

# The Battle With Sin: I Want My Way (Part 7)

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It's just plain to me that as we enter the Christian life, men and women are born again. What happens is, basically, I think the Lord in His kindness, when He first brings folks into the Kingdom, oftentimes He gives them certain seasons of peace and rest and joy. And just as I've seen it, the testimony in a number of different Christians, a time comes when, all of the sudden, the fiery trial that Peter promises, comes upon us. Barnabas promised through many, much tribulation we inherit the Kingdom of God.

And what happens is, God doesn't always throw all the trials and all the tribulation on us when we first come into the Kingdom. That typically isn't the case. Very rarely is that the case. And what I've seen happening is, as young men and women are advancing along, the battle gets quite intense; the enemies against us are many. And... as kind of the foundation text for this little series that I've wanted to do, just waging warfare in the midst of the different kinds of trials and the different kinds of temptations that come against us, the platform text is this one in 1 Peter chapter two.

Let's all look at that and read this again. 1 Peter 2:11: "Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against our soul."

Those words right there: "abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against the soul." And as I've brought out thus far, passions of the flesh we're in this body. The fact is, God hasn't called any of us to live the Christian life removed from this body. The problem with this body- Paul says it in Romans chapter eight. We groan in this body. You know why? It's not that we can't use this body for the Lord. We're supposed to. The body's for the Lord.

We can please and we can serve, and doesn't the same apostle tell us, we are to yield these members to righteousness. We can; we must. This is the battle. The battle is right here.

God comes along and we're born again, we're made new creations. But our body is not made new and so we still carry around the flesh. And in the flesh you have sin seeking to reign. That's where it seeks to reign- in the mortal body. That's what Romans chapter six says.

Sin seeks to reign in the mortal body, and it seeks to use the passions of this body against us. And that's what's happening here. There's war. There is war inside. There is war with sin. There is war brethren, there is war with the devil. You may not see him, but the battle is fierce.

You want to know how fierce it is? Let me just, let me read some words to you that might surprise you. Check out Revelation. Revelation chapter thirteen verse five, "And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them."

Isn't that amazing? "allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them." What do you think? How can the beast, how can the devil, how can the dragon, how can we be conquered if we're truly saints? How can he conquer us?

Brethren, one thing's for certain, that He that is with us is greater. You look back at chapter twelve, verse eleven, "And they" there's the saints again, "they have conquered him" they've conquered the dragon, "by the blood of the Lamb."

How can he conquer us? You know, the best he can do to us is take our life. The best he can do is take us out of this world, out of this battle. That's the best he can do.

We will conquer by the blood of the Lamb. But this is all out warfare. And the thing is, when he comes, when that robber comes, what does he come to do? Steal, destroy. He comes to destroy, he comes to undo us. Satan is in this for keeps. He is looking to destroy us.

And what this says over in 1 Peter is that there are passions of the flesh which wage war against the soul. And as I've told you before, these are passions that are bent against our souls. They are against, that's the word used there. You have passions against the soul. That means passions that are seeking to destroy the soul. They are anti-soul passions. They are passions that seek to wreck us and seek to ruin us.

Brethren, isn't that the case? When we were lost, isn't that exactly what our passions were due? They were driving us directly to death.

I mean, that's what it says in Romans chapter one, even those who know that they deserve death. Right? They know it! And they take delight in and they just encourage others that do these very same things.

Brethren, this is amazing! Those passions were so great before God intervened in our life. Maybe some of your lives He hasn't yet intervened. It's a fearful thing!

You are driven. You say, "I'm free, I can do what I want." Yea, you can do what you want, the problem is, your passions have your want and your will bound like that!

You say, "I can do what I want." Well, that's right. But look at your life. All you want is that which is wicked, that which evil and that which is bent on your destruction. That is a fearful thing when you are controlled by passions that are driving you to the very pit.

But see, we're in a body still that has those lingering passions. And so the point is, like Paul would come along and say, "I buffet my body." I hit it, I knock it into submission.

Brethren, this is real. Jesus Christ says, we need to tear out the eyes and cast them away from us. We need to amputate. Can you imagine pulling out a saw and sawing off your foot? This is what Jesus says. We need to take off feet and take off hands. It's a radical amputation.

We need to fight fiercely. And I've told you, I've emphasized this. The Kingdom of Heaven is taken by force. The violent take it.

And so this is a battle, this is an all out battle. And I've started here-pride. We've started this, the anti-soul force of pride. It sets upon us. Brethren, this is one we have to fight! This is one that's hellish, it's a passion of the flesh and it storms in upon us.

Brethren, I can tell you this, that in my Christian life, there's no question about it, brethren, you don't enter the Kingdom unless you surrender to Christ! There must be that humiliation! There must be that poverty of spirit. There must be that acknowledging, "If you confess your sins, He's faithful and just to forgive you."

