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Eye to Eye: Humility in Warfare

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Series: The Mind of Christ

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To try to describe this moment in history would be much like trying to describe Pearl Harbor with ten thousand times the intensity. In essence, war had already broken out. It had been in progress for years. This might be more like a summit conference in which the two heads of state of the world's two superpowers met to try to make their positions clear.

Both were seeking victory. One knew that real victory only comes from defeating the enemy once and for all. The other was trying to arrange a sort of pseudo cease-fire, a "peaceful coexistence" if you will, that would, in essence, bring about temporary peace at the cost of great compromise. There would never be another moment in history quite like it.

All of the forces of the spirit world were gathered in the shadows watching in anticipation. Every member of the angelic host waited in hushed wonderment. All of the demons on Satan's team of destruction were in the grandstands cheering on their quarterback, the host of hell himself. Whatever happened here would determine the ultimate destiny of the devil and all his demons, and could also affect the salvation of all mankind. It was, to be sure, Super Bowl One.

God had arrived on planet earth for the conflict. He had chosen to come in human form, as a mere man. He had humbled Himself, chosen to be born in a manger, live in a carpenter's home, submit Himself to His earthly parents, be baptized by His mother's nephew, and let His Father choose His team of helpers and make His every decision. He had humbled Himself beyond human understanding, so that every man or woman yet unborn would be able to see how God looks in a human body.

He looks incredibly humble. And that humility catches Satan off-guard. Satan tends to overlook the power, the wisdom, and the victorious future of the believer when

he walks humbly with his God. Always, that is the devil's undoing. It was in the conflict just about to take place. Jesus, the Living God made flesh, had come to planet earth to save us from our sins. Satan, His adversary, was poised on his pedestal of evil, wanting to play "let's make a deal". He totally miscalculated his opponent. He mistook humility for impotence. He thought physical weakness meant spiritual defeat. He did not understand the Mind of God. He still doesn't. That's why you and I *can honestly meet Him head on so long as we stay in a state of total dependence.*

Eye to eye: Satan and God. The drama had been playing on the screens of human experience for years. But now it was time for the main event. The King of Eternity, the Creator-God who spoke the worlds into being, had taken off His robes of righteous royalty and donned the cloak of a servant. He had left His throne in glory and with it the benefits that accrue to His deity. By so doing, He entered the arena of sin and degradation that had been so marred by fallen man. His goal was to remain sinless so He could bear the sins of the world. His enemy: the prince of darkness. His goal was to do anything to prevent God from becoming a Savior. And so the stage was set.

Most of us have a reasonably clear understanding of what happened. The story is not new to us, and we cherish the victory that ensued. But the question we must ask ourselves in this study is: *do we understand what went on in the mind of God?* If "this mind is to be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus", then looking carefully at the *attitude* Jesus portrayed through this conflict may well be the key to understanding our mindset when the temptations and tests of life appear on the horizons of our lives.

A careful look may well shatter a few of the preconceived concepts of dealing with the devil that have become so prevalent once again in this generation. That we have victory assured us is accepted. *What attitude we have and what choices we make will determine our appropriating that victory* and may well be the difference between doctrinal understanding and personal transformation. The truth of the matter is: many of us face temptations and trials daily, and lose the battle, all

the while quoting and teaching and memorizing

...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.
(I John 4:4b KJV)

We often give testimonies of the victorious life while secretly living in a world of bondage to besetting sins. We claim power we do not receive, pray for deliverance that never comes; and sometimes the frustration of losing the same battles over and over bring about a sense of futility that we mask with spiritual clichés and frenzied activity. Does it work or doesn't it? Can we have victory or is it a mirage? Are we playing games, pretending to be men and women who possess the very same power that raised Christ from the dead, while living a life that is characterized by defeat? Should we be increasingly victorious in our conflicts with the devil, growing "in ever-increasing splendor, from one degree of glory to the other"¹? Yes, according to Scripture, we should. Jesus lived a life of total victory. Then He returned to the Father and placed His Spirit in us. If we choose to let His mind control us, our victories should multiply, as He gains ever-increasing control of our lives. If this is not the case in your life, listen carefully to this play-by-play look at the Master as He pursued hand-to-hand combat with the one whose goal it was to destroy both Him and His kingdom.

