

THE VOICE OF THE DEVIL: “SUBMIT! . . . RESIST!”

(Jas 4:7; Eph 6:10-18)

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Please listen as I read from the Apostle Paul’s concluding words in the Ephesian Letter.

^{6:10}A final word: Be strong with the Lord’s mighty power. ¹¹Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil. ¹²For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.

¹³Use every piece of God’s armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still be standing firm. ¹⁴Stand your ground, putting on the sturdy belt of truth and the body armor of God’s righteousness. ¹⁵For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News, so that you will be fully prepared. ¹⁶In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. ¹⁷Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸Pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all Christians everywhere (Eph 6:10-18, NLT).

To these words from the pen of Paul, I wish to add the admonition of James, Jesus’ brother, found in the seventh verse of the fourth chapter of his letter:

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you (Jas 4:7, NIV).

Today is the fourth Sunday morning that we have spent with the Devil. During the past three Sundays, we have listened to him, to the only three occasions found in Scripture, where his voice is heard: first in the Garden of Eden, slandering God to man; then in the story of Job, slandering man to God; and finally in the wilderness confronting the God-man, making a final bid against the plans and purposes of God in His Son.¹

Now we come to the practical and personal application, although I sincerely hope that such has not been absent from my earlier sermons. We have heard enough from the

Devil and now it is time to tell him where to go. Satan is real. Satan is shrewd. Satan has strong spiritual forces as his allies. So, then, if we are surrounded by such forces of evil as Paul describes in the paragraph I read from Ephesians, *how are we going to stand up?* Notice Paul is very particular in the use of the word “stand.”

Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able *to stand firm* against all strategies and tricks of the Devil (v. 11). . . . Use every piece of God’s armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still *be standing firm* (v. 13). . . . *Stand your ground* (v. 14).

How is this to be done? How are we—individually and personally—going to fight this foe and these forces of evil? That is the question we will seek to answer in this lesson.

So, where do we start? *We begin by believing in the reality of Satan.* We affirm the truth of Scripture and we accept the existence of Satan. In the Bible, we have seen his schemes and we have heard his lies. And yet, perhaps his most diabolical deed has been convincing the world that he is not real. After all, who fears an enemy that does not exist? A psychotic fears demons that are not real. A neurotic knows the demons are unreal, but fears they may be mistaken. But what do we call a person who refuses to see a demon or danger that is real? More often than not, we call them “deceased.”

Vernon J. Charlesworth (1839-1915), British author of a number of hymns,² wrote this poem:

Men don't believe in a devil now,
As their father's used to do;
They reject one creed because it's old
For another because it's new.

There's not a print of his cloven foot,
Nor a fiery dart from his bow
To be found in the earth or air today!
At least—they declare it is so!

But who is it mixes the fatal draught,
That palsies heart and brain,
And loads the bier of each passing year,
With its hundred thousand slain?

But who blights the bloom of the land today,
With the fiery breath of hell?
If it isn't the devil that does the work,
Who does? Won't somebody tell?

Who dogs the steps of the toiling saint?
Who spreads the net for his feet?
Who sows the tares in the world's broad field?
Where the Saviour sows His wheat?

If the devil is voted not to be
Is the verdict therefore true?
Someone is surely doing the work
The devil was thought to do.

They may say the devil has never lived,
They may say the devil is gone,
But simple people would like to know
Who carries the business on?³

The starting point, then, in our stand against Satan is to believe that he is, and that he is still in the business. The Apostle Peter warns, “Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour” (1 Pet 5:8, NLT.)

For those of us who are Christians, we know—as we saw in last Sunday’s study—that Jesus confronted Satan in the wilderness and that He was victorious over him. We also know that the fight goes on and that we are in the fight. How are we going to fight so as to win? My message is to those of us who are in the fight. How are we going to fight so as to win? *Everything we need to wage and win this war is found in the straightforward statement of Jas 4:7 – “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.”*

The battle against evil is so real that there must be a definite plan of warfare. Unless we have a plan, we will perish. And all that we need is right here: “Submit,” “Resist.” I will say it again: “Submit,” “Resist.” Submit to God, and having submitted, then the fight is on—resist, resist the devil.