There's got to be that kind of brokenness. There's got to be that kind of spiritual poverty. There's got to be that kind of spiritual abandonment where we say, "I surrender, Lord." He says, "Follow Me", and we say, "I'm following."

But brethren, you know what happens? There are passions of the flesh that wage war. That means that after we come, they come back. Brethren, this is never the kind of thing where we do battle one time at the beginning and now there's no battle, or we repent one time at the beginning and now there's no repentance.

Brethren, there have been times, in my twenty-one years as a Christian, where I have wanted you been there? I want my own way!! I want "Lord, I want to do it this way!" And we may not yell like that, but it's the kind of thing where we come along, we've already got our mind made up and our prayer's a sham. We're not asking the Lord to direct us; we're asking the Lord to bless us in what we've already made up our mind we're going to do.

We haven't really consulted counsel, we haven't really consulted the Word of God, we just already pretty much made up our mind. We're going to marry that girl over there and it's probably not the best thing, and my parents don't approve and my pastor probably doesn't approve. And you know... but we're going to do it.

"Lord, bless that." And the Lord's saying, "You're a fool!" You haven't sought counsel, you've despised you know, you've basically gone against the counsel of your parents, you've gone against the counsel You ever been there? I want my way.

Brethren, I mean, it can come into the pastoral thing. I mean, there's been times I mean, I'll just give you an example. I'm not going to tell you who it was. There was a time when, just as a pastor, I wanted our church to support a certain missionary. And the battle wasn't me with the church. The battle was me and God. If I would have set the man before the church, the church would have supported him. But the struggle was, I felt like the Lord was saying, "Don't set him" And I just felt like, our mission just isn't going to be complete if we're not supporting this guy! I went, "Lord, I want us to support him!" And the Lord was saying, "No." It's like, I want my way! I want to do that!

I'm not the only one that's been there. If you've been a Christian for any amount of time, you know, it's come along where again and again and again, you're like, you want to do this. "I just want to do this. I know this isn't pleasing to the Lord, I know that movie's not pleasing to the Lord, but my friends are going and I want to go!"

Or, "I know the Lord" you know, it's the Christian life is a very subjective life. And what I mean by that is Jesus Christ deals personally with every one of His children. And you know what? There are times when He'll let all of His children but you do something. And He says, "They can, you can't."

And it's like, "But Lord, I want to." You want your way. You know what, if you think about this and I get an example of this from the Scriptures, Peter was just this kind of guy. "Lord, far be it, You are not going up to Jerusalem to die! That is not what I want to have happen!" And you see where Jesus came from. "Look, you're not even in tune with the plan of God. You've got your own agenda here. You want what you want, not what God wants." And really, it was the same kind of thing. "No, no! Lord, no!" And the Lord's saying, "Yes."

That's one kind of thing where we do battle, but pride manifests itself in a lot of ways. Obviously, we could look at pride as being the root of every kind of sin. But I mean, there are

just outward expressions of pride where we see it as pride and we don't even have to go put another sin name on it. It's just, this is pride.

I mean, what are some other just blatant manifestations of pride that we struggle with, with regards to our Christianity? Can you think of any? Not just well, I mean, they'll all come back to this. I want my own way.

But what are some other manifestations of it? Can you think of any? Acknowledgement of help. That's a big one. "I don't want to ask for help. I've got a problem in my life and I don't want other people to know. I can do this myself. I don't need your help." And you know what it ultimately comes back to? It ultimately comes back to, "I don't need God's help."

Because, you know what, at the root of pride isn't just exalting self. It's exalting man and diminishing God. It's basically making God little and man big. And that's the thing.

This is the very kind of thing that we looked at in, I believe it was Asa yes, it was. Do you remember him? He went and sought help well here, I have the text.

2 Chronicles 16:7, "At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, because you relied on the king of Syria, and did not rely on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you. Were not the Ethiopians and the Libyans a huge army" See, he consulted the Lord with regards to them. "Yet, because you relied on the Lord, he gave them into your hand." Then he says, "Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in the stocks in prison, for he was in a rage with him because of this. And Asa inflicted cruelties upon some of the people at the same time." And then it says, "Yet even in his disease," his feet became diseased and it became severe. "Yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but sought help from physicians."

This is a big one - not trusting the Lord. You just, you're going along and you're not trusting the Lord. "Now, I'm just not going to. I need to trust in money. I need to trust in what man can do. I can't trust the Lord; I've got to trust doctors. I can't trust the Lord. I can't."

It's a refusal to look for help. Because really, when we look for help we acknowledge our weakness. And it's just a lack of willingness to admit our weakness. And that happens. "I don't want help. It'd just be bothering them. It'd be, it'd be Very closely related to another one, "I'd be embarrassed."

You know what another big manifestation of pride is? It's embarrassment, which is really another word or way of saying 'fear of man'.

You remember, you remember the text that I read to you from Isaiah? This one, Isaiah 51? "Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass" God says, "I am he who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man" It's back to this, "I'm your God. Who are you to fear men?"