THE PREPARATION

First, look at the preparation. The eternal God is about to confront a mere angel of His who took it upon himself to incite rebellion, and had formed an alliance with other rebels in an effort to undermine the plan of God. The plan of God was that man would be created in the image of God, that is, to *reflect God through total obedience*. He would not be a robot, with no choices. On the contrary, *all the choices would be his*, but the choice of choices would be who would be his lord. Man was not made to be his own god. He was made to obey someone. That choice would determine his eternal destiny and his indwelling peace. Satan's goal from the beginning was to convince man that God's plan was not fair. God's plan involved man *humbling himself and becoming*

¹ II Corinthians 3:18 (Amplified Bible)

a doulos, a bonds slave. It involved honoring God by obeying God and thus enjoying the benefits of God’s protection and power.

Satan’s argument was that man had the same rights as God, including the right to run his own life. So Satan injected into the bloodstream of history a concept called “pride”. Pride says that we can do whatever we make up our minds to do, we can become gods in our own right, *but Jehovah doesn’t want us to know that*—hence, his argument to Eve in the garden.

Imagine Satan’s glee when Jesus came to earth and made His kingship vulnerable by submitting Himself to the same kinds of temptations Satan had used to ambush man from the beginning. Imagine the planning sessions he and his evil cohorts had, strategizing about how to capture the Master in some situation wherein Jesus would leave His Father’s umbrella of protection and act on His own, thus abandoning the platform from which salvation could come to all men and Satan would once and for all be sentenced to death. Imagine the intensity of the preparations. It was “super bowl Sunday” and then some. Everything that had happened up to this point was on the line. Your salvation and mine was on the line. All of eternity boiled down to this one moment in history. Study it carefully. The mind of Christ has never been more evident than it is in this passage.

The story begins like this:

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

(Matthew 4:1-3 NIV)

Imagine if you will, how you would have responded, had you been royalty on a mission, and this assignment came to you. Pretend you are the son of the king of a great nation, and he has sent you as his ambassador to do something special in one of his kingdoms for the underprivileged who were perishing. Now suppose the king called you and said, “Son,

I want you to go out into the desert where all the dangers of the world are, and eat nothing for forty days. It will be for the good of the kingdom.”

How would you respond? Would you not answer, “But Father, I’m your son. You can send anyone on such a mission. And Father, it’s one thing to miss a meal; it’s another to miss 120 meals. Father, what about the enemies that lurk in the desert, looking for prey? In my weakened condition, will I not be an easy target for those who seek to destroy me?”

The son of a king making himself that vulnerable? How about the Son of God? He had already laid aside His robes and His rights and become a man. What more could He be asked to do? That, of course, is a question you and I know the answer to. He could be asked to die. In fact, *is not that why he came?*

The key phrase in the entire passage is the first one. “Then Jesus was led...” Indeed He was. All of His life, He was. Jesus didn’t go into the wilderness to prove something to His Father. He went to the wilderness *because His Father told Him to*. And when some of us find ourselves from time to time in life’s wildernesses, we need to remember that. God often leads His dear children into the very jaws of the enemy in order to have victory over the enemy. You don’t have victory in battle by fleeing the battlefield. Neither do you have victory by running your own war. You listen to your commander-in-chief, *and when He says go, you go*.

He wasn’t led there for a church social and Satan just happened to show up. Matthew wrote: “*He was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.*” Specific journey: into the desert. Specific purpose: to be confronted by Satan in hand-to-hand combat. No doubts about the reason for this trip. Now, you would imagine that God would have led Jesus immediately into Satan’s presence while He was still strong and fresh. But, no, God had a side trip that took more than a month, and took all the physical energy Jesus possessed and allowed it to be dissipated.

