

# Competition or Cooperation - Which Will It Be?

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Well have we had a belly full of political ads yet? You just roll your eyes and it sickens you. It does me anyway. You can't turn on the TV or the radio or look at the newspaper without hearing and seeing these horrible ads, throwing mud, competing back and forth and accusations back and forth. It's sickening. The question becomes, what is the spirit behind the presidential race? What's the spirit behind the state and local elections? What is the prime spirit behind that? It's the same spirit behind sporting events where fans fight each other, beat each other up and even kill each other before and after sporting events. It's the same spirit that will occur on Black Friday, the Friday after Thanksgiving. You see the door open in some store and hoards of people start running in and they're hip-checking each other and elbowing each other and shoving each other to get to a place where they want to buy something. I think we've all experienced the situation where you're driving on a two-lane road and there's a car up ahead that's going way below the speed limit so you pull out to pass and the minute you pull out, they start speeding up and then you speed up and then they speed up some more and all of a sudden you're running abreast and both of you are well over the speed limit because they are not going to let you pass them.

That same spirit is behind much of the world's problems today. That spirit is the spirit of competition. Competition is a foundation of our democratic, capitalistic society. It's one of the pillars of our society, and frankly, it's an outgrowth of Darwinism. One of the abiding principals of Darwinism is that the weak die and the strong survive. That is a tenant of capitalism. Walmart is the poster child for that concept. We live in Yakima, Washington and Walmart moved in on the west side of town, a huge new store, and they are putting out of business the mom and pop shoe store, the mom and pop hardware store, the mom and pop furniture store or electronic store. They are just running them out of business and when they go out of business, Walmart raises their prices back up. Big box stores are predators and they put you out of business if you happen to be competing with them. That's why (and I'm just speaking for myself) I will not shop at a Walmart. I just won't do that. I avoid big box stores whenever I can because they are predatory and they're strong and big and they put little mom and pop stores, the life blood of this country economically, they put them out of business.

It's an erroneous belief that competition makes us stronger. You hear that all the time. Competing makes us stronger. No, it does not make us stronger. What competition does is bring out the worst in people, as we're going to see before we're done today. When they say competition brings out the best or makes us stronger, let's ask the question, how do the strong survive? How does a Walmart survive or how does some big box store survive? How does a big or powerful nation survive?

1. They use questionable tactics.

2. They misrepresent or lie about their opponent or their opponent's products. I worked in manufacturing for a number of years and we had some competitive manufacturers that just outright lied. They invent lies and then they push those lies and misrepresent the products they sell or themselves just as politicians misrepresent their opponents. You see that all the time today.

3. How do the strong survive? Unethical conduct; you see that all the time. You even see that in sports. If you watch a basketball game, particularly the NBA, I don't very often, but the guys will be bumping each other a little bit and one guy just barely touches the other guy and he falls back and throws his arms out. They call that "flopping". He flops on the floor in an effort to get a foul when no foul was committed, but it's an effort to win at all cost.

That is the mentality of competition, you win at all cost. You do whatever is necessary to compete and win.

Now that same spirit was injected into the Worldwide Church of God. I think we all know that. There was competition at Ambassador College over who would be hired into the work. There was competition over who was going to be ordained a deacon or a local elder or a preaching elder or a pastor or an evangelist. There was competition that was allowed to occur. We've all seen competition at Feast sites. Remember the old days; Feast sites would compete about who got the biggest offering or most dollars per person or whatever. We had competition there and it just infected the Worldwide Church of God.

That same attitude has carried over into the greater Church of God today, competition on where brethren attend. I've heard stories about different groups in a given town and they're competing over who goes where and calling people and wanting them to come over here or over there. There's competition over who has the best time on a certain cable TV station. I've heard that, and people crowing saying, "Well we've got a better time than this other group over here." There's competition over who produces the best looking booklets or magazines or who produces the most booklets or magazines. There's competition over who has the best or biggest campus. There are several campuses being built and there is competition about that.

In the greater Church today and us here, we in God's Church have a choice to make and that leads us to the subject of the sermon. The question for us (you and me) today is, is it going to be competition or is it going to be cooperation? Competition or cooperation, what is it going to be for me? This is a very important question because God is watching to see our attitude and our approach and to see whether we're going to cooperate or whether we are going to compete.

Now the first point I'd like to make as we set the background for this is that **Satan is the author of competition**. It all started with Satan. Whenever Satan started his rebellion, prior to that time there was no competition about anything. There was unity and harmony certainly between God and Christ and certainly between what was later

termed in the Bible, the holy angels, but Satan was the first to compete. We won't turn there; we know it by heart, Isaiah 14:14.

**Isaiah 14:14.** *I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. (KJV)*

What he was saying is, "I am competing with God Almighty." That was the first instance of competition in the created universe. Satan competed with God over whom Adam and Eve would obey. God said, "Follow Me" and Satan said, "No, I want you to follow me. Oh, and by the way, He is a liar." There's unethical conduct, spreading lies, just like we see today. Satan did exactly that and he lied to get their obedience and they caved in and obeyed. Satan provoked Cain to compete with Abel over an offering, and because Cain's offering was not accepted, he got so angry that he killed his brother. He was competing with him for God's favor.

