

## Wrestling with God and Man

Much of the struggle we face as believers in Jesus Christ can be characterized into two categories: one comprising of our struggles with man and the other will be with God: Gen 32:28; 2Cor 10:3-5; Eph 6:10-12. We are powerless in the flesh to stand before the on slot of God's Enemies: 2Chro 20:12-25. As believers, our provisions for coping with the world, the flesh and the Devil are power systems from God that supersede Human imagination: Eph 3:19-20. This power was established within us by the Holy Spirit and is tapped into more and more as we grow spiritually: Rom 1:16, 15:13; Eph 3:20. As Christians the most important thing we will ever learn is we will never win a battle for God utilizing human dynamics: Zech 4:6-7; these two verses demonstrate the need for God's power if we are to undertake a project for Him. The power of the spiritual life maintaining a walk in fellowship with the Spirit is the only defense we will have against the enemies of God: 1Jn 4:4. Only through God's power system can we advance in His plan for our life: Rom 15:13. As believers we are under obligation to satisfy the righteousness of God: Rom 6:13. Human logic, Human talent, Human ingenuity, Human wisdom are no match for Satan and the systems he deploys to delay our advance: 1Cor 1:19-31.

Being in the world, we are in enemy territory and should be completely reliant on God for support/power: 2Cor 10:3-5; Eph 6:10-17. At a certain point in our relationship with God He will demand that we no longer be friends with the world: Jam 4:1-12. Satan system attempts to distract us from using God's system of power: 2Cor 4:1-18. God is aware that we enter into His family with some handicaps/fleshly behavior that we've acquired from the world: 1Cor 5:7-8. It is inevitable God will start pruning off the unfruitful branches in our person; certainly, there will be some pain that goes along with this process: Jn 15:1-11; 1Thes 3:1-5.

The Lord Jesus needs to be set first in our life in order to live an effective life for Him: Rev 2:3-5. As baby believers in enemy territory, our support system is such that no harm can come to us apart from God's permissive will: Rom 8:31. The enemy cannot make a move towards us without authorization from our sovereign God. If we are under testing and attack, we are to maintain an attitude of grace and thankfulness: Col 3:13-14; 1Thes 5:18; 1Pet 4:7-11. Whether we capitalize on opportunity to prepare for the battle or not, there will be suffering inflicted by Satan's system which is entrenched in the world around us: Acts 14:22; Eph 6:11. Emotionalism and shame will be the result of having our eyes on the world: Phil 3:19. One of the easiest things we can develop as Christians is resentments towards this apparent opposition; scoffing at these agents of suffering will only bring the discipline on ourselves: Prov 9:12. We have to humble ourselves and God will lift us out of our weakness into his strength: Lk 18:14. As long as we are tuned into God's plan, the enemy's strategies will not prosper

against us, just as was the case with Jesus' sufferings: Isa: 54:17. If we are willing to cooperate with God, then He will turn these sufferings into an astounding victory: 2Tim 3:10-13. If we are feeling a sense of restraint, and it is not appearing as though our aspirations are taking the shape the way we envisioned, frustration can set in distorting our view of everything: 1Sam 16:7. Just because we envision something, it doesn't mean we are seeing the will of God for our life.

On the road taking us from being Spiritual infants to Spiritual adults, we will be faced with the test of being under another person's authority: Rom 13:1. Regardless of what things we think are wrong with this person, God is never going to justify our animosity towards them; which is simply hypocrisy in us: Jam 3:13-18. Having a critical, unforgiving attitude towards any person in the human race is never going to gain an approval with God: Mat 18:33-35. For many of us there will be much suffering before we learn to let go of these resentments: Ecc 1 2:14; Isa 28:18-19. When God's discipline comes to release us from the bond of resentment, the only way we will fail is if we are resentful with God also. If we get resentful towards Him he is going to tighten our fetters even tighter: Isa 28:22.