He fasted for forty days and forty nights. That means He ate nothing for nine hundred and sixty hours. If I don’t eat

for eight hours, I go completely wild with hunger. Twenty-four hours seems like eternity. Even in the hospital, unless you are being fed something, you begin to feel as though you don't have enough strength to get out of bed. Now multiply that forty times. Remember, Jesus as a man *was tempted in all points like as we*. That means He was just as affected by not eating as we are. But the Father led Him into that situation for two reasons:

1) The weaker He was physically, the more dependent (the more humble) He would be. That's what Paul meant when He said, "My strength is made perfect in weakness". In His weakened condition, only the Father could deliver Him. Good. That's where the Father wanted Him. And so often, *that's where the Father wants us*. How often great warfare erupts in our lives just before a great test or an important ministry. It is because Satan wants to stop what you are about to accomplish, and God allows the test, because He knows that *only when you can't, will you acknowledge that only He can*.

2) Jesus had to be in His weakest condition, or the temptation would not have its maximum effect. If He was to be tempted in all points, it had to be beyond anything we would ever encounter. The Spirit minces no words. It says, "He was hungry." Amen. We get hungry thinking about it.

Once Jesus was in His most weakened condition physically, He didn't have to hunt for trouble. And neither will we. The passage says: "the tempter came to Him." You can just bet on it. the Father didn't let Satan at Him until forty days had passed. Once they had, He let Satan loose, and the tempter was like a magnet looking for metal. He landed right at the Master's feet. But remember, Jesus was in this predicament because "the Spirit led Him there."

Now, we are reminded that,

God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt any
anyone. (James 1:13 NIV)

Remember, every incident where warfare is involved has two sides. From God's perspective, it is a test. From Satan's

perspective, it is a temptation—same circumstances; different perspective.

THE CONFRONTATION

So Jesus was sent to the desert by His Father to be tempted as a test. The temptation came from Satan. The test was allowed by God. Satan meant it for evil. God meant it for good. Once Satan perceived that he had Jesus in a weakened condition, he attacked. Now notice carefully, *all of these attacks were designed to get Jesus to act out of pride, rather than humility.* Listen to his lies:

“If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”
(Matthew 4:3b NIV)

I find it very interesting that Eve’s first temptation and Jesus’ first temptation both had to do with food. Food must be one area where the will does not want to be broken. “If you are the Son of God...” There is the basis for his attack. “If you are who you say you are, prove it by some supernatural act. Demonstrate in the physical realm how powerful, how successful you are. Jesus, surely you are hungry by now. Your Father wants you to be happy. If you’re hungry, and you have supernatural powers, just dare the Father to feed you. After all, how can you serve God in such a weakened condition?” Sound familiar?

What he was daring Jesus to do was to act independently of His Father. He was using human reasoning to defy Scriptural absolutes. The Father had led Jesus into the wilderness and He had led Him to fast. He was fasting so He could be spiritually strong and win the greatest victory ever won in the realm of spirit warfare. Satan appealed to the flesh to overrule God’s will. He dared Jesus to prove who He was by flashing His magic wand and turning a blob of rock into a loaf of rye. It must have been tempting, indeed. Here was God’s archenemy daring Jesus to prove that God had power. Pride would have responded, “I’ll show you, Mr. Satan..” and would have produced a loaf of bread the size of Mount Everest. That would shut him up. Or would it?

Satan wanted Jesus to satisfy the flesh at the expense of the spirit. He wanted Him to defy His Father’s instructions,

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based on His authority apart from His Father's authority. He could have. He could have gone in the bakery business big time. Instead, He humbled Himself, and answered:

"It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

(Matthew 4:4b NIV)

The solution for temptation is the Word of God. It immediately takes the appetites and emotions and gives them something stronger to override their desires. The will has something eternal to respond to, and there accompanies that something eternal a supernatural power called grace that enables the will to make the right choice. Bread wasn't the issue, *the will of God was*. Had God wanted Jesus to have a sandwich, He could have sent one by a raven, like He did with Elijah. The circumstances weren't the real battlefield; they were just the mirage. The battle would be won or lost based on whether or not Jesus did what He "felt" like doing, or *humbled Himself* and just appropriated the Word to do God's will, regardless of how loudly the flesh protested.

Satan attacks in waves. He did with Eve. He did with Job. Watch for his next assault on the Son of God:

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

"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.'"

