

WE ARE AT WAR!

Date:

Word:

Text: Ephesians 6:10-20

INTRO: Let me give you a moment to pray a very brief prayer. Here it is: "Lord, if there is some truth in this message You want me to hear, I ask You Lord to speak to me." The title of this message is, "We Are at War!" What fear those words instill when it is literal physical war in one's own country. Our generation has never heard this! But I am talking about another war, one that is raging right now and no matter who we are we are in it. So, let me ask, what do we mean by the word "war"? A war, as we generally use it, is a conflict carried on by force of arms between two or more opposing parties. We see this right now in Ukraine where Russian "forces" and Ukrainian "forces" are fighting for supremacy. It is forces trying to take by force what they want.

In Israel we see a war as well. It is a war between the state of Israel and another force that is not a state. Each side has its "force." War is generally a bloody and gruesome thing. but in our world, we have different kinds of war. There is the war of words or the cold war. The news media wages war with pictures and words, both true and false pictures and words. In this war they fight for supremacy of the things they want. I read this morning that in war truth is the first casualty.

But behind the scenes of all that is happening in the world, there is a spiritual war. This war is between God and the devil and you and I are in it and we are at war. We are on one side or the other and sometimes we need to be reminded of this. We have all had part in the devil's army, but here is a scary truth, and that is even we as Christians may quite often be fighting for the devil while we think we are fighting for God!

This war is fought in our personal lives. As I looked at this, I looked over my past life and I recognize that I have been the devil's helper when I had no idea that this was the case. If we learn to recognize this battle, we will probably all see this in ourselves. We were on the devil's side when we were unsaved. Paul said, "For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles." But even as Christians we may be helping the devil. In this message we are going to look at this war and where this battle is fought.

I find Christians very fearful of the demonic world, even in simply talking about it, and through this fear we may remain largely unaware of when demons have access to us and we ourselves are fighting for the devil. I speak from my own experience.

I. THE HISTORY OF THE BATTLE

So let me identify the battle I am talking about and give you the history of the battle as I see it. It is the battle between God and Satan. Let me share something I have not shared for a long time. I raise this question: If God knew beforehand that Satan would deceive man and lead him into sin before He created man, why did He create mankind? Let me just say this, your life and mine is extremely important! We are in something very, very big!

I want you to understand that what I give now is my own opinion. Take it for what it is worth to you and if you have something better, I would like to hear it. When I was a young Christian, I pondered this matter and upon hearing a certain message I worked on this diligently. You need not agree with me but you will agree there is something bigger going on than we generally see.

So, I want you to come back with me to the creation of the universe. Are you there in your mind? We are now back around 6,000 years ago. Be glad we are not evolutionists or it might take a long time to get back there!

Now come back with me to before the universe existed. What was there now? Oh, you might say, God and angels were there. OK, so let us go back before angels and what was there then? God! As far as we know there was nothing but God. Now come back with me to the time before God existed, and what was there? Just kidding. So, we are now back to where God alone existed.

It is my view and I know others disagree, that God's chief attribute is that He is good. I believe He is everything else He is, because He is good. He is holy, righteous, just etc... because He is good. Now consider a good God who exists all by Himself.

And then one day, before there were days, He decided to make some free moral agents that would be able to recognize Him and His goodness and they would be able to experience

all His goodness and they would acknowledge that goodness, and out of that He would no longer be alone and He would be glorified and be able to commune with beings that were persons and free moral agents who recognized His goodness, and through this these created beings would find perfect fulfillment and they would glorify Him. And as long as they did that in recognition that they were created beings, they would be fulfilled and they would praise and honor and glorify God.

Now people say it must be boring to be in heaven just praising God all the time. Oh, how little we understand. As I see it, they praised and honored and glorified God because they experienced such tremendous joy because of the fact that they were fulfilled in all that they did. You see, we love nothing better than fulfillment! We will give anything for fulfillment. As a matter of fact, that is what every human being wants right now! Here is what we all want, fulfillment in all our undertakings! Have you ever made something or done something and you were really happy about it and you just enjoyed that feeling of accomplishment? That is a taste of fulfillment.

