

Soldier Up!

Saints & Spiritual Warfare

"Keep Calm & Resist the Devil"

James 4:7 & First Peter 5:8-9

Star Trek made famous the statement, "Resistance is futile." Of course, our heroes from Star Fleet did resist the Borg, and, in the end, defeat them.

We have an enemy who we are told - not once, but twice - to resist and defeat:

Jas 4:7 Therefore submit to God. **Resist the devil** and he will flee from you.

1Pe 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

1Pe 5:9 **Resist** him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

James and Peter say we ought to resist in two very different contexts:

- James is talking about resisting the devil when he is using our flesh and the world to tempt us to sin.
- Peter is talking about resisting the devil when we are experiencing the pressure of persecution.

Lets start with James and be encouraged we can resist the devil when he is tempting us in a way that causes him to flee.

Jas 4:1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

Jas 4:2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

Jas 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Jas 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Jas 4:5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

The first three verses are a commentary on our flesh, called by James, "your desires for pleasures that war in your members." When yielded to, our flesh manifests as wars, fights, murder, and coveting.

The next verse, verse four, presents the world as a spiritual harlot, and Christians who are enjoying the friendship of the world as spiritual adulterers and adulteresses.

We've said before that the devil uses the world to tempt our flesh.

Jas 4:5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

Difficult verse unless you see it in context and think of the "spirit" not as the Holy Spirit, but as a reference to your human spirit that can "yearn jealously" for the things of the world.

How can we ever hope to resist such formidable opposition?

Jas 4:6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "GOD RESISTS THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

That God gives "more grace" shows that His grace is greater than the power of the flesh, the world, and Satan. The Old Testament quote (from Proverbs 3:34) reveals who obtains God's grace - the humble.

The word humble does not define a special class of Christians, but encompasses all believers.

True, a little later in this chapter we are told to "humble ourselves" (v10). Here, in verse six, we are called "the humble." Being "the humble" is our *position* as saved individuals - not our practice.

Jas 4:7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

"Therefore," i.e., *because* God gives more grace, I "submit."

"Submit" could be translated *obey*. Here's the thing. I CAN obey God; I CAN submit to Him, because I am a recipient of His grace; and His grace is more than enough to overcome my flesh and the world.

I think our problem is that we read these commands as if they are something we must do in order to earn God's grace. We think the more we obey and submit, the more grace He will release.

But that puts all the emphasis on my efforts. I will always fail.

The grace for me to obey and submit is already there. If and when I disobey and rebel, it's because I consciously choose to yield to the devil's temptations.

If I realize God has given me the grace to say "No" to sin, I resist the devil, and he must flee.

He only flees for a time. Even Jesus had to do battle over and over again with him. When Jesus defeated his temptations in the wilderness, we are told Satan fled "until a more opportune time" (Luke 4:13).

But flee, for a time, he must. Or, you could say, if I resist, he must retreat.

You've played rock-scissors-paper. It's an elegant game. Rock breaks (dulls) scissors; scissors cut paper; paper covers rock.

When he was very young, just a child, one of the brothers in our fellowship added an element to rock-scissors-paper. It was a gesture using your hand to look like a rising cloud. He called it Atomic Fire and, as you might suppose, it obliterated rock, scissors, and paper.

It was a true doomsday weapon that could not be overcome.

I think we sometimes approach the devil's temptations as if we're playing rock-scissors-paper and need to outsmart him in order to win. If I'm reading James correctly, grace is our Atomic Fire; it obliterates his temptations, if we will choose it over our own strategies.

Let's take a look at Peter's idea of resistance. Peter's command that we resist the devil is in a totally different context. Here it is again.

1Pe 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

1Pe 5:9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

The context is "the sufferings" of Christians "in the world," or what we would call persecution.

I hate to be the one to point it out, but there's something you don't see here; there's something Peter doesn't say.

He doesn't say, "resist the devil *and he will flee from you.*" In fact he says you may **continue** to suffer:

1Pe 5:10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

Often when talking about this verse Bible teachers say things like, "Satan is a lion with a roar but no teeth." One commentator I read compared Satan to a small, yipping dog that belonged to a neighbor. One day, he decided to bark back at the dog, and, when he did, the dog turned tail and ran.

That is not the picture Peter is painting. He portrays the devil as a terrorist who can indeed inflict devastating suffering. And it is a suffering you might have to "endure for a while."

According to Peter, you "resist" the devil; he doesn't flee, but gets all the more violent and vicious. The temptation here is to give-up, to throw in the towel, to quit living for Jesus - maybe even forsake The Lord.

"Don't," says Peter. "Don't quit resisting."

Remain "steadfast in the faith," realizing it is part of your warfare to suffer persecution.

That's what it means to be "sober" and "vigilante." I should expect the devil's attacks. My threat level is always red.

This answers a lot of questions for me, namely, "If I'm in a trial, why doesn't the devil flee when I resist him?"

It's because I am not promised he will flee in my trials, in my sufferings. I am promised "grace" that is sufficient and, in the end, I will be perfected, established, strengthened and settled.

In movies, the hero is a guy (or a gal) who cannot be broken. No matter how viciously they are tortured, they won't give-up the information; they won't renounce their position.

We are that spiritual hero when we trust the grace of God and endure our hardships as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

With regards to tempting you to sin - you have grace to resist the devil and he must retreat.

With regards to trials - you have grace to go on resisting the devil though he may continue his onslaught.

Either way, resistance is not futile.