We're starting a brand-new year, and boy, what a year *last* year was! The devil tried to stop us with COVID-19, but he couldn't. He tried to kill the church and shut us down, but we're stronger than ever. If you're wondering if we're in spiritual warfare, the answer is yes, and praise God, we're winning!

What I want to talk to you about is the battle that's going on in our minds right now. We need to understand that our lives are the product of how we think, and the fight is whether we give God or Satan access to our thought lives. By no means does the enemy want us to study our Bibles and learn what God's will is for our lives. He'll do anything he can to distract us from picking up that book that contains God's Word.

The devil will tell us we don't need to read the Bible and that we can get the information on how to live successful lives from the world. However, just like the instruction manual for Ford Motor Company that tells us precisely what to do to keep its Ford vehicles running right, the Bible is our instruction manual on how to live our lives for maximum performance and results. As our Creator, God is the only one who can give us exactly the right information in the right way at the right time to ensure our success.

Our thoughts are amazingly powerful; so powerful, in fact, that if we don't exert our authority over them they can work against us. There's nothing in life that can exist without it first existing in our minds. If we want to change our lives, we begin by changing the

way we think, first. Proverbs 23:7 says that as we think in our hearts, so we are.

Man is a spirit being living in a physical body and possessing a soul. The soul is where the mind lives, and the mind is where all the thinking, feeling, and choosing take place. Our minds are the arena of faith and the battleground for our lives. What our lives will be like is determined by the outcome of the battle raging in our minds.

One of the enemy's tricks is to get us to blame God for the bad things that happen. God may use bad things and work them for good, but He *never* causes them. There's a devil loose in this world who is behind all the destruction. If our thinking is wrong, we'll never recognize the thief behind what's happening around us right now. "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Just like any physical warfare we fight, the spiritual warfare we're engaged in has two opposing forces: God and His angels versus Satan and his demons. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). We already know the second group has been defeated, but that doesn't stop the enemy from continually whispering suggestions in our ears that contradict the

STRONG IN THE WORD

Word of God. The devil is hoping to find a chink in our armor where he can shoot his fiery darts to bring us down. He can do so if he finds a part of God's Word we're ignorant of, which is why it's so important to have a solid understanding of the Word and how to apply it in the heat of battle.

We can't win this fight by ourselves; we need God's help. To resist satanic influences trying to invade our thinking we must put on the armor of His Word. Studying the Scriptures daily and meditating on them constantly is the spiritual equivalent of a soldier wearing a suit of armor. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:10, 11). It's God who makes us strong; we win the fight with the right mindset.

Taffi and I love you and pray for you every day. May the blessing of God be on you and your family. Remember, Jesus is Lord, and "...in all of your getting, get understanding."

In Expectation,

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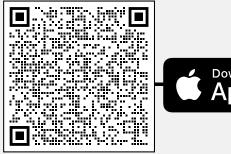
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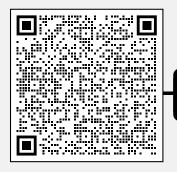


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