

## Jerry Wesol - Combative Spirit

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Our title and our subject today is going to be things that you know, and hopefully this will be encouraging and when we leave this place that it'll equip us to meet those experiences. The Lord has found needful in our walk a combative spirit, and we have a question, is it a good or a bad thing to have? You know, when we hear the word combat and it brings to our minds battles and warfare. But to begin to answer our question, we turn to the Scriptures and we're told that we are soldiers in Christ, that we are to strive, which implies combat, in order to receive the reward.

And we will attain it only if we contend faithfully and lawfully. Second Timothy 2, 3:5. Now a soldier must be ready for combat, and that requires armor. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6, 13, wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand, what is this having done all, and what is it to stand?

We'll cover some of that, and why is it important? Because we're told in verse 12, for we wrestle against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of the world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. This battle is for our life, our spiritual life, not the flesh. For that's what we sacrificed when we made our covenant with the Lord in consecration.

And if we're not prepared, it will be very easy for the spiritual demons to confound us. Even after Satan failed to turn our Lord to his reasoning, he used Peter to try and swear, Lord, but so in tune to the Father was our Lord, that he knew where the attack was coming from, and he said, get thee behind me. Satan, the God of this world, wars with the saints, and we're told in first Peter five, eight, be sober and be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking who he may devour.

And Paul tells us, 2nd Corinthians 10:4, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty. Through God to the pulling down of strongholds, Satan wants to stop the church from developing, and spirit beings have greater influence over the human mind. But the Lord has not forsaken us, and we have the precious promise that he will never he will be there in every time of need, and it is through his sure word that we have this faith, and we must, and we need to turn to that Christian soldier's manual daily.

Second Peter 1, 19. We have also a more sure word of prophecy. Whereunto ye do well that you take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. No, the self help category of books has dramatically jumped in recent years. It's a multi billion dollar business.

Everything from physical training to confidence building to mastering leadership to learning self control, and this tells us that people want to be happy. Perhaps they even want to be at peace with God. However, there's a flaw. They're getting help from fallen human beings and they're trying these things without God, the giver of every good and perfect gift.

And more importantly, how do you have peace without the Prince of peace ruling in your heart? And thankfully we have our self help book and that was written by men moved by the spirit of God. 2nd Peter 1:21. On top of that, we believe he has supplied us with his messenger Brother Charles Taze Russell to reveal the vision and make it plain. It's such a big difference and we quote Brother Russell.

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So let us be forearmed and forewarned, ready for the battle to stand and be proven. Return to Bible study with our hearts uplifted to God that He may give us the light promised to his faithful people in the End of the age. Reprint 4778 the more we study and increase our faith in the Lord's Word, we can detect error quickly and be able to protect new creature mind, and why is that important? Well, daily we have dealings with combative people on our way to work.

In the traffic there's road rage now they don't. But you know, unfortunately they're not just yelling at you and blowing their horns, they're pulling out guns and shooting at each other, and how about at work? There's always some individuals that they like to belittle or they like to be combative.

But even customers in retail stores, restaurants, or even patients in the hospital, they react violently over simple things, and the political ideology, it's no longer about right or wrong truth, it's about the ideology. It's about if truth is in the way of the ideology, you demonize the truth. Matthew 7, 13 and 14 Enter ye at the straight gate for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction and many there be which go in there at because straight is the gate, narrow is the way which leads to life and few there be that find it. The stresses of life and the evil in the world limits men's reactions to their environment.

We have a higher calling and a higher way spelled out for us. However, it's not so easy to control at times with our flesh getting in the way when we are in situations like these, we should ask ourselves, what did Jesus do when he was reviled? He reviled not again. When he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judges righteously.

And why are these things happening and so commonplace today?

Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 3:1 3, in 2 Thessalonians 2:11, that in the end times, perilous times would truly come strong delusions that they believe a lie, and there's false teachers that promulgate them, lovers of self and pleasures more than of God, and of course, without natural affection, without love. In Matthew 24 and Luke 21 our Lord foretold our day, describing the trouble not just through the gospel age, but at the end of the age, and he said, when you see these things, look up your redemption is nigh. We should be looking up heavenward for guidance, not to the earth and society's ways.