Satan has provoked competition down through history. Nations go to war with other nations by being provoked by Satan, but also as we're going to get into later, he's responsible for character flaws in all human beings. But Satan has been behind the wars and the fighting and the competition between nations. Hitler, who was undoubtedly possessed and heavily influenced by demons was a master at pitting his commanders against each other. He had them fighting each other. That way he could have control over them for his favor. Then after World War II look at the cold war; there was competition against Russia, east versus west. We had the arms race. We had the race to the moon and the list goes on and on and on.

Today we have competition in technology. There's a technology race between us and the Chinese and the Europeans and the Indians as to who is going to develop technology faster and better. We have economic competition. The machinations and the behind-the-scenes maneuvering about valuing currency and competing here and competing there and government regulations that favor one nation over another, all because of competition.

Competition has infected every aspect of today's society. The world's various systems of government, whether capitalism or any other, are based on competition and Satan is behind it all.

That is the first point. Satan is the author of competition. He provokes competition. He produces competition among human beings. We have to keep that in mind at all times as we go further into the sermon.

So the second point I'd like to bring out is **competition is motivated by three character flaws**, three character flaws that are not Godly, three character flaws that are part and parcel of Satan's character.

**A. Pride and selfishness.** Competition is motivated by pride and selfishness. Pride is found everywhere. It's found among college professors, it's found among scientists

competing with each other, medical researchers competing with each other to get a grant or recognition from their peers. Competition is part and parcel of any athletic event, whether little league kids playing baseball or professional teams, competition is at the heart of that.

Competition in business; you're either growing or you are dying. You either best your competitor or you get crushed and business executives use that within the business to crush competition for their position and they also go after their competitors.

Prior to the start of Pacific, I was in the audio business for thirty-five years and very familiar with business and business tactics. As I said before, I've seen manufacturers lie knowingly about their products. I've seen managers take credit for other peoples' work. I've seen managers deflect blame for their own mistakes and put it on other people and again all competition to get a position or a job, to grab onto power or to hold onto power. I've seen executives micro-manage other people in an effort to get power or control people, all part of competition to elevate the self.

Let's go to 1 John, chapter 2 and see where pride and selfishness come from. This is the first character flaw that provokes and pushes competition. We're being admonished here that we cannot love the world.

**1 John 2:15.** *Love not the world, neither the things [that are] in the world. If any man love the world ...*

And the world, as we know, is deceived by Satan and backed by Satan.

*15b) ... the love of the Father is not in him.*

That is obvious.

*16) For all that [is] in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes (and what we are focusing on now) and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

Relating back to the first point, who is behind the world? It is obviously Satan. So John is saying, "Look, you've got a choice. You can go the way of the world. Adam and Eve did that. Or you can follow God Almighty. Take your pick. If you want to go the way of the world, it's dog-eat-dog competition and if that's the way you want to go, you better be prepared to put up with it."

Now that happened in the early Church. Let's look at the early Church. Let's go to Acts, chapter 8 and this is the example of Simon. When he saw that the Holy Spirit was given with the laying on of hands, notice his action and his attitude.

**Acts 8:18.** *And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money. (KJV)*

Now notice his attitude. Why did he want this power and why was he willing to give them money?

*19) Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. (KJV)*

You see, he wasn't interested in the benefit of the recipient receiving the Holy Spirit. He was interested in having power for himself so he could decide who he was going to lay hands on and then curry favor with those he laid hands on. It was all about the self. It was all about pride. "Look at me. I have this power. I can lay hands on you and all of a sudden you have power that comes from me." It's all about pride and selfishness.

Satan also provoked Diotrephes to compete with the Apostle John. Let's go there in 3 John and we will read verses 9 and 10. Just two examples; there are plenty of examples we could use, but Diotrephes had a competitive spirit based on pride. The apostle John is not happy about this.

**3 John 9.** *I wrote unto the Church: but Diotrephes, (notice this) who loves to have the preeminence among them (pride, be worshipped, be looked up to), received us not.*

Here's this guy, Diotrephes, who refuses to receive an apostle that laid his head on Christ's chest.

*10) Wherefore, (John says) if I come, I will remember his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and forbidding them that would, and casts [them] out of the Church. (KJV)*

Of course, we've seen that in recent history in the Church. If somebody is a threat to somebody, you just kick them out rather than talk with them and work with them and try to see what the problem is. You just run them off.

So here are two examples in the early Church of pride and selfishness, trying to bring those two characteristics into the early Church. That spirit continues to this day. There is pride among some of the ministry in the greater Church today. They are there to be worshipped. They are there to be served. They are there to be raised up. They are there to be acknowledged as somebody special; pride and selfishness. There are ministers in the Church who attempt to micro-manage the brethren and in doing so they control every aspect of the brethren underneath them; again pride and selfishness. It has crept into the Church.

