

## 1. Internal Struggles and Sanctification.

### The struggles of our life test our faith.

'In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. — 1 Peter 1:6-7 (ESV)

- **Dying to Self:** The central challenge is consistently choosing God's will over one's own desires, which is described as a daily, sometimes moment-by-moment, struggle.
- **The Battle with Sin:** Christians struggle with maintaining holiness (sanctification) and confronting their own "fallen nature," often failing and requiring constant repentance.
- **Managing Emotions:** Controlling anger, overcoming fear, and navigating anxiety are noted as major, persistent struggles that can hinder faith.
- **Mental Health and Faith:** Grappling with anxiety and depression while trying to maintain faith can lead to feelings of guilt or spiritual failure, particularly when incorrect teaching suggests that salvation cures all mental struggles.

## 2. External Pressures and "The World"

### The struggles of our lives allow us to glorify God.

Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. —1 Peter 4:16 (ESV)

- **Counter-Cultural Living:** Being "in the world but not of it" is difficult, as Christians are tasked to live by different values than the surrounding, often secular, culture.
- **Persecution and Ridicule:** Many face hostility, discrimination, or social pressure, particularly when standing for moral truths on issues like sexuality, marriage, or politics.

- **Struggles Within the Church:** Often, one of the hardest parts is dealing with hypocrisy and judgment from other Christians, or "professing Christians" whose actions contradict Christ's teachings.

### 3. Spiritual and Practical Challenges

#### **The struggles of life correct and build up our faith.**

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." — James 1:2–4 (ESV)

**The goal of perseverance is spiritual maturity and completeness.** The Greek word for mature, "teleios," suggests reaching an intended end or purpose. ***This maturity is not just about age or experience but about becoming fully developed in character and faith.*** Completeness, or "holoklēros," implies wholeness, lacking nothing necessary for spiritual life. This reflects the biblical principle of sanctification, where believers are progressively conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). The process of becoming mature and complete is a lifelong journey, emphasizing the importance of continual growth in faith and understanding.

- **Trusting God During Trials:** Continuing to believe and trust when prayers go unanswered or when facing significant crises (e.g., sickness, loss of a child, financial ruin) is extremely challenging.
- **Loving Enemies and Forgiving:** Fulfilling the commandment to love everyone—including criminals, oppressors, and "enemies"—is often seen as one of the hardest practical teachings of Jesus.
- **Doubt and Unbelief:** Managing times of "spiritual dryness" and questioning if one's faith is real, particularly when God feels distant.
- **Giving Up Control:** Struggling to stop relying on one's own strength and instead trusting in God's providence and timing.

### 4. Specific Struggles for Christians Today

#### **The unique challenges of today**

“If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, In which you trusted, they wearied you, Then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?” Jeremiah 12:5 NKJV

Jeremiah had just poured out his complaint about the apparent success of the wicked (Jeremiah 12:1–4). God answers by reminding him that his present trials are only the warm-up. **Think of everyday “foot races”—ordinary pressures, misunderstandings, disappointments. If these daily strains already drain our stamina, we need to recognize it before greater challenges come.** Proverbs 24:10 echoes the thought: “If you faint in the day of distress, how small is your strength!” Hebrews 12:3 urges believers to “consider Him who endured such hostility... so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” Everyday faithfulness builds spiritual muscles for tomorrow’s marathon.

- **Sexual Temptation:** Especially for men, the constant, easy access to pornography is a significant battle.
- **Busyness and Distraction:** The modern, fast-paced world makes it difficult to prioritize time for prayer, Bible study, and silence.
- **Distinguishing God's Will:** Developing the ability to discern God’s voice from one’s own selfish desires is a difficult, long-term process.