It should go without saying that if we neither submit nor resist, we will be beaten by the powers of evil. If we do not recognize the authority of God and if we put up no fight against evil, we will fail. But let’s look more closely at our two key terms—submit and resist.

Where there is resistance without submission we are doomed to be defeated. If I go forth to battle believing that I am able to fight the devil with my own strength, I will be beaten. The devil is older than I am, more experienced than I am, smarter than I am, and

stronger than I am. If I go out to fight with my own power, I will most certainly perish.
Look again at the words of the song we sang moments ago.⁴

Soldiers of Christ, arise
And put your armor on;
Strong in the strength which God supplies,
Thru His beloved Son.

Strong in the Lord of hosts
And in His mighty pow'r;
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts,
Is more than conqueror.

Stand then, in His great might,
With all His strength endued;
But take, to arm you for the fight,
The panoply of God.

Leave no unguarded place,
No weakness of the soul;
Take ev'ry virtue, ev'ry grace,
And fortify the whole.

That having all things done,
And all your conflicts past,
You may o'ercome thru Christ alone,
And stand entire at last.

On the other hand, where there is submission without resistance we are doomed to be defeated. We must submit to God and then we must gird ourselves in His strength. The Devil is not afraid of the Christian who fails to wear the armor God. To submit and then not resist is spiritual suicide. It is like enlisting in the army and then sitting in camp waiting to be captured. We must arm ourselves for the fight by putting on “the panoply of God.” The English word “panoply” comes from the Greek word πανοπλία (*panoplia*) which means “the entire equipment, complete armor, or full defense” of a soldier. We began this lesson with Paul’s words in Eph 6:

v. 11 – Put on all of God’s armor (πανοπλία) so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil.

v. 13 – Use every piece of God’s armor (πανοπλία) to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still be standing firm.

“Submit,” “Resist” – we must submit first and then resist, and these two things must be kept together. Neither to submit nor resist is to be the fool and the plaything of the Devil.

To submit without offering resistance is to be beaten. To resist without having first submitted is to be defeated. We must have both.

If the practice of resistance begins with the act of submission, to whom are we to submit? We are to submit to Christ, to God in Christ. We are to submit to the One who knows the enemy far better than we know him; to the One who knows us far better than we know ourselves; to the One who knows the battlefield as no one else knows it; and to the One who has engaged the enemy and who has triumphed over him. We are to submit to the Demon-destroyer, the Satan-slayer, the Devil-defeater. We are to submit to Jesus Christ the great Captain of our salvation. Christ knows the foe as I cannot, He understands me as I do not, and He knows the whole battlefield. I must submit to the victorious Lamb of God who has won the war. I may not know much, but I know how this movie ends: Satan is crushed and Christ is the Champion!

You and I – if we are to win this war, we must submit to Christ for salvation, for strength, and for security. For salvation: Jesus saves and *only* Jesus saves. For strength: Jesus has overcome Satan and by His power so can we. For security: Jesus keeps us safe from the forces of Hell. We must continually submit and we must constantly resist. And when we submit to God in Christ and resist the Devil, the Devil will flee from us. Satan is shrewd, he is sinister, and he is strong; but he is not stupid. He knows that he has no chance whatsoever against “the panoply of God.”

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you (Jas 4:7, NIV).

Submit . . . resist . . . and the Devil will flee.

I want to end where I began, by reading from Eph 6:10-18. I will be reading from *The Message*:

And that about wraps it up. God is strong, and he wants you strong. So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way. This is no afternoon athletic contest that we’ll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels.

Be prepared. You’re up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it’s all over but the shouting you’ll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You’ll need

them throughout your life. God's Word is an *indispensable* weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out.

And don't forget to pray for me [Paul]. . . .

“SUBMIT! . . . RESIST!”

¹This series of four lessons follows the format of G. Campbell Morgan, *The Voice of the Devil* (Baker). Helpful for its historical perspective is Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History* (Cornell University Press, 1988).

²In the hymnal used at the Plymouth Church of Christ (Alton H. Howard, ed., *Songs of Faith and Praise* (Howard Publishing, 1994)) see number 472 – “A Shelter in Time of Storm.”

³Quoted by Morgan, *Voice of the Devil*, 50-51.

⁴“Soldiers of Christ, Arise,” words by Charles Wesley; music by William B. Bradbury.