



Ed Miller  
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## JAMES 4:7-12

[PRAYER] Lord, thank you for the opportunity to gather together. Thank you for the freedom that we have to come to this place. Thank you for the opportunity we have in this country to share the things that mean a lot to us. And you mean a lot to us. Thank you for the tool that Scott gave us, a card that we can pass out that has an opportunity for people to go and watch some short videos to learn something about answers to questions that they have. We all have questions. Father, we pray that you would use those cards that were passed out and that you would give each of us an opportunity this week to pass out one of those cards. Thank you for this opportunity. Now open up your word to us. Teach each one of us. Meet us where we're at our point of need so that we can grow in you and we can take Jesus home with us in every aspect of our life. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

As you know, when I preach we're back into the book of James. We're in James 4. I always like to take a brief review because you may have forgotten some of what is in James or some of you are new. But in James 4 we're going to look at what it means to submit to God and resist the devil. That's the focus this morning. Submit ourselves to God and resist the devil.

You'll remember, though, back in James 1 as we were in our worship time we were talking about the storms in life and challenges that we all face. James encourages us to *consider it pure joy when we face trials of many kinds*. All kinds of trials. There's lots of different kinds of trials. I want to remind us that this book is written with an understanding that we are going to face trials. Some of those trials are things that we face of our own doing, our own flesh, our own desires. Sometimes God brings trials into our lives, as He did into the lives of Jonah and his friends. Sometimes Satan, the evil one, attacks us. He is attacking us often. We need to be aware of that.

In our society today I think there is a lot of interest in things connected to evil spirits, to demons, to those kinds of things. A lot of interest in that. But it often is in a way that it seems it is fiction. I think sometimes we think the devil is not really real. There is no real devil that's looking to devour us, that's chasing us around, trying to deceive us. There is. And we are going to face those kinds of trials.

One of my go-to verses in this area is this: *For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* That's in Jeremiah 29:11. It's a go-to verse for me because when James talks about considering it pure joy, we often think how can it be joy when we face trials?

Well we have to have God's greater purpose in mind. It is for His glory. God is always interested in promoting His glory, His greatness. But He cares about us. He cares about each one of us and

He wants us to prosper. So God allows these trials and brings these trials even into our lives because He wants us to grow, become more like Him, and He wants us to experience these great things that He has for us. He wants us to prosper.

So let's remember that in all of this that we talk about this morning. We're going to talk about Satan attacking us and us resisting. God is for us. God cares about us. God wants good for us. That should bring us great hope.

So let's look at James 4, starting at verse 7, and we're going to put it up on the screen. I usually don't do that because I prefer that you look at your Bibles myself. But I'm going to use several longer passages of scripture this morning, so it will be helpful if we have it up there.

James 4:7-12. This section is titled "Submit Yourselves to God." *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

*Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?*

When I got started in James I was looking towards that passage talking about judging and I've been looking forward to the time when I was going to preach about this section. I prepare ahead, but then as I get a couple days closer I spend more time with the Lord and more time in study and God often does something a little different in terms of what He's saying He wants me to do. I have just not been able to get away with God saying stick with this idea that's in the first few verses about resisting the devil. So next time I'll get to judging because I believe there's a lot of confusion about judging in our world today. We're going to talk about resisting the devil because I think it's a critical topic for us.

I'd like us to take a look at the verbs. The first verb is *submit yourselves then to God*. Submit. All very active verbs that we're looking at. *Submit yourselves to God*.

I'm going to review a little bit. We're going to go back to Jonah because really when we saw those sailors responding to God, we saw a great example of what it means to submit to God. I thought it was a great sermon last week encouraging what it means for someone to submit to God. *Submit yourselves then to God*.

Here are a few things. Pastor Scott said these things. A person comes to a point in their life when they're not happy with their life and they want to improve their life in some way. That is the motivation to respond to submit to God. Second, often a believer enters the picture and has an influence on someone's life. That causes a person to wrestle in their heart and then it produces a crisis of conscience.