It has also infected some of the brethren in the greater Church of God. They look down on people in other groups. "Oh, I'm not like them. They're a Laodicean and I am a Philadelphian." They look down on those in the world. God hasn't called them yet. It's

not their time yet, but some people out of pride look down on people who have yet to be called.

I read this in print last week from another group: "If you are not with us, you are not in the true Church." Again, that elevates the self and it elevates the group and this spirit of competition has infected the greater Church today.

Notice Proverbs 13 and verse 10. One of the great sources of fighting and contention is pride. The Bible tells us that and sadly we don't see that in all too many cases. Notice what Solomon says:

***Proverbs 13:10. Only by pride comes contention: ...***

Fighting, upset, arguing back and forth.

***10b) ... but with the well advised [is] wisdom. (KJV)***

By pride comes contention, but God always gives us a solution to the problem of pride and selfishness. Let's go to chapter 29 and verse 23.

This proverb starts off by saying, "A man's pride is going to bring him down. He's not going to be elevated forever."

***Proverbs 29:23. A man's pride shall bring him low ...***

Who? The prideful? Those who seek exultation? No.

***23b) ... but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit. (KJV)***

You see, humility is the antidote for pride. We either let pride motivate us or we let humility motivate us. It's our choice. We each have a choice to make.

Now let's go to the New Testament, again, God's solution to pride. I will read it out of the New King James. It flows better and makes more sense in today's English. This is talking about love, as we know. Notice what it says.

***1 Corinthians 13:4. Love suffers long [and] is kind; love does not envy; (now notice this) love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; (NKJV)***

If we have love, we won't strut around with our chest sticking out. If we have love, we don't put ourselves in the spotlight or parade ourselves around. Love is the antidote to pride and selfishness. So pride is one of the character flaws behind the spirit of competition. What is the second one? We just read about it in this last verse.

**B. Envy and jealousy.** Both of these promote and provoke competition. Think about this: Envy motivated Joseph's brothers to sell him into slavery. Remember they were upset with him about his coat, and Joseph probably didn't keep his mouth shut when he

could have, and he was favored by his father and his brothers were very envious and jealous. We won't turn there, but you can write this down, Acts 7:9.

**Acts 7:9.** *And the patriarch, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt...*

Envy was the motivator of those brothers to sell him into slavery.

Envy also motivated the priests to compete with Jesus Christ. Here they had control of the people. The people looked to them and the people looked to the temple. This guy Christ comes on the scene and makes very plain their hypocrisy and the fact that they weren't teaching the truth, they weren't following the truth and weren't obeying even what they taught. Christ is bringing this to the attention of the people and the priests hated Christ for that. Again, we can turn there if you want, but it's Mark 15:9 and 10. Pilate, when they had captured Christ, and Pilate was addressing the crowd:

**Mark 15:9.** *But Pilate answered them, saying, "Will you that I release unto you the King of the Jews?"*

*10) For he knew that the Chief priests had delivered Him (Christ) for envy. (KJV)*

Because they were jealous and envious of His authority and His power and that the people were flocking to Christ and not to them. So they wanted Him dead. They wanted Him captured and killed.

Now we have to ask the question regarding jealousy and envy; could this same spirit be in the greater Church today? Jealousy and envy; well it was certainly in the early New Testament Church. Let's go to 1 Corinthians 3:3. It was in the early New Testament Church. It was a problem that the apostles had to deal with. Paul is saying to the Church in Corinth and by extension to us today:

**1 Corinthians 3:3.** *For you are yet carnal ...*

Meaning you shouldn't be but you are still carnal he is saying.

*3b) ... for whereas [there is] among you (what is the first thing he mentions?) envying, (what's the second thing?) and strife ...*

Because envy promotes competition which leads to strife.

*3c) ... and divisions ...*

Envy promotes strife which promotes divisions.

*3d) ... are you not carnal, and walk as men?*

Meaning as the world is influenced by Satan. You're certainly not following Jesus Christ if you envy and have strife and divisions. That's what he is pointing out.

Now let's jump over to Galatians and we'll read chapter 5 and verse 21 and then to verse 26. He is making it very plain that if we have that attitude, we will not be in God's Kingdom.

**Galatians 5:21.** *Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like ...*

Envyings is put right in there with murder and drunkenness.

*21b) ... of the which I tell you before, as I have also told [you] in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (KJV)*

We won't be in God's Kingdom if we allow jealousy and envy to motivate us.

*26) Let us not be desirous of vain glory (vain means empty) provoking one another, envying one another. (KJV)*

We can't do that and yet it was rampant in the Church back then and it still exists in the greater Church today.

Let's go to Romans, chapter 1 and see again the apostles directing the peoples' attention to this problem. Romans 1 and we'll read verses 28 through 32. I'll read it again out of the NIV. Notice what Paul says.

**Romans 1:28.** *Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind ... (NIV)*

God says, "Hey, you want to follow Satan, that's your choice. Go right ahead."