We may well have our eyes set on something that God intends for us to have; but are we going to break the rules trying to get what we want? If we get it by breaking the rules, then there will be a price to pay before God is willing to put his blessing on it. The satisfaction we thought we were going to receive out of it will only be turned to sorrow and bitterness; because we received only the desires of our lust and not God's perfect gift: Prov 10:22. Once again, it may be what God had intended for us; but acquiring it through anger, resentment, speaking subtle suggestions/gossip to other people regarding this person's inadequacies, or lusting to overthrow another person's authority is never God's Way. Developing a critical attitude towards what appears to be injustice or incompetence is defiantly Satan's most formidable trap. God in 1Corinthians 1:26-31 makes it clear that very few of us are great; yet He is still going to use us if He can persuade us to be humble: 1Pet 5:6. Many other challenging situations are in the path of those interested in serving God: 1Cor 4:11-13; 2 Cor 11:23-29.

It is going to be very important to know that we can not challenge Satan and be successful. We can do God's will and experience success but it is only because of His power working on our behalf: Eph 1:19, 3:7; Col 2:12. Jealousy, anger, resentment, selfishness, or lust for advancement is all hostile to the plan of God: Jam 3:13-18; this is the spirit of Satan's pride. If we allow God to humble us we will become acquainted with a system of love that surpasses anything we had imagined: 1Cor 13:4-7; 2Pet 1:1-11. If we are operating in systems of human emotion, being controlled by them, we have not yet advanced to a place where we know God's person. If we humble ourselves He will exalt us, but if we exalt ourselves, then we're to be humbled. So, we might ask ourselves: "What does it mean to be humble?" [Lk 14:8-11].

If we are living by faith and not by sight, then we are in the system that God has endorsed: 2Cor 5:7. At times things are going to appear very dark; it can and will appear as though we are trapped in a dead-end situation, or at least not appearing to go the direction we envisioned. Not even our mistakes or the mistakes of others represent a challenge to God's plan. Satan wants to make it look like we are going to lose out if we do things God's way. Faith allows us to rise above feelings of hopelessness. Satan's objective is to short circuit our faith; when our adversary has been successful we are the most miserable people in the world, having been taken captive in doubts and uncertainties; we will be under the Lord's discipline until we take back the confidence that is ours in Christ: Heb 11:6, 12:11. Once having acquired the level of faith God intends, we begin to have the keen awareness that nothing will stand in the way of our success; we've finally learned that it depends on God's will and not our own: Eph 5:10. God's Word is the only system enabling us to rise above our limited perspective: Psa 36:9; Jn 8:12; Eph 3:8-12.

The most classical example of waiting on God for advancement is seen in the life of King David: 1Sam 16-31. He had a date with destiny being anointed by Samuel; yet, before long, David was considered an enemy by a king that should have loved him. Now David was on the run, and it appeared as though King Saul was deserving of death for his injustice. Despite the differing opinions of David's colleagues, David was willing to make the right decisions though being pressured to kill Saul. David left the issues of disciplining Saul in the Lord's hands. It's important to realize that David was chased around by Saul for more than ten years!! David needed to learn he was not going to win Saul's affection no matter what he did. This can be a hard lesson for us to learn also. We can spend a lot of time trying to win the affection of some people; yet this will only distract us from further developing our relationship with God. When we set our face towards Jesus, there are going to be some divisions: Mat 10:34-39. This of course does not excuse us of our responsibilities to maintain a respectable behavior towards others regardless of how they treat us: Rom 13:7-10. God demands that we respect the unrespectable, just as we're to respect Him. Once we're willing to do this it's amazing who God can use to bless us; it can be the most unlikely people. Christ disarmed the rulers and authorities; as long as we are willing to play by the Lord's rules, we will triumph just as He did: Col 2:15. Our confidence needs to be completely with God. Our lack of confidence in other people can even be a distraction; it takes energy to distrust people (trust God).

