

## Freedom from the Voices

*Spiritual Keys: Mental Health*

By Bob Vincent

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**Bible Text:** Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5  
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I want to talk to you again today about this little series that we're doing, "Spiritual Keys to Unlock Mental Health." We've looked at five of them so far.

Freedom from self-rejection, most people struggle with feelings of self-rejection. They don't like themselves. They don't like how they look. They don't like their certain abilities they don't have. They don't like the fact that they tend to put on fat, particularly in a time like where in the history of humankind when everybody has enough to eat in a country like ours pretty much. So people reject themselves and it bothers them and never forget this, oh, if we could just get this truth: never forget when you turn on television, you are turning on a device that's designed to brainwash you. That's not a joke. It's not hyperbole. It's true. People who are experts in the field of psychology and sociology have studied how to get responses. They continue to study, they study even things like how your body responds to certain pictures and they design commercials on television that they know will cause changes to occur in your chemistry of your brain. Seriously, I'm not making that up. We have made vast progress in understanding how that organ of the body, the brain which is not the same as the mind, how the brain works. So television is designed to get you to do something, buy products. In order to get you to buy products, people have to be convinced that their skin looks bad; to be convinced that because they have a little gray in their hair that they no longer have self-worth whereas the Bible says you ought to be proud of having gray hair, it's a good thing, it's wonderful. But you watch television and it makes you think, "You know, I've got a pimple. Oh, my gracious! What am I gonna do?" And so, again, television is designed to make you unhappy. If you can come to grips with that truth, it really is. It really is. I'm not joking. I'm not making that up. I'm not exaggerating it. Television is designed fundamentally to make you unhappy. It is designed to create an anxiety in you until you go and buy a particular product. It's designed to do that. It's to make you crave certain foods and all these other kinds of things and so self-acceptance, coming to grips with the fact that I am who I am because God loves me and he sovereignly designed me to be the way that I am because there is a purpose for my life that no one else can fill but me.

Freedom from fear. Fear destroys so many people and here's the secret: the way to overcome fear is fear, the fear of God. When you give God everything, when you determine that you will fear God supremely, that you want to have his smile on what you

do, what you say, what you think, when you determine, "I'm going to put God first," that sets you free from all other fears.

Freedom from guilt. You know, it's amazing that believers should all experience freedom from guilt because if we have put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, we know that the blood of Jesus Christ has washed that guilt away. We need to understand something, when we still feel guilty after we've confessed and we've tried to make amends and whatever, we need to rebuke that guilt and command it to get out of our minds. God corrects us, he never rubs our noses in our mess.

Freedom from frustration. What I'm getting at there is the fact we live in a fallen world, that means sooner or later no matter how much you exercise, no matter how low the fat in your diet, no matter how limited the sugar content, you're going to die. You're going to die. It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment. Until Jesus comes, you're going to die.

My aunt who lived to be 102 ½ who played the piano for us when she was almost 102, her full concert grand piano she had in her parlor. She wheeled herself there at almost the age of 102 and played beautifully for us. Loved bacon and eggs for breakfast. Loved sausage. Ate it regularly. Ate fried chicken. Loved gin in a gin and tonic. And she lived to be in good health until almost 102 ½, she died at the age of 102 ½ and until the last few months of her life, she was fully aware of who she was, where she was, when she was, and who you were when you called her and she could get out and go.

Life is unpredictable. James Fix who wrote that book on running dropped dead of a heart attack running. Here's the secret: bloom where you're planted. The spouse you've got is as good as you're going to get. Make the best of it. Make the best of her. Make the best of where you are. The trouble with people is they keep thinking, "Well, if I can just trade this one in for another one," whether this one is a husband or a wife or a job or a career or a place, and I look over the fence from where God has placed me and I see that beautiful lush grass and fail to realize that Satan has this beautiful green spray paint and that old dry brown stubble is just dead grass. But people jump the fence always instead of blooming where they are. Freedom from frustration.