*28b) ... to do what ought not to be done.*

*29) They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed (taking for the self) and depravity. They are full of envy (and then right next to it) murder (and right next to that) strife, deceit and malice ...*

You see, once we allow envy and jealousy to come into us, then as we're going to see in a minute, murder follows, strife follows, deceit and malice follows. It goes on to say:

*29b) ... they are gossips ...*

*30) ... slanderers, God haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful (pride again, of the first characteristic) they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;*

*31) ... they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.*

You see that in the political ads; senseless, faithless, heartless and ruthless.



32) *Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death ...*

What Paul is saying is if we have envy and greed and strife and selfishness, we deserve death. It goes on to say:

32b) *... they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. (NIV)*

That was in the Church back then and, sad to say, it's in the Church today. As I said earlier, God always give us a solution. There's always an antidote for this. We read it earlier in I Corinthians 13:4. Remember it said, "*Love suffers long and is kind. Love does not envy.*" If we have love for somebody else, we would never envy them. If we have love for somebody else, we would never want to take what is theirs and be jealous of what they have or who they are. So love is one of the antidotes.

Let's go to James 3 and we'll read verses 16 through 18. Again, we have an antidote for envy. The second of the character flaws that promote competition is envy and jealousy. Notice what he says.

**James 3:16.** *For where envying and strife [is] (he lumps them together because envy leads to strife) there [is] confusion and every evil work. (KJV)*

Envy leads to strife which leads to confusion which leads to evil.

17) *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure (no agenda, no jealousy, no envy) then peaceable (not wanting to fight. Not wanting to have a contest) gentle [and] easy to be entreated (not wanting to argue; always seeing the other person's point of view) full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. (KJV)*

Verse 18 is the key.

18) *And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.*

What he is saying here as you sow seed, if you sow peace then the fruit of righteousness becomes that. You sow peace. You reap what you sow and you get peace. So the fruit of righteousness is to sow peace and then we reap peace.

So envy is one of the character flaws that provokes the spirit of competition. That's the second one we're talking about. The last one is:

**C. Hatred.** We're going to see that competition unchecked leads to hatred. Just looking at the world today, we see the Jews and the Palestinians fighting over Jerusalem, don't we? They're competing for control and the radicals, particularly on the Palestinian side, whip the people into a frenzy of hate. They want to blow Jews up with

suicide bombs, truck bombs and all that kind of thing. The Jews and the Palestinians fight over Jerusalem, competing for control and hate is the result. Even within Islam. You have the Taliban versus the moderates. You have the Sunni's versus the Shiites and they're willing to blow each other up and blow their own children up, (Muslim children) because they're competing for power. They're competing for control.

You see, competition brings out the works of the flesh. They say competition is good for us; no, it's not. It brings out the works of the flesh and hate is the result.

Let's go back to Galatians, chapter 5; works of the flesh. I'll read it from the New King James. We'll begin in the first part of verse 19 and then to verse 20.

**Galatians 5:19.** *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are ...*  
20) ... *hatred (which leads to) contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath (or anger) selfish ambitions, dissensions ... (NKJV)*

The outgrowth of competition, if left unchecked, is hatred.

Let me read from a very good book. It was written in 1968 by Jerry Kramer, and it's called Instant Replay. It was a big hit at the time and it was on the best seller list. Jerry Kramer was a tackle for the Green Bay Packers. The Green Bay Packers were coached by Vince Lombardi. They were the premier NFL team at the time. They won national championships; they won the first Super Bowls and he was a staple of that Green Bay Packer team. He was an offensive tackle. He was embarrassed when they played the Detroit Tigers in one of the championship seasons by a guy named Alex Karras. He was in the news recently because he died. He was a tremendous offensive lineman. After his career in the NFL, he became an actor and was on television. Alex Karras was a ferocious lineman and Jerry Kramer had to play him. They had to play Detroit twice and the first game of the season Jerry Kramer was embarrassed by Alex Karras. He was not able to block him and so Alex Karras sacked the quarterback, Bart Starr several times. This book covers the entire season and Jerry Kramer says the following: "By the time we reached the locker room, I had worked up a feeling of pure hatred. For three weeks I'd been hearing nothing but Alex Karras and I wanted to destroy him."

It's quite common in athletics. You face an opponent a week down the road if it's football, particularly where you play on the weekends. You have a whole week to generate hatred for your opponent. And you do, you want to kill him, you want to crush him. That is the spirit of competition.

Hatred towards others is something we should never allow in ourselves, and yet we see it in the political ads that are getting more and more frequent. There is hatred; Democrats against Republicans; this person against that person; the pro life versus the abortion crowd. It just goes on and on and on; pure hatred. We have to ask ourselves: has this spirit of competition rubbed off on the Church and on us? We're talking about hate specifically.

Let's go to Titus 3:3 and see that, yes, it was part of us before we came into the Church and hopefully we haven't carried it into the Church. Notice what we're being told here.