We know we have truly made some progress when we regard others as being more important than we are: Phil 2:3, having a fantastic love for them despite (our) faults. Thinking about a leader's inadequacy does not lead us to the keys of understanding, but is, in effect, being in a position where we're judging God: Jam 4:5-12. God instructs us to pray for our leaders and authorities: 1Tim 2:1-4. Scoffing or judging people is a trap and puts us in a position where we cycle garbage in our hearts: Prov 9:12; Mat 15:19. Once again: systems of resentment towards another person or group are not going to be justified by God.

King Saul's sin complex was set ablaze by his insatiable lust to be appreciated by others. When David took some of the spot light from Saul: that was it; David would be viewed as an enemy rather than a friend. Taking the attitude that other persons are undeserving of Glory is to condemn ourselves of (not) having that very Glory: Rom 14:22. God wants to share His glory with us (even though we're less than perfect.) If the plan depended on us being perfect, then none of us would make it. God's plan functions on Grace!! If we embrace an attitude that others need Godly discipline, this can bring on ourselves the very discipline we envisioned: Gal 6:1-5.

If we are not willing to face our own sins in truth, then we are in no position to help others with theirs. More often than not, once we take care of our own sin, we will realize the other person's sins by comparison were minor. Once we start realizing these things, it is a major step in the right direction. Saul repented of his evil towards David more than once but within a short time was repeating the same offence. Saul forgot what kind of person he was. When we walk away from the Mirror of the Word and soon forget what kind of persons we are, we too will find ourselves committing the same sins over and over again: Jam 1:19-27, caught in systems of resentment and self justification (perverting the word of God to suit our own lusts: 2Cor 4:2; Job 38:1-2). When we get caught in the trap of resentment, the only recourse is to go and confess our sin to the one we are being judgmental of. This is only the beginning; we have had our eyes on man and not on God; we have developed a sin complex that only over time will be washed away if we continue to maintain the correct focus. Remaining focused on the word of God as it applies to self, and not others, is the key. Especially not judging the authorities God has [over us:] this ranging from the preschool teacher all the way to the federal government. If there is a problem with those above us, only God is in a position to make the necessary corrections, and in His timing. Our complaining only complicates matters because we're implying that we're right when in fact all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God: Rom 3:23; 1Pet 4:7-11. If God has not put us into a position where we can effect change in a person, then we should keep our mouths shut so we are not scoffers. If we fail to watch our own steps, we will surely fall into the hole we suppose others are in; and we will realize that we are the biggest hypocrite of all: Lk 6:39-42. If we do have some people under our own authority, chances are they will be affected by our sin: Mat 15:14. The most common tactic of Satan is to set brother against brother: Gal 5:13-26. Persons that God is preparing to be in a greater position of authority will have to pass this testing with flying colors. If we are put in a position of authority without passing this testing, we will never be happy nor feel secure no matter what we are able to attain through the energy of the flesh.

There is a calm/peace that needs to develop in our soul; and it is this calm that God uses as the base of every blessing we're to receive in this life and also our life to come in heaven: Phil 4:7-9. Maintaining the correct attitude towards God goes hand and hand with the proper attitude towards people; within this principle we will either stand or fall. Since we will be caught in what seems like

darkness, the only recourse to this is to finally start living by faith and avoid trusting what our eyes are telling us, therefore, not leaning on our own understanding: Prov 3:5-8. The greatest thing we will learn to have as Christians is the wisdom of God's patience: Eccl 7:8b; 2Tim 2:24, 3:10. Once again: things may not look good; they don't need to look good for God to pull the blessing "out of His Hat": Jam 5:11. We see this in the life of Abraham: despite his own impotence and the deadness of Sarah's womb, he was sure God was able to perform: Rom 4:18-20. So, we see in the Bible God pulling the victory out of what seemed like a hopeless situation.