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

(Matthew 4:5-7 NIV)

Once again, the temptation was to pride. It was to prove His deity by putting Himself in a position of danger through presumption and then misusing the Scripture, demanding God to deliver Him. Satan still uses this tactic ever so successfully in our generation. It puts us in the driver's seat. It dares God to prove Himself by healing us or saving us from some calamity that we may or may not have created needlessly. It says to God, "If you are who you say are, I claim this verse and demand that you give me a better job

or that you heal my child or that you demonstrate your power in some way on my behalf to satisfy my hunger for the sensational.” God is repulsed by such presumption. It is the ultimate insult to His nature.

The Creator-God need not prove Himself to His creation. He who spoke the worlds into being need not bargain with us for our affections through needless demonstrations of His precious power. Should it be His will to do so, the Scripture says He can but speak and “the mountains will quake”. But if it is only to satisfy our desire to be gods and move Him at our will, *He will recoil in grief at the thought of such foolishness.* Oh, Beloved, don’t play that game with God. At the root of such nonsense is pride. It wants to determine God’s will based on our interpretation of what would be best, and using His Word as blackmail material, would attempt to make Him our servant, rather than our being His.

Jesus wasn’t about to bite at that bait. Once again, *He humbled Himself.* Surely He must have been tempted to quiet Satan once and for all by showing Him just what His Father could do. We know it was a temptation because the Scripture says it was. Had Jesus had one ounce of pride, He had both the power and the justification, humanly speaking, to silence the prince of darkness once and for all. Jumping off tall buildings may be okay for Superman, but it wasn’t for Jesus. He had a much more important miracle to perform. It would take place on a rugged Roman Cross. To yield to this miracle would be to nullify the one that counted. So once again, He used the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

Satan doesn’t mind our using the Scripture if we use it for our glory rather than God’s. He loves to counterfeit the Spirit’s solutions. That’s why James wrote, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask it amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”² Claiming the Word apart from the “Your will be done” heart attitude that Jesus indicated was the pattern for seeking His plan is playing right into the enemy’s hands. The Word is not a club we use to badger God into submission. The Word is the Mind of God through which we submit ourselves to His will and surrender to His higher ways.

² James 4:3 NKJV

One more time, Satan threw a fiery missile at the Master.

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.

“All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. (Matthew 4:8-12 NIV)

Here is the ultimate temptation to pride. Satan said “Jesus why don’t you trade kingdoms. The one you’re working on is going to take forever and a day to bring to pass. You’re going to have to suffer and die and intercede and finally do battle to win.” Here’s a shortcut. Keep your title. Keep your kingship. Just put the here and now into your scheme of things, and stop exchanging that which is physical for that which is spiritual. Live for today. I’ll let you have this whole world as your domain. It’s mine to give. All you have to do is forget the kingdom, which is to come, and it’s all yours. I call it ‘painless victory’. Not a shot need be fired. You and I can be friends. We can co-exist. We both want the same thing, don’t we? We want everybody to be happy. What do You say, Jesus? What do You say?”

“I say, get lost, Satan,” Jesus responded. “I have only one God and only one goal. Anything you offer me that will cost me even a fraction of one percent of my Father’s will, I refuse.” He humbled Himself. He passed up the offer of a lifetime for the honor of eternity. And that’s exactly what He wants us to do when the enemy comes around with that very same lie. He wielded the Word of God one more time, and Satan fled like the coward he is.

THE APPLICATION

This passage gives us some keys to victory in the Christian

life as we face the onslaughts of the enemy on a day-to-day basis. Let's review them as we close:

1- Don't argue with God over life's inconveniences. Had Jesus whimpered and complained and refused to go to the battlefield, He would have missed the battle, and we would have missed the blessing that the battle produced. Life's desert experiences are not accidental. The Spirit "led Him into the wilderness". He will do the same with us. If we cooperate with Him and praise Him, we will be able to stand in the midst of the battle, and become more than conquerors.