Freedom from bitterness. Bitterness will eat people alive. Probably bitterness will do more to destroy your physical health than any other mental illness you deal with. I am released when I release others. As long as I harbor resentment toward somebody else, I'm punishing me not them. You see, that's the amazing thing, that person that has done you wrong probably does not know that he or she has done you wrong, and if they do, probably they could not care less. When you hate them, when you say, "I'll never forgive them," who are you hurting? Only yourself. And here's the secret: why, why do you hate them? Do you know what? You will become like the person you're bitter against. Wow. That ought to scare you. You will. You will become like the person you hate because that person you hate is the model of your thinking.

And today we're moving near the end but not quite the end, freedom from the voices. One day I was driving down the road and I stopped at a stoplight and I saw a bumper sticker on a car in front of me and the bumper sticker said, "I do what the voices tell me." May I let you in on a secret? God has revealed that our President, Barack Hussein Obama, hears voices. He does. God has also revealed that George W. Bush hears voices. Bill Clinton hears voices and I'm not just talking about Hillary. And George Herbert Walker Bush hears voices. And you can go on down the list. You hear voices. Everybody hears voices but in a secular world, in a modernistic world, the tactic of the enemy is to make you think that the voices you hear are your own thoughts.

Turn with me, if you will, to the passage that Dirk read earlier, Ephesians 6, and I preached a series on this within the past two years so I'm only going to give a couple points because I've got a dozen other places we need to go this morning. Page 1347, I want you to notice several things that stand out here.

First of all, notice verse 11. The devil is a Methodist. Now if you're speaking of denominations, he's also a Presbyterian and he's a Baptist and he's whatever you name it. But it's interesting, the word that's translated "wiles" there in verse 11, "Put on the whole armor of God," page 1347, Ephesians 6:11, "that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil," is a Greek word that when it's transliterated sounds like our word "method." The devil has a Franklin Covey Day Planner and he has a 1A, 2, B1, B2, he has priorities. He has a mission statement. He has a marketing plan. What you need to understand is the devil is organized, he is a schemer and a plotter. Let me tell you something, if you can come to grips with this truth, you will be better off than the vast majority of people in central Louisiana in terms of mental health, and in terms of victory over sin in your life: you are in a war and you have a sadistic enemy who is plotting and planning to humiliate you, to put you in a situation where you lose the respect of other people and your own self-respect. The devil is constantly plotting and planning how he can make you feel pain, not simply physical pain but excruciating mental pain. So we see here the devil has wiles or methods. He follows a system of strategies in order to hurt people.

Notice something else, verse 12, you will never in this life get out of war and that is a secret if you can come to grips with, profoundly will change you. You will never get out of this war. There will never come a place where you can take your armor off, sit down, hit your mint julep or your lemonade or your ice water or whatever it is, buttermilk I like, and sit there and sip your buttermilk and say, "Now I can take my rest." As long as you are in this world until Jesus comes, you are in a state of war and you have to be alert.

Notice, you will never get to a point no matter how spiritually mature you may become, you will never get to a point where you no longer have struggles, mental struggles, mental problems. Your wife has mental problems, your husband has mental problems and, of course, that means you have mental problems.

"We," notice verse 12, "do not wrestle against flesh and blood." Notice St. Paul is including himself. Here is a mature Christian confessing to mental problems. He is

talking about a wrestling. Where is this war taking place? It's taking place in the human soul. The Greek word for "soul" is "psuche." Psychology or psucheology, if you will, is the study of the soul. Your mind is part of your soul. Your brain is part of your body. This warfare takes place in your soul. This warfare where you hear the voices takes place inside your mind. St. Paul had mental problems. Barack Hussein Obama and George W. Bush have mental problems. Glenn Beck has mental problems. I have mental problems. You have mental problems. Psychiatrists have mental problems. Psychologists have mental problems. School teachers have mental problems.

