

The Struggles Of The Christian Life

by Steve Gallagher

This sermon addresses the struggles Christians face in their journey, emphasizing the battles against the world, the flesh, and the devil. It delves into the importance of fighting for a life pleasing to God, highlighting mental struggles, doctrinal issues, idealism, sexual lust, suffering, and the need to maintain faith amidst uncertainties. The speaker encourages perseverance in the Christian walk, acknowledging the challenges but emphasizing the victory found in continuing to fight the good struggle.

Scripture: Ephesians 6:12, James 4:7, 1 Corinthians 9:25, Matthew 5:28, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Proverbs 14:12, Revelation 2:7, Psalm 138:7

Topics: "Perseverance in Faith", "Overcoming Spiritual Battles"

Description

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Transcript

Morning everyone. How many of you are due to graduate in the next couple months? Okay, a bunch of you. This message today is for everyone of course, but I especially have you in mind because I'm aware of the kind of things you're going to face when you go home.

And I want to kind of talk on that a little bit because the nature of the Christian life is one of battling, fighting, wrestling, striving, and overcoming. As I was studying for this message over the last week or so, and one of the words that I kept running into is the word against. In the New Testament, it's often used about how the religious leaders were against Jesus or were against Paul.

But in the Old Testament, it's used over 1,100 times. And that means it's a thematic word. It's an important subject, especially in the Old Testament, really in the New Testament as well.

But it really shows forth in the Old Testament. I mean, a lot of those usages are Israel going to war against some pagan nation. So you have the children of God and the children of darkness in a conflict.

But also, 400 or 500 times, it's used regarding the Lord. Let me give you some examples. In Genesis 13, now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord.

And you all know this one. David cried out in Psalm 51, against you, you only, I have sinned and done what is evil in your sight. And Moses in Deuteronomy, as people of Israel getting ready to go into the promised land, he said to them, from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord.

And it also goes the other way. You know, for instance, when the Lord was telling Moses, now then let me alone that my anger may burn against them, and that I may destroy them. There's a conflict there between the Lord who wants to win his people over to himself and the people who don't want to be one.

Conflict. And of course, the word against, you know, reflects the idea of opposition, two forces opposing each other. And when you think about the history of mankind, I mean, it is nothing but opposition, conflict, ever since the garden, really.

Mankind has been opposed to the Lord in rebellion against the Lord and against his authority. Jesus said, strive to enter by the narrow door. And that word strive is agonizimai.

Try saying that fast 10 times. Agonizimai is the word strive here. He says, strive, again, agonizimai, to enter by the narrow door.

For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. And that's, of course, referring to after the door has been shut. And this word is where we get the word agonize.

But it really describes the battle that's involved in spiritual matters. You know, for instance, when Jesus was before Pilate, he said, if my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would be agonizimai, fighting. Right? And Paul later wrote, fight the good fight of faith.

That's the word agonizimai, a portion of it. So Jesus is saying, fight your way through the narrow door. Or you could say, wrestle your way through the narrow door.

Or even agonize your way through the narrow door. You know, people of the first century understood that if they agreed to follow Jesus Christ, and it's true now in Arab, not Arab, Muslim lands, and China, and North Korea, and many countries in this world, when they made the decision to follow Jesus Christ, they understood that it was going to be conflict all the way to end of their life. They understood that.

Their savior had been hung on a cross to die a slow, agonizing death. And they had already seen some of the leaders martyred. They understood what it meant.

This is what Jesus was referring to when he said, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. Unquestionably, the Christian life is one that must be fought out from beginning to end. It is a long battle.

Now there's those who say that Christianity is for wimps. You know, we need a crutch in life, and therefore we want to be Christians because we can't make it through life without some kind of help. Anyone who would make a stupid statement like that is clueless about Christianity.

I can tell you that. What could be more difficult than to resist every natural inclination? To learn to replace self-trust with trust in some invisible being? To constantly strive to put the needs of others before your own desires? To resist every temptation to exalt yourself or defend yourself? To take great care to find and live and obey the will of God? The truth is that any wimp or coward can live for self, but it takes a lot of courage

to walk with the Lord and to follow him sincerely. Now the Bible makes clear that the source of most of our struggles come from three different antagonists, and I want to talk about them for a while.

The first is your flesh. You know, one of the first things that a new believer discovers is that he's got a conflict going on inside him, an inner turmoil. As someone called it, the war within.

And Paul talked about it. He said, walk in the spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.