You see, if embarrassment, fear of man again, we have another good example, its Peter gives us so many good examples of this whole thing. "Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, 'You also were with Jesus the Galilean.' But he denied it before them all, saying, 'I do not know what you mean.' And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.' And again he denied it with an oath: 'I do not know the man.' After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'Certainly you too are one of them, for your

accent betrays you.' Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, I do not know the man.' And immediately the rooster crowed."

Embarrassment, fear of man. That's a big one. Comes in on us. We're afraid to speak the gospel. You feel the Lord come in and you feel your conscience: "You need to speak to that man. You need to speak to that family member. They're perishing. You need to go over there and do that."

I can remember, I can remember reading the account. I think this was something Mack Tomlinson, I don't know if he still does, I got off his list if he still does, but he used to do a daily devotional. And he sent one out and one time he had a quote from Beth Moore. She was sitting in an airport one day and they, you know how they do when somebody's in a wheelchair, they just kind of push them up to the gate there to wait, somebody, one of the airport staff will do that and then they'll leave them there until it's time to board the plane and then somebody will run them down.

Anyways, they brought up this old man and he had really long hair and it was just all gnarled and in knots. And she was sitting there waiting for the plane, and she glanced up and she saw him and she just like heard the Lord say he was all bedraggled hair, like they just brought him out of a nursing home or something. And she felt like the Lord just impressed upon her to go over and brush his hair. And she really wrestled with that.

I can remember Paul Washer talking about walking by this truck, there was like a, some kind of trucking business, freight business or something, that he'd walk by all the time. Maybe it was up in Dallas. And he felt the Lord: "Go in and talk to all these rough truck drivers." And he said a lot of days he went by and he wouldn't do it. And God just kept poking him everyday, "Go in there. Go in there."

Brethren, that's a big one as Christians that we have to struggle with, a big one. We've got this thing, "I want my own way." We've got this thing where we don't want to seek help. We want to be dependent... or independent rather. We don't want to be dependent. We want to be so you've got these things. "I want my own way." You've got this spirit of independence. You've got this spirit of fear of man. Any of you ever been there?

Brethren, I remember I mean, to pray now in a restaurant is like, I wouldn't even think about it, I wouldn't even bat an eye. I remember, like the first few weeks after I was saved, I got involved with Youth for Christ and I met with the paid staff guy at like a Denny's, and we were having breakfast. And he said, "Let's pray." And he bowed his head and I was just filled with sheer terror that we were actually praying. This was so opposite and opposed to anything I had ever known, to actually pray publicly in a restaurant. I was just stricken utterly with fear.

But the thing is, where that wouldn't be there now, Brethren, there can still, all the sudden be something... where we'll get into certain situations and be just struck with fear.

I remember there was this: I remember working up at this engineering firm in Kalamazoo, Michigan and there was a vice president of operations there and this guy was the most intimidating guy. And I was so convicted, I left that place and I never had dealt with him about the gospel. After I had left, I had to write to him and apologize. But we can get struck by fear of man.

Other ways that it comes out? "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God." By doing what? "Humble yourselves." What's that? Casting all your cares, all your anxieties. Do you know that anxiety is a tremendous manifestation of pride?

Worry is pride. You know why? We can go back to the same kind of it's like God saying, "Who are you to fear man?" It's also that He can say the same thing to His people, "Who are you to be anxious? Am I not in control of every last, smallest, little aspect of your life? Am I not in absolute, utter and total control? Is there one speck of dust that moves that I do not have control over?" And for us to be anxious is saying, "I need to worry about this because God really isn't able to take care of this. I can't really put all this care on Him, because if I do, He might not take care of it the way it really needs to be handled."

And you know what's very close to that in nature and in sin? Grumbling. Because, very often, when we're worried, it's a side by side companion with grumbling. Because we think we got a raw deal. Not only are we anxious, because we don't like our circumstances and they're intimidating to us, we grumble because we don't like the fact that we're in those circumstances, which by the way, we're told that those Israelites when they were out there in the wilderness, that is an example, Paul told the Corinthians, for us today. And so there's another manifestation.

How about just this, brethren, this is a big one: a desire for greatness. "What? How come that brother gets to do that? Why don't I get to do that? How come he how come I get the raw deal? Lord, how come they get that? I want to be..."

You know, brethren, there are a lot of times you can be overcome by passions of the flesh where you want notoriety, you want attention, you want applause, you want recognition, you want the honor. You want to be acknowledged as being better or greater. You want to be acknowledged for your skill. You want to be acknowledged for your ability. You want to be acknowledged for your gift. You want to be acknowledged for something that you've done. You want to be acknowledged, boy, you very sacrificially gave and it's a test...