Everybody has mental problems in what sense? In the sense that we, what? We are like Paul, we wrestle. There is a contest, there is a conflict going on in the soul of every human being. Older Christians understood this. In many ways from my perspective, the zenith of biblical psychology was the 17<sup>th</sup> century in England. They understood the nature of the soul and the conflicts of the soul. I think of people like John Bunyan, the great Baptist preacher who was arrested and spent so much time in prison for preaching unlawfully. You're familiar perhaps with the famous allegory, "The Pilgrim's Progress," but he also wrote another allegory, "The War for Man's Soul." That is a great allegory and Bunyan demonstrates far more knowledge of psychology than the people who have come after him. He understood the nature of psychology. Or I think of that Church of England minister by the name of William Gurnall who wrote the massive volume, "The Christian in Complete Armour." These people were counselors. These people understood that pastoral duty is never simply preaching but it is listening to the people of God and interacting with them and praying with them, and as they were in the trenches with the people of God with the Scripture and with prayer, they developed a massive thoroughly biblical psychology.

"We," he says, "wrestle." Now what do we wrestle against? If we look at verse 12, it's very plain that we don't just wrestle with the devil, we wrestle against all kinds of demon spirits. Some are principalities. Some are powers. Some are rulers of the darkness of this age. They are the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places. In other words, the Bible teaches clearly and unequivocally there are such things as demons. They are under the control of Satan and they are here this morning. They are. You cannot see them or smell them or taste them or feel them or hear them, but they are here and they have a mission and their mission is to keep you from getting this word down inside you and letting it be engrafted in your soul because the word doesn't do you good until you engraft it by faith in your soul and the word of God becomes part of you.

Here's how they operate. "I wonder how long he's going to preach? I wonder if my roast is going to burn?" That's one of the voices, by the way. Or, "This is ridiculous. We're living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is totally nuts. This is ridiculous. This is a joke. I don't believe this junk." That's one of the voices. Voices, you need to understand, are always there. I'm not talking about the fact that some people hear voices outside themselves like vibrations on their tympanic membranes, but I am telling you this, what Barack Hussein Obama experienced this morning as he was getting up is only different by degrees from what the person who is locked up in a padded cell experienced this morning when he awakened. It's only a matter of degrees of difference. For Mr. Obama and Mr. Bush, Mr.

Vincent and Mr. and Mrs. name your name, it's subtle. It seems like it's our own voice. It doesn't seem like there's any weird thing or supernatural thing. It's just a thought and that thought seems perfectly normal and natural. The point I want you to see is that in Satan's strategy, Satan is not present everywhere, he's not omnipresent, he's not omniscient, but he has a network under his control so that for all practical purposes, at times it seems as if he's present everywhere. You deal with principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this age, the spiritual host of wickedness. The battle is in the mind.

Notice something else, verse 16. He speaks here of "taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." What are those fiery darts? Notice that he is treating this as a universal thing. St. Paul wants you to understand that spiritual warfare involves everybody. What are the fiery darts? Do you know what a fiery dart is? A fiery dart is, "They're watching me. I know they are." Have you ever had paranoid thoughts? Barack Hussein Obama does. George W. Bush does. Do you think you're unusual because you have paranoid thoughts? Everybody has paranoid thoughts. I didn't say everybody was a full-fledged paranoic but I am saying that thoughts of suspicion and what-not, that's normal in the world. Here's another one, "I'm a drunk. I'll never ever be able to change. I'm a drunk. I'll never ever be able to change." Labeling yourself, we'll get back to that in a moment.

Hopelessness, despair, these are all kinds of the fiery darts that Satan and his imps fire at us. You understand, then, the war is in the mind. The war is in the mind. If you understand that, if you understand the war is in your mind, the war is for man's soul, if you understand the war is in your mind, you understand that thoughts can be put inside of your mind that are indistinguishable from your own thoughts.