I do not know what all there was for the angels to do, but it cannot be otherwise than that there was a lot for them to do and that they were totally fulfilled in doing so. Now in order for angels to praise and glorify and honor God, they had to be free moral agents. There is no praise or glory or honor that means anything if it is simply programmed or forced, say like a machine. And if they are free moral agents, then they must have the ability to do things that do not please God, as well as those that please Him.

And in the process of time, and yes, there was time, a very high-ranking angel, a cherub called Lucifer decided he too wanted glory. Turn to Isaiah 14. There are two passages most theologians believe describe the fall of Lucifer, this high-ranking angel that wanted glory for himself. His name, Lucifer, means *bearer of light* or the *morning star*.

Here is the account of his fall from Isaiah 14:12-15:

12 *"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations!*

13 For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north;

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'

15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.

After this event God had sin in His domain, something He had to deal with or forever have sin that had not been dealt with. If it was not dealt with God would cease to be good because He would cease to be just. So here is the big question: How can God justly deal with Satan and those angels that followed him, and still leave the rest of the angels in such a way that they knew they were praising and worshipping God of their own free will? Think now: if He cast Satan and the fallen angels into hell right there, the rest of the angels would have to conclude this: "Oh, we worship God of our own free will all right, as soon as we don't we get the axe, just like Lucifer and his followers."

And here is my speculation: God created the universe, and thus made a realm in which man would be able to live and move and have his being, but he would never be able to see God. And He created the whole universe with this purpose in mind: He would use mankind to destroy the devil and leave the rest of the angels knowing forever that they served God of their own free will. If this is so, how that all works I do not know, but according to the NT, there are things in our great salvation that the angels desire to look into (1 Pet. 1:12). Could it be that when all man's struggles on earth are over, the angels will understand how salvation by faith proves that they truly have a free will?

There is much we do not know but what we do know is that in this realm in which God created man, man must choose God of his own free will and obey and worship God alone without ever getting to see Him. This faith is the thing that pleases God above all else, and it is when we please Him that He extends His grace to us.

Well, we do not know how long man lived in obedience to God but we do know that the battle between God and man happened

in the Garden of Eden and we know the story how Adam and Eve fell into sin. God knew that would happen, and He also knew that He would provide a very costly way of salvation for man, but man would have to put His faith in God and trust in Him through His Word in order to be saved and for Him to accomplish His purpose. Man could never see God. This is man's ultimate test, and any person who learns to live by faith becomes part of God's army against Satan.

On the other hand, those who sin and do not get saved are part of Satan's army. There is no neutral ground. You see, fallen angels could never be saved once they sinned, and that is because of this: They have seen God and because of that could never live by faith. Man, who has not seen God can live by faith and trust in God's way of salvation but to do that he must humble himself and live humbly before God by faith. Satan fell through pride and can never humble himself. He is lost once and for all, as are all fallen angels.

So, man is to get saved by faith and is to live his life by faith. That is where all of us are right now. But there are several major problems man faces. First, through Adam's sin man is born with a sin nature. Every honest person will find this in him or herself. That causes man to always be bent towards sin and God cannot be glorified or defeat Satan by those who live in sin.

So let me briefly mention the sin nature. We all have a sin nature and it causes a constant battle for us. Pastor Daryl has been dealing with sin. That is a most important subject for a pastor to deal with and it is not pleasant. He went through the sins of the flesh of Galatians 5. All of us do battle there. I have been most keenly aware of some of the areas I have to watch in my life. It is possible for Christians to be envious or jealous or hate others without being aware of it as Pastor Daryl has pointed out. That is frightful. Oh, how we struggle in the conflict with these issues of the sin nature, and no two of us are alike in our own sin nature but we are all alike in that we have such a nature.

Turn to Ephesians 6. The second major battle we have is with demonic forces. Let me make all of us aware of something once more: Each one of us have a conflict or war with our sin nature, and with the devil. This passage was read earlier and we'll just read verses 10-13:

Ephesians 6:10-13:

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.

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.

