

Overcoming the Struggles of the Flesh # 16

James 4: 7-10

In our previous study we dealt with the struggles we face concerning the flesh. As we grow and mature in the Lord, we may find it easier to deal with specific temptations, but we all face a continual battle with the flesh. It always seeks a different course than the spirit. It desires one thing: to please the lusts it possesses.

As I considered the struggles of the flesh, I thought of how good it would be if we didn't have to deal with that continual battle. However, we must face reality; as long as we live in this sin cursed world, in a body that faces the same curse, we will struggle with the desires of the flesh. [Rom.7:18-19 – For I know that in me \(that is, in my flesh,\) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. ^{\[19\]} For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.](#)

This struggle will be with us as long as we live, but we can overcome the struggles we face. Temptation will always be present, but we can learn to overcome the desires of the flesh and avoid submitting to the temptation. Opportunities to sin will continue to be presented, but we do not have to willfully engage in that sin. As sure as the sun rises in the morning, each of us will face new struggles, but we can find victory in the Lord.

James dealt boldly with the struggles of the flesh in the opening verses of this chapter, but he did not leave us without a course of action. In our text this evening we discover the strategy for overcoming the struggles we face. Let's take a few moments to examine these verses and the [responses](#) they reveal concerning: [Overcoming the Struggles of the Flesh](#).

I. The Obedience of the Believer (7) – There are two commands given in this verse: [submit](#) and [resist](#). These are actually imperatives that the Lord expects those who belong to Him to follow. These are military terms which every believer should be familiar and live according to. We are blessed to serve the Captain of the Lord's host and we have an obligation to follow His command and live according to His will. [Rom.6:13 – Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.](#) Let's take a moment to look at these two commands in detail. The first involves:

A. Our Resignation (7a) – [Submit yourselves therefore to God](#). This is something that, on the surface, looks simple enough. We all know we submitted ourselves unto the Lord at the

moment we were saved. We yielded our lives to His will as we were born again. But, it seems with time we fail to fully submit our lives unto the Lord.

- This is a word that deals with rank. It has the idea of “*arranging ourselves under the authority of the Lord Himself.*” History has never recorded a successful campaign without proper leadership. Those armies who were successful in battle had good commanders in charge and obedient soldiers who followed their orders. If we are to be successful in this struggle with the flesh, we must submit ourselves to the authority of the Lord.
- This involves every aspect of our lives. All of our being must be in complete submission to the Lord and His will. You might argue that you surrendered your heart to Christ when you were saved. You do, in fact, have a relationship with the Lord, but is it a relationship of submission, or is it merely a relationship of salvation? Many know Christ as their Savior, but they have never gotten to the place that He is the Lord of their lives.
- God expects us to submit to His will and allow Him to be the Master and Lord of our lives. This will never happen as long as there are areas in your life that you are unwilling to submit to God. Many have no problem with church attendance. They have no problem living for the Lord here, but out in the world is a different story. Many are willing to abandon most aspects of the old life, but refuse to let go of others. They have drawn the line and are willing to go no further for the Lord. We must submit ourselves, actually line up under the authority of God, seeing Him as our Lord and Master. [Romans 12:1 – I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.](#)

B. Our Resistance (7b) – [Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.](#) How many times have we heard the question asked as to how we are to deal with the attack of Satan? How do we overcome his advance and his subtle tactics? Here we find the answer to this much asked question, Resist him! This means to “*stand against him, oppose him in every situation.*” There is no room for compromise in any area. We cannot submit to anything the devil brings before us.

- He is a master of deception. He knows how to appeal to our flesh. He knows the areas we are weak. He has been in the business of deceiving and destroying lives since man was created. He knows how to get to the heart and desires of men. If we are to overcome, we must resist his advance. We must stand firmly against him and oppose him on every front. There is no place for us to let our guard down or grow complacent.

- Those who are arrogant enough to believe that it could never happen to them are prime targets for his attack. They are vulnerable because of their self-confidence. David was a man after God's own heart and he succumbed to the attack of the enemy. The truth is we can't resist Satan and overcome him within ourselves. The things that he presents are appealing to the flesh. We must have the power of God working in us if we are to be victorious. [Rom.12:2 – And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.](#)

I. The Obedience of the Believer (7)

II. The Objective of the Believer (8) – We have considered the Christian's obedience, but we also need to consider the believer's objective. How should we carry ourselves if we hope to overcome the struggles of the flesh? How do we ensure that we are prepared and conditioned for the battles that we must face? The answer to our preparation and conditioning is found in this verse. Notice:

A. Our Relationship (8a) – [Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.](#) What a promise for those who battle the flesh. If we will but draw nigh to God, He will draw nigh to us! We are only asked to make the first step. Take the first action, seeking the Lord and he will be faithful to draw nigh to us. Isn't that an amazing thought? All we have to do is step out in faith toward the Lord and we are promised that He will always move in our direction.