**Titus 3:3.** *For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish (Yes, we've all been there) disobedient (Yes, we were) deceived (Yes) serving divers lusts and pleasures living in malice and envy (We've talked about that, but notice what he says) hateful [and] hating one another. (KJV)*

We've been there and we've done that. Sometimes it even creeps into the Church and it's sad. But hatred is one of the character flaws behind the spirit of competition. We've talked about three, hatred being the last of the three, and then pride and then envy and jealousy and then hatred. These character flaws lead us now to the last days which are characterized by selfishness and by competition.

Let's go to 2 Timothy 3. We've read this a lot in the last couple of years. Verses 1 through 5 talk about the last days. Perilous times are going to come and we certainly have seen that on the east coast in the United States this past week; very perilous times.

**2 Timothy 3:1.** *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. (KJV)*

That is going to happen and is happening. Notice why perilous times are coming ...

2) *For men shall be lovers of their own selves ...*

They want what they want; they want to satisfy the self.

2b) *... covetous (selfish) boasters, proud (we've already talked about that) blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*

We are a nation that is drifting so far away from God, don't want to acknowledge God, don't want to acknowledge that God exists and don't want to obey the Bible.

3) *Without natural affection ...*

You see in the paper every day where it is riddled with accounts of child molestation, child brutality. We had two or three in the paper today.

3b) *... truce breakers, false accusers ... (we see that in the political ads)*

3c) *... without control, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*

Just like Cain despised his brother, just like Joseph's brothers despised Joseph.

4) *Traitors, heady (for the self), high minded (looking at the self; exalting the self) lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God,*

Satisfy the self more than to please God.

5) *having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof ...*

Notice the last four words,

5b) *... from such turn away. (KJV)*

So those who want to compete, those who are filled with pride or envy or jealousy or selfishness or hate, we are being told we better stay away from those who want to compete and fight. We shouldn't be part of those who want to compete and fight.

So we've seen now three character flaws that are behind the spirit of competition.

We're going to go to the third major point we want to talk about. We've seen that Satan is the author of competition, but the third point is that **God is the author of cooperation**. God is behind cooperation. Obviously it has to be done according to His law, but God's Spirit, Christ's Spirit is a spirit of cooperation and not fighting and envy and jealousy and hate and pride, etc. Christ gave His life to cooperate with the Father.

Let's go to Matthew 26:42. This was Christ's primary motivation, to cooperate with the Father and do the Father's will, not His own will but the Father's will. He was now sweating blood. He was now in the throes of knowing what was going to happen in a few hours. He was distressed. Every cell in His body was screaming, "No, I don't want this!"

**Matthew 26:42.** *He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, "Oh, my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, your will be done." (KJV)*

Christ says, "I want to be in harmony with Your will. I want to do what you want me to do. I do not ultimately care about my flesh or my life because I want to do what you want me to do."

You see, as opposed to the spirit of competition, God's way requires a totally different attitude and approach as exemplified by Jesus Christ.

Let's go to Matthew, chapter 5. Notice the very first words of the very first sermon Christ gave. He talks about cooperation and not competition.

**Matthew 5:2.** *And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying*  
3) *"Blessed [are] the poor in spirit (meaning the humble and meek): for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

4) *“Blessed are those that mourn ...”*

You can't mourn if you don't think about other people and think about society and friends and relatives who are going through trials.

4b) *“... for they shall be comforted.*

5) *“Blessed [are] the meek (who don't exalt the self) for they shall inherit the earth.*

6) *“Blessed [are] they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness ...”*

This means obeying God and obeying God's law as opposed to doing what we want to do.

6b) *“... for they shall be filled.*

7) *“Blessed [are] the merciful ...”*

It takes vulnerability and humility to be merciful to someone that has hurt us or offended us.

7b) *“... for they shall obtain mercy.*

8) *“Blessed [are] the pure in heart (not polluted by Satan; not polluted by the world) for they shall see God.*

9) *“Blessed [are] the peacemakers (we just talked about that) for they shall be called the children of God.” (KJV)*

Now all of these characteristics that we've just read have us looking out for others and not exalting ourselves. The very first sentences out of Christ's mouth, that are recorded for us, talk about characteristics that do not exalt the self but look after others. Look at verse 38.

**Matthew 5:38.** *“You have heard that it has been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:*

39) *“But I say unto you, that you resist not evil (don't fight back and don't compete): but whosoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

40) *“And if any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat, let him have [your] cloke also. (don't compete)*

41) *“And whosoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two. (Cooperate; don't argue and don't fight. Cooperate with the person.)*

42) *“Give to him that asks and from him that would borrow of you turn not away. (Cooperate. Don't fight.)*

43) *“You have heard that it has been said, ‘You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.’” (KJV)*

That's not in the Bible, but that's what they were taught in those days and had been taught that way for centuries.

44) *“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.” (KJV)*

Cooperate. Ask God’s blessings upon them. Why should you do all this?

45) *“That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven ...”*

If you want to be God’s child; if you want to be a son or daughter of God then do what He just said. Christ is saying, “Do what I tell you if you want to be considered a child of your Father which is in heaven.”

45b) *“... for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*

46) *“For if you love them which love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans the same?”*

If you love those who love you, what’s the big deal? What’s the reward? Don’t even the publicans do the same, the tax collectors?

