



Thriving

John 16:33

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

I. The Existence of Evil

A. An Unyielding Agenda --- opposition to God

Genesis 3:1

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

Matthew 4:5-6 (NIV)

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.

⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

B. Difficulties arise "on my account"

Matthew 10:16-20

I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. ¹⁷ "Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. ¹⁸ **On my account** you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, ²⁰ for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

II. Why is Life a Struggle?

A. We arrive "hard-wired" for sin

Romans 7:15

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

B. We must choose a response:

1. Cooperate --- with our tendency to rebel
2. Resist --- and overcome the tendency; always easier initially to go along

Galatians 5:16-17

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ¹⁷ For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

3. Power to Help Us

1 Corinthians 1:17-19

. . . to preach the gospel--not with words of human wisdom, **lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.** ¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but **to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**

III. What Can I Do?

A. Train

B. Community of Faith

C. Learn the Truth

D. Ask for Wisdom

James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

E. The Tools Required

1. The Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:22-24 (NASB)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; **against such things there is no law.** ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

2. "The Helper"

John 16:7 (NASB)

"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but **if I go, I will send Him to you.**

Acts 1:4-5 (NIV)

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for **the gift my Father promised**, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in **a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.**"

3. Dexterity Developed

Mark 9:2-7 (NIV)

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵ Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁶ **(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)** ⁷ Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "**This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!**"

4. The Friendship Factor

John 15:15 (NIV)

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

Heavenly Father,

I bow my knee before the majesty and splendor of Almighty God. You have created the earth and everything in it. I put my hope in You and Your great faithfulness. You set boundaries, establish Your righteousness and watch over Your people. May my life be pleasing in Your sight. Grant me the strength and courage to complete the course you have chosen. In Jesus' name, amen.