So what do you do? Well, turn with me, if you will, to 2 Corinthians 10 for a moment. 2 Corinthians 10 and look at what he says here. 2 Corinthians 10, page 1333. 2 Corinthians 10:3, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." What's he saying about bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ? It doesn't make any difference whether the thought that you're thinking came from within yourself alone or whether it was put there by some tv jingle, or whether it's a demon spirit who has whispered it into your mind and you can't tell if this is from the world, is this from the flesh, or is this from the devil. It doesn't make any difference. If it doesn't line up with Scripture, reject it. If it doesn't line up with Scripture, reject it.

This is an incredible key to unlock mental health. You have the power to reject thoughts that you don't want to have and if those thoughts you cannot get rid of by prayer, let's follow the methodology of Jesus. How do you bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ? So again, does it make any difference whether it's your own thought, whether it's put there by the world with some clever tv advertising person figured this out to make you want this, or whether it's supernatural and from a demon, one of the Presbyterian demons here this morning, or maybe we've got a Baptist demon

that decided to come over instead of being at Calvary. There really are, and listen to this: I am convinced as a student of history, particularly church history, every denomination has a ruling demon over it. There is a Baptist demon. There is a Presbyterian demon. There is a Pentecostal demon. There is a Catholic demon. What do those demons do? They put blinders on your eyes so that you can't receive anything except within your denomination. So I don't want a Presbyterian demon messing with me as I try to read the Scriptures, or a Methodist demon, or a Baptist demon. Gracious sakes.

So what do you do? How do you bring every thought into captivity? What about all the garbage you learned in college? I learned an enormous amount of garbage in college. College is greatly overrated. However, in our economic system, you pretty well have got to have a degree, worthless as it is. I learned that. I learned when I was without a job with eight years of higher education and an undergraduate degree in philosophy that I could get a cup of coffee for the same price as other people. It's totally worthless. Totally worthless. You have to unlearn so much when you go to college. What do you have to unlearn? You have to unlearn every thought that doesn't line up with the word of God. Every thought that doesn't line up with the word of God. I discovered along the way certain courses I took taught me how to think critically and I realized that much of the foundation of modern thinking is simply bovine scatology. It is. Specious imagination. History, bunk. It's always written by the heroes, I mean by the winners, and they always whitewash their evil. The only honest history and honest biography you'll ever read is in this book.

So what do you do with these thoughts? How do you take captive thoughts? Turn with me, if you will, to Jesus' methodology. Let's look at the classical passage, Matthew 4. How did Jesus deal with thoughts? How did he deal with the voices? Matthew 4, page 1113, verse 3. Matthew 4:3, "Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'" Do you ever have atheistic thoughts? I have atheistic thoughts. Does anybody else ever have an atheistic thought? Be honest. Anybody here who has never had an atheistic thought? It has never risen in your mind? It's amazing if somebody is here who has never had such a thought. What do you do with atheistic thoughts? Well, I used to be tricked by the devil on this one big time. Whenever I was praying, I'd get these atheistic thoughts and then what I would do is I would go through all of these proofs that I had studied and memorized, and I would begin to argue with myself, that's really nuts. I told you we're all nuts. I'm nuts. I'd begin to argue with myself and I'd begin to reason why I knew there was a God, I would begin to reason why I believed the Bible is true, why believe that Jesus died and rose again, why I believed that his promises are true, and by the time I finished winning the argument, because I always won the argument, but by the time I took all that time winning the argument with myself, I had no longer the time to pray. How about that? Have you ever had that experience?

Do you understand that doubts, "If you are the Son of God," doubts do not simply come from your own thinking. Doubts can be one of those fiery darts that's fired into your mind and it seems like it's your thought. Here's one. I've dealt with a lot of people who struggled with homosexuality over the years, whether it was male homosexuality or

female homosexuality. It's no longer popular to say female homosexuality so you have this little acronym, lesbian, gay, let's see, lesbian, gay, not sadomasochist, let's see, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered. Those are the four letters that everyone is very sensitive about protecting people's civil rights and I certainly want to protect people's civil rights. Far be it for me to tread on someone's civil rights but let me speak to you bluntly about these things. Here's where we are. In our tax-subsidized public school system today, and thank God we live in an area that is more conservative than other areas and some of this may not be true here, but it's coming here and it's certainly in places like Massachusetts and California. Let's say you're a young person, maybe a young male, and you're between the ages of 10 and 14 and you're going through puberty and then you go through adolescence and some of you had the thought just now, "Why is he talking about this? This is church, it's not appropriate." That's a damn lie from hell. You ought to rebuke it in Jesus' name. Who is going to help people deal with this stuff if it's not preachers in the pulpit?