For these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please, that your flesh pleases, really. Let me read this in the Passion paraphrase. It doesn't use the word against, but it just brings out what Paul was describing.

As you yield freely and fully to the dynamic life and power of the Holy Spirit, you will abandon the cravings of your self-life. For your self-life craves the things that offend the Holy Spirit and hinder him from living free within you. And the Holy Spirit's intense cravings hinder your old self-life from dominating you.

So then, the two incompatible and conflicting forces within you are your self-life of the flesh and the new creation life of the Spirit. Isn't that really well written? I mean, it just brings it out, which is why I like to read paraphrases. What a fierce battle we must wage against our lower nature, right? And you know, when you come to the Lord, you soon discover that your old thinking is actually the enemy of God.

You know, and then you've got all those desires of the flesh. I mean, practically every single one of them is wrong in one way or another. But then there's the logic of the flesh.

You ever heard of that? The logic of the flesh? You have? You've heard of that? I thought I coined that. Man, that's really disheartening, I want you to know that. Just when I think I've come up with something new, I bet he never even heard of it.

The logic of the flesh, Steve Gallagher. You know, what it usually boils down to is a desire not to go the way of the cross. Because the preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, isn't it? But it's life to those of us who are being saved.

Life, the preaching of the cross, praise God. Now, Pastor Ed gave a message a few months ago about scripture. Actually, he gave two messages about scriptures that really helped him in the residential program.

How many of you were here when he gave those? Yeah, a bunch of you remember that. And I'm going to just quote him in this, because I couldn't say it any better. He just really nailed it.

And he was talking about, out of Proverbs 14, there's a way that seems right to a man, but the end is the way of death. He said, somewhere along the way, you'll come to realize that God rarely seems to do things the easy way, the direct way, the obvious way, the efficient way, the way that seems right to a man. But there's a reason for that.

Its end is the way of death. If the way that seems right is the way of death, what does that tell us about the way that leads to life? It doesn't seem right to us. I don't think it is any stretch to say that one of God's biggest challenges is getting you and I to choose a way that doesn't seem right to us.

Isn't that true? I mean, that is just like really profound inspiration that he thought of that. So the flesh is one of your sources of real opposition to going the way of the cross and to following the Lord. The world.

When I think of the world, I think of the mass of humanity. And I like to picture things in my mind. And I just see an abandoned freeway and millions of people, you know, maybe 50 across and just endless in front of you and endless behind you marching along all in lockstep, all headed in a direction.

They don't realize that there is a cliff at the end of that freeway. And they're all going to go over that cliff. But because everybody's doing it, and this is clearly the movement, the direction, obviously it's right.

Right? You're supposed to be wrong. Thank you. You know, and they have all kinds of different thoughts and ideas and opinions about stuff.

And they argue about this and that. Hey, where do you think you're going? It's pretty bad when your staff gets so bored. So they're all marching in lockstep in a direction.

Now imagine you're in the midst of this mass of people moving along. Right? And all of a sudden you look up and you get a sight of the Lord. And you get a sight of yourself.

And you see the tremendous discrepancy between the two. And you realize this ain't right. I'm going in the wrong direction.

And right then and there, just a conviction overwhelms you inside. I will not take another step down this path. So you turn around and you start going against the flow.

You talk about resistance. Right? I remember how many times I've been around people, you know, unsaved people, like our families, for instance. And, you know, I don't say anything.

I never preach to our families. I mean, rarely. I mean, every, maybe now and then I'll slip in something.

But I don't, like, corner them and try to browbeat them into Christianity. That's not going to do any good anyway. But it's amazing how upset people get.

You know, it's like, I don't have a judgmental thought in my heart towards them. I pity them. But I don't have any, like, I'm not sitting around thinking of what rotten sinners they are.

I know what I was. I know what I am inside. You know, so I just don't think that way.

But how, you know, it really is kind of comical. But I mean, it's too sad to be comical. Quit that laughing.

Quit that. I really am pretty sick inside. But how upset people get with you.

You know, it's like they feel conviction because of your righteous life. And they don't want to feel that. They don't want to feel like you're better than them or something like that.

And they don't want to think of themselves as wrong. So they get angry at you. You know, I remember when I was leaving the sheriff's department, a few of my friends, and we were close.

You know, there's such a thing as a foxhole friend. When you fight together and you, you're doing battle kind of one way or the other every night, together, that bonds you close. And all of a sudden, you know, my life fell apart and I turned to the Lord.

And I was different. I was not the same guy. And I didn't fit in with them anymore.

