

2020.06.10 Prayer Meeting Lesson, Hopewell ARP, Culleoka, TN

James 4:7–9

⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded. ⁹ Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

I wonder if we tend to read the phrase “resist the devil” as meaning the same kind of thing when we resist some evil man, or perhaps some evil idea.

The devil, however, is THE adversary. The polar opposite of our glorious and good God, though infinitesimally smaller, much to the devil’s humiliation.

This is why **the command about how to respond to the devil is sandwiched between two commands about a proper response to God.**

Submit to God! Give Him His place, by taking yours. Submit to His truth in defining and assessing reality, by bringing your own ideas into line with His. Take His commandments as your marching orders, and His instruction as the wisdom that shapes how you fulfill those orders. To put the devil to flight by resisting him, you must first and foremost submit to God!

Then also, **draw near to God!** Here is a marvelous thing. This passage tells us not only how to put the devil to flight, but even to bring the living God near unto us. When Deuteronomy 4:7 describes how God would exalt (would lift up) His people before the eyes of the nations, the Holy Spirit puts in their mouth this amazing praise for God’s people: “For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him?”

Drawing near to God, in calling upon Him, is a special form of submitting to Him. And our passage tells us that **when we pray, God comes near us. We do not need to “feel” it, per se. It is a Bible promise. And this is why we must come with repentance.**

We must come with full resolve that our hands will only always be employed as God would have them employed, and we must come with resolve that our hearts will only always be stirred up as God would have them stirred up. For, when we call upon God in prayer, we draw near to Him. And, by His Word just here, we must know that He also draws near to us.

We remember from chapter one that we are to ask in faith, without doubting, not being like that person who is a wave of the sea, tossed by the wind, unstable in his ways. 1:8 called such a man a “double-minded” man, who should not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.

So, what do we do with hearts that are full of desire for the things of earth and are forgetful of eternity, and forgetful of the infinitely better pleasure of having God Himself as our great

desire? Take that laughter and joy over earthly things in which we had forgotten our God and mourn over that laughter and gloom over that joy. Lament and mourn and weep.

It is a right and proper thing to draw near to God with grief over our worldly hearts that have been controlling our hands. Let us come low, not only taking our place as creatures, but humbling ourselves as sinners, cleansing our hands and purifying our hearts.

But, as we thus draw near to God, what will we find? Does He shrink back from us? Is He disgusted and offended? Cold and distant? No, for if we have come with biblically broken hearts and truly contrite spirits, then we have come by faith in Jesus Christ. True repentance and true faith are always together and never apart.

And, when we draw near to God, we find that He does not shrink back; in fact, He draws near to us. He smiles upon us. Yes, He even stoops down to us in that low place to which we have rightly humbled ourselves, and He lifts us up to His throne.

We draw near, and He says, "Here is the place to which you have drawn near: My throne.

Come near, where I sit above all authority and glory of the highest heaven.

Come near, where I have seated you, in my Son, on that same throne. It is a throne of grace for you.

Yes, you have come in humility, and well you should, for you are very needy. Behold the filth of your hands and your hearts from which you had to turn to call upon My name again. Your need is very great.

But My grace is infinitely greater. Here, at My throne, you have grace and mercy to help you in your time of need.

So, where now is the devil? We have forgotten him entirely, because he cannot withstand God's presence or abide with such grace. When we pray, the devil flees, for God Himself comes near us!

Resist the devil. Submit to God. Draw near to God!

Amen.