- Often we wonder why our lives are so dry and cold spiritually. We wonder why we can't feel the Lord as we once did. We pray that God would show up in our midst in a mighty way. This simple truth hit me hard when I actually realized what was lacking. God was there all along. He wanted nothing more than to supply the strength I needed. He was just waiting for me to move toward Him. Rather than waiting to see if God will have favor and move in our midst, draw nigh to Him and know that He will! [Jer.29:13 – And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.](#) We'll never make it without the Lord's strength and power in our lives. We are assured of that if we'll move toward Him.

B. Our Repentance (8b) – [Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.](#) If we have any hope of overcoming, we must be prepared. We must have the necessary supplies and equipment, and we must also be properly conditioned for the battle. Our bodies must be in shape to fight and endure.

- There is a need for spiritual conditioning as well. This conditioning involves our repentance. We must keep our lives free of any hindrances and in tune with the Lord. There can be nothing to weigh us down or hinder our ability to fight the good fight of faith. [Heb.12:1 – ...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.](#)

- Our conditioning through repentance is actually two-fold. There is the outward conditioning. We are called upon to [cleanse our hands](#). The OT priests had to cleanse themselves before they were able to offer the sacrifice before the Lord. We must cleanse ourselves of the outward filth of this life. We must live our lives in a way that honors God.

- Many today claim to know Christ, but their lives tell a much different story. A life that is lived in Christ will be lived in a way that honors Him. We are no longer our own; we belong to the Lord and we must live as if we do! How will we ever be effective in the battle if we have no influence in this life? “If he is a Christian then I have no need of Christ. I live as good a life as he does.”

- Also there is the inner conditioning. We must also [purify our hearts](#). Simply, we are not to be hypocrites. We must practice what we preach. We must serve the Lord every day we live, wherever we are, and in every circumstance. True character is revealed when no one else is around. It is revealed when we think that no one else sees our actions.

- We must keep in mind that the Lord is always aware of the life we live. There is nothing hidden from Him. Many today are trying to fight the battle outwardly, but their hearts are not right with God. Actually the heart is the key element for the soldier. If the heart isn't right, there can be no victory. May we never be guilty of being double minded, portraying one thing, but living another!

I. The Obedience of the Believer (7)

II. The Objective of the Believer (8)

III. The Outlook of the Believer (9-10) – Lastly we must possess and maintain a proper attitude. We must keep a proper perspective if we are to be victorious. This involves:

A. An Honest Perspective (9) – [Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.](#) On the surface this verse seems hard to be received. Is the Lord demanding that the Christian live a life void of any happiness? Are we to live a life that

never experiences any joy? NO! God isn't saying that we must continually live in deep despair and never laugh or express joy in our lives. He simply desires that we be broken over sin and the condition of the world. We must get to the place in our spiritual lives that we are troubled over what we see in this world.

- It ought to burden our hearts when we think of the condition of this world. It ought to trouble us that folks around us are lost and on their way to an eternal hell. It ought to burden us that our blessed Lord is no longer welcome in many places in our world today. A victorious believer will be burdened about the needs in this life. He will not be one who is numb to the needs of others. He will not be one who is content to live his life and never have a desire to reach others for the Lord.
- How long has it been since you had a burden for someone who was lost? How long has it been since you wept over the sin that seems to consume our land? How long has it been since you labored in prayer for those around us? We need a grieving heart for the hurting!

B. A Humble Perspective (10) – [Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up](#). Lastly the outlook of a victorious believer includes a heart of reverence. He is never proud of the accomplishments he has made. He never boasts of the battles he has won or the advancements he has made. He only has One to glory in and that is the Lord. He is fully aware of his dependence on the Lord for his strength.

- If we are to be victorious in this life, we must humble ourselves before the Lord. Were it not for the Lord we could do nothing. He is the One who has allowed us to be here this evening. He is the One who supplied the blessings we have enjoyed today. He is the One who gave us victory in the battles of life.
- Fellowship enjoys the blessings that we have because the Lord has been faithful to us. He has used human instruments to accomplish His will, but ultimately He is responsible for the blessings we have received. If there is anyone who deserves our praise and adoration, it is the Lord! I desire to have a humble heart before the Lord. I never want to get to the place that I feel as if I have accomplished anything. It is through the suffering of the cross that we have hope today. It isn't in who we are or what we have done. It is all about Him!

Conclusion: Surely you will agree that we all face various struggles with the flesh, and if the truth be told, we are defeated more often than we care to admit. These struggles will remain, but we do not have to live in defeat. We can overcome by the help of the Lord. If we will respond to the struggles we face as we have been instructed, we can enjoy victory. If you are unsaved, you cannot enjoy victory. You are yet in your sin. Jesus can set you free and enable you to overcome as well, but you must respond to Him in salvation.