Or you're fasting, extended fast. You're fasting longer than you know most other people around you have ever fasted. And there's this thing creeps in. You want somebody to know. You're not supposed to let your right hand left hand know what they're doing here when it comes to our giving, and you've given very sacrificially. And you kind of, it creeps in there. You kind of want somebody to know you did that.

Brethren, can you remember? I mean, here it is! Luke 9:46, an argument arose among the disciples of Christ as to which of them was the greatest. Here they are arguing, "Which of us is the greatest?"

And you don't think that doesn't happen to us in our Christian life? "Which one of us is the greatest?"

You go and you do something with a group. You go to campus ministry and somebody's acknowledging all the great turn out and they go through all the names and you were left out. "What? How come I was left out? I was there. How come I'm not getting acknowledged?"

And we laugh, but you know, these things can and the thing is, it's like Paul says, don't we're not to give any provision, any supply to the flesh. But I tell you what, there are seasons when the flesh can come on us with such intensity. I mean, it can come on you with intensity. You don't like it, you recoil from it, but it wants attention, it wants to exert itself, it wants

acknowledgement, it wants its own way. It is filled with anxiety, it is filled with grumbling, it does not like what God has dealt you. You don't like the providence God has dealt you.

Brethren, seasons can come on you when it comes, how do we do battle? How do we lay hold on that thing? How do we take that thing by the hair and ram the sword straight through its neck? How do we do it? Where does the battle come from?

Brethren, I'll tell you another thing that comes up, it's very kin to something not seeking help- it's that independent, it's self-confidence. Again, remember when it reared its head in Peter? Self-confidence, when was Peter overconfident? When what? Exactly, right there. "I'll not deny you. Lord, though they all deny you, I'm not going to deny you!"

Man, pride folks, I know the Proverbs says pride is before destruction, but it's before falls. Brethren, when we're filled with pride and we run with it, you don't want to run with it. If you're God's child, He's going to lay you low. But we need to deal it a mortal blow. When it comes, we need to do the fiercest battle with it.

How do we do it? And here's the thing, here's the thing. Every Christian has to fight these passions, every one of us. We have to do war. We must all fight pride. All who will see eternal life, brethren, we must, we must do this battle. We must. We must put the deeds of the body to death, including these prideful deeds. We must!

Romans 8:13, many of you are familiar with this, it says, "if by the Spirit, you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

If you live according to these passions, you're going to die. If you put them to death, you live. True Christians are sin killers. By the Spirit's power, you're sin killers. We've got to learn to do battle with this.

But here's the thing, practically, some of us do better than others. I mean among those who truly do battle, among those who are truly Christian, the truth is, some have greater success than others and that simply can't be debated. How do we know that? Because, brethren, within the Christian realm, we have Christians that are humbler than others. That's just a reality.

And you know what? Typically we would expect to find that those that have walked with the Lord long I mean, the truth is, probably, as a whole, we would hope that we would find somebody that's walked with the Lord twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years; they're going to know something about the humility of Christ that somebody that's walked with the Lord for six weeks won't know.

But you know what? Even those, if we brought all those that have walked with the Lord for a year, some are more humble than others.

Why? why? I mean, it's just true.

It's like when Jesus says, "Store up your treasure in heaven." Some store up more. It's just true. The things that we're called to do, some respond better. Some are more sacrificial. Some respond like the widow, who threw in her two last coins. Not everybody does that. Not everybody's that sacrificial.

And not everybody's the same with regards to humility. Not everybody's the same with regards to faith. Jesus could look over here and say, "Oh, you of little faith!", and then He could look over here and say, "I haven't found such faith even in Israel!". We're not all the same.

Even those that have true faith, we're not all the same. How is it that some fight better? How is it that some succeed better? Some Christians achieve greater strides; they run faster, reach higher, resemble Christ more.

My question to you is: why? What is it they know, what is it they're doing that others maybe aren't doing as successfully, as well? Practically, what makes the difference? Because I think you and I have to recognize that there is a difference. There is one!

So, why? All true Christians fight the battle. The truth is, in the midst of the battle, some people seem to get laid out on the battlefield more. Some people seem to fall more. Some people end up like the Hebrews at such a time as they themselves ought to be teachers, they needed somebody to come along and teach them.

Or the Corinthians: "I have to deal with you as carnal, can't even feed you the right stuff." I mean, why is that? Some advance, some are commended, some are rebuked. You know it's true.

Look at Christ when He dealt with the seven churches. Were they all the same? They weren't! That's not just, folks, it's not just individuals are different, but collective bodies of individuals are different. Some churches achieve greater humility than others. Why? I mean, we've got to ask this question. This is where the battle is! This is where it's fought!

Now, you know, I think we all recognize this. We all recognize that there's God's grace and that's a big factor in the thing. I think we all recognize with the apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 15: 10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that was in me."