Galatians 5:16, 17 this I say, then walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. First Corinthians 3:3 for ye are yet carnal for whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men in our lord. In Mark 8:42,44 he confronted the Pharisees about this carnal spirit, and Jesus said to them, if God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God. Neither came I of myself, but he who sent me.

Ye are of your father, the devil and the lust of your Father you will do he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in in him.

So often do they try, they see these wonderful miracles, all the things that Scriptures foretold about him, and yet they wanted to kill him. But when we consecrate our lives, we are baptized into Christ's death. The mortal body is for use by the new mind, not the other way around, and we're given the Lord's Spirit and we're to be transformed by the renovating of our minds, and we must always strive to keep our body under, follow our Lord's example, and not look to the world for answers.

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Jesus and Paul are making it very clear there is a totally different way. You must think flesh, carnal, spirited mind, it's not of God and will not inherit the kingdom, and Jesus made it clear that they should not lord over one another like the princes of the gentiles in Matthew 20:25 to 28 and he goes on to tell us in John 13:34, 35 as I have loved you, that ye also love one another and by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples. Ephesians 4:26 and 27 Be ye angry and sin not let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil. In Mark 3:1:6 there's a good example of this where a man comes into the synagogue and he has a withered hand.

And Jesus asked the Pharisees, he says, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill? But they were silent, and he looked around at them with anger, is grieved at their hardness of heart, and he said to the man, stretch out your hand, and he stretched it out, and his hand was healed. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him on how to destroy, and that means to kill.

To kill him. You know to be angry you can have a godlike displeasure in opposition to something wrong. Love for truth, love for God, and love for the people that are being deceived by error can be the cause of anger. A perfect man could be angry at evil or injustice, and his anger would be controlled by reason and by justice and by love. Injustice and wrong should be met with indignation and rebuke by God's true children.

Anger in itself is not a sin. Anger prompted by love should be controlled by love. Reprint 439. The danger is in extremes. We should use a great deal of discretion, and no matter what provocation we have, we should see that the matter is settled quickly.

Wrath must not be harbored or cherished, or it's sure to lead to permanent bitterness and hatred. Reprint 5974 Some get angry to the extent of bitterness and personal hatred, and this is a fleshly response by the spirit of retaliation. We must keep close to our shepherd if we would be delivered out of temptation and from the power of the evil. One volume six, page 609. You know, just going to show how our Lord was fully committed and understood the wiles of the adversary.

In John 18:10, 11 says, Then Simon Peter, having his sword, drew it and cut off the right ear of the high priest's servant. The servant's name was Malchus, and then said Jesus to Peter, put up thy sword. The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? And we're told in Luke 22:51 that Jesus healed Marcus's ear, so strong was our Lord's resolve to fulfilling his vow.

Being refreshed and assured of this faithfulness, he even demonstrated his love for his enemies in healing Malchus ear, and we're told in Matthew 26:53 Our Lord says thinkest that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than 12 legions of angels. Now remember, a legion is a thousand, and we know from the Sennacherib situation with his whole army was wiped out in one night one angel killed 185,000.

Jesus understood the cup that he must drink, the suffering and ignominy that he must go through, content to do the Father's will through it all, and this is what all who name the name of Christ must do. Now now is the acceptable time to be proven in the December 6th manna. There's a positiveness to this to combative spirit and the text is Proverbs 25:28 he that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that's broken down and without walls. The battle itself is the greatest battle and we have the Lord's word for it that he that rules his spirit, his own mind and will, is better than he that takes a city, because he has to that extent learned to exercise the combativeness of a true character in the right direction and self control.

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There's our answer. Reprint 2878 since we are to be transformed, our combativeness must be focused in the right direction. The striving against the world, flesh and the devil, not against our fellow man or our brethren. Resisting the old nature makes us in the likeness of our Lord and Master Jesus. Then can the Lord use us in his kingdom?

And we think that Peter and John and Paul had to learn this same lesson to stop protecting their flesh.

Combative self preservation attitude. It causes Peter to deny our lord. In Luke 22:54 61 says, and before the crows Peter denied the Lord thrice. It was after this third time that Jesus looked on him and Peter remembered that the Lord said he would deny him. But you know, this is before he received the Holy Spirit.