Trusting God is the greatest thing we can do and is, in fact, the most rational system of thinking we can have because God is faithful. The first and most important thing we need to learn in God's system is not what we should do but what we shouldn't be doing. Satan wants to put our focus on things that we have no business focusing on: Prov 4:25-27. Satan wants us to focus on the real or imagined sins of others, he wants us to focus with a critical attitude; this is a destructive attitude not the constructive, up lifting heart that we need to have in order to heal the sick and the blind. Once we have the right heart it will not be long before God puts it to use. The only influence we will have on people is God's Influence. Without God going ahead of us, our human power will only be misunderstood. We can only hit the mark with God's power; until He gives us His power, we are not in a position to give it: 2Cor 10:4-5. Only with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Peace, can we cut through the hardness and darkness of the heart: Heb 4:12. It is only through this power we will be heard, leaving us and others edified and not feeling a sense of reproach: Jam 1:5.

If a brother is limping, we are not going to heal it by giving it a kick: Heb 12:13. In the same way, we are not going to be able to persuade a brother (who has fallen down) to get up by reproaching him. Knowing a person is caught in a sin is not enough; if the person is caught in a net and we go to pull him out without doing it carefully and/or in God's timing, we can do more harm than good. If the believer is still enjoying his sins, then it's not a good time to address the issues. There is a time when we can be in denial about our sins. Not everybody wants to be rescued; Christians need to hate their *old* life before they're willing to bear the reproaches of Christ: Lk 14:25-35; 1Pet 4:14-16. When it's time for us to be tested, it will appear as though we are in a desert all alone: Lk 22:31-34; this is a position in our lives where we're not able to connect with anybody, not in the way God wants; God has it this way so we will connect with Him in the way He wants us to. You see we can be very conceited and not know it. There's a lot to be learned alone in the desert with the Holy Spirit. In the desert Satan wants to see how he can work on our mind. Satan has forbidden food he wants us to swallow. When we are under this pressure it forces us to reach out to the Word of God for the answers: Mat 4:3-4. This is why God kept Israel in the desert. The surrounding nations thought of this desert as being forbidden and not able to support life. It would be this environment that would be conducive to the Spiritual life enabling us to know God: Deut 29:5-6. Being in the desert takes

away the distractions that would prevent us from knowing Him. The only way Israel could fail in the desert is by impugning God and lusting for more than God was wanting to provide: Num 11:31-35. God wants us to have the good land but first He wants us to get to know Him and His ways: Heb 3:7-14, learning to imitate Him: Deut 10:12. 3Jn 1:11.

Part of the process is learning not to take Satan's bait. After we learn what not to do, then we learn what to do. A difficult test to pass is being right about something, something we think is important; yet we come to the realization that other people don't share our passions about the situation. We have a limited perspective and God always has a better plan than we do: Isa 55:8-9. This is why waiting on the Lord is the greatest thing we can do. As with Jacob, sooner or later we need to learn that God is in charge and that He and only He is able to effect the changes that we would like to see in our life. The name Jacob means Chiseler. God had no intention of stealing Esau's birth right; in order for Jacob to be the man God would have him be, Jacob would be sent away and learn about what it means to be subjected to a charlatan. Jacob was God's project and He would teach Jacob the importance of the square deal by having him endure the pains of injustice. God teaches us to behave properly, so when the stakes are higher we will do the right things, according to His specifications. This is the principle of doing a right thing in the right way. Rarely does our good behavior come naturally; pleasing God is a learning process.

Jacob in the morning before his reunion with His brother is in a wrestling match with God: Gen 32:24-32. Jacob was under the impression he could prevail; God, knowing this, had to show Jacob who was really the boss, and with just a touch the match was over; Jacob realizing there never was anyone who could have got in the way of his success except God Himself. After we finally realize this, we settle down and start enjoying life; also, having the proper apprehension of God and His people. It's after what can be sometimes a long expanse of sufferings that God is ready to give these greater blessings that were prepared for the believer who's prepared to give the glory to God. These blessing are for the obedient child who has his face set towards Jesus: Col 3:1-3. If you have never read the story about Jacob and Esau it would be well worthwhile: Gen 27-33, also the story regarding David and King Saul: 1Sam 8-31. There is also a favorite of mine that is a short reading that covers the full cross section of troubles that Christians are likely to encounter; this being the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter of Lamentations. When God sets our face to the dust, then there is Hope.