I mean, here's Paul saying, "Hey, I recognize that I have out run others." You know what, if you've out run others, it's not humility to say you haven't. It isn't that at all. Because if you have, the best thing you can do is acknowledge it and give God the glory for it. Because if you have, you have, and if you have it's by His grace and so you should acknowledge His grace. You shouldn't, that's false humility when you say you aren't something that you are. That's not even true. That's not humility. What you're doing is, you're depriving God of the thanksgiving that He gave you the grace to get back.

Paul could look at it and say, "I've outrun others." But he didn't say, "Applaud me." He said, "This is the grace of God."

So, I think we would all recognize that it's the grace of God. But don't you dare miss this. Listen to what Paul says: "By the grace of God, I am what I am and will admit that and will acknowledge that and will thank God for that. His grace towards me was not in vain. On the contrary," listen to this, "I worked harder than any of them."

But let me just point this out, he worked harder than any of them. He didn't say, "Well, glory be to God, look at all the grace He poured on me and how I was able to exceed everybody else and I basically sat on the couch and became a couch potato and watched soap operas and I managed to out run them all. Isn't God's grace glorious?"

He said, "The way God's grace manifests itself is you work harder, you fight harder, you do battle harder. You wage war more vigilant, with more fierceness, with more force, with more effort! But you do it!"



Brethren, you see, when the grace of God comes out, what it's going to create in you is that response, where you do it! You must put the deeds of the body to death. Yes, you do it by Christ, you do it by the power of the Spirit, you do it by the grace of God. But, YOU do it.

And I'll guarantee you this, anytime you find a person that has excelled more in humility than others, it is because they have done something in fighting that war against pride more than others. They have done it. They have run harder in the direction of humility. They have fought harder to defy and defeat pride. They've done it; you better believe it, they've done it. And if you think that you will make gains and you will have victory without fighting the battle, you're thinking wrong. It's not going to happen. You must fight.

Brethren, don't ever forget this. If you put the passions of pride to death, it's because you do actually kill pride. Look, if you are running this race and you've got ten steps up on another person, it's because you've pressed harder to gain those extra ten steps on that person.

Now, you can trace it back to the grace of God, absolutely, absolutely. And you can praise God for it, and boy that's a place where we need humility just as well in acknowledging what God has given to us that we not be lifted up and we not be prideful and we not look down our noses at people that don't have the same amount of truth and the same amount of success, people that are somewhat more in the dark, somewhat more without solid doctrine. Look, I'm not talking about the lost people, I'm not talking about the heretical hordes, I'm not talking about false religion, I'm talking about other Christians that just aren't where you are.

But brethren, if you're going to put this to death, if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. But YOU must do it; YOU must put them to death. Brethren, the thing I'm emphasizing here is, if you have not achieved the strides in humility that others have, it's your fault. It's because you have not pressed on! It's because you have not run higher. It's because you Look, if you rise above others, it's because you have risen above others. By God's grace? Yes, But mark it down, if you succeed it's because YOU succeed.

And the reason I emphasize personal responsibility so emphatically at this point is precisely because the writers of Scripture emphasize personal responsibility this emphatically.

Folks, humble churches there are humble churches, there are humble people. And the thing about it is, they come from somewhere. There are people that greatly out distance others, and they come from somewhere. They don't just happen by accident.

And you know where they come from? I guarantee brethren, they come from the path of difficulty; they come from the path of discipline; they come from the path of extra effort; they come from the path of more vigilant prayer life; they come from the path of being in the Word of God; they come from the path of walking with Christ; they come from the path of... they come from the path of being proactive. You know what I mean by that? Where there is a special exertion to be humble versus the guy that just kind of takes the Christian life as it comes to him.

There are people who proactively say, "I am going to pursue humility with a passion." There are other people that aren't even pursuing it. God works it in them to some degree, but they're not praying for it. As a Christian, God is going to work it into them; He's going to work that image there. But they don't see it near as important. They're not aggressive in the pursuit of it. And that can come through the kind of teaching emphasis that they get.

I mean, one of the reasons that I wanted James to bring to you the "Andy" thing from last week is because, look, I'm absolutely convinced of this. You know, I think one of the reasons

that Kirksville and Sedalia have the kind of churches they do and the humility levels as a church that they have is because of the leaders they have. They have humble leaders. And I think you guys need to see the value of having humble leaders in our church as well and be praying for me and for those other men that will come along after us.

We need pace setters in our lives, we need examples. And the truth is, elders in a church are to be examples. That's what Hebrews 13 says.

But brethren, some flounder in this. Some don't have as much success. Why? And it's not always because they don't put forth any effort. You know what? Christians sometimes do put forth some effort, but some people seem to flounder and they seem to fail.

Now, Paul said this when it came to buffeting his body, he said he didn't just beat at the air. You know how it is when you have some, you've got some guys fighting, you rear back with all your might and I mean you throw the biggest roundhouse punch and you put everything you've got into it and you swing through the air and you entirely miss the enemy. You've expended effort. But you haven't done any good.