Peter, when he's prompted to go, he does go and he meets with Cornelius. Acts chapter 10 Peter received the vision from the Lord and he did go to Cornelius. It was the Spirit that enabled him not to fear the Jews and to go into the Gentiles. However, Peter needed to be rebuked by Paul. Galatians 2:11-21 we're told, and this is Paul speaking, but when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face for what he did was very wrong.

When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't let eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. Despite all this zeal, Peter may have given in to a certain status among the Jewish brethren.

And he had to be reminded that God is not a respecter of persons and that a new dispensation had begun. Peter contradicts his own principle. He drew back and separated himself from the Gentiles. Being afraid of those of the circumcision party, he was giving his approval of introducing yet again a spiritual caste system in the church. This brought him in direct conflict with Paul.

But we know the years of experience that Peter had and his faithfulness. He was fully committed, and we know that he loved Paul, and we're told in 2 Peter 3, 14:16, therefore, beloved be diligent to be found by him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation. How patient was the Lord with Peter, just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, you know, it's supposed that Peter was crucified and not wanting to be equal to the Lord, he requested to be crucified upside down.

John 2, known as the disciple that Jesus loved, he had to battle the old man, and because the Samaritans rejected Jesus, James and John wanted the Lord to rain down fire upon them. Luke 9, 53 and 56, just like what Elijah had done. But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and he said, you know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them, you know. In Mark 14:50, we are told that this combative spirit for self preservation also engulfed John, and he fled with the rest of the disciples. But we know he recovered, and he was not ashamed or afraid to be there with Jesus at the cross. John 19:25, 27 Jesus said to his mother, woman, behold your son, and then he said to the disciple, behold your mother.

Revelation 1:9 tells that John had been banished to Patmos. It was a penal island in the Mediterranean Sea, almost uninhabitable, rocky and barren, where convicts were worked in the

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quarry of marble and this was for the word of God. Seclusion had been forced upon him as a penalty for faithfulness. His faithfulness in believing and teaching the word of God.

John would not draw back, and we're this one scene from Acts chapter four. When Peter and John were imprisoned and threatened.

They were taken into custody by the priests, the temple guard and the Sadducees for teaching the people about Jesus, resurrection from the dead, and Peter boldly declared to the high priest that the healing of the man that was lame 40 years was done through the power of Jesus, whom they crucified, declaring him to be the chief cornerstone that was rejected, and when threatened, they said, we will listen to God, for we speak of what we have seen and heard. They beat them. They thought they were going to get them to capitulate, but they couldn't do it.

How pleased must the Lord have been to see these two that he loved grow in character. Strong new creatures, living and reflecting the glory of God and telling of the wonderful promise of the kingdom and of life through the Messiah, through that one ransom our Lord Jesus at this point truly about the Father's business, not protecting their flesh, only to do his will and good pleasure. But our next elder brother is sure proof of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Saul the mighty Pharisee. You know, we are told that Paul Saul of Tarsus approved of the and consented to the death of Stephen.

In fact, he had received letters to empower him to enter homes of Christians in Jerusalem and have them hauled off to prison and later to go to Damascus and to do the same. But Acts 9:3:6 is we were we're told how our Lord met him on the road, and Paul says, who art thou, Lord? He says, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest, and Jesus tells him to arise and go into the city.

And it shall be told thee what that thou must do. You know, even Ananias was afraid to go to Paul. But remember what the Lord tells him. In Acts 9, 15 and 16 the Lord said unto him, go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and Kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

A transformed life from vainglory to humility, perfect love for the brethren. In 2 Corinthians 11:24-25, Paul says of the Jews, Five times received I 40 stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck A night and a day I had been in the deep talk about a soldier combating the flesh and its interest. Even though Paul had received rough treatment and was beaten by the mob, yet he asked the commander for the privileges of speaking to the people, his own perspective on self. In 1 Corinthians 9 we know that Paul worked hard to remove pride from himself, and he was always striving to uplift the brethren and not persecute them.

First Corinthians 15:9 I am the least of the apostles because I persecuted the brethren. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not in vain. No, I worked harder than all of them. Yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me more than an overcomer, full of faith and faith in the precious promises. 2nd Timothy 4, 6, 8 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. How henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. What a transformation.

