

James 4:7 Commentary

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Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
See also [Overview Chart](#) by Charles Swindoll

JAMES									
Faith for Living									
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The Reactions of Living Faith to Worldliness

The reaction of living faith to selfish strife (James 4:1–5:12)

- A. The condition manifesting worldliness (James 4:1–6)
 - 1. The description of the condition (James 4:1–3)
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 - a. The adulterous character of worldliness (James 4:4)
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- (1) The yearning of the Spirit (James 4:5b–6a)
- (2) The verification from Scripture (James 4:6b)
- B. The exhortation to the worldly (James 4:7–12)
 - 1. The call to return to God (James 4:7–10)
 - a. The statement of the basic demand (James 4:7)
 - (1) Nearness to God (James 4:8a)
 - (2) Personal cleansing (James 4:8b)
 - (3) Open repentance (James 4:9)
 - (4) Godly humility (James 4:10)
 - 2. The injunction against censoriousness (James 4:11–12)
 - a. The statement of the prohibition (James 4:11a)
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The reaction of living faith to presumptuous planning (4:13–17)

- A. The rebuke of their self-sufficient attitude (James 4:13–14)
 - 1. The delineation of the attitude (James 4:13)
 - 2. The presumption in the attitude (James 4:14)
- B. The indication of the proper attitude (James 4:15)
- C. The evil of their present attitude (James 4:16–17)
 - 1. The evil of their boasting (James 4:16)
 - 2. The sin of their inconsistency (James 4:17) (Hiebert - James Commentary)

James 4:7 **Submit** therefore to God. **Resist** the devil and he will flee from you. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [hupotagete](#) (2PAPM) [oun to Theo antistete](#) (2PAAM) [de to diabolō, kai pheuxetai](#) (3SFMI) [aph humon](#)

Amplified: So be subject to God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him], and he will flee from you. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

ASV: Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

BBE: For this cause be ruled by God; but make war on the Evil One and he will be put to flight before you.

ESV: Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ([ESV](#))

KJV: Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

NET: So submit to God. But resist the devil and he will flee from you. ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: Give in to God, then; resist the devil, and he will run away from you. ([NJB](#))

NLT: So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: Be humble then before God. but resist the devil and you'll find he'll run away from you. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: Be subject with implicit obedience to God at once and once for all. Stand immovable against the onset of the devil and he will flee from you.

Weymouth: Submit therefore to God: resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.

Young's Literal: be subject, then, to God; stand up against the devil, and he will flee from you;

Submit therefore to God. **Resist** the devil and he will flee from you: [hupotagete](#) (2PAPM) [oun to Theo antistete](#) (2PAAM) [de to diabolō, kai pheuxetai](#) (3SFMI) [aph humon](#):

- **Submit** - 1Sa 3:18; 2Sa 15:26; 2Ki 1:13, 14, 15; 2Chr 30:8; 33:12,13; Job 1:21; Job 40:3, 4, 5; 42:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; Ps 32:3, 4, 5; 66:3; 68:30; Jer 13:18; Da 4:25,32,34, 35, 36, 37; Mt 11:29; Acts 9:6; 16:29, 30, 31; 26:19; Ro 10:3; 14:11; Eph 5:21; Heb 12:9; 1Pe 2:13
- [James 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

- [James 4:7-10 Resolving Conflicts God's Way](#) - Steven Cole
- [James 4:6-7 Drawing Near to God, Pt. 1](#) - John MacArthur

Wherewith, O Lord, shall I draw near,
 And bow myself before Thy face?
 How in Thy purer eyes appear?
 What shall I bring to gain Thy grace?
 ([Wherewith, O Lord, Shall I Draw Near](#))

This verse initiates what Hughes refers to as a tidy unit of ten terse commands beginning with this dominant command to submit and ending with a summary command to humble one's self. Hughes goes on to add that...

James wants to so fire the souls of his people that they will swim triumphantly in the river of grace. May it be so for us as well! James' opening command grates like fingernails across the chalkboard of contemporary culture: "Submit yourselves, then, to God" ([Hughes, R. K. James: Faith that works. Preaching the Word. Crossway Books](#))

The 10 **orist imperative** verbs in James 4:7-10 clearly signify that James is issuing an urgent call to his readers to repent from their ungodly behaviors described in the preceding passages. And so like a commanding general, James issues a series of curt military like commands which call for incisive action. The command to **submit** is a basic requirement which must precede obedience to the subsequent commands. Proud hearers won't submit and surely won't obey any of the other commands. Humble people on the other hand will submit and obey.

