

Did You Resist, Fully Resist?

“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7). This scripture from the New Testament really gave me issues in times past. I knew that the whole of God’s Word is true. I knew there were no discrepancies, but why did the Lord say that if you resist the devil with his luring temptations, he will flee from you? At the time, my experience had been that he was not fleeing from me. As I saw it, he would turn right around to immediately begin again his temptations just where he left off. There was no perception that he fled at all.

However, we need to take a closer look at the word “resist” in James 4:7. Its literal meaning is to stand against, or take your stand against the devil. The word, as it is used here, has a military connotation and was frequently used of those who placed themselves in battle array against an enemy. We are to face Satan as an enemy as if in battle. Just as in Ephesians chapter 6, we are to put on the whole armor of God that we can be able to stand against Satan. **Therefore, resisting is the key to the fleeing.**

The resistance begins in our mind, long before resisting the actions of the sin. We are not to occupy our thoughts with the enticements from Satan, but are to put them out of our mind immediately. The purpose of Satan’s devices is to trick us, and they are very appealing to us (2 Cor. 2:11). But the enticement begins with the thought in our mind: “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness” (Mark 7:21-22).

James 1:14-15 teaches us about the stages of yielding to sin: “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” This is where the resisting needs to begin! When Satan places the enticement in our mind, at that point we must resist by changing our thought and not dwelling on that thought. If we continue to dwell on it, it will very likely cause us to act on those thoughts. It is important to know that we resist Satan only by total rejection of his effort. If we yield, even to the slightest degree, he will not flee us. However, if we stand against him, he will abandon his effort, at least, for the time.

For the elders,
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