So you're between the ages of 10 and 14 and some of you are here like this, and in the course of your development and awakening, you find yourself attracted to someone of the same sex. Is that abnormal? No, that's not abnormal. "Huh?" No, that's not abnormal. As people are going through puberty and adolescence, sometimes they are attracted to people of the same sex, sometimes to the opposite sex, but what happens is if you're in that situation and you go to a counselor in many public schools in America, that counselor is going to tell you, "Well, you're gay and you just need to accept it." That is wickedness beyond belief. What that counselor is doing is getting a person who has experienced temptation, who has experienced maybe some experimentation, you know, not all playing doctor is with the opposite sex members, someone who has done some experimentation or had some thoughts and that counselor is pressing that person to embrace a way of life that is, let me say as a person who has ministered to a number of gay people over the years, not gay at all. It's the saddest of lives, particularly when you get older. Wow. So what happens is with your tax dollars, you're subsidizing a brainwashing that makes people think they're a certain way when they're not that way at all. Just because you've been tempted that way doesn't make you that way.

Here's another thing. If you've been in that lifestyle, the moment you come to Jesus it doesn't mean in every single case that you are no longer attracted to people of the same sex. Where do you get that? Some people who come to the Lord out of a lesbian or male homosexual lifestyle experience immediate deliverance and are no longer pulled in that way at all, but others are not. Should that surprise us? Of course not. What are you promised in Christ? You're promised victory in Jesus. It doesn't mean you're promised freedom from temptation. Our Lord was perfect and never sinned and he was tempted in all the ways that we are yet without sin, but he was tempted and those temptations were tough and hard. And listen, you're in a war. That's what we started with today. You're in a war. You've got to take those temptations and come to the Lord with them.

How do you deal with temptations? How do you deal with things you can't get out of your mind? What about some bizarre sexual thought? How do you deal with that? First of all, you understand that you have authority over what you think. And again, I'm sorry if

you're listening to demons who are telling you this morning this isn't appropriate. That is a lie. This is very appropriate. America is in the trouble America is in because preachers didn't open their mouths and tell people the truth for the past century. Let me tell you, you read the Puritans, you read 17<sup>th</sup> century theology and you understand that people dealt with every kind of matter in the pulpit and people explained them to their children at home. The point is, what? It doesn't make any difference what you're pulled to.

How do you deal with it? The first thing you do is you've got to do what Jesus did. "If You are the Son of God," doubt, "command that these stones become bread." Use your power for your own personal gratification. Look how Jesus dealt with it, top of page 1114, verse 4, "He answered and said, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" What did he do? He responded by taking that thought captive. He took it captive by affirming the truth of Scripture. He took it captive by affirming the truth of Scripture.

"Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple," verse 5, verse 6, "and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God,' doubt again, you see, "throw Yourself down. For it is written: "He shall give His angels charge over you," and, "In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, "You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'" How did he deal with it? Did Jesus just pray and believe? No, you've got to pray, you've got to believe, you've got to speak. Listen to me: the greatest single secret to mental health is stop listening to yourself and start talking to yourself. Can I say that again? The greatest secret to mental health is stop listening to yourself and start talking to yourself. When your thoughts don't line up with Scripture, reject them in the name and the authority and the blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus speaks.

"Again, the devil took Him," verse 8, "up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" Then the devil left Him," then the angels came and brought him relief.