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day,

Here is our great foe in this war! If you watch carefully, you will meet him this week. Now what is concerning is that the many of us as Christians are not aware of what Satan is doing in our lives and how he uses us and how we speak for him and do his work. Many times, when the devil puts thoughts in our mind, we are not aware of what has happened and we think they are our thoughts. It is right here that family troubles and church troubles come. These troubles very often if not usually come from Christians who are being used by demonic forces without recognizing it.

And all that brings us to this question: Where does this battle take place?

II. THE PLACE OF THE BATTLE

I want to now show us where God and Satan are fighting the whole battle. The realm in which the entire battle between God and Satan takes place is that area the Bible calls the heart, the area we speak of as the mind.

[[Let me ask you this question: What is the difference between the brain and the mind? Here is the answer: The brain is the physical part of where mental processes take place and the mind is the spiritual part. If you want an interesting study, study what the secular world thinks the mind is. They know there is such a thing but they do not know what it is. That is because the mind is not the brain. The brain is physical and part of the body, and the mind is spiritual and part of the soul.

Because I don't have time to explain some of this, let me just say that when the Bible talks about the heart and it does not mean the physical part of man, then it is speaking about the mind. As the heart is the crucial aspect of our bodies, so the mind is the crucial aspect of our soul. It is the vital center.

Now, the Bible does not have a word for mind. You might say to me, "Well, does not the Bible say you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and all your mind?" It does. The word heart speaks of this vital center of the soul, but the word translated "mind" is not mind, but it is *dianoia*, which literally means a "thinking through." We think in our mind or what the Bible calls the heart. Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinks in his heart so is he."

There is so much to say here that we cannot speak of at this time, but all of that to say this, that the battle between God and Satan takes place in the mind and I can tell you from personal experience some of what a battle that is. The Lord has allowed into mine and my wife's lives things we had not dreamed we would face. It is different than we could ever have imagined, but we walk with God and trust Him. Many of you have the same story. We know God knows what He is doing. And what we have learned very clearly is this: The battle is in the mind and we need to trust learn to trust Him!

III. THE MANNER OF THE BATTLE

We want to now look at the manner in which this battle takes place, so turn to Acts 5. Some time ago my attention was drawn to a verse in Acts 5.

We begin in verse 1:

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.

2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?"

4 *"While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."*

5 *Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.*

6 *And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.*

I want you to look carefully at verse 3. Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart?" Get this, Ananias is a Christian and Satan had filled his mind! I ask you, is it possible for Satan to put thoughts in our mind? We are looking at the manner of the battle between God and Satan and it is fought in man's mind and man decides who wins.

Now question: Can Satan fill any Christian's mind he wants to? No. But any Christian can open the door for him to fill their mind with thoughts. Let me ask you, do you ever get angry with others and you lose it? Do you ever think bad things about others you should not think? Do you get caught up with worldly ways of thinking? Does lust ever take over? Do you get caught up with things on the internet or other social media you should not? Any one of those things, and many worse things, we participate in can open the door so that Satan can fill our minds and there are none of us who are not susceptible and all of us must always be on guard.

When a discerning Christian recognizes what is happening and he or she says, "Now that is a bad thought! I will not entertain thoughts like that" or, "I cannot watch that" or, "I cannot play those games" or I cannot say those words," that person has closed the door to Satan. The person that entertains such things and many others has opened a door that may allow Satan to walk in. We have gone through some very difficult church troubles and it took me quite some time to learn to say to myself, "You can't think like that, don't think like that." It is amazing how many church or family troubles we can fix in our mind and not realize that it is all fleshly thinking and an open door for an evil spirit to plant more thoughts. Let some of those thoughts go and we may think we are doing our own thinking and we

have the answers, but we could be surprised that those thoughts came from elsewhere. Those same things we thought were so good may come back to us all mangled and distorted after we express them.

So, we ask, what happened to Ananias? How did he open the door? I do not know why there was a need in the newly born church at Jerusalem. It may be that they were suffering persecution for believing in Jesus and some people may have lost their jobs and they had a hard time making ends meet. However that was, a certain man named Barnabas sold his land and donated the money to help these needy people. No doubt the Christians said, "Oh wow, have you heard what Barnabas did?"