Submission is looking at the humble, self-emptying example of Jesus and daily choosing to follow in his steps (1Pe 2:21note)...

**NOT MY WILL
 BUT THINE
 BE DONE**

-- Jesus (Lk 22:42)

Submission is a matter of the will. James commands the reader to make a conscious, volitional choice to submit their imperfect will to God's perfect will. This is be our daily experience, for daily our natural (**flesh**) tendency is to rebel against the people and circumstances God uses in our life to facilitate our submission. We need to come to the point that when God's "submission tests" come, we say "I don't understand why You are allowing this, but I choose to bow and submit my will to Yours dear Father."

We need to pray like the Puritan **Richard Baxter**...

Lord, what thou wilt, where thou wilt, and when thou wilt.

Wuest's renders Jas 4:7 as...

Be subject with implicit obedience to God at once and once for all

Barton remarks that James' series of commands...

both require and strengthen humility as we obey them. Humility is among the qualities that we simply cannot pursue directly. It, along with such traits as self-control, patience, endurance, peace, and joy, is a by-product of living God's way. ([Barton, B. B., et al. Life Application Bible Commentary. Romans: Tyndale House Publishers](#))

Paul Apple entitles Jas 4:7, 8, 9, 10 as **"Six Steps Towards Renewed Intimacy with God"** - no "self help" program here; this is a "God-help me" program! ([James](#))

Note that some commentators feel that James is addressing **non-believers** in this section, but I agree with C H Spurgeon (see below) that this section speaks powerfully and practically to both the **saved** and the **unsaved**.

I dare not choose my lot;
 I would not if I might.
 Choose Thou for me, my God,
 So shall I walk aright.

Horatius Bonar

Submit therefore - Why "**therefore**"? Because only the humble receive the grace of God (Jas 4:6note). Drop your pride, your arrogance and your haughtiness. To be a partaker of God's grace we must daily choose to submit, to surrender our will, our desires, to God's will, which is good and acceptable and perfect. Only the lowly person, the humble man or woman will willingly surrender his

or her rights to God. **Pride** ever fights against this sweet surrender! And beloved, this rebellious usurper (still resident even in those who are born from above = the residual fallen flesh) will fight against God's will until the day we die! That is why Paul instructed Timothy to **fight** (agonizomai in the present imperative = command to make this your continual practice! Why? Because the world, the flesh and the devil will continually oppose our walk of grace in Christ and try to provoke us to pride, crying out "You have rights!") **the good fight of faith** (1Ti 6:12, 1:18, 19, Imitate Paul's example - 2Ti 4:7-note, 1Co 4:16, 11:1, 1Th 1:6-note, He 6:12-note, He 13:7-note, 3Jn 1:11)

Ralph Martin says that the **therefore**...

alerts the reader that what follows is an "expansion" of Pr 3:34 (Martin, R. P. Vol. 48: Word Biblical Commentary: James. Dallas: Word, Incorporated)

Hiebert adds that...

Having diagnosed their selfish strife as a manifestation of worldliness and shown the seriousness of their condition, James at once calls for rectification. "**Then**" (oun, "therefore, consequently") indicates that his injunctions are prompted by the condition just exposed. Having yielded to the world's allurements, they had to be restored to the pathway of separation. They had to resume a right relation to God (Jas 4:7-10) and cease their censoriousness of their brethren (Jas 4:11,12). ([D Edmond Hiebert - James - Highly Recommended Commentary - Any commentary written by Hiebert is excellent!](#))

Submit - Notice that this verb is placed at the beginning of this clause for emphasis. Get under and listen up! Come under God's authority. Our willingness to yield our "rights" is a reflection of the genuine humility James had just advocated in Jas 4:6. The proud heart refuses to bow that it might truly hear God. A willingness to submit reflects an attitude of humility. Proud people by definition are elevated above others and do not submit. Don't start quoting Jas 4:7 beginning with "Resist the devil"! James' point is that unless we are submitted to God, we will not have the power to resist the devil. If you want to know practically what submission looks like, then review Jas 4:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, to see what submission does NOT look like. If you are engaged in any of these activities, then you can be assured you are not submitting to God's authority. To submit to God is to reject compromise with the world (1Jn 2:15, 16, 17, Jas 4:4-note, Mt 6:24-note), which lies in the control of the Evil One (1Jn