

Warfare (III): Against the Old Self (II)

I. The Self-Centered Self

1. Chorea

- ◆ Dr. Jowett: “There is a neurological disorder called chorea, and one of its manifestations is that patients sometimes continuously spin around a target in a slow manner.”

He spoke about how we, **as individuals centered on ourselves, continually revolve around the “self.”** Sometimes it revolves around a particular talent, constantly seeking more admiration and praise from others—a chronic illness of thinking we are attractive. Other times it’s a desire to continually evoke sympathy from others.

For example: forgiveness. In fact, we ourselves often cannot forgive. If we constantly think, “I have forgiven the trauma inflicted upon me,” without considering our own debts to others, the harm we’ve caused, then we’re simply feeding our own ego. True self-mastery lies in forgetting and in no longer commemorating those past grievances.

- ◆ If we hope for our lives to enter into brightness and bear much fruit, we must cease this spinning. Only then can we step into a broader perspective. **We must break free from self-centeredness and enter into the realm of our brothers and sisters**, standing in their viewpoint, observing life’s panorama from their standpoint.
- ◆ For a self-centered person, many aspects of life are readily apparent. They easily become elated by praise and disheartened by even slight criticism. Their entire emotional state often hinges on a single word, glance, or opinion from others.

2. Luke 12:15-21: A rich man

- ◆ This rich man is an extremely self-centered individual, frequently referring to “me, my soul, my produce, I will...” Always indulging in self-congratulation. God said, *“Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”*

God said, *“So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”*

- ◆ Self-accumulation of wealth includes accumulating money, building up my reputation, securing my status, and hoarding my time. Every moment is reserved for my own enjoyment, unwilling to give it away to serve others...

3. Haman in the Book of Esther

- ◆ In the Old Testament, Haman is a typification of our old fleshly nature. Haman’s elevation to a high position, higher than all his colleagues, and the requirement for everyone to bow down to him at the king’s gate exemplify this. However, only Mordecai refuses to bow or pay homage to him, which infuriates Haman. Similarly, our old selves within us are exalted, with everyone seemingly submissive, but if just one person refuses to comply, we become enraged. We revel in the adoration of everyone, but if even one person dislikes us, we cannot bear it.
- ◆ Finally, it’s about a tall cross, meant for Haman to hang on. Jesus said, “take up your cross daily and follow me.” The cross given to each of us by Jesus is meant to crucify our old selves. We must nail this old self to the cross on a “daily” basis because it obstructs our growth and hinders the joy that God wants to give us.

II. Methods to Deal with Our Old Selves

1. We have to truly repent.

- ◆ God illuminates us, often through others. However, if we casually overlook or brush aside these revelations, we become progressively more blinded, layer by layer.
- ◆ Some people have so many works of enemies upon them. It doesn't happen suddenly; it accumulates over time by frequently leaving room for enemies, by doing wrong without genuine repentance. When you feel a slight pang of conscience, brush it off, and say, "It's okay, I won't do it next time," without acknowledging the sin and truly repenting, you are just brushing aside it.

2. Be "honest," without concealing

- ◆ **In dealing with our old selves, one crucial point is to be "honest," without concealing.** God wants us to walk in the light, because the fruit produced by the light is goodness and truthfulness. If you are not honest, you're already out of the light. Habitual lying leads to believing the lies as truth, and you lose sight of what is actually a lie.
- ◆ Dealing with our old selves means breaking down our masks, not covering them. Additionally, when God raises someone to point out your mistakes straightforwardly, you should accept it, allowing that old self to shatter, without making excuses for it.

Because each revelation nails it to the cross, which is truly a blessing for breaking free from oneself.

3. We have to love.

- ◆ We cannot kill our old selves, **so a crucial method in overcoming it is to continually love.** Let God's love flow outwards. A pastor once said that he spends his days pondering how to love God and how to love others. By constantly focusing on love, there's no time left for sin.

So, if your significant other is your cross, keep on loving them abundantly. Say, "Lord Jesus! Since you love me so much, how should I love them?" Then you'll find they no longer remain your cross.

4. Continually draw near to God, wait upon God

- ◆ By frequently drawing near to God, waiting upon Him, our old selves diminish. When Joshua entered the promised land of Canaan, the first battle was against the city of Jericho, inhabited by the towering Anakim, symbolizing our old selves. You'll notice that God instructed them on how to attack Jericho, entirely apart from human strength or weapons, but through divine methods. What method? (Joshua 6:10) Being silent and still regularly.

The more you speak, the more active your old self becomes. By staying silent often, you allow God to work in you.

- ◆ Not only staying silent: some people still brew with sorrow in silence when they feel hurt. They harbor deeper grudges, and eventually, when the opportunity arises, they erupt like a volcano. **So, it's not just about staying silent; it's about loving Jesus, trusting in Him, and fixing our gaze upon Him. We need to dethrone our old selves and replace them with love for God and understanding.**

5. Obedience is also the best way to crucify oneself.

- ◆ A good self is harder to kill. A good self may seem admirable to others, such as always being willing to take a loss and not taking advantage of others. Sometimes, a good self can be strong and resistant to be changed by God.
- ◆ One who truly has no self is very submissive to God, to circumstances, and to the gentleness bestowed upon me by others.

6. To rejoice in God often

- ◆ To rejoice in God often is also the best method to overcome our old selves. Even during which circumstances make you unhappy or sorrowful, you should rely on the Lord to always rejoice and give thanks in all things.

Warfare (III) Assignment

1. Can you describe what Dr. Jowett calls as “chorea” and its symptoms?
2. Do your emotions easily get affected by a glance or a word from others?
3. In the book of Esther, what does Haman symbolize, and what is his ultimate fate?
4. In what aspect do you tend to be self-centered?
5. What is true forgiveness? Which is more dangerous: being thwarted or being attacked?
6. What methods are mentioned for dealing with our old selves? Which aspect do you lack in dealing with your old self, and which methods do you find most useful in your life?
7. How has this recording helped you?
8. Scripture memorization: Galatians 5:24-25 and Galatians 2:20-21.