And a lot of us in the Christian warfare, it's like that. We flounder around a lot of times because the energy is expended with little advantage. You see, what we want to do is we want to focus. We want to focus! If we're going to fight this thing, we need to figure out how to take this thing by the head and hack it to pieces and we need to make our blows count. We need to do it damage. We need to beat our bodies into submission. We need to do damage in the battle to Satan, we need to resist him. We don't want our efforts to be wasted, scattered, inefficient.

You remember you say, "How can we do that?" You remember how Paul came along to the Colossians and he said, "You know what you Colossians are doing? You're saying, Don't eat, don't drink, don't touch." You remember that? Remember where he says that?

You know what he's saying? Your efforts are scattered. They're worthless. You're not getting anywhere. What you're doing is not helping you in the battle. That's wasted effort.

You've got people that are saying, "Okay, this is what the Christian life is. I need to have the right diet; I need to drink the right things; I've got to touch the right things."

You see, it becomes this thing of all these outward things, but they don't help. They don't reach in where the battle's really fought.

You say, "Okay, there's a lot of we get it, we get it. How do we fight? I mean, how do we do the mortal battle? How do we expend the energy right?"

Well, here's the thing. Okay, imagine this: All of a sudden, you're overtaken by this, "I want my own way." Now, it doesn't always come up like that, but it's like, there's a thing in your life and "I want that", "I want to do that". Your heart's set on a way. It can become anything.

I've heard somebody talk about a girl that they knew who had made becoming a missionary an idol. You heard that story? There's a lot of different things. People, people idolatry can set upon us. And do you know what happens when idolatry sets upon us? We want that thing. We want it! Oh, isn't it amazing, as soon as an idol comes into our life it's not long before the Lover of our souls comes along and says, puts His finger right on it, "I want that." "No, Lord! Anything but that! Not that! That was the one thing I didn't want You to come along and deal with me about!"

And you know, we can get to where we try to convince ourselves, "That's not an idol! That's not an idol! I can give that up!" We can become a whole lot like the drunk, the lost guy,

you know, "I can give that up anytime I want!" And so we're trying to convince ourselves, "I can give that up anytime I want!" And we keep telling ourselves that because we don't want the Lord to come along and tell us, "Okay, get rid of it." And then He comes along and He says, and we hear Him speak to us in the conscience, like "Ughh, now there's no peace. I need to give that up."

Here's one of the things. What happens when I'm overcome by that? What happens when a season comes on me in my life where I want my own way? How do I get to where I want the Lord's way when I want my own way?

Well look, this is an assumption on my part. If you're a child of God, somewhere buried in there, you do want God's way. Because if you're His child, even though seasons can come on like that, somewhere buried in the root, what you really are is evident.

You know why I say that? Because one of the very traits of a child of God is blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness. And I see this, God promises in the new covenant that He's going to cleanse you from all your idols. And I also see this in the Scriptures: that God works in you to will and to do of His good pleasure.

And so, this is what I know. When a true child of God is confronted by a season in their life where they just want their own way, they want something, I know this, that somewhere in there, there is still a desire and a hunger and a thirst for what is righteous and for what is good. You want God's will.

Because if, look, if there's nothing of that I mean, I had this guy approach me. I get these from time to time I get this. But I had this guy email me and he's saying, I get people ask me the craziest questions, this guy wants counsel on how to become Christian or how to get heaven, how to get eternal life when you don't want it.

Hey listen to what he said, this is a quote from him, "I think my problem is that I inwardly want to sin. How am I supposed to hate sin? I've prayed for it," in other words to hate sin, "but I'm not sure of the legitimacy of a prayer for something that I know is good but that I don't really want."

Well, I wrote him back and I said, "I don't even know why you wrote to me! Why are you writing to me asking for something that you don't want?"

I believe that the true child of God is not like this person. A true child of God is never going to be in the place where they're like, "I want my own way and I have no way out of this because I don't want God's way and I want my own way, period."

See, I don't believe the true Christian is like that. I believe the true Christian in his worst times is like David where he tried to get his own way, and now His bones are all dried up and there's just, oh there's this spiritual darkness has come on his soul. He's not happy; he's miserable. He's wanted his own way and he's in misery. And he wanted out. What a blessing when the prophet came to him and said, "You are the man!" suddenly. What a blessing that was!

In your worst times, brethren, there's a conviction in there. You may have tried to quiet it, but God's stabbing at your conscience and you know it. And deep down, you really do want His will. And if you've ever been in one of those times where you've just struggled with wanting your own will, oh and you get to the place where you resign yourself.

You guys ever heard the Don Johnson story about his arrowhead collection? Don Johnson had these arrowheads. He spent his life going into caves and finding all through that whole Arkansas area and he'd go digging around and he'd go exploring and he had what was a really impressive arrowhead collection.

And it was like, one day God said, "Don, get rid of it." And he was appalled. "No, no!" He couldn't do it! He wouldn't do it! And he wrestled and he battled and he was in such misery and it was coming up on this one Sunday and he had to preach. Arrowheads!