What I want you to understand is this truth and you won't want to turn to all of these Scriptures, I'm just going to read them for you, but if you survey the Gospels how did Jesus deal with the voices, Matthew 8:16, "When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word." The power of life and death is in the tongue. How did God create the world? He spoke it into existence and God has in a limited way given you authority to create by your words. You have authority over Satan himself. Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess by the power of your words.

Luke 8:28-29, "When he saw Jesus," this is the demon possessed man, "he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, 'What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!' For He had commanded," notice he had command "the unclean spirit to come out of the man." He had commanded. I want



you to know something: you may not be the lord of somebody else but you are the lord and master of your own castle. You can think what you want to think. You do not have to entertain obsessive-compulsive thoughts. You have authority in the name of Jesus.

Now I'm going to tell you, somebody just had a thought just now and it came straight from a demon, "That's nonsense." Take it from somebody who took a lot of psychology, again, I don't know why, back then you got a BA, it should have been BS. All of this labeling, you need to start labeling yourself according to the word of God. I don't have to think this junk. I don't have to think it. I have authority over my own mind. I don't have to think it. I can command it to get out of my mind.

He commanded the spirits, we're told. He commanded the spirits. Then we go further in Luke 9:42. Can children be demonized? Absolutely. How about an infant, can an infant be demonized? Absolutely. There was a child who was constantly trying to throw himself in the fire and the water and Jesus asked his daddy, "How long has that been going on?" He said, "From the earliest childhood." From earliest childhood. Luke 9:42, "as he was still coming, the demon threw [the little child] down and convulsed him." How did Jesus deal with this demon spirit who was tormenting a little child? Have you ever thought about the fact that you may have a child who is suffering from demonic problems? Is that possible? Why do you think that's impossible? Why is your mind so full of this nonsense? It's because you've been steeped in the spirit of the age and don't you understand why we're losing the war with Islam? Because the West is over unless we recapture our spiritual roots. Secularism can never beat the spirit of Islam. They will use our laws against us every single time and they will win because we're not wrestling against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers.

How did Jesus set free this little boy who was experiencing such torment, torment that pushed this kid to throw himself into the fire or water? Luke 9:42, "Then Jesus rebuked," he spoke out loud. When Paul was harassed by a slave girl in Philippi who could really foretell the future in a limited way but nevertheless good? He finally turns around, annoyed we are told, and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." I command you.

So how do they do it? Turn over, if you will, with me for a moment to Revelation 12. Lord, full time and space in the name of Jesus because you do that for me many times. Page 1417. Revelation 12:11. How do you overcome the devil? Say you're here today and you're trapped in the homosexual way of life, or a heterosexual way of life, you just can't keep your britches on, you'll sleep with anybody, anywhere, any time. You feel remorse, you feel awful and feel like when you finish the deed and you're lying there next to this person, you want to throw up and you're overwhelmed with waves of remorse and you have victory and it lasts for two or three weeks, then lo and behold something happens again and you end up sleeping with somebody again. It doesn't make any difference, heterosexual or homosexual. I don't know why heterosexuals are so self-righteous in dealing with homosexuals. The bottom line is bring your sexuality to Jesus and guess what? The key to sexuality is self-denial. Use your sexuality the way that Scripture says

to use it, within the context of marriage and not outside of marriage, and marriage as Scripture clearly intends it which is always male and female.

How do you overcome these thoughts? Maybe you've had this thought, "You know, I'm gay. My earliest memories were being attracted to somebody of the same sex." First of all, you need to understand something about memory. I have probed there many times with people. Memory cannot be trusted. Memory cannot be trusted. Let me tell you, a very effective counselor can put memories in your mind of things that never happened. "Are you serious?" I'm very serious. A very effective counselor can put memories inside somebody of things that never happened. This is particularly true of people who deal with child abuse. A counselor can lead a child into thinking things and believing certain things are true and that child will begin to believe those things are true and say those things are true when they as a matter of fact are not true. People have to be extremely skilled not to put memories inside little children when those children have experienced great trauma. That's a fact.

