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SERMON TITLE

Mastering Your Mindset

SERIES

DATE

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KEY SCRIPTURE

Genesis 4:2-7

SYNOPSIS

The battle for the mind has been going on since the very beginning.

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ Mastering Your Mindset

We've been talking a lot about the conflict in the mind recently. You need to think about what you think about, and anything doesn't align with God's Word needs to be brought under control. We want to be more and more like Christ, and the Word plainly says that that kind of transformation only happens as we renew our minds. So, we have to change the way we think. There are a number of scriptures which address this issue and the earliest one goes clear back to the very beginning with Cain and Abel.

☞ Genesis 4:2-7

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. 4 But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. 6 Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, **sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.**"

There's some debate regarding why Abel's offering was acceptable to God while Cain's wasn't. We can't be completely sure, but I noticed that it says Cain brought "some" of the fruits of the soil. But Abel brought fat portions from the firstborn of his flock. It could be that Abel made sure to offer God the very best, while Cain only just brought something. That makes sense to me. Then, in Hebrews 11:4 we learn that Abel offered his sacrifice "by faith," which suggests his sacrifice was heartfelt rather than just obligatory.

Whatever the case may be, we certainly see a difference between these boys because Cain was angry, (literally, burned with anger), and his face was downcast – he scowled; his anger showed on his face. Instead of being concerned about what he could do to be more acceptable to God, he let envy and jealousy become a raging fire within. In fact, just a little later, we see this turned into action through the first murder ever recorded, when Cain lured Abel into the field, attacked and killed him.

From the very beginning, we can see that thoughts lead to actions, whether good or bad. God knew this, so, before Cain made that fateful decision to kill his brother, God confronted him about his attitude and told him how to deal with it.

Sin is crouching at your door. It is lying in wait, hoping to find a point of entry. Romans 7 tells us ☞ that **sin will seize opportunities** to spring itself to life and set you on the course to death. James describes how this actually transpires...

James 1:13-15

13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each one is **tempted** when, **by his own evil desire**, he is dragged ☞ away and **enticed**. 15 Then, after **desire** has conceived, it **gives birth to sin**; and **sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death**.



So, sin is always right there looking for opportunities, and **it desires to have you**. We know these verses end with God telling Cain, and us, to be the master over sin, but we see here that sin wants to be your master. This desire is a craving with intent to devour – like a wild animal. **1 Peter 5** makes this same comparison... your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Sin wants to dominate you in order to ultimately destroy you.

☞ **Sin has a desire, a craving, to take over.** In fact, this desire also refers to the yearning attraction between a husband and wife. In other words, sin is passionately driven to have you.

☞ **But you must master it. You must govern, rule, and take dominion over sinful thoughts.** You have to be in charge of your own thought life, because if you don't, sin will take over. The word used for "master" here is also used in other scriptures with various shades of meaning. In **Genesis 1:18**, the sun and moon "govern" the day and the night, which simply means they are prominent in their places. In **Genesis 15:2**, an heir to the family gains possession of the estate and "manages" it. In **Deuteronomy 15:6**, the Israelis were told they would "rule" over other nations, much like a lender has power over a borrower. Then, in **Proverbs 16:32**, "self-control" is praised as the trait of a patient person.

So, from these various references, we can say that you must master your mindset by distinguishing between good and evil. You must be disciplined in order to direct your thoughts and have dominion over sinful attitudes.

I've preached before about No More Stinkin' Thinkin'. Here's a quote from that message: *If you're constantly thinking about yourself; if you tend to be ungrateful, unforgiving, angry and bitter, then you've got stinkin' thinkin'. You're on a downward path to destruction! Stop! If you're thinking about eternity and trusting God's promises in spite of your circumstances, then you've got righteous reasoning! You're on the path to holiness and peace. Keep it up!*

☞ So, I could end the sermon here with this: you can **Master Your Mindset** when you **discipline your mind**; when you **direct your thoughts** toward what is right; and when you allow God's ways to **dominate your attitudes**.

But, as I was studying I stumbled across this strange anomaly in the meaning of the Hebrew word used here. Not only does it mean to govern, rule and dominate, but with a slight variation in the word it also means to "make like something else." In **Proverbs 28:1** and **Job 30:19** the word means to "become like..." dust, ashes, and those who are dead. So, that suggests that to master sin, you need to be like it is, and that doesn't sound right. Right?

But the more I pondered on this, the more it started to make sense. Sin is always lurking nearby, ☞ looking for opportunities to Lord it over you. So, you should have a similar attitude: **always be ready to resist and rule over the sin that pops up in your thoughts**.

Ephesians 6:10-11 says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." It goes on to list the full armor of God, and it's all about being prepared so that you can withstand the attacks of the enemy.



1 Peter 5:8-9 says, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.” When the enemy attacks your thoughts, trying to take over, you must be alert or ready so that you can resist him. There’s an element of self-control here, too, just like Cain was encouraged to master or exert self-control over the sin in his life.

James 4:7 says, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” This has a similar thought to the other verses about resisting the devil, but it adds a promise... simply putting up some resistance will cause the enemy to flee.

So, we see the pattern: Be ready, resist and rule over sinful thoughts. But I also want to point out how these three references all include an element of faith, just like Abel’s sacrifice. The armor of ☞God begins by **being strong in the Lord**. We can resist the devil when we **submit ourselves to God** and **stand firm in the faith**.

So, yet again we see a partnership between God and us. He calls us to Master our Mindsets by readying ourselves to resist the enemy and rule over sinful thinking. But he’s right there with us – our strength comes from him, so submit to God and stand firm in the faith. It’s ultimately his power that enables us to Master our Mindsets.

Romans 8 talks about the mindset. There are minds set on what the sinful nature desires and there are minds set on what the Spirit desires. To have a spiritual mindset requires you to have the Spirit living within and for you to be **Spirit led**.

It’s the Spirit of God who **helps us in our weaknesses**; he searches our hearts and has the mind of the Lord; he is always interceding for us, especially in those times that we don’t even know what or how to pray.

It’s the Spirit who helps us **put to death the misdeeds** of the body. It’s the Spirit who frees us from fear. It’s the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead that lives in you, giving you abundant life.

It’s the Spirit who reminds us that we are God’s children and we can cry out to our “daddy, God,” for help. It’s the Spirit who reminds us that because we are God’s children, we are also heirs to the kingdom with Christ. It’s the Spirit who reminds us that God is always working for our good; he’s always working on our transformation; and, nothing can separate us from his love.

☞So, **always be ready to resist and rule over the sin that pops up in your thoughts**. But also, **remember who you are** in Christ, and who is working for your good! **Romans 8:1** says, “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” That’s part of the resistance, because the devil wants to belittle and break you. So, remember who you are! And, since it’s the Spirit that does so ☞much on our behalf, **rely on the Spirit**. When you do that, you will find life and peace. (**Romans 8:6**).



So, put this all together. Sin is always lurking nearby, looking for opportunities to Lord it over you. So, you should have a similar attitude: **always be ready to resist and rule over the sin that pops up in your thoughts; remember who you are and rely on the Spirit.** As you **reflect on the truth** in all of this, you can Master Your Mindset.

Romans 8:31, 37

31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

37 in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

With the power of the Spirit of God working within, you can Master Your Mindset.

Mastering Your Mindset is especially important in our modern world. It's not just about keeping a positive attitude and avoiding personal sins. It's about standing firm on the truth in this sin-fallen world. Jesus warned that in the Last Days deception would be rampant even amongst believers, so you need to stay grounded in the truth as written in the Word, and you need to Master Your Mindset.

So, what do you think?

☞ **Make up your mind!**