do your daily devotions, but whenever you get up in the morning, there are issues, right? Sunday's issues are different from Monday's issues, right? What does *Matthew 6:34* say?

Matthew 6:34

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

God says, as you go through the day, there are many troubles, it will be there. So, when you get up in the morning, you have your troubles, everybody has their troubles and you already know what the troubles are. So, simple thing is that, when you wake up in the morning, you know your troubles, it's already there in your mind, it's occupying your mind—that's how you know what your trouble is; if it's not in your mind, it's not trouble; it's trouble because it's in your mind. So you already know what it is – did you guard your mind? That is your actual daily devotion! The other is regular. What is the one that is dominating your mind? What I have in my hand is a Bible Promise Book—like I said, your issue is anger, go to the Bible and look at what it says about the anger, guard your mind; lust, guard your mind; food is your issue, guard your mind. Go to what you need in the Word. Pastor Vijay may not need it because he has the Word in his mind, he has memorized but you know, you feed your mind according to your trouble. You know what? The God of peace keeps satan under your feet, not in your head! Simple, practical!

Each one of us know what our struggles are each day and the question is – do we have the Word to back us up in this battle so that before it comes, you know you have your promises, you took a look at it. Let me give

you about anger. First the anger of God: “But His anger lasts only for a moment but His favor lasts a lifetime. Weeping may remain for a night but rejoicing comes in the morning.” So that gives you the boldness to go for mercy—God is not angry with me because this is what it says. But if you are the one who is angry, and not God – “*My dear brothers, take note that everyone must be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry for the anger of man doesn’t bring the righteous life that God desires. Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit for anger resides in the lap of fools. A quick temper person does foolish things. Better a patient man than a warrior; a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city. A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.*” You have dealt with anger, “Thank You Lord, I don’t want to be a fool,” there are many “greats,” -- “Alexander, the great;” “Babur, the great;” I shall be great by controlling my anger—that’s what Your Word says, “That man is great.”

Did you see how that Word of God helps you? It’s a very practical book and the Word of God is dynamite in the spiritual realm. That’s what you need to understand – the powers darkness, principalities, rulers, are no match to the Word of God, just say “It is written.” That’s all, it’s written. He did not bring that temptation back, he just backed off and strike the second one. Jesus said “It is written.” Third one, Jesus said, “It is also written.” It’s as simple as that and we have to learn this on a day-to-day basis. And there are lots of Bibles with the concordances at the back which gives you promises according to your trouble, meditate on that. Do your daily devotion, that’s a different thing, but eat according to your trouble. Let your diet be according to your work. What is your trouble, go for it; if you are sick, go through the Bible, meditate upon it – you know, it is written! It is written! Faith level goes up. The enemy will start putting in fear—it is written, it is written, it is written! Because your mind is free, your body will become free and if your body is free, and in your mind you are a slave, you are still a slave. That’s what *Romans 12:1* says.

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

What does it practically mean? Meaning is that, don’t act out anything until you got a grip on your thoughts. That’s what it means, don’t do anything—a thought is coming, wait! Does it agree with the Word of God, if it does then do it, otherwise don’t do it. It’s very simple. *Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.* Wait, be slow, be still. Do you really have to do it? Or if I have to do it, do I really have to do now? And which way should I do it? Wait! And you are free. And you will suddenly realize you can do it! That’s what the Bible says, “If you meditate upon My Word day and night, do not depart it from your mouth and do it, you will be successful and prosperous wherever you go.” In whatever area of your life you go, it doesn’t matter what the devil does, you will be successful. What does it mean? Deuteronomy 28— “You shall be the head and not the tail.”

Let me ask you a question—number 11 out of 12, he was head in his father’s house. Finally, he gets the firstborn’s birthright. Hebrew slave in an Egyptian’s house – head; Hebrew slave prisoner with all Egyptians prisoners because it’s the king’s prison, all from the palace have come – head; Hebrew in the Egyptian’s land – head. So your situation doesn’t matter if you handle your mind and the grace of God is available, God says, “You will be always on the top.” Suddenly, you will realize, you and I don’t need more than the Word of God (Bible) and the Spirit of God, and that’s what the Bible says, “Law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ, and out of the fullness of His grace, we have received blessing upon blessing. It’s simple, it’s not difficult. Don’t let others evaluate whether you are prosperous or not, you are successful or not, don’t let others decide, you decide – does it agree with the Word of God? Let me tell you, the most successful man who ever walked on earth was Jesus Christ, He did not even have a grave to call His own to be buried, His clothes was divided when He was crucified, to often do an illustration, He had to borrow money, and often He slept out in the open because He did not have a place to rest – yet, He was the most successful, prosperous man ever! Don’t let others tell you whether you are successful, prosperous or not, let the Word of God tell you. Lying in a prison, Paul writes, “I know how to abase and I know how to abound. There are chains all around my hands, but let me tell you, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens

me. And let me tell you church, my God shall supply all your needs in Christ Jesus.” You know what, he was absolutely a prosperous man because he is not a slave in his mind, he is absolutely free. You know who is he writing to? To the people who are free in the body, enslaved in the mind.

That’s what the Bible is talking about – you can! And I can! We are victorious; we are conquerors, already spoken over us. God says, “Change how you think.” For a son abides in the house forever. We are not son and slave, son and slave, no! We shall be son, son, and son. We shall break the yoke of slavery over our lives! Amen!

Closing prayer

Father, this morning we just come to You, we are going through the series about liberty. We can be enslaved as the prodigal son to the world and be a slave; or we can be enslaved as the older son through the law, but You came to set the captives free, and freedom begins in the mind and I pray, Lord, all these young people who have heard, will practically try to fight this battle—all of us, Lord, young and old. Young people have their own issues, older people have their own worries and anxieties, so it doesn’t matter, we are all under attack 24/7, but Your word says, “The God of peace shall crush satan under Your feet.” Your Word says, “Think upon things that are above, not on things that are below,” help us to think Your thoughts and have Your heart, the meek, humble heart attitude like You, Lord. And every time we will win, for Your Word says You will take us in triumph in Christ Jesus in every place and in every time, that is true if our minds are free and all of us are in this journey, and I pray we will fight this good fight of faith that we will not allow the enemy to occupy our minds and our hearts, they belong to God. If our minds and hearts are controlled by the Word and Spirit of God, our bodies will follow and we will be free man like Joseph – wherever we go, we will be free man walking in liberty of Christ. For the Word of God says, “Where the Spirit is the Lord, the Lord is Spirit, there is liberty.”

Help us not to allow the world to frame us, or the law to frame us; help us to allow You to frame us. We are who You say we are. Whom the Son sets free is free indeed. Help us to oppose the lies of the enemy and replace it with the truth of God. Thank You, Thank You, Lord. I commit this week into thy hands, go with us, go before us. May the peace of God guard our minds and our hearts, for in Jesus’ name we pray, Amen!

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father and fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with each one of us! Amen!