So listen, how do you deal with these thoughts? "I'm a drunk and I'm always going to be a drunk. I'm a chronic philandering adulterer and I'm always going to be a chronic philandering adulterer. I'm a lesbian and I'm always going to be a lesbian." How are you going to deal with that? Verse 11, Revelation 12:11, page 1417, "they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death." Let me tell you, the blood of Jesus can give you victory over anything. The blood of Jesus.

Turn with me, if you will, to 1 Corinthians 6. Now I believe that AA does a lot of good. Page 1314. And one of the reasons AA does a lot of good is that the 12 Steps in essence are drawn from Scripture but just disguised to a great degree. The 12 Steps are drawn from Scripture but disguised so people talk about a higher power and I'll tell you, there's only one higher power who delivers people and that's the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, people say, "My high power is the sole of my shoe." Okay, fine. It's not going to do you a bit of good. So one problem with AA, but you know, they've got to get support and funding and what-not, is higher powers. Jesus is the only higher power that works. That's one criticism. I'm not throwing out AA altogether, I'm just saying there is one criticism.

Here's the big one, this is even more serious, "I am an alcoholic." What's wrong with saying that? Well, let's look here at 1 Corinthians 6, page 1314. By the way, I was a drunk. Me, your preacher was a drunk. I was a drunk from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade up through the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade in high school. I was raised by teetotalers. My parents never had alcohol in the house, never saw my parents drink, but on a heavily chaperoned public school overnight trip in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I had my first taste of alcohol. It was vodka. Then I set out on a path of getting drunk as much as I could. Because I passed 6 feet around the age of 12 or 13, because my voice changed around the age of 12 or 13, because I started shaving around the age of 12 or 13, I was able by the time I was 14 and had a driver's license, it was legal back then, to be the guy before school who would buy the beer for everybody else. In the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. So they gave me their money, I went into the convenience store, I was never asked for an ID. "I'd like a six pack of Bud, please." And

you know, "Sure." Pay him the money. I had bourbon many times in the glove compartment of my car. When we went on overnight trips, sometimes I put a fifth of bourbon in my book case. Most students knew that. I was a joke. I was a drunk.

What happened to me? Well, here it is, verse 9 of 1 Corinthians 6, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." Verse 11, "And such were some of you." When I became a Christian, I rejected the label "drunk" and I took the label "Christian." It changed my life. I'm not a drunk and I'll say this and this may not be true for other people but it was true for me, the day I came to Jesus, my thirst for drunkenness took a nosedive and I have not been tempted to get drunk for over 40 years. "Such were some of you."

Now that may not be your experience and you may be a true Christian and that's okay. Here is the deal: whether you're tempted or not tempted, what do you do with temptation? You overcome it, how? Pray. Believe the promises of God. And what's the missing thing? You've got to stop listening to yourself and start talking to yourself. "I'm not a drunk anymore." So my biggest problem with Alcoholics Anonymous and I really don't have a problem with Alcoholics Anonymous if you keep these caveats in mind, is this, don't ever say, "I am an alcoholic," say, "I was a drunk. I was a drunk but Jesus set me free." Now that doesn't mean that I can do everything that everybody else does because if it's a strong temptation that pulls you down, then don't do it. It may be a sin for you to drive down Lee Street if the wheels of your car just happen to turn into the Hocus Pocus parking lot. Are they closed now? Yeah, they're down the street now. They're like closer now.

What leads you to sin is sin itself. Here's the important truth: don't label yourself. This is particularly true for people who have come out of a gay lifestyle. Don't say, "I'm a lesbian." Don't say, "I'm a gay person." Say, "I am a new person in Christ." If you've come to Jesus, he set you free. If anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation. All things have passed away, all things have become new. That doesn't mean you won't be tempted. That doesn't mean that you won't be attracted to someone of the same sex. But when you are and the voices tell you, "Well, you know, you've always been this way and you will always be this way," this is what you have to do, "In the name of Jesus Christ, by the power of the blood of Jesus, get out of my mind!" And do you know what? They have to obey. You can't take authority over other people but you can take authority over your own house. It's your house. God gave you that house. You have authority over what you think or don't think. "Get out of my mind!" Speak it with force. Quit listening to yourself and start talking to yourself. Freedom from the voices comes when you realize that whether the voices are self-generated, generated by tv jingles, the world, or generated supernaturally by demons, you have authority over them. Understand that.

