



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start # 1557

James 4:7 "Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

We conclude our series this week on the great spiritual battle that we are engaged in. This is more important than the political battles for presidency. This is more important than winning the argument about which quarterback was the all-time greatest. This is more important than getting your agenda approved at work. This is more important than pushing to get unsafe products recalled. If you lose this spiritual battle, you will lose your soul. This is one battle that we cannot lose. We must put everything we have into this. There is no cost too great to pay. There is nothing that is of greater importance than this. Satan is after your soul. If it means quitting your job to save your soul, quit. If it means moving to save your soul, move. Nothing tops the salvation of your soul. Nothing!

One final passage that helps in this spiritual battle is found tucked deeply in the book of James. Resist the devil. Resist is a fighting term. One of my kids has a dog. The dog is getting big. When they go places they must put the dog in his cage. He resists. He spreads his legs out, lifts his head and it becomes a wrestling match to get him in. Resisting. Not going along. Digging your heels in. Fighting.

There are three thoughts from our verse.

First, the order is always important. God placed words in an order because He wants them that way. Before Satan flees, before there is a resistance on our part, first comes a submission to God. Submit to God is what James says. The next verse says, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." Come close. Come real close. Submission is too often limited only to the wife's role in a marriage. And there, it is often misunderstood and misapplied. Submission is first an attitude. It means to bend the will. Jesus shows us this in the garden prayers. Facing the cross, He asked if this cup might pass. He added, "not my will, but Thy will be done." That's submission. I am bending my will for God's will. Jesus did not go to the cross kicking and screaming. He went silently like a lamb that goes to the slaughter. We must bend our will and wishes for God. We must do what God wants, not what we want. This is true both in and out of the church house. Worship isn't about entertaining us. It is about honoring and praising God. There is no reverence if we are not submitting to God. Submission is first an attitude, but then it follows with behavior.

(OVER)

Submission is more than just a thought, it is an action. It's doing God's will because it is God's will. The person who uses the words, "I have to..." in relationship to obeying God hasn't really submitted. "I have to go to church..." Really? It doesn't sound like you want to. Having to do things and wanting to do things are not the same. I have to file my taxes. I don't like the process. Too much paperwork. I want to play with my grandkids. Have to and want to-it's a submission thing. Submit to God. Draw near to God. Obey God. This is the first line of defense against Satan. Trying to face Satan without obedience and submission to God will be a disaster. God's way is the only way.

Second, resist Satan. He can be resisted. Saying, "I couldn't help it," just isn't true. You could have. You should have. Satan cannot force you. He cannot make you do something against your will. He can entice you. He can encourage you. He can fool you. He can deceive you. He can offer you the world. He can make false promises. But in the end, it's our choice. Satan can be resisted. You don't have to do what He is tempting you with.

Third, Satan is a coward. Dig your heels in, raise your Bible and you'll see Satan running for cover. He doesn't resist back. He doesn't sucker punch you when you are not looking. Put up a fight and he'll leave. Understand, as the Scriptures teach with Jesus, Satan flees for a while, but he will return. After the temptation of Jesus, Satan left for a more opportune time. He'd be back. Remember Peter telling Jesus that He would not die? Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan." He was back. Remember on the cross? If you are the son of God, come off that cross. That was Satan back again. All the trick questions by the Pharisees...Satan. He was back. Satan won't leave you for good. You have something that he wants and that is your soul. He'll be back. But for now, hold your ground. Don't let him get an advantage of you.

Be careful when you are alone. Satan will strike. Be careful when you are tired, stressed or upset. Satan will come knocking. Paul's warning to the Ephesians about anger, "don't give the devil an opportunity." Anger invites the devil. When we are mad, we don't think straight. We do things we shouldn't when we are angry. Be careful.

Fight the good fight is how we started this series. Hang in there. Don't give up. Feed your soul. Be strong. Put on the full armor of God. Resist. Those aren't cute motivational statements to put on Facebook. These are the words of God. They work. They are the way to win the war against Satan.

Satan will come knocking, maybe even this morning. You do not have to open the door. Resist. He'll leave for a while. But be watching. He's coming back.

Roger Shouse