And one night they got really upset with me and just started, they crowded around me and just started hammering me about what was I doing. And it was hard. It was hard to take, but you know what? It was just cement inside me.

There was no way anyone's talking me out of what just happened. It was tremendous. It was powerful.

It was miraculous what God did inside me. You think I'm going to let some people criticize me and change my heart? There was no way. And you know, it was hard to go through, but whatever.

That's just part of the deal. And that's the way the world is. They don't understand.

To them, you look stupid. Why would you throw your life away for what? To go to church? You know, if you take a stand for the Lord, you're going to find a lot of opposition. But the world doesn't worry about you if you're a half-hearted Christian.

You know, they basically accept you. Because you know why that is? It's because inside, you're just like them. You're just like them.

If you're a half-hearted Christian, you're not a Christian. You're just like them except you go to church on Sunday and you don't cuss. But you try taking a stand for the Lord and you are going to face the animus of the world.

And a lot of times that comes in the form of people you work with, your family members, old friends, and so on. You really see this also in the book of Revelation. There's a term in there, depending on your translation.

In the NAS, it's earth dwellers. I think that NIV is the inhabitants of the world. Is that how it goes? He never reads the Bible, so he's taking pot shots back there.

But anyway, you see it in the book of Revelation. I mean, if there's one thing that's clear, it is that the people on this earth, when all this stuff starts unfolding, they are adamant that they will not bend their knee to the Lord. Two different times it says that they would not repent.

They would not turn away from their idols and their sin, and so on. And even when the judgments of God are raining down upon them, all that does is harden them in their sin and makes them rage against God. And then eventually, you know, when the Antichrist starts doing his stuff, they are just going to gladly turn on the Christians, the true believers.

And some of them right in the forefront will be religious people. I'm just telling you, a lot of people who call themselves Christians will be right at the forefront of all that. John said, do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.

The whole world lies in the power of the evil one. But whatever is born of God overcomes the world. Praise the Lord.

And you know, before you came here, at some level, you fit right in with the world. You had to have. Your heart was in the same stuff.

You were thinking the same ways. Oh, I know you went to church, you didn't agree with their thinking on abortion and maybe homosexual rights and pornography and stuff. Yeah, you didn't agree with some of that stuff and some other stuff, you know.

But really, your heart was pretty much just like theirs. And you know what? When you guys go home, if you have met the Lord in this place, you're going to find that everything is different. And it's amazing.

I cannot tell you how many times I've heard it from guys who have gone home. It's like, wow, I had no idea. You know, it's because while you're here for nine months, it's just a gradual, slow transformation going on inside you.

And you remember, I mean, I don't like to bring up church because some of you come from very good churches, you know, so I don't want to overstate this. All right. But some of you are going to go back to your churches and you're going to say, what was I thinking to go to this church? Because they're not preaching the gospel.

They're not preaching against sin or worldliness or whatever. They're just giving nice little pep talks. And you're going to realize that it's going to shock you.

It's going to shock you when you get around people that you used to be really close with and you no longer fit in with them. It's going to shock you when so-called Christians scoff at you because you're taking a stand against the things of the world and so on. You can expect that many people that you know from the past are going to disdain your new convictions.

Be prepared. Young man, are you awake? The guy in front of you. He's just in deep thought.

The third one is the enemy, of course. You have an enemy bent on destroying your life. And he is waiting for you back at home.

Waiting for you. Demons who know you inside and out. Know your triggers.

Know your... All they have to do is just push that button and you're going to do the same thing you always did. They know you and they're waiting for you. But I want to tell you something.

If you're a changed man inside, it's going to be a whole new ball game. I'm not saying you'll never have your failures or whatever, but you will be a different person inside. I mean, the very name Satan means adversary.

That ought to tell us something, right? And Paul said, for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers. Against the powers. Against the world forces of this darkness.

Against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. And they will stop at nothing in their scheming and conniving and in their ways of knowing how to set circumstances up to bring about your downfall. They will stop at nothing to ruin your soul.

Now, if it sounds dismal and, you know, like, wow, how am I ever going to make it? Let me promise you, you will make it if you walk with the Lord. And if you maintain what you've established here, I promise you, you will just go right on through to the very end, victoriously for the Lord. Because greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world.

Amen? The Christian life is fighting from beginning to end. You know, when you get to the book of Revelation, Jesus gives seven different messages to these different churches. And every one of them he ends with, to you who overcome.

