



Ministry of Biblical Studies

Trust

MAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

"Learning to Trust: Run From Evil"

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4610 S Prairie Avenue | Chicago, IL 60653 | MCC1920.org
Rev. Leon Perry III, Senior Pastor



Welcome to the Metropolitan Community Church
Ministry of Biblical Study Classes
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“Learning to Trust: Run From Evil”

2 Timothy 2:22 (NIV)

22 Run away from the evil things that young people long for. Try hard to do what is right. Have faith, love and peace. Do these things together with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

The phrase “resist the devil” is found in James 4:7 where the apostle James exhorts believers to resist the devil in order to cause him to flee or “run away” from us. To resist means to withstand, strive against, or oppose in some manner. Resistance can be a defensive maneuver on our part, such as resisting or withstanding the temptation to sin. Or it can be an action we take to use the only offensive weapon in the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:13-18), the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Using the Scriptures to expose Satan’s lies and temptations is the most effective way to strive against and defeat them.

It is important to read the whole verse: “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Resisting the devil must be accompanied by submitting to God. A disobedient or unsubmitive believer will not see victory.

The apostle John records Jesus saying about Satan, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). As Christians, we have full life when we are aware of the reality of the presence of evil. As we struggle to stand firm in our faith, we must realize that the enemies we are up against are not merely human ideas, but real forces that come from the powers of darkness. The Bible says, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12).

Why will resistance cause the devil to flee? Because he knows he cannot have victory over us if we are prepared to do battle against him. As mentioned before, the Bible assures us that we need only put on the full armor of God to be fully protected from evil and to actively resist it. There is nothing more frightening to Satan than a believer who is fully equipped with spiritual armor, beginning with the "helmet of salvation," which protects our minds, and the "breastplate of righteousness," which protects our hearts because it is the righteousness of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). Only a true believer wears these because only those who have received God's forgiveness by grace through faith have eternal salvation and the righteousness of Christ imputed to them.

Once fitted with the helmet and breastplate (literally, "chest protector"), we are then to take up other defensive weapons with which to battle Satan: truth, the readiness to proclaim the gospel, and the faith that shields us from all the flaming arrows of the evil one. The final piece of armor is prayer. We pray for strength to resist evil and to actively battle against it. We pray for wisdom in the conflict, and most of all, we remain steadfast in our prayers, both for the ability to resist the devil and also for other believers who struggle in the same battle. When the church, the body of Christ, stands united against evil, fully equipped with the armor of God, we present a formidable foe to the evil one and we will see God get the glory for the victory.

As a side note, the Bible never gives Christians the authority to "rebuke" the devil, only to resist him. Zechariah 3:2 tells us that it is the Lord who rebukes Satan. Even Michael, one of the most powerful of the angels, did not dare to accuse Satan, but rather said, "The Lord rebuke you" (Jude 1:9). In response to Satan's attacks, Christians should redouble our efforts to clothe ourselves in the spiritual armor, wield the Word of God, and rely on His power through prayer. Instead of focusing on "rebuking" the devil, we should focus on resisting him with the full armor of God.

1. Evil is real.

That is to say, we distort the Bible and do ourselves a profound disservice by minimizing the existence of suffering. God invites us to acknowledge our pain. The Psalmist wrote, "I believed, even when I spoke, 'I am greatly afflicted'" (Psalm 116:10).

2. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

In some ways, talking about a "problem of evil" is a false start. A better quandary to start with would be the problem of sin. How quickly we rush to raise a self-righteous fist while our other hand digs in the cookie jar. "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?" (Ezekiel 18:25).

3. God is good.

Whatever we say about God's sovereignty over evil (and say we will; see below), we must never imply that God is corrupt, that he somehow nurses a dark side. "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one" (James 1:13).

4. God ordains all things that come to pass, including evil.

God does whatever he pleases (Psalm 135:6). To be sure, this means he clothes lilies and feeds birds (Matthew 6:26, 28). But he also makes lightning (Psalm 135:7). He strikes down firstborn children and kills mighty kings (Psalm 135:8). Our God holds sway over the good, the bad, and the ugly. "I form light and create darkness," he says. "I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things" (Isaiah 45:7).

5. Man is responsible for his actions.

Lest we fall into fatalism, we should remember that God's sovereignty never excuses wrongdoing. When a man commits murder, the blood is on his hands. "For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" (Luke 22:22).

6. God did not spare his own Son.

The cross speaks to our theology of suffering in at least two ways. First, it shows us that God can will something to happen that he opposes. Proverbs 6:16-17 tells us that God hates "hands that shed innocent blood." And yet he sent his Son to suffer precisely that fate. Is this a mystery? Absolutely. But it is not nonsense. We can look at evil and with no contradiction say, "This is wrong, and God has willed that it take place." Listen to how Peter describes the crucifixion: "This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (Acts 2:23, emphasis mine).

Second, the cross demonstrates that God regards our affliction not as something strange to the palette, but as a cup he has drunk to the dregs. By giving up his own Son, God entered into our pain. He knows what it's like to suffer loss. But he also did more. By putting his Son to grief, God turned grief on its head. "But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). This brings us to the final point.

7. Heaven works backwards.

C. S. Lewis writes in *The Great Divorce*, "They say of some temporal suffering, 'No future bliss can make up for it,' not knowing that Heaven, once attained, will work backwards and turn even that agony into a glory."

Lewis is not being novel here. He is simply restating what Christians have hoped in for centuries, the promise that gives all our suffering purpose: "For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