Listen, if you understand who Jesus really is, he's the eternal Son of the eternal God who left the glory of heaven because he loves you in spite of all your weaknesses and shortcomings, he loves you and he came into this world and he did battle with the devil and it looked like he lost when he was crucified but he was crucified for you and me. He

took your guilt, he took your shame, he took your sickness, he took your weakness, he took your defilement, he took it on himself and he went to hell with it on himself and then he rose up from the dead. He rose up from the dead victorious. He's at the right hand of the Father now and he purchased the Holy Spirit to set you free. To see you free means you won't be tempted? No, but it means that God gives victory when you call on his name.

So don't just pray. Let me tell you why Christians live in defeat more than anything else. Here it is. First of all, people harbor unforgiveness. When you harbor unforgiveness towards other people, your prayers just got nullified. Nullified. Null and void. Null and void. It's just like going to the post office at 11:58 on April 15 and there's a long line and they will say, "If you're in the line, we'll give you that postmark." But there comes a point and you drive up and the line is over and it's now 12:01 on the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup>, "Sorry, you didn't make the deadline. You filed too late." When you and I hold unforgiveness in our heart, bitterness in our heart towards somebody else, we just got our ticket canceled. "I'm sorry. This ticket is no good." That's a major reason.

Here's another reason. We worry about what other people think about us. Listen, and I told them this in the first service and I told them I would have to tell them another time the real circumstances of this but this really happened to me. Back in 1966, 44 years ago, is that right? I was preaching 44 years ago and a man pulled a shotgun on me. It appeared to be a 12 gauge. I learned then don't pay attention to clocks but pay attention to pointed shotguns. And I did. I think it's time to give the benediction.

A great key to spiritual health is not worrying what people think about you. Listen, if you haven't picked this up about me before, I understand what people think about me. Seriously, I know people think I'm an eccentric, and I am, and I say outrageous things, and I do, and why do I say them? Because I truly believe the Holy Spirit is applying that word, I don't mean this perfectly 100% or that I'm batting 1000, but the outrageous things are put there many times by the Holy Spirit because it takes that statement for that particular person sitting there that day to hear with hearing ears. So when you hear something really outrageous, just pray for me and if I'm wrong, I'll learn one day, and if I'm wrong and the Lord shows me, I'll tell you the next Sunday I was wrong. I think those of you that have been here long enough know that.

But here's the deal: you've got to quit listening to yourself and start talking to yourself even when people think you're nuts. Now go to the bathroom and do it or go to your bedroom and do it or go out and get into your car and do it. Listen, in the days of earpieces and cellphones, it's great because nobody thinks you're nuts anymore walking around and saying something, but you've got to do it. You can't just believe and you can't just pray, you've got to speak that authority to these thoughts wherever they came from and tell them, "Get out of my mind," and they will obey.

Two last Scriptures. I won't even have you turn there, I'll just read them, but the Scriptures are James 4:7, "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." 1 Peter 5:6-7, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He

may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." Then he goes on to tell us about resisting the devil. He will flee.

Let's pray.

*Lord, it's hot and we're all perspiring and I'm probably perspiring more than anyone, but Lord, this is a very important message because there are a number of people here today who struggle with the voices and sometimes they think they're the only people who struggle with voices and they worry that they're insane and they are, just like President Obama and President Bush are insane, but Lord, not to the point where they need to be hospitalized or shot up with Thorazine or something. Lord, help them to understand that there is nothing that they face that other people haven't faced and that you will provide deliverance for those who call on your name in humility and then turn around and speak with the authority that Christ gives every believer to those thoughts to be gone in Jesus' name. Amen.*