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Paul stayed and studied in Arabia. He went to Jerusalem and he studied with Peter, and then he spent time in Damascus and preaching the word the Jews thought to kill him. He changed his name from Saul, which meant desired, to Paul, which meant small. Paul boldly spoke before Agrippa and the philosophers regarding the unknown God, and we're told that many cleaved unto him after this.

And they believed Paul was all in not ashamed, but proclaimed the word regarding the peril as a light affliction, and like Jeremiah, he burned with zeal to tell the Gospel message and uplift the brethren. Paul wrote 14 books of the New Testament. We have what we have in the understanding of that Christian character by our dear brother Paul. So when we look at the combative spirit on the positive side, there's growth of character and dedication to duty.

All three apostles used their combative spirit to uplift, restore and teach others in the body of Christ to love one another. It was this spirit, rightly directed, that enabled them each in their own walks to combat the fleshly desires, follow the Lord's leading and submit to his will even unto death in the combative spirit. In a negative way we saw that it's self preservation of this life and vain glory lording over others. Before Pentecost, John and Peter had a struggle, combating their pride, their fear and putting self value and their will ahead of God's will. They did not understand yet that they were bought with with a price.

John 17:9, verse 20:23 records the prayer in that upper room right before our Lord was going to go have his Gethsemane experience and be taken to be crucified. He he prayed on behalf of the disciples. He said, I pray for them that they all may be one, that they may be made perfect in one that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou has loved me, and what an assurance to be included in our Lord's prayer to the Father on our behalf. We have been washed and cleansed and however imperfect our earthen vessels may still be, our hearts are perfect in his sight and who is able to read the heart and as he sees us with a perfect heart, a perfect purpose and intention, striving to overcome the weaknesses and disabilities of our imperfect flesh, humbly trusting in the provisions which he has has made for our redemption from the fall.

God recognizes in us that which is worthy of his love. Reprint 3161 Ralph Waldo Emerson has a famous quote that people mention a lot says, Sow a thought and you reap an action sow an act and you reap a habit. Sow a habit and you reap a character. Sow a character and you reap a destiny. I think this goes along with some of our discussion on the the treasures.

Our destiny is tied directly to our thoughts. Paul reminds us how important our thoughts are in Philippians 4:8. He writes, finally, brethren, whatsoever is true, whatsoever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, and whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things. If you change a thought, you will change your future. Every action starts with a thought.

Every attitude starts with a thought. Every destination started not with someone else's action, but with the thought you selected have the right spirit Having the right spirit. Our faith will be demonstrated by the works of a well developed character of Christlike character.

And character development is so important for our testing and our proving, because only then are we ready for that spiritual birth. You know we look at these verses in Matthew 5:3 12 Blessed are the humble minded, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Blessed are those who know what sorrow means, that mourn for they will be given courage and comfort. Blessed are those who claim nothing, the meek, for the whole earth will belong to them. Blessed are those who are hungry and thirst after goodness for righteousness, for they will be fully satisfied.

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And blessed are the merciful for they will have mercy shown to them. Happy are the utterly sincere, pure in heart for they will see God, and blessed are those who make peace, for they will be sons of God, and happy are those who have suffered persecution for the cause of goodness, for truth, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs, and what blessedness will be yours when people blame you and ill treat you and say all kinds of slanderous things against you for my sake?

Be glad then. Yes, be tremendously glad, for your award is in heaven is magnificent. You know, we use some of Phillips and and and combine some of the words with the King James with some of the Phillips here we thought the thought was well expressed and we think that this shows that character development and it's also prerequisites these developments for the kingdom because we read in Galatians 5:22-24 the fruits of the Spirit is love, and joy and peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance against such there is no law and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. The Beatitudes designate the particular graces necessary to receive the blessings which the Father designed we should enjoy. But through Christ we see that once this level of character has been developed, standing upon that fourth quarter mark of love, we are ready to be proven to stand our faithfulness being tested, and notice in our Lord's sermon that it is not until these character traits are developed that we are blessed to suffer and be proven by the Lord.

To be worthy of this blessing means to develop and possess a character which the enemies of righteousness would deem worthy of persecution. To be worthy of this blessing means to develop and possess a character which the enemies of righteousness would deem worthy of persecution. Reprint 48, 66 we are to overcome evil be not overcome of evil. Romans 12:21. We are never to take up or to use evil words, or methods or manners.