And he tells some wonderful part, aspect of eternity with him. Overcoming. So I'm saying all this to remind you of what's awaiting you guys.

You know, but there's a fourth thing I want to talk about. And this is really what I felt the Lord wanted me to talk to you about this morning. Mental struggles.

Mental struggles. And there's a lot of them, let me tell you. And now I'm just talking about stuff revolved around the Christian life, your spiritual life, and so on.

For instance, I got a couple of wives back there. You talk about struggles. It's Christine, right? And you've got four kids? Oh, one.

I'm getting you mixed up with someone else. Well, you still got struggles. You're just going to represent all the women that we deal with in this ministry.

You know, the things a wife has to go through. Do I stick it out with this man, or should I just dump him? Do I confront him? Do I just wait and say nothing? Do I tell my pastor? Do I hold it in? Do I cover him? Do I what? You know, it's just that there's a thousand different things wives have to deal with. Struggles.

Mental struggles. Many of them are mental struggles for women. And you know, some of them just choose, and this is just too much.

I just can't take it anymore. I'm just done. And they flip that switch, and it's very rare that when a woman flips that switch that there's any flipping it back.

My wife did, but it took a miracle from the Lord to do it. And I'll mention people of color. You guys got your own struggles that us white people have no clue about what you guys have to deal with in life.

And that crosses, you know, Christian or not Christian. That's just an issue, you know. But even coming into the church, you just got your own things you've got to deal with that we don't understand.

But let me get into some things that all of us deal with in one form or another. God's will. Trying to figure out what does he want about whatever it is.

Should I buy this car or should I not buy this car? Should I get an older car? Should I just do without? What do I do, Lord? Tell me. You know, or a house, or do I marry this girl or do I not marry this girl? Is she your choice for me, Lord? You know, there are just so many things that we need God's mind on the decisions that we make, because some of them are huge decisions. Life is a journey into the dark in a certain way.

You know, you're just kind of feeling your way through. But I like what Oswald Chambers said. He said, I don't know where I'm going, but I know who's leading me there.

And that kind of says it all, doesn't it? And you just kind of have to grope along. But I want to tell you something. It's pleasing to the Lord that you are struggling with these things, because back in the past, you didn't even think about it.

You just made decisions on a whim or whatever you felt like. And now his will is becoming something important to you. And it means something to the Lord that you're going through this struggle.

And you know what? He lets you go through this struggle. Part of it is because he wants to teach you how to depend on him. And let me give you an example of preaching.

You should all say, thank God I'm not a preacher. You have no idea what Pastor Ed and Nate and I go through to come up with these sermons. I mean, it's just anguish sometimes, agonizing, trying to figure out of, you know, every time I set myself, like this message, for instance, all the Lord gave me was the title.

That's all he told me, the struggles of a Christian life. All right, now what? Silence. And I go for hours and hours.

Typically, I spend about 12 hours to put a message together. And I know Nate does too. Pastor Ed, forget it.

We can't even let him preach. He's just carrying too much weight around here for him to take 12 hours to put a message together. Now, Glenn Meldrum's another matter altogether.

Ten minutes, he throws a message together, comes in here, devastates you. You feel like you've been hit by a Mack truck. You're down here whimpering, crying for Mommy.

It just makes me sick, you know? I mean, we really anguish over these sermons. But you know something? The Lord is pleased with that anguish and that struggle that we go through. I don't know where that puts Glenn.

You're just going to have to find your own way, brother. Doctrinal issues. Wow, there's a source of all kinds of confusion.

Man, depending on which church you happen to walk in, you're going to get hit by something completely different. Well, let's just take a look at the granddaddy of all, the ones that have to do with Reformed theology for or against. Wow, this takes some real courage to take this on.

You know that you got the right wife when she never encourages you. It must have been God's choice. It was my choice, but it was inspired.

So which is it? Sovereignty of God or man's free will? I want to tell you the answer to that. It's both. It's both.

When I look at my 50 years of being involved with the Lord and all the thousands of hours I've spent studying this book, I see the sovereignty of God everywhere. I just do. I see the sovereignty of God.

I see when I was a little boy and I went forward at 12 years old and, you know, up to the altar or whatever I did, I can't remember. But from then on, it was like God had his hand on my life. And even all my years of rebellion and all that, even during time, I remember once I hit someone and I thought I was going to prison for it.

And I was crying out to God, even though I was terribly backslidden and it all just worked out. And, you know, I knew it was the Lord. And things like that, I just look and I see God is just huge in my life.