Now let me show you how the devil can take a very good deed and use it for his own ends. What Barnabas did was a good deed. But here is the case; Satan had already tried to destroy the church from outside as chapter 4 reveals. So far, he has failed and now he wants to seek to bring destruction from inside the church. How does Satan get inside a church? Well, he finds some Christian or carnal Christian and enters through the mind of that person where he finds some ground to enter, and in this case, not only did he find such a person, he found a man and his wife who had opened the door for him to enter and control their thinking. What was this open door? Ananias and Saphira wanted to be known for giving money to the church just like Barnabas. Does that happen in churches? So, they agreed together to sell some possession and then keep back part for themselves but make it look like they had given it all to help the poor, and right here was the devil's opportunity to enter. They were living a lie.

In Acts 5:3, Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart?" Did Ananias realize Satan had taken over his thinking? No, but the facts are Satan had filled it with his thoughts! Ananias had opened the door; Satan stepped in and filled it with his thoughts! Here is the battlefield! Here is the manner of the battle!

In 2 Corinthians 2:11 Paul speaks of the possibility of Satan taking advantage of us. He can do that when something is not right in our minds. Then it says, "For we are not ignorant of his devices." Now that word "devices" speaks of thoughts. Here is what happens, when he finds any opening where he can put thoughts into our minds, we think those

are our thoughts and when we do not recognize where they come from, we are ignorant of Satan's work in our minds. In our North American Christianity few Christians are aware of the demonic world at work. When we are ignorant of where certain thoughts come from, now he can take advantage of us.

How does Satan keep unbelievers in unbelief? According to 2 Corinthians 3:14, he blinds their minds, their thoughts! Listen to 2 Corinthians 4:4. It says:

4 whose minds <3540> the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

That word "minds" is our word for thoughts again. And whose minds or thoughts is it speaking about? The minds or thoughts of unbelievers. How does Satan keep them blind? Satan blinds their thoughts! And we see in Ananias that Satan can work like that in Christians too! When the door is opened, he can place thoughts in the minds of Christians.

We have faced numerous church troubles and often I would think, "I will say this or that," or, "If I could only..." Or "I am going to..." Then there came a time when I began to say to myself, "You must not think like that. That is pure carnality." I have observed others doing what they thought was the way to fix a certain issue in a church without realizing they were doing Satan's bidding. Oh, it may look right and reasonable, but it has its source elsewhere.

Listen to 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. It says:

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

We must not war according to the flesh. Why?

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

My wife and I have watched numerous videos of Europe and have seen many castles, strongholds. Many of them look impossible to enter unless you are let in. The devil sets up such strongholds in our minds, say on the hill of pride or envy or greed or a desire to be somebody, and it is

impossible to penetrate that stronghold, but Paul said the warfare of the minister is not fleshly and it can pull down these strongholds.

What else do the weapons of our warfare do?

5 casting down arguments

How many of those do we let carry on in our mind sometimes? But these weapons cast down arguments:

and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

Where is the battle? The battle is in the mind!

Let me take you to another passage, this time a more encouraging one. Turn to Philippians 4. We will begin in verse 6:

6 Be anxious for nothing,

There is the active part of the mind and many are the things that want to bring us anxiety. But Paul says, "Don't do it." Then he says, "Do this...

...but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Let me just point out that the word translated "minds" is our word *noema*, or thoughts. When we learn to bring everything to God and entrust those things to Him, the peace of God will mount guard over our thoughts!" It will change how we think.

Here is the battleground! Our mind! And when our thoughts are guarded by God's peace, now Paul tells us how to think in verse 8:

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are

of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

Where is the battle? It is in the mind; it is the vital part of the soul where we process thoughts and store them and what we process and what we store determines how we operate and whose servants we are. You see, it is possible to be a Christian and do the devil's bidding.

Turn to Matthew 16. In this passage we are nearing the time of crucifixion and Jesus is beginning to show to His disciples that He must die and they are not having it. We begin in verse 21:

21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

22 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"

Peter thought he was a staunch defender of Jesus but he was doing the devil's bidding. Now look at verse 23:

23 But He (Jesus) turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful (lit. thinking) of the things of God, but the things of men."