And then he thought, well, he'd try to sell it, but the Lord's going to let me keep some of my favorite ones. And he said, he came into that church building on Sunday morning and he was up there at the front of it and he was on his knees and he was just crying out and he was just wrestling! This thing was eating him up! And he got to that place where he just said, "Okay Lord, you can have it all."

How many times do we come to that over and over in our life? And then what peace and joy and it's just we want that! Deep down, we want that relationship more than so I trust that.

But then, brethren, on top of that, not just the desire for humility, we need to be purposed. Remember how the Psalmist said it, David, Psalm 17:3, "I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress."

This comes back to being proactive. We've got to seek humility with purpose. You see brethren, this reactionary approach doesn't get it. You know what I mean by reactionary? All I'm doing is living all my time in light of my arrowhead collections and then when God pricks my conscience, I have to fight and do warfare and spit and seethe and wrestle and before I finally break.

We need to be proactive in the sense... Jesus did not seek His own way when He was here. He humbled himself. Brethren, He did not seek His own desire. He did not come to be served.

You know what, we need to be proactive. There are certain things that we can do to humble ourselves. Serving is one of them. Brethren, serving. Serve one another. Romans 15:2 "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please Himself..."

Getting in the habit, brethren You want to do battle? One of the ways is to basically purposefully seek to endeavor to be involved in the very activities where you are knitting this thread of humility into your life. In other words, just lay it down. Keep a journal, a journal where you basically are going to seek to serve other people.

Again, you have to be careful. It's best to keep short tabs on that journal. Keep ripping the pages out when they get too old and throw them away so that you can't go back. It's best we forget the things we do, a lot of times. But at least, maybe keep a journal where you can write down the things you hope to do and ways you can serve people and after you've done it, then tear it out and wad it up and throw it away. Because you don't need to remember. Forget those things that are behind, as much as that would be detrimental to the very humility that you're trying to fashion into, by the power of God, into yourselves.

But we need to be proactive, not just reactionary. Fight to serve people. Fight against selfish tendencies. Fight against them, brethren.

I mean, I think some days when I've been at church all day and you know, I've been up early and I've been preparing and then I come to church and I preach and there's different matters to take care of and all sorts of people want to talk and there's counseling situations and all these things happen and I'm at the end of the day and I'm exhausted and I'm like, you know, when Paul Washer was here this last time, he told me, "Don't let those young guys wear you out." And he said, "They will." And he was dead serious, he said, "They can kill you, especially on a Sunday." And he said, "They can really, they can cause spiritual defeat and darkness to come into your life. They can wear you out to that point."

But you know, and there can be times when it's like, "Ugh, we're at the end of the day" and it's like, "Ugh." Ruby was telling me that the Wilkinsons needed the jackets for their children because they were going to Minneapolis, and it was like, well Martha ended up taking those over there, but it was like we were going to have to and it was like "Ugh, I just want to, I want to relax." I mean, we would have done it, but there shouldn't have even been a hesitation in my heart to do it.

Because I think of the Lord Himself. Can you think of a time when He was weary and all worn out? And yet He had time not only for one woman, He just kept going after that. Then all the Samaritans came out there to the well and He just kept going. He wearied Himself in serving people.

Brethren, let me just end on this note. Because I and we're not done with this yet, probably one more time with this. But listen, I'll tell you this again, whether it's Romans 12, whether it's Ephesians 4, whether it's Colossians 3, you have this thing about the mind, setting your mind, renewing your mind.

Brethren, the battle against pride is fought in the mind. It's fought by what you believe. It's fought by truth. Here's Jesus, if He was here right now and some of His disciples were over here arguing who was going to be the greatest, let me tell you exactly how He sought to equip them. Exactly how He sought. And you see when you read Peter's epistle, he got it, he learned.

You got some disciples arguing about who's going to be the greatest? Here's what Jesus says, You'd almost think this is just totally backwards to the way you would think He would reason. He actually says, to the guys arguing about who are going to be the greatest, it's as though Jesus said, "You see guys, I really do want you to be the greatest. And I'm going to show you the path to it. Guys, it's not that you're arguing about a bad thing."

Now, they were embarrassed because the way they were arguing and what they were arguing for, they knew, their own consciences told them they were wrong. They were kind of silent on Him. He'd have to ask them some times, "What were you guys talking about back there?" They'd kind of hang their heads. They were arguing about and discussing who was going to be the greatest.

I mean, you remember the day you know that there were some family connections here going on. James and John, they come with their mother. "Hey Mom, get us in!" "We want to sit on your right hand and left hand." You know what's interesting? When Jesus answered, He doesn't say, "There won't be somebody sitting on my right hand and left hand." In fact, He says there will be.

