

To Strive / Struggle / Fight for Something

[This study is based on a group of Greek words, all having the same root ("agon-" - from which we get the English word "agony"). In this outline, the verses are paraphrased or summarized, and the specific words we are examining are underlined. For those who are interested, a list of the Greek words, their definitions, and the verses in which they are found, are given at the end of the outline.]

SOME OF THE TYPES OF STRUGGLES / STRIVING WE WILL HAVE AS CHRISTIANS

A. Pertaining to the "good news" of the faith...

1. *Struggling (against false teachers) to maintain the purity of the faith.*
 - Jude 1:3 - contending, fighting for the faith.
2. *The opposition/strife caused by those who do not want the gospel proclaimed.*
 - 1 Thessalonians 2:2 - much opposition/struggle/conflict caused (by opponents), when we proclaimed the gospel to you.

B. Pertaining to our own salvation.

1. *Struggling to make sure we are among the saved.*
 - Luke 13:24 - Strive (try with much effort) to enter the "narrow door" (of salvation)... not many will succeed.

C. Pertaining to our own spiritual growth, godliness, etc.

1. *The need to persevere in our struggle for sanctification/holiness [a teaching illustration].*
 - 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 - Illustration: competing ("struggling") in an Olympic (sports) contest. We must continue to train ourselves (purposefully and constantly), so that we will win the prize, rather than being disqualified for the prize.

2. ***Struggling against sin.***

- Hebrews 12:1-7 - [Chapter 11 describes a "cloud of witnesses," who fought the fight and won... their victory should be an encouragement to us.] We must get rid of whatever slows us down, and must persevere in the race / "struggle" (v. 1) that is before us. We must focus our eyes on Jesus (for encouragement), and remember what he did for us. Our struggle against sin (v. 4) hasn't killed us, as his struggle did! We must interpret the hardships we endure as being used by God - like discipline - to accomplish good in us. And if God is doing this in us, it means that he considers us to be his children!

3. ***Striving for godliness [with a focus on God, not on the body].***

- 1 Timothy 4:7-10 - (Context: Train yourself to be godly...) This is why we work hard and strive/struggle [KJV: "suffer reproach"]: We have placed our confident hope in the living God.

4. ***"Fighting the good fight."***

- 1 Timothy 6:11-12 - [Flee from (list of various sins) and, and pursue (list of godly character traits).] Fight the good fight of the faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life God called you to...
- 2 Timothy 4:6-8 - [It's time for me to die like a sacrifice.] I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race. (I have kept - remained faithful to - the faith.) Soon I will be receiving my reward from the righteous Judge - just like all will, who look forward to his appearing.

E. Pertaining to the spiritual growth of others. [The focus is on OUR struggles for them, resulting in their growth.]

1. ***By means of proclaiming, admonishing, teaching.***

- Colossians 1:28-2:3 - We preach Christ (with both admonishing and teaching) with the goal of presenting everyone [to God] as mature in Christ. This is why we work and struggle so hard, energized by his power. ... I am struggling both for you and (others) - even for those who do not know me personally, so that they may be encouraged ... and united ...

2. ***By means of prayer (an example).***

- Colossians 4:12 - Epaphras, ... is always wrestling/struggling in prayer for you, that you may rest assured in what God's will is, and may be spiritually mature.

F. Pertaining to other people's struggles (sharing or similarity with them). [The focus is on THEIR struggles, which we share, or the similarity of our/their struggles.]

1. *Willing to share (by praying for them).*
 - Romans 15:30 - I urge you ... to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. [A specific request is in v. 31-32.]
 2. *Experiencing the same types of struggles that others do... for Christ's sake.*
 - Philippians 1:29-30 - God has granted to you the privilege/honor of not only believing/trusting in Christ, but also suffering for him. You are experiencing the same types of struggles as I have been experiencing.
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MISC. USES OF THE WORD...

A. "Struggle" at Gethsemane.

1. *Jesus' "emotional struggle" (anguish/agony).*
 - Luke 22:44 Being filled with anguish / agony, he prayed more fervently...
2. *Near absence of "physical struggle" by the disciples (who ran off, rather than defending and protecting Jesus).*
 - John 18:36 Jesus said, "If my kingdom were of this world [implication: it isn't], my servants would fight to prevent the Jews from arresting me."

B. Victory over opposition (and over those who "struggle" against you).

1. *The "opposition" to the proclamation of the gospel... overcome.*
 - 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 - We told you the good news, in spite of strong opposition (v. 2). Our visit to you was not a failure (v. 1).
2. *A "winning struggle" - conquering of kingdoms by some of the "men of faith."*
 - Hebrews 11:33 [Examples of people who had faith]... who through faith conquered kingdoms, [etc.].

[This is OPTIONAL - only for those who are interested.]

Verse List and New Testament Greek Definitions (based on Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament)

agonia

- Used to denote severe mental struggles and emotions - agony, anguish - Luke 22:44.

agon

- A contest (of athletes, runners, charioteers) - used figuratively for: a) any struggles with dangers, annoyances, obstacles, standing in the way of the faith, holiness, and a desire to spread the gospel - Philippians 1:30; 1 Thessalonians 2:2; 1 Timothy 6:12 [2nd occurrence]; 2 Timothy 4:7; Hebrews 12:1; and b) intense solicitude, anxiety. - Colossians 2:1.

agonizomai

- To enter a contest; contend in the gymnastic games - 1 Corinthians 9:25.
- To contend with adversaries; fight - John 18:36.
- To contend, struggle, with difficulties and dangers (such as those antagonistic to the gospel) - Colossians 1:29; 1 Timothy 4:10 (not KJV, which says: "we suffer reproach"); 1 Timothy 6:12 [1st occurrence]; 2 Timothy 4:7.
- To endeavor with strenuous zeal, strive (to obtain something) - Luke 13:24; Colossians 4:12.

sunagonizomai

- To strive together with one, to help one in striving - Romans 15:30.

antagonizomai

- To struggle, fight (against something) - Hebrews 12:4.

katagonizomai

- (To struggle against) - by implication: to overcome - Hebrews 11:33.

epagonizomai

- To contend (for something) - Jude 1:3.