

# Our Struggle

**Introduction.** The battle of Antietam in 1862 was the bloodiest day of the Civil War. In twelve hours, there were over 22,000 dead, wounded, and missing. “At last the sun went down and the battle ended, smoke heavy in the air, the twilight quivering with the anguished cries of thousands of wounded men,” wrote one historian.

Though the battle appeared a draw, Union General George McClellan was able to end Robert E. Lee’s thrust into Maryland, forcing him to retreat across the Potomac. This was possible because two Union soldiers found a copy of Lee’s battle plans and delivered them to McClellan before the battle.

In some respects, we are no match for our adversary, Satan. But as with General McClellan, our enemy’s plans have fallen into our hands. We know his strategies to entice us with lies, lust, greed, and the like (2 Corinthians 2:11). With such knowledge, given us by God’s word, we engage in the struggle and can resist the enemy’s advances. In Ephesians 6:12, “wrestle” refers particularly to a hand-to-hand fight. Wrestling was a fight characterized by trickery, cunning, and strategy. And that’s what we need to remember. Life isn’t a struggle or wrestling against ourselves or others; it’s against the devil, but it takes several forms that we’ll study today.

## ***I. Our Struggle To Conform To The World***

- A. Christ wants transformation (Romans 12:2).
- B. Demas decided not to transform himself (2 Timothy 4:10).
- C. A servant of Christ does not run with the ungodly (1 Peter 4:4-6)
- D. A servant of Christ lives soberly, righteously, and godly (Titus 2:11-14).

## ***II. Our Struggle To Compromise The Truth***

- A. If we are not with Christ we are against Him (Matthew 12:30).
- B. The truth is made up of a fantastic unity (Ephesians 4:4-6).
- C. We are warned to stay away from false teachers (2 John 9-11).
- D. We are always set for a defense of the gospel (Philippians 1:17).

## ***III. Our Struggle To Render Empty Service***

- A. The devil takes the word out of our hearts (Luke 8:12).
- B. God wants faith and works from us (James 2:14-20).
- C. Christians do their work with all their might (Ecclesiastes 9:10).
- D. Christians are not slothful, but fervent in service (Romans 12:11).

## ***IV. Our Struggle To Act Hypocritically***

- A. The gospel calls for kindness toward one another (2 Peter 1:5-7).
- B. If you will not forgive, no forgiveness will be given to you (Matthew 6:14-15).
- C. Outbursts of anger and wrath are wrong (Colossians 3:12-13).
- D. When Christ looks into your heart He should see His image (Romans 8:29).

## ***V. Our Struggle To Give Up The Faith***

- A. It’s a turning back to weak and worthless elements (Galatians 4:9).
- B. Some give up because of false doctrine (1 Timothy 1:18-20).

- C. Some give up because of discouragement (1 Kings 19:11-18).
- D. God always has a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

**Conclusion.** In a Twilight Zone episode from 1960, an American on a walking trip through Central Europe gets caught in a raging storm. Staggering through the blinding rain, he sees an imposing medieval castle, which is a hermitage for a brotherhood of monks. The reclusive monks reluctantly take him in.

Later that night, the American discovers a cell with a man locked inside. An ancient wooden staff bolts the door. The prisoner claims he is being held captive by the “insane” head monk, Brother Jerome. He pleads for the American to release him. The prisoner’s kind face and gentle voice wins over the American. The American confronts Brother Jerome, who declares that the prisoner is Satan, “the father of lies,” held captive by the Staff of Truth, the one barrier he cannot pass. That convinces the American that Jerome is indeed mad. As soon as he gets the chance, he releases the prisoner — who immediately transforms into a hideous horned demon and vanishes in a puff of smoke.

The stunned American is horrified by what he has done. Jerome responds sympathetically. “I’m sorry for you, my son. All your life you will remember this night and whom you have turned loose upon the world.” “I didn’t believe you,” the American replies. “I saw him and didn’t recognize him,” to which Jerome responds: “That is man’s weakness and Satan’s strength.”

As was said previously, you may feel like you’re wrestling against yourself or others, but you’re really wrestling the devil. The devil is everywhere (1 Peter 5:8).