Crisis of conscience. Let's stop on that a minute. Submitting ourselves to God is a very active thing that we do. We submit. It's a very active thing. It's not a passive thing. And it's not something that happens in just our mind. There's a lot of surveys done out there, Gallup Organization, the Barna Group, others do survey and research. A lot of people today say they believe in God. A lot of people go to church at least once or twice a year. But a lot of people just give mental assent to the reality of God and not submitting themselves then to God.

This crisis of conscience has to lead us to repentance. Unfortunately I think we don't emphasize that in our culture much. Submitting to God necessitates repentance. It necessitates turning away from the world. Turning away from running my own life. It's necessary. That's the difference between just believing and submitting. We can say I believe something, I believe it to be true, I affirm it. But to actually submit ourselves to God means to turn away from the things of this world. Repent. Forsake the world. Then we will be followers of Jesus.

So Scott continued on then on how we need to take steps of faith and it leads to action. So a true submission to God is going to be active, it's going to require turning away from the world and turning to God. Submit yourselves to God.

Okay. Second verb – *resist the devil*. So we submit to God, but then we need to resist the devil. A very real devil. He's very real.

What does it mean? Well let's read a definition of resist, shall we? A simple definition. To fight against something. To try to stop or prevent something. To remain strong against the force or effect of something. To not be affected or harmed by something. To prevent yourself from doing something that you want to do. Again, this is an active verb. *Resist the devil*.

The Bible says that the devil is *like a roaring lion looking and prowling around for someone to devour*. It's a pretty scary idea, isn't it? To picture a lion roaming around and you're out in the wilderness and this lion is stalking you. They're hunters and they're looking to devour. They're looking for food. The devil is looking for ways to devour us. That's not a time to be asleep, is it? Thus the word *resist*. It's an active word. Resist. Fight against. Do something to prevent. Put up a defense.

There's a number of folks in our midst who are former military or current military, law enforcement. Now if we were to ask them how do we resist something, how do we resist an enemy, they will tell us well first you prepare and you want to know your enemy. How are they going to come at you? It requires an action. We need to resist and we need to know our enemy. We're going to get to that in a minute as well.

Here's a few thoughts on what it means to resist the devil. First it means don't go it alone. Too often we think we're strong, we think we can stand up against anything that comes against us. We can go it alone.

I'm referring a lot to last week's sermon. It's good to review. It's good to remind us of what God spoke to us about last week. Again, in last week's sermon when the storm grew intense, at first the sailors just rode harder. They tried harder. They were skilled seamen. They knew what to do.

It wasn't the first time they had faced a storm, I'm sure. They knew what to do. So they worked hard. They used their own strength, but it wasn't working. It wasn't succeeding. They were not able to get control.

I don't know about you, but that's often my first tendency. When I come against the storm or an attack of the devil, I tend to want to think from my past experience and all the skill I've gained in life. I can handle it. I can fight the devil myself. I think that's a really big mistake when we are under attack. Some of you may be very much under attack. I know the story, the life that many of you are leading and I know that you are under attack. So my first suggestion, my first point from scripture about resisting, standing strong is don't go it alone. Don't go it alone.

In the military one single solitary soldier is going to have a very hard time if they're outnumbered. Scott's son, Ben, is a United States Marine. Joanne and I had the privilege of going down with Scott and Carrie to his graduation from boot camp. I was really impressed with a lot of things about how the Marines prepare young recruits to be part of the Marine Corps. A lot of it is about being on a team and looking out for the guy next to you. You have the guy or girl next to you, their life in your hands. They are looking out for you.

We need each other. We desperately need each other. We have a ministry time at the end of service, we have small groups. If you're going through a struggle or a challenge or being attacked, don't go it alone. Get with somebody. Get with somebody else. Share with someone else. Have them pray for you. Have them encourage you. Have them just be present with you and be with you. Share your burden. So that's the first thing. Don't go it alone. Don't be like I often am and try and do it on my own.

Now as I was alluding to, know the devil's schemes. We really need to know what the devil likes to try to do. How is he going to come at us?