To do so is temporarily to join the enemy, or to admit that his implements and methods are better than those of the captain to whom we belong to answer anger with anger, evil report with evil report bitter words with bitter words, slander with slander, persecution with persecution, blow with blow or any of these would be to endeavor to overcome evil with evil to be misled by the adversary to use his methods in any of the ways is to be overcome of Evil. Reprint 2215. We're going to suggest five steps that we conquer self.

Step one. Choose the enemy. That's the awareness. What part of you do you want to improve upon step two, Strategize the attack and defense. What's your plan to stop the bad behavior?

Step three. Declare war inwardly through commitment. Commit 100%. Go all in. You made this consecration.

We're headless. We do the will of the Lord. Step four. Defeat the enemy. Win at all costs.

Win the battle. Follow through with your plan and do not give up. Only now is the acceptable time. The opportunity will close. Step five.

Repeat, but most importantly. Always begin with with prayer to many. Too many battles on too many fronts and you lose them all. Choose an enemy and declare war. Let the earth and all her trimmings go.

Keep the old man in the coffin. George. Brother George. Elders used to say, sometimes you got to jump up and down on that coffin. Keep it in there.

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Develop the new creature mind. We must be ready for the spiritual birth. Plant the royal banner on the terrain of your mind. Renounce all hope of retreat. No turning back.

Keep your hand to the plow. Submit to the Lord's work of your sanctification. Because only then will your crown await you. Glory, honor and immortality. 2nd Timothy 2, 3, 4.

Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that worth entangled himself with the affairs of this life that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. You know, Brother Albert told us a story. There was a soldier who was in his foxhole, and the command was given to charge.

And all went charging with this soldier. He was so afraid, just so frightened. He stayed in his foxhole. At the end of the battle, his sergeant came to him and he didn't. He wasn't upset with him.

He didn't yell at him, he didn't ridicule him. He reminded him. He says, you have to remember you're already dead. Then you can do your job. Our flesh is reckoned dead.

And we are of the kingdom of God. Unless we are willing to learn lessons through experiences and to endure hardness, we shall not be prepared to enter into eternal glory. Ours is a vow of complete, unquestioning obedience to the orders of our God and Lord. The entire suppression of our self will reprint 5147 because there is a grand purpose of this conflict. It's after we have considerable experience in battling with sin and selfishness in ourselves and casting the beam out of our own eyes in subduing anger and malice and hatred and strife in our own hearts and flesh.

It's then and by means of this severe battle and experience that we will be prepared to assist the brethren and to assist our neighbors and their difficulties, to help them to overcome their besetments and weaknesses. Reprint 2878 it is indeed no easy matter to tread the path of humility, to continually check the human aspirations, and to keep the sacrifice on the altar until it's fully consumed. If we are to attain to glory, honor, and immortality, we must keep close to the example of our Master. It's when we are thus humble and faithful that the LORD makes us his chosen vessels to bear his name to others. Thus emptied of self, he can fill us with his spirit and with his truth, and we can go forth strong in the Lord of hosts and in his mighty power to do valiant service as soldiers of the cross.

Isaiah 62:10 Pass ye through pass ye through the gates, prepare ye the way of the people. Cast ye up cast ye up the highway, clear it of stones, lift ye highest standard unto the peoples Our value in the kingdom, if found faithful, having conquered, our fallen tendencies will be able to help mankind up the highway of holiness, so that when tested, they will live forever.

Joshua 24:15 choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the lord. Remember, when Joshua received his commission, the enemies of the Israelites were entrenched in the land, but the LORD said to him, for an inheritance, the land which I swear unto their fathers to give them only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee. Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou may prosper whether soever thou goest. We are given the same assurances that the Lord is with us in every time of need, and that his angels encamp around us.

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Let us boldly go before the Lord in prayer for grace. To help we must tell out the message of truth as good soldiers endure opposition, fight the good fight of faith until the LORD says it's enough and he removes the offering from our hands. We will not receive the crowning life and glory until we bear the cross to the finish of our earthly course.

Job 23:10 but he knoweth the way that I take when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold  
Brethren, it's my prayer for all of those who have named the name of Christ, that we are found faithful to our vow and to our covenant by sacrifice. May we leave this place forearmed, shod, clothed, and shielded with the promises, the sure word, and with zeal tell out that good news to God be the glory. Amen.