47) *“And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more [than others?] Do not even the publicans so?” (KJV)*

If you salute your brothers only, what are you doing different than people out in the world? Don’t the tax collectors do that also?

48) *“Be you therefore perfect (The Greek means complete or whole) even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”*

You see, in the greater Church today, if we all had this attitude we would cease the strife and cooperation would break out within the greater Church, wouldn’t it? But that is not happening, is it? It isn’t happening at all.

Cooperation among God’s people is a wonderful thing to behold. I’ve seen brethren here at Pacific or at the Feast; you walk in at the Feast site and look around the room and you see God’s people as a team working together for the common good. I don’t care if it’s setting up chairs, the AV crew or whatever it might be, you see people pulling together. The activities for the kids before services or all the activities we had during the Feast, people were working together for a common good for the benefit of other people. Whatever is necessary, brethren jump in and they get it done. Nobody is lording it over; nobody’s cracking a whip; nobody’s barking orders. People just pull together and they get it done. It is such a joy to see God’s people working together in harmony and unity.

In this third point, God is the author of that. Satan is the author of competition. God is the author of cooperating, working together for a common good for the benefit of other people, not thinking of the self.

That leads us to the fourth point we want to make. **Cooperation requires humility and selflessness**. We've already established the fact that competition is motivated by pride which is the opposite of humility, or selfishness which is the opposite of selflessness.

Let's go to Colossians 3 and read verses 12 and 13. Paul is encouraging the people in Colossae to have this attitude that results in cooperation, not competition. I'll read it out of the New King James.

***Colossians 3:12.*** *Therefore, as [the] elect of God ...*

People who have been called and chosen of God.

*12b) ... holy and beloved (he says this is what we all need to do), put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering,*

Putting up with one another when we're having a bad day.

*13) bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also [must do].*

You see, all these characteristics in verse 12 and 13 are characteristics that lead to a spirit of cooperating between human beings, God's called out ones. You see, a cooperative spirit focuses on the welfare of the other person.

Let's go to Philippians 2 and read verse 4. I'll read it from the NIV. Notice what we are being told. Paul is very direct about this.

***Philippians 2:4.*** *Each of you should look not only to your own interests ...*

That's selfish and, yes, we should look on our own interests to take care of ourselves.

*4b) ... but also to the interests of others. (NIV)*

What affects them, their concerns, their worries, their fears, their trials and troubles. Look on those. Pray about them. Step in and help if it's appropriate.

Let's go back to Ephesians 4. We're talking now about the opposite of pride and selfishness.

***Ephesians 4:2.*** *With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love,*

Forbear one another. That literally means to put up with one another and since we're not perfect, we occasionally have to do that with one another, don't we?

In the millennium, there's going to be a change from competition to cooperation. There is going to be a change. There is not going to be competition in the millennium. For example, we don't know what kind of manufacturing facilities we will have or to what extent. I'm sure we will have some of that. We don't know exactly how that's going to work. God will have to show us, but it's not going to be like today where you have a Ford and a Chevrolet kicking the stuffing out of each other. It's just not going to happen. There's going to be one manufacturer of a given commodity. Even in retailers, if you have a village or a town or city in a certain area, you're not going to have two or three or four shoe stores competing with each other, throwing rocks at each other or hurling accusations against each other. You're going to have one shoe store and they're going to make good products and they will treat people fairly and they're not going to compete. They will cooperate.

One of the things I think all of us in the last two or three years have come to see and value is that we highly value cooperation and we intentionally turn away from the spirit of competition. We've all been there and done that and have a belly full of it. It brings it home today in the political environment that we have, but we highly value cooperation. It just makes us sick to see competition and we don't want that to enter into the Church. So this fourth point is that cooperation requires humility and selflessness.

Now the last point we're going to make is we're going to look at an example in scripture where both spirits occur in one event, one timeframe. You see both spirits on display right in front of us and it paints a perfect picture of what we're talking about, cooperation or competition.

Let's go to 1 Samuel chapter 18. Saul represents the spirit of competition. We'll begin in verse 5 and then to verse 12 and then to verse 28. David has killed Goliath, Saul has elevated David and David is obeying Saul. Remember, he's just a young kid.

***1 Samuel 18:5.** And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, [and] behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war (obviously because he killed Goliath. He was fearless.) and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants. (KJV)*

They spoke highly of David. He behaved in a way that promoted that.

*6) And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music.*

*7) And the women answered [one another] as they played ...*



This was common. A group would sing one set of verses and the other group would answer with a different set of verses. That has happened quite often through the Bible.

*7b) ... and said, "Saul has slain his thousands (then another group would sing) and David his ten thousands." (KJV)*

Oh, boy!

*8) And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him ...*

Can we imagine why that would occur? Pride, jealousy, envy; and notice his attitude.

*8b) "... They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me (The king. Big Ole me!) they have ascribed [but] thousands: and [what] can he have more but the kingdom?" (KJV)*

What can he have more but that? He jumps to conclusions and thinks, "This guy is after my job." Pride, jealousy and envy.