So again, in the military while there's no war going on or they're training, they don't sit around and say, "Hmm. We'll just do what we feel like when we get attacked." There are all kinds of contingency plans and war games and all kinds of things that are done to prepare for the enemy. When is the enemy going to use this particular type of weapon, or that particular type of approach, or they have this capability or that? Do they have air capability? Do they have land capability? Ships? Submarines? What do they have? How are they going to attack? Are they going to flank us? How are they going to come at us? They prepare.

We need to do the same thing. We're in a war, folks. We are in a war against principalities and powers, against the devil. He is out to destroy us. He wants to destroy us. Now remember, that's no cause for us to be afraid. That's just cause for us to be prepared. God is always going to be with us. He's not going to leave us. But we need to be prepared.

How does the devil come at us? I think it's usually through some kind of deception mixed with some truth. The devil is really smart. He uses just enough truth mixed in with some lies to get us to see things wrongly. We start to believe things that are not true.

Let's look at another passage of scripture where we see the serpent in this case who is the devil. The serpent is attacking Eve in the Garden of Eden. We'll put that Genesis passage up so you can follow along.

Genesis 3:1-5. It's a great example of the devil and how he attacks. *Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"*

*The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree (one particular tree) that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"*

*"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

This suggests that there's a lie and a truth. We know the story. It's a very familiar story to us. The serpent says you will not die. Well that's a lie, isn't it. Because you will die. There's a truth: God knows that when you eat you're going to know the difference between good and evil. That's a truth. Okay. God wanted to protect the first people from fully understanding good and evil because He knew then that they would have to wrestle with good and evil. They would have to struggle with good and evil. He didn't want them to have to deal with evil.

Well Eve believed the lie and the truth, took that fruit and ate it, and passed it on to Adam. The deceit was a lie and a truth.

Isn't that what Satan usually does with us? He comes at us today and deceives us. And he says things like this: "If you disobey God, that doesn't really matter. There's not going to be any consequence for that. That's just a myth. That's made up. That's not going to happen." We've all had situations in our lives where we've done things that are wrong, but we haven't been struck down. So we can tend to believe that lie.

Another one that we often hear coming at us: "God doesn't really care about you, He cares about His glory. He cares about His kingdom, but He doesn't care about you as a person." This is challenging for me because I often think about how God cares about His grand purposes, His grand schemes, the big picture things of His kingdom advancing, but He doesn't necessarily care about Ed Miller. Well He does. He does care about Ed Miller. So when Satan comes at me and says, "God doesn't really love you, Ed. He's just using you," it's not true. God loves me. Yes, He cares about the big picture things. He cares about the world, the universe. He cares about me.

Another one he comes at us with: "God just doesn't want you to have any fun." He gives us all these rules. "God just gives you all these rules because He doesn't want you to have any fun."

Another thing he comes at us saying: "If you just accumulate more and more things, you're going to be happy. That's all you need. More things. Less problems and more things. If you have more things you're going to be happy." That's a lie.

“The Bible isn’t God’s word, it’s just myths and legends.” It’s a common one out there. I’m sure there’s a question of some kind or another in your mind. Maybe you went this week and you took that card and looked up some of those questions. I watched a couple of those videos because I have some questions about why God allows suffering in the world. I have questions about why God does a number of things that He does. Why does God operate this way? We can use those as opportunities to learn and grow, or we can use them as opportunities to doubt God.

Here’s another one that’s very prevalent today and it’s a mixture of truth and lie too. We have a lot of diversity in our world. Diversity is a good thing. The fact that God created us as different people, as different backgrounds, male and female, different cultures, different races, different interests is a very good thing. God created us that way. That’s a good thing. But in our society today I think this may be one of the greatest lies that Satan puts out there, this idea of relativism in terms of our beliefs, that everything is relative. “One religion is just as good as another. One set of philosophies is just as good as another. There really isn’t any absolute truth.” That is a lie. Satan loves to take that. When the media takes that one today, he uses that all the time and we’re bombarded by that message that nothing is really true.