2- Don't minimize the value of fasting. This isn't incidental to the passage. Jesus was fasting because the Father knew that He was about to be exposed to the greatest onslaught of spiritual warfare ever known to man. When you sense the battle looming on the horizon, withdraw if you can, *even if it is just for a few hours*, and be willing to fast, *even if it is just for one meal*. And keep it to yourself. Don't tell a soul. Matthew, chapter 6 explains why.

3- Be sure you understand the difference between a test and a temptation. A temptation comes from Satan. It is a drawing to do evil. A test comes from God. It is an opportunity for Christ in you to change you into His likeness. *The same circumstances often produce both a test and a temptation.* God cannot tempt you. But God can and will take the things Satan uses to tempt you and use them to test you and help you grow.

4- Remember that physical weakness usually releases spiritual power, if we will respond properly. Don't fret or argue with God when physical limitations or sickness seem to make you unable to do in your own energy the things you would like to do. Often those limitations are necessary to create the spirit of humility or dependence God needs to live through you.

5- When temptations/tests come, remember:

a) Humble yourself. Immediately say to God, "Dear Lord, I can't handle this. Thank you that I can't. If I could, I'd try. No, Lord, only you can give me the grace (the divine enablement)

to deal with this crisis. Thank you. Here, Lord, you take over. Amen.”

b) Keep the Word where God can use it.

This book of the law shall not depart out of our mouths,
but we shall meditate on it day and night...

Memorize verses that deal *specifically* with the onslaught that appears on the horizon. Personalize those passages. Meditate on them continually. When the battle intensifies, quote them. Quietly say, “*It is written..*”

c) Let the Spirit do the fighting. You and I were never meant to fight the devil. Don’t rebuke him. Ask God to do that. You call the Word to remembrance, but acknowledge that only God can defeat the enemy. Rest in Him. Praise Him for the victory that is already His. Memorize II Chronicles 20 and reaffirm it in your heart in the midst of the conflict.

d) Don’t tempt God. Don’t do what Satan asked Jesus to do. Don’t put yourself in the midst of an unnecessary temptation and then cry to God to bail you out. “You shall not tempt the Lord your God.” Don’t ask God to do something sensational to satisfy your need for confirmation of His power. He does not need to prove Himself to you. If you have put yourself needlessly in the throes of temptation, confess it as sin, and humble yourself, and ask God to use the test He is allowing from the temptation you incited for His glory.

This passage of Scripture is more than a play-by-play report of the greatest battle in history. It is a model for us to use when the storms of life hover over us, and the temptations of life assault us and we see no way of escape. Remember:

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (I Corinthians 10:13 NKJV)

What a wonderful God we have. He went to the battlefield for us and demonstrated to us what it means to confront the enemy head on and come away with total victory. Don’t take this passage lightly. Properly applied, it could change your

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life. Ask God to reveal to you how well you respond to life's tests and temptations. Remember:

“If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, in which you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?”
(Jeremiah 12:5 NKJV)

If, in life's little challenges, you fail constantly, take note. What will you do when the Jordan swells before you, and you have no place to go? If you have learned to stand eye to eye in humility, you will be ready for the swelling of the Jordan, or anything else the enemy sends your way. Jesus was our example. When the devil harassed Him and tempted Him, He simply humbled Himself.

By God's grace, may we do the same.

EYE TO EYE WARFARE

Eye to eye—
Satan and our Lord—
It's all recorded
In His precious Word.
He showed us the truth
He gave us the facts,
How to respond
When the enemy attacks.
What to do,
What we must know
When the Jordan swells
And there's no place to go.
How to fast
And how to pray,
How Satan's temptations
Are tests today.
So reasonable
To the natural mind
Were the enemy's lies
His logic refined.

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But, oh, 'neath it all
Deep down inside,
What he was seeking
Was one ounce of pride.

For one brief moment
In that stressful hour
He hoped Christ would act
In His own human power.

“Apart from the Father
Just one tiny choice
And you’ll have it all,”
You can hear Satan’s voice.

But, oh, praise God
Our Savior stood tall,
He said, “Apart from the Father,
I do nothing at all.”

He humbled Himself
And He thus overcame.
“Oh, dear God,
May we do the same.”

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