Huge. But on the other hand, I see my free will through the whole thing as well. I saw when I was 17 and backslid, I made the choice to walk away from God.

I saw all the choices to go into sin and to pursue that whole lifestyle crime and all that. I got involved when I was young, all that stuff. I made those choices and I made the choice to come back to the Lord.

I mean, he helped me for sure, but I'm the one that made the decision. You know, guys, the reality is the sovereignty of God and the free will of man are like railroad tracks that go from Genesis to Revelation. They're both there.

And if you make the mistake of totally focusing on one or the other, you're just going to end up in a ditch because they're both there. Here's what the problem is and why there's so much strife in the church over this issue. It's because people demand or absolutely are convinced that they have all the answers.

But God leaves some things as a mystery. Why can't we just be humble enough to realize that we don't have all the answers? I don't have all the answers. They're both true, but somehow, you know, you can take it up to a certain point.

If you go past that point, you're going into pride and arrogance. It's better to just say what David said. Where is it? I got it in here somewhere.

Oh Lord, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty, nor do I involve myself in great matters or in things too difficult for me. That's the right mindset with some of these doctrinal issues. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand.

That's my motto. Here's another one that causes a lot of consternation for some people. Idealism.

Idealism is a wonderful thing because that's the thing that makes you strive more and more to live a higher standard than you've lived in the past. To always try to get closer and closer to the Lord and to walk in a God-pleasing, holy life. It's idealism that makes you want to follow him like that and not just settle for a compromised, half-hearted Christianity.

It's idealism that does that. That idealism inside you. But you know what? Satan, in some people, just because of their natural vulnerability in this sense, Satan takes that idealism and corrupts it into self-righteousness.

And so then it becomes, and it's so subtle and it's so hard to know what's what with this whole thing, that he can twist it in such a way that your desire to please the Lord gradually eases over into this need for perfectionism. And it's all pride-based. It's pride-based.

It's on, look at me. You know, in whatever form that takes, maybe nothing to do with other people, maybe just in yourself. But if you go down that path, I want to tell you where it takes you, into self-condemnation.

And what the enemy wants to accomplish in you, he knows full well where perfectionism will take you. You will absolutely burn out because nobody can be perfect. And you'll just burn out and finally give up.

And that's what Satan is after. So it's better to just, you know, when you start feeling those self-condemning thoughts and you start feeling that thing inside you that you feel like you're never good enough and all that, listen, you just do the best you can do. And you just have to leave it there.

Lord, you know, forgive me for not doing better, but you know, you're just going to have to change me inside. Something like that. And push back on those feelings of self-condemnation and that striving for perfectionism.

You just have to push back on that. How about sexual lust? Jesus says, if you lust after a woman in your heart, you basically, you have committed adultery with her in your heart. And then he talks about hell, same little section there, mentions hell twice.

So you've got this thing inside you and ladies just try to zone out for a while. I understand this deal. It's like this thing, sex, and you're not even like purposing.

Now listen, if you intentionally lust after a woman, that is just, you're doing that in self-will and a sin and you need to repent or fantasizing or whatever. You're purposely wanting to think that way. But set that aside for a minute.

What I want to talk about is when your mind is in autopilot. How many of you have ever experienced this where you're just kind of just daydreaming, whatever. And all of a sudden you realize your mind has been in the gutter for five minutes and wait, stop.

I don't mean to do that. You know, and you grab your mind and you yank it back to the narrow path. How many of you have ever dealt with that? Yeah.

You know what I'm talking about. It's just there. It's powerful, especially if you have a history of giving over to it.

It's powerful in a man, you know, not to mention the hormones and all that. It's just powerful. So what do you do about that? Is the Lord ready to send you into hell because that thing is so powerful inside you? No, he's not.

He's for you. He's not against you. Now you set yourself on a course of intentionally going after sin.

That's another matter. That is another matter. But I'm telling you, there is a struggle involved.

And every time you resist and you fight and you struggle against that thing that comes so natural in your thinking, it's pleasing to the Lord. It's pleasing. Even after five minutes of indulging yourself mindlessly in some fantasy or whatever, then you grab, you come to your senses, realize what you've been doing, you know, and just stop it and repent or whatever and get your mind right where it needs to be.

That is so pleasing to the Lord to see that you care like that. How about suffering? That's another thing that causes Christians a lot of confusion and consternation is just, you know what the problem is, is that once the Lord has won you, he comes in and just starts lavishing you with his goodness and his kindness. How many have felt the goodness of God in a very real way? And we get in the habit of expecting that from the Lord.