The word "mindful" in this verse is a little different than the word we have had so far but it has to do with thinking. What Peter was thinking was not right, and this opened the door for a spirit to enter. Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Get behind Me Satan!" If that could happen to Peter, do you think that could happen to me or you? Of course, it could! And why did Jesus look at Peter and address Satan? Because Satan was the one who put those thoughts in Peter's mind and he was working through Peter's mind against Christ!

Do you know what happened just before this? Peter had just made a great and godly confession, and it is in such cases that we stand in great danger of becoming a tool of the devil and we are not at all aware of it, as Peter was not in this case!

When we come to where we have done something significant for the Lord, the time shortly after is always a dangerous time, and so it was for Peter. Satan is a huge adversary and when he can get in our mind at an opportune time, he can use Christians for his own purpose! It is highly unlikely that we have not been used by Satan in some thing and even today we may not be aware of it.

But we do not need to be the tool of the devil. Listen to 1 John 4:4:

4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

The One who is in the believer, in the context, is the Holy Spirit. The god who is in the lost is not as big as the God who is in the believer. Now notice it says, "You are of God, little children, and you have over come them..." You have gotten the victory over them. Who is "them"?

Well, let us read verses 1-3 to find out:

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,

3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, (that is, the spirits) because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

How do we guard our hearts? We saw earlier that we are to be anxious for nothing but by prayer and supplication bring every request to the Lord and the peace of God will mount guard over our hearts. We need to also fill our minds with the Word of God. We need to keep our motives pure in all we do and walk a close walk with God. We are not capable of recognizing when the devil has put something into our

minds. For this reason, we must be always in prayer and always seeking God.

Jesus said in Matthew 22:37. "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." Once more we have the words "heart" and "mind" used in one verse, but here, the word translated "mind" is *dianoia*. The *noia* part indicates it comes from the word *nous*. It is my understanding that this word *dianoia* means a "thinking through" of something that has been stored in the mind. Here is how I see it; when we are idle and our mind is not otherwise occupied, or when we work and we can think about things at the same time, it is the thinking we do then that is so crucial. When we are driving or we are lying awake at night, the mind does not shut down it is constantly active thinking various things through. The word "nous" has to do with the storage part of our mind, and this word *dianoia* indicates regurgitating things that are stored there and we are thinking them over. When we have interpersonal problems, church problems, family problems, or problems related to our day-to-day living, these want to crowd into our thinking part of the mind when it is not otherwise occupied.

As I take it, when our mind is in that state, right there we are to love God with all our thinking. Now when we love God in all that thinking through, instead of biting and devouring others, we should love God there. Paul told us in Philippians what kind of things to think. Now this takes discipline which requires all our abilities.

We are at war and this war is being fought in our minds, and here we must learn to get the victory by faith.

CONCL: Let me conclude by saying there are very important states of mind as well as many ways of thinking. Humility is a lowly state of mind. Pride is a haughty or high state of mind. We can be like-minded or sober-minded and there are many other states of mind.

But let me conclude with this, that there is a kind of thinking, a state of mind that pleases God. Paul writes this in Philippians 2:3-7:

3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind (thinking) let each esteem others better than himself.

4 *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

5 *Let this mind (lit. this kind of thinking) be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,*

6 *who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,*

7 *but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.*

We are to learn to think like Jesus thought!

Now listen to Isaiah 66:1-2:

1 *Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?"*

2 *For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist," Says the LORD. "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.*

What verses! Do we want to live to please God? Would we like Almighty God to sit up and take notice when He sees us? He said, "This is the man I will look on; on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word!" That is vastly different from the man the world considers great! Let us ask ourselves, do I live in a state of humility?

We are at war! We need to remember that. When young people join the army of any country, they are often excited and can hardly wait to get into the fight. And then when the gruesome events of war become a reality, soon they become sick of war. They just want to go home and live a peaceful life. When we enter the spiritual life, it may sometimes seem like this will be a most wonderful life, but if we live for the Lord, the longer we live, the more difficult the battle becomes! We are all somewhere between beginning this war and being very tired of this war and longing to go home. And this is what I would encourage us to; fight the good fight of faith, the fight that takes place in the mind; for in due time we shall reap if we faint not!