But in the end, He said, you remember what happened to the other disciples when they came and asked that? They were indignant. Because again, "We want that! We want it!" Desire

for greatness. In all of it, Jesus never said don't pursue greatness. He just said that the way the world pursues it is not the right way. You see, the path to greatness is humility.

We have this reality in Scripture repeatedly: that in order to be exalted, you must be humbled. Those that will exalt themselves will be humbled; those that will humble themselves will be exalted. Those who will be the greatest in the Kingdom are those who serve. If you would be greatest, you will become servant of all and slave to all and you will serve. Jesus: none went deeper and He was exalted.

Where does the Bible say that? Philipians 2. He humbled Himself, He became a man, obedient all the way to death, death on a cross and God exalted Him. Brethren, there is going to be somebody sitting at His right hand and His left hand. Can I tell you who it is? It is going to be those who are most humble. That person is going to be greatest, who served most, who loved most. So there's your path.

But you see, it comes back to a mental thing. How am I going to fight the battle? Brethren, you know what Jesus was doing and what I can do as a servant of His in teaching what He taught? I want to encourage you all to greatness. I want to encourage you all to be as great as possible in the Kingdom of Heaven. I want to encourage you to sit as close to Christ as you can. I want to encourage you to true greatness.

Jesus brought a child into their midst and He basically said, "Whoever receives a child like this" You see, there were times when those disciples were like, "We're too great for children. Take your children away! The Master wants nothing to do with them. You know, He's too great for that. We're too great for that. Get those children out of here."

And Jesus is like parting these guys and saying, "Guys, you just don't get it. Bring the little children unto Me." And they're all like looking, they were probably always looking at Him thinking, they were probably always looking at Him feeling half way ashamed, right? Embarrassed, backward. They finally got it, you can see it. Peter says, "Humble yourselves therefore, under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time."

Brethren, this is a mind battle. You see, when I want my own way, I can break down grumbling, I can break down this desire for my own way, I can put the sword in the throat of pride when I think, "You know what, Jesus offers me the best. He's shown me the pathway to true greatness. For you to desire that is not bad or He wouldn't have appealed to it. And He did appeal to it. He appealed to you to pursue your own greatness. And in the midst of this, for you to set your mind, brethren, set your mind on true greatness. Set it there!

And look, I am convinced that as Christians we are basically people who must do warfare against the passions of the flesh, the desires of the flesh, as people who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

You know what that means? That means that in this world, Christians are not people who do not know desires of the flesh. They do, they do war against them. As people who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for you to want true greatness, is to hunger and thirst for righteousness.

You see brethren, we are people whose desires for good must be greater than our desires for evil. Brethren, we would lie to ourselves if we said that we didn't ever have desires towards lustful things, inappropriate things, sexually immoral things, prideful things, greedy

things, lustful, envious, jealous, blasphemous. I mean, we have all these things; we're going to get into all manner of them: unbelief...

But brethren, what we are is people whose desires for righteousness have to exceed; that's how we triumph. That's really where it happens. It happens on the level of desire. (P) And brethren, when you walk around with greater desires for true greatness. You say, what does that greatness look like? Oh brethren, if it's got to do with where we sit and the closeness we have to Christ and with the amount we get to enjoy Him and with being given greater faculties to be filled with the joy and the pleasures of God, we are the biggest vessel possible to be filled with this everlasting joy and to know the delights of God and to be able to have greater comprehensions.

Or even as it is here, some people have bigger IQ. If it basically comes out to vaster capacities to be able to know and to comprehend God. And the more you know of Him, the more you love Him. The more you know of Him, the more you know of Him the more there is that is lovable to you, the more there is to draw joy from, and that just ever increases in the vastness of it and to have brethren, I don't know what it's all like, but truly there is an ability and a capacity to be closer or to have greater comprehensions. There is!

Jesus does not say there isn't a place to sit at His right hand. And brethren, if we can fill ourselves with this and we can get to where we are inspired to seek to have the most heavenly reward and the greatest glories and to be able to have the most crowns to throw at His feet and to have lived the most sacrificial and pleasing life to Him and to get the greatest commendations from Him in the end. Brethren, when our desire's for that trump those other desires, that's where you're victorious, when your mind's set there.

But brethren, I'll tell you, the guys that flap around on the field all the time, the guys that are beating at the air, they're losing it right here. Because when the battle's upon them, they don't have any idea where to set their mind. You can realize what's bad, "No, I don't like this! I don't want this! I'm trying to run from it, I know it's not good!" But if you don't have any place to go, you're down on the field.

You see, the minds got to have a place to get set. Set it on things above. It's got to be renewed. That's where we do this battle, brethren. That's where we do it. And if you are not so persuaded of the glories of heaven and the glories of the next life and what there is to be won by an all out battle here, then you're not ready to fight that battle. It's going to be fought here.

Well, God help us. You think on those things. Think on those things!

Well, that's it for today. We'll revisit this again next week. Probably one more time on pride, then we'll probably move on to something else.