And then out of left field, wham, you get hit with some tragedy or something. And it's like, God, what happened? I thought you were good. I thought you had my back.

I thought you were covering me and protecting me and watching out for me. What's this? I've been reading this book about Leonard Ravenhill and he was in Chicago in the 50s and he was preaching at A. W. Tozer's church. And he was in a hotel and he and this man who was his prayer partner, actually the man

was a real intercessor, was there with him, an older man.

And they were on the third floor and a fire broke out in the hotel and just engulfed the hotel. And he had, he got that man, they tried going out the fire escape, but it was fully in flames. And he got to a window and he let the man down.

He was like 70 years old, that man. He let him down and dropped him three floors and the man made it okay. But then he had to basically jump out the window and broke his back in three places, shattered, I'm trying to remember now, I forget everything.

I think shattered his pelvis and his leg. And I mean, he was never the same after that. I think he was 44 years old when that happened.

He was never the same after that. The rest of his life, he dealt with pain issues. Amy Carmichael, godly woman who rescued young girls out of these horrible Hindu temples that were using these young girls as sex slaves.

And just a godly woman. But the last 20 years of her life, she spent in terrible pain in a bed. Watchman Nee, who fought to get the Chinese Christians united, following after God, started many, many churches in China.

And then the communists came in and arrested him. He spent the last 20 years of his life in a work camp. Where's the goodness of God in that? You guys just saw Wurmbrandt's movie last week, right? I mean, these things cause confusion and you just struggle with these kinds of issues, right? Let me just tell you, you're going to have your struggles, mental struggles, and also your struggles against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

You're going to have struggles in this life. But if you'll just keep fighting and keep moving forward, over time, you're going to be growing your self-life, which has been enormous in you in the past. And it is diminishing.

Those of you who are responding to the Lord here, your self-life is already diminishing. You don't realize it, but it is. And it's going to continue to diminish as you follow the Lord.

And the more it diminishes and your pride diminishes, the greater clarity you will have in seeing all, just all the different issues of life. You won't face all the confusion. There will be times of confusion, but it won't be all confusion like it has been, like it probably is now.

And not only that, but the Lord will help you overcome all the opposition and all your uncertainties. So all these different struggles, in the midst of them, you need to know something. It makes the Lord very happy when you're willing to fight to live a life pleasing to Him.

It's pleasing to the Lord when you care enough about what He thinks and what He wants that you struggle through to find His will in a matter. It's pleasing to Him when you care enough about Him that you stand for Him when everyone around you is scoffing at you and going the opposite direction. It's pleasing to Him when you care enough about Him that you keep fighting against those unclean thoughts and so on that press into your mind.

It's pleasing to the Lord when you go against what seems right in your flesh, but you go against it because you know it isn't right, because the Bible tells you something different. It all boils down to this. Is having a relationship with Jesus Christ important enough for you to fight for it? Is it important enough? Does it mean enough to you that you're willing to struggle for it and to agonize your way through, if that's what it takes? Paul said, fight the good fight, and I'll just change it to say, because really this is kind of closer to what the Greek means, struggle the good struggle.

Struggle the good struggle, and the Lord will help you. He will help you all the way through if you'll keep fighting, but if you quit fighting, you're dead. If you quit fighting, you're dead.

You're done for. You know, the Christian life can be very difficult, but the alternative is unthinkable. So Lord, I just want to lift these people up to you, those who are here this morning, and any who may be watching us on live stream.

I just want to lift them up to you, Lord. They all have different struggles, things they're struggling with. Maybe there's a couple of guys struggling with if they even want to stay here.

Maybe there's guys in here struggling with the rules of this place, or the things that have crossed their will. These wives back here, struggling with all they've had to go through because of their husbands, all the many different uncertainties of life, and the things we have to battle against in life. Lord, I just want to ask you to please come to each one in their own particular need, and meet them in that need.

Help them, God, to make it through those battles. I know you're not going to just rush in and just make everything clear. This is part of the Christian life, but help them, God, to stay in the boat, to keep up the good fight, the good struggle, to keep moving forward.

Help them in it, Lord. And I pray that today you'll just be with them. Just help them to just enjoy your presence today, to have a blessed day in the Lord, this day.

Bless the meeting tonight and the mercy studies, a tremendous, tremendous subject of your mercy, and the part it plays in our lives. Blessed tonight, Lord, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Xos3UX4oG1l.mp4>

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