

James 4:7-10

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Verse 7: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” It is not human nature to be willing to submit. It must be learned. The English word “submit” means to “accept or yield to a superior force or to the authority or will of another person,” and comes from the Latin “submittere,” meaning “under send/put” (lexico.com by Oxford Dictionary). God is the superior Authority under Whom we must submit. We have no right to usurp authority over the Creator of this universe.

Paraphrasing one of my MSOP instructors (B. J. Clarke), he would always tell us, in responding to someone who arrogantly rebels against God, we ought to say something to this effect: “You want to make the rules? You want to decide for yourself what’s right and what’s wrong? Then go make for yourself a universe and then get back with me.” In other words, we as humans CAN’T make the rules! We can’t determine (in our OWN judgment) right and wrong, because we DON’T have the ability to create the universe! God is the ONLY One Who could do that, and the very fact that He has the power to create (and destroy) the universe is enough to make us fall down and submit ourselves to Him!

Yes, we must submit ourselves to God (the higher Authority) and we must resist the highest evil (Satan). The Devil is relentless. He doesn’t give up after the first try. Rather, again and again he persists in tempting us, but we can and must resist him! Jesus gave us the perfect example of resisting Satan in Matthew chapter 4. There, three times Satan came tempting Him, and three times Jesus resisted, responding “It is written.” Eventually, Satan gave up, and left Jesus (Matt. 4:11)! We too can resist the devil and he will flee from us. The key is that we must resist him by responding, “It is written.”

Verse 8: “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.” I picture here a father and son or daughter drawing near to one another in a loving embrace. Oftentimes a child will immediately reach for his father or mother’s arms after having been disciplined. Why is this? Because the child longs to be accepted and in fellowship with his father/mother again. He has learned, in the moment of discipline, that he has been a displeasure to his father/mother, and desires to once again be in his/her good graces.

The same is the case with Christians. We must desire to draw nigh to God. When we fall short of His glory through sin, we must desire to be reconciled with Him. He will lovingly embrace us again, but we must take the first step by submitting to Him again in repentance. Thus, we must cleanse our sinful hands, and purify our double minded hearts if we expect to be brought back close to God once again.

Verse 9: “Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.” This verse reminds me of Joel 2:13: “Rend your heart, and not your garments,

and turn unto the LORD your God..." Sin should cause us to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep. It should tear us up. A Christian should never find himself in the mentality that he is okay with sin. If he does, he surely has had his conscience seared (1 Tim. 4:2), and will likely need an intense "wakeup call" if he is to return to the faith. See also Ezek. 18:27-30; Jer. 31:9; Luke 18:13; 2 Cor. 7:9-11; 2 Tim. 2:25-26 for a good study of penitence.

Verse 10: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." In order to submit to God, first and foremost, one must be willing to humble himself. In so doing, God will then lovingly lift the sinner back up upon recognition of his repentance.