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Every so often, the issue of spiritual warfare becomes a popular topic in Christian circles. I have noticed in the last few months that many people are concerned with what the Christian's role is in spiritual warfare and how we can be free from fear. Several passages deal with spiritual warfare and give some guidance to the Christian wanting to feel secure.

On Sunday, our High School group read from James 4:7: "Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." In describing our temptation, James makes a passing comment on the "warfare" side of temptation. The Christian is given simple instructions in this area: "Resist the devil." Our question then is simple: How do we resist the devil? I want to provide some thoughts so we can be more prepared to follow this simple instruction.

The Armor of God

Ephesians 6:10-20 is a well-known passage in which Paul describes the Armor of God. Elsewhere, Paul simply refers to the "armor of faith and love and a helmet of the hope of salvation." (1 Thessalonians 5:8). Paul's instruction to put on the Armor of God again sounds simple, and yet much ink has been spilled in describing what it means to put on the Armor of God. I have read articles that suggest we take up the Armor of God through confessions at the beginning of our day. We would mentally put on each

piece of Armor, and by doing so, we would be wearing this Armor. I do not think this is what Paul had in mind. Instead, Isaiah 59 suggests that the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation are the Armor of the one who will come from God to judge the world and vindicate those faithful to his covenant. I think Paul gives us a more straightforward command than pedantically speaking spiritual Armor onto our spirits. Paul's teaching for the Christian life is always to live a life centered on the Gospel and Jesus. To put on the Armor, which Isaiah defines as belonging to the Messiah, is to situate yourself firmly in the Gospel and to live each day in Christ, not in the Flesh. Isaiah 59 clarifies that we cannot reach righteousness, so our breastplate of righteousness cannot be taken up by ourselves but must be given to us.

The Armor not mentioned in Isaiah falls into a similar category. Peace, which covers our feet, is a clear allusion to Isaiah 52:7, quoted in Romans 10, that those who speak the Gospel bring peace everywhere they go. The shield of faith fits this category because Paul tells us that the solution to being attacked by the evil one is to put our faith in Christ continually and to keep believing in the promises of Christ and his imputed righteousness.

Finally, the Sword of the Spirit

Scripture demonstrates that our resistance to Satan is to

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mimic that of Jesus in Matthew 4. If you do not know Scripture, you cannot be expected to resist the devil successfully. In all, then, our Armor is put on by continually trusting the protection and work of Christ rather than ourselves.

Prayer

Paul follows up the Armor of God by telling us to pray in the Spirit continually. When you read the epistles of Paul, it is clear that he spent his time praying for the churches, for his friends, and for future missions. Each book holds a specific prayer that Paul lifts to God. This seems simple, but Scripture describes our struggle with sin as simple. If we are not people who bring our prayers and requests to God, we will find it nearly impossible to resist the temptations that the devil presents to us. As we pray, Paul says to pray for our struggle and all the saints in their struggle. Part of the Christian's life in spiritual warfare is to pray for each other so we do not fall into temptation. To lift each other in prayer is to love each other as Christ loves the Church.

Submit to God

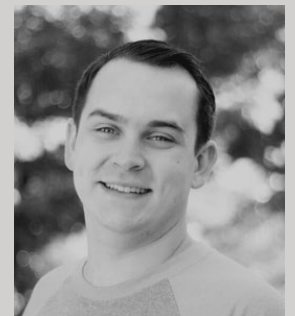
Finally, some of the solutions to the problem of resisting the devil are found in James 4:7, just before the command. We are told to "submit to God." Part of the problem presented in James 1 is that when we are tempted and fall into sin, it is because of our desires. When we submit to God, we consistently give our desires to him to be conformed to his. Not that we will not be tempted or have sinful desires, but Scripture promises that as we live lives for Christ, we become more like Christ. If this is true, and our goal is to live holy lives, we should focus on our submission to God. When we obey God, we are told we will bear fruit and prove to be the disciples of Christ. This submission puts us in a greater position to resist the devil.

As I consider the passing comment to "resist the devil," I wonder if it is simply written because James expects Christians to live lives close to their savior, and as they walk with him, their desires will conform to his. If you struggle with resisting temptation and the devil, ask yourself:

- 1) Am I living in Christ? Or am I attempting to be Christ like in my power?
- 2) Is my faith leading my decision-making?
- 3) Where is my prayer life? Or do I have one?
- 4) Am I consistently submitting to God? Or am I trying to rule over my life?

I hope this is helpful to you. In closing, This is my prayer for you from 1 Thessalonians 5:23

"Now, may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. And may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will do it."



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