

Making him Run Away

**“Submit yourselves, then, to God.
Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”
--James 4:7**

There are those moments in life and ministry that are crucial times, when we have a decision to make. A decision about whom we're going to believe. Those moments come when God might be about to begin using us in new ways for His glory on earth. Because when the devil sees those moments, he reacts in fear, and like a coiled snake, he prepares to strike. He steps up his attacks on us and our families, hoping to trick us into abandoning what God is calling us to do and pulling back from our close walk with the Lord.

Here's how it happens, in my experience. The crucial moment comes, and the devil tries to thwart God's plan in our lives by attacking in some way that brings pain and distress to us and our family. And while he is inflicting that pain, he whispers a very clever lie into our ears—one so clever in its ability to deceive that we can be very prone to believing it is true, even when we're in fellowship with God and other believers.

Here's the lie: “The devil only targets God's servants for harm. If I am no threat to the devil's kingdom, he will leave me alone.”

So then, the temptation comes. We start to think, I can make the pain stop, the problem go away, if I just hold back a little bit in my relationship with the Lord. I want the enemy to stop hurting me, so I will resist opportunities to be a threat to him. If I stop devoting myself to prayer, he'll stop hurting me. If I don't do any evangelistic work, he'll go away. And so on.

But the truth is, that's not the way to stop the devil from harming us. He doesn't have any kindness. He doesn't bless with relief from pain those who please him. And he doesn't have any mercy, so he doesn't stop hurting you when he figures you've had enough. He will kick you while you're down. He may try to trick us into believing he won't bother us if we resist the Spirit's work in and through our lives, but we must remember that he is a liar and the father of lies. He hates you with an intensity beyond comprehension, and he will delight in continuing to hurt you, even if you do what he wants by backsliding and pulling away from God's plans for you. If you resist God and His will, you leave yourself more open, and *more* vulnerable, to the enemy's attacks—not less.

Thankfully, God's word does provide us with knowledge of how we truly *can* make the devil leave us alone in these moments. It begins, not by resisting God, but by total surrender and submission of our whole selves to Him.

We come to God, and say, I will trust You, not the devil. I will believe Your promise of protection, not his false promise to go away if I do what he wants. I surrender all of myself to You. I submit myself to Your plans, whatever they may be, because I believe You when You say that Your thoughts of me are numerous as the sands of the seashore, and that they are plans for my good, not to harm me but to give me hope and a future. So I will obey You. I will draw closer to You in prayer, not push You away. I submit completely to Your will.

By so doing, James tells us, we do effectively resist the devil. And then comes the surprise ending: The devil runs away from us.

There we were, thinking we could get him off our backs if we resisted God's plans for us, and all the while the way to get rid of him was to wholeheartedly embrace the Lord and His will. Because the devil isn't at his strongest moment when we're at ours. He is, deep down, a coward, who runs at the first sign of *real* trouble. And real trouble is what he has when we stop fighting him in our strength, and let our God use His strength on our behalf. We don't have to surrender to the devil when he attacks; we can *defeat* him in God's power.

So in times of trouble, let us seek shelter, not in running from the devil, but in running to the Lord, hiding beneath the shadow of His wings. Then we'll keep the enemy on the run. And God will use us for His glory, Christ building His church, and the gates of hell failing to protect Satan's kingdom from it.