*9) And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.*

*10) And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and [there was] a javelin in Saul's hand.*

*11) And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall [with it]. ..." (KJV)*

The spirit of competition leads to hate.

*11b) ... and David avoided out of his presence twice.*

*12) And Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul. (KJV)*

Jealousy.

*28) And Saul saw and knew that the Lord [was] with David, and [that] Michal Saul's daughter loved him.*

*29) And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually. (KJV)*

Pride, jealousy, hatred. Let's go to chapter 19 and verse 1.

**1 Samuel 19:1.** *And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.*

He ordered his son to commit murder. He knew the Ten Commandments, but he ordered his son to commit murder.

9) *And the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with [his] hand.*

10) *And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence and he smote the javelin into the wall; and David fled, and escaped that night. (KJV)*

Notice where the spirit of competition eventually leads; it leads to hate and to murder. Now as I said, these two spirits are evident in this single timeframe. In Jonathan you had the spirit of cooperation. Notice Jonathan's attitude. He was converted. He knew God was with David and he wanted to cooperate with God's will. He wanted to be in harmony with God. He was next in line and he knew David was taking his place, but that's what God wanted and he was humble enough to say, "God whatever You want, that's what we will do." Look back in chapter 18, verse 1.

**1 Samuel 18:1.** *And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul (life) of Jonathan was knit with the soul (life) of David, and Jonathan loved him (David) as his own soul. (life; he loved David as much as he loved himself.)*

2) *And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's (Jesse's) house.*

3) *Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul (life).*

4) *And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that [was] upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow and to his girdle.*

These were all symbols of his authority and his position and he gave them to David. He was humble in doing so and he was in harmony with God's will. What an attitude Jonathan had. He was giving up of himself, giving up his position as the next in line and saying, "God, if You want David to have it, I am more than happy to cooperate. 'David, take this.'"

Look at chapter 19:2.

**1 Samuel 19:2.** *But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, "Saul my father seeks to kill you ..."*

This is an act of treason on Jonathan's part. He is betraying his father. Well, his father ordered him to kill David and that is against God's law. So Jonathan was standing up for God and God's way even though it meant treason against his father.

2b) *"... Now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to yourself until the morning and abide in a secret [place] and hide yourself,*

3) *"And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you [are] and I will commune with my father about you; and what I see, that I will tell you."*

He said, "I'm going to be honest; I'm not going to be deceitful. I'm not going to try to promote myself."

*4) And Jonathan spoke good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, "Let not the king sin against his servant, against David ..."*

He spoke good of the man who was going to take his place. He goes on ...

*4b) "... because he has not sinned against you, and because his works [have been] to you very good.*

*5) "For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel: you saw [it], and did rejoice: wherefore then will you sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?" (KJV)*

He pleads the cause of his friend and he hopes to get his father reconciled with David. He's taking the time and the energy. A lot of carnal people would stab somebody in the back. It's a perfect way to stab somebody in the back; to speak evil of an individual. We've all had that happen to us. Now look at chapter 20. We'll read verses 30 and 31. I'll read it out of the NIV.

**1 Samuel 20:30.** *Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan ...*

Because he knew Jonathan was trying to get them back together and he was talking good about David.

*30b) ... and he said to him, "You son of a perverse and rebellious woman!"*

It was the wife's fault; always her fault!

*30c) "... Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you? As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send and bring him to me, for he must die!"*

Yet Jonathan would not do that. He was trying to get his father and David together in a spirit of cooperation and he refused to compete against David even though he had the opportunity.

Both Saul and Jonathan died a violent death, but one died miserable and separated from God and the other died at peace, doing God's will. Yet they both died violently. Jonathan was not thinking of himself. He was thinking about pleasing God. He was thinking about David. He was thinking about Israel, wanting to do what was best for his friend and for his nation, even to his own hurt.

We've just witnessed here two opposite spirits in the same timeframe and the same event. Now, we have to ask; which one yields the best fruit? Which one yields peace

and harmony and unity and oneness and happiness and joy? These are all the fruits of God's Spirit. Which spirit yields that ... versus which yields the works of the flesh? It's obvious. So the question we have to ask ourselves is: which spirit do I have? Which spirit will I have? We've all had the spirit of competition at some point in the past; I have and I think all of us have. But the key is as we look forward to the Kingdom of God (and we want to be in God's family), which spirit am I going to have: cooperation or competition?

Now, the fact is as we wrap this up, we in the greater Church (I'm speaking to the greater Church) we need to change now. We shouldn't have competition between Church organizations. We shouldn't have competition between Church teachers and Church leaders, and we shouldn't have competition among ourselves as individuals, God's people. We should be servants and not competitors. Our goal should be to serve God and serve His people and not compete. We should be servants, getting down in the trenches and working to serve God's people, not seeking to be elevated, not seeking to be in the spotlight, not seeking to say, "I am God's true servant on this earth and I am the only one." I read that this last week also; a man writing about himself.

Which one pleases God? Somebody down in the trenches with humility as Jonathan had or somebody trying to exalt the self as Simon had in front of the apostles?