God does love us equally as human beings. That’s the truth. God loves us equally as human beings, created in His image and different. We’re all different. God does love us, but He doesn’t love evil. He doesn’t love the evil that we do and the false beliefs that many human beings have. He doesn’t. He mourns that. God does not love that.

*Resist the devil.* So first of all, resist the devil by not going at it alone. Resist the devil by taking a stand. Another way we resist the devil is with truth. So we need to know the truth if we’re going to take a stand and those flaming darts that the devil is going to throw at us. If we’re going to take a stand against the devil, we need to take a stand for God, we need to resist the devil by understanding the truth. We need to know the truth.

Ephesians 6:10 says – *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.* We need to use the weapons that God has given us. So one of the things we can do is, again, not go it alone. Another thing is to know what the devil is trying to deceive us. But then we can use the tools that God gives us through His word. We understand that we have tools, we have this armor that we can put on. If we had more time, I would spend a lot of time going into the full armor of God. So I encourage you to read that on your own and look more carefully.

We’re going to talk just briefly about the offensive weapon in that armor. That offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. How do we resist the devil? We resist the devil by knowing the word of God. Nowhere in scripture is it better presented than when Jesus Himself was confronted by the devil and Jesus had to resist the devil.

Let’s look at that. Matthew 4:1-11. *Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.* So our Savior, Jesus, had to resist the devil as well. *After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.* So He was also worn down. I can imagine what it would be like to fast for forty days and forty nights, but He was worn down. He was hungry. *The tempter* (the

one who tempts, the one who deceives) *came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."*

*Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Scripture, the word of God.*

*Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" In other words, you won't be hurt. God will send His angels to come take care of you.*

*Jesus said, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Scripture again.*

*Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."*

*Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended to him.*

Back in James we have this idea of *resist the devil and he will flee from you*. That's what happened here. Jesus was tired, He was hungry, He had been in the desert. He resisted the devil with the word of God. He wasn't taken in by the deceptions and even the partial truths. If He had thrown Himself off that high point, would God have rescued Him? God might have sent angels to rescue Him, but He was not going to tempt God that way, because that is not what God wanted Him to do. He resisted the devil by knowing the word of God.

Brothers and sisters, we need to know the word of God. We stand and resist him with the word of God, the sword of the Spirit. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God. We use that sword. Which is why it's so important that we spend time in God's word so that we know the word of God so that when Satan attacks us we have that sword of the Spirit in our hand and we can wield that sword, that truth. We need to know the word of God and spend time in the word of God.

Lastly I'm just going to end with this. Verse 8 says – *Come near to God and he will come near to you*. Coming to God's word, studying God's word is our primary way of coming to God. We pray as well. We meditate. But we come to God, we come to His word, and if we know the word of God we're going to be able to resist the devil. We draw near to God.

In the desert following the temptation, the angels attended to Jesus. God was with Him. God will respond to us in the same way if we draw near to Him. So when you're in trouble, when you're feeling attacked by Satan, don't go it alone. Resist the devil with the word of God and He will come near to you. Know how he's going to attack you. He's going to deceive you and know the truth.

Let's just take a moment and reflect quietly before we go into our final worship time. Do you understand how the devil tries to come at you? Maybe you know there's a particular way that he

comes at you. Maybe it's through possessions, having things. You're really tempted to want to have things. Or maybe you're tempted to want to be happy and to avoid difficult things. Different ways for each of us. How does God want to protect you? You need to know how the devil's going to come at you. What do you need to work on in your life to be more effective at resisting him? Of the things that I mentioned, what do you need to grow in? Let's just take a moment and reflect on how we're going to take this home.

[PRAYER] Thank you for your word, Lord. Thank you that we have your word, your truth, we have it recorded and written down for us and we can read it. You know we have it, but we need to know it in our hearts and in our heads so that when we're attacked we can resist with the word of God, we can throw the word of God right at the devil. We can understand he's coming at us, he's making an end run to get us, and we can see it coming, and we can use your truth to stand and resist and fight off those attacks by the devil. Help us, Lord, to spend time in your word, to draw close to you and know that you'll draw close to us. It's in Jesus' name that we pray, amen.

Let's continue to worship the Lord.