Look what Peter said to the assembled elders. He called a group of elders together and notice what he stressed. Remember, Christ said to Peter three times, "feed My lambs; feed My sheep." Let's go to 1 Peter 5 and we'll read verse 1 to set the stage and then the verse we want to focus on is verse 5. Peter called this meeting and notice what he said.

**1 Peter 5:1.** *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:*

Now just stop here and think, he could have exalted himself. He could say, "I'm an apostle; you guys are just elders. You'd better bow and worship. You better get on bended knee in front of me or I'm going to kick you out." That has happened. But he said, "The elders which are among you I exhort. I'm also an elder. I've personally witnessed the sufferings of Christ, but I'm an elder. Also I'm a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed."

**5)** *Likewise (here's what I want you to do), you younger (elders) submit yourselves unto the elder (the older; the ones with more experience) Yes, all [of you] be subject one to another ...*

Consider one another; look out for one another. If somebody has an opinion, listen to that opinion.

*5b) ... and be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. (KJV)*

He doesn't give grace to somebody who is trying to exalt the self. We have to learn that in God's Church. The spirit of competition wants to exalt the self above others. We see that all the time in the greater Church. We cannot be part of that if we want to be the children of God. We have to be clothed with humility. We have to be subject one to another. As elders in the Church, we do that; we are subject to one another. I wish you could listen in to some of the conversations that we have.

Let's not forget why we are named Pacific. We can't forget that. Most people think we named it because we're in the Pacific Northwest. No. That's part of it, but the main reason we are named Pacific is because the word Pacific means peace or peaceful. And all of us fled competition, fled strife and politics. We got a belly full of it, just like we see on television today. We're tired of it. We don't want any part of it. We sought peace and we pursued peace, hence the name, Pacific.

The elders wanted to cooperate as a group and not compete with one another. We've had a belly full of that. It has happened wherever I've been. People compete. They want to have the preeminence instead of cooperating as a group of elders. The brethren want to cooperate as a team to get work done, to get a work done and serve the brethren. As I said, we saw it at the Feast, we see it here at Church, we see it all around the country, a group of people coming together just to serve others, to empty the self and take care of others.

I'm closing now to summarize, but early on in the formation of Pacific, we had wolves in sheep's clothing attempting to get in. They began to compete. They began to want their own way and they eventually wanted to take over. It happened when we first started within the first year. They wanted a position of power, status and authority. Then others came in wanting to criticize out of envy and jealousy, wanting their own way. They brought no spirit of cooperation, but rather a spirit of competition and guess what? They didn't last very long. They didn't last long at all, as the brethren and the ministry wouldn't put up with it. Those here in this room know that. We wouldn't put up with a spirit of competition. That's why we must be on guard against anyone who would bring in a spirit of competition because we will not abide that spirit, because that spirit is not of God, it's of Satan. We all have to be very careful not to allow that to creep in because Satan wants that to creep in as he did to the Worldwide Church of God and as it is in areas of the greater Church of God. We cannot have a spirit of competition. God's way is a way of cooperating with humility and kindness and gentleness and goodness.

Let me close with a perfect example of cooperation. A number of years ago (I can't remember the exact date. I wish I had written it down.) Seattle had the Special Olympics. It was a big deal and the press made a lot of it. Maybe you've heard this before, but the Special Olympics, as you know, is for physically and mentally handicapped kids and they get to compete in races and jumping and a lot of the

Olympic events. This particular event was the 100-yard dash and there were eight contestants, boys and girls, all of them handicapped. The starter shot the gun and everybody started ambling out of the blocks and running as fast as they could and about ten yards down, one little boy fell flat on his face and he started crying. The others kept running for a few steps and then all of a sudden, they looked around and they heard the crying and they knew one was missing and so they stopped. Nobody's coaching them. All seven of the others stopped and they turned around and they saw the other little boy lying on his face crying. They all walked back to where this little boy was and this little girl (with Down's Syndrome) knelt down and said, "This will make it alright," and she kissed him on the top of the head. Then they all gathered around in a group and they picked this little boy up and they all walked hand in hand down to the finish line.

That is the opposite of the spirit of competition. That is a spirit of cooperation where the seven were looking after the one. At the end all of them were happy. All of them felt good about what they did. At the end when they crossed the finish line, all of them were jumping up and down just like they had all won the race, but it was the group and it was an act of absolute cooperation.

So you see we can have that attitude in the greater Church. We can if we exercise God's Spirit. We will have that attitude in the world tomorrow without question. So within our sphere of control which is smaller than our sphere of influence, but regardless, we should all promote within our sphere of control and our sphere of influence the spirit of cooperation rather than the spirit of competition.

So as I said in the beginning: Which one is it going to be? Will it be competition backed by Satan or cooperation, which is part and parcel of the very nature of God? The fact is, it is up to each one of us. We have to decide for ourselves whether I'm going to promote the spirit of competition or I'm going to promote the spirit of cooperation. Let's make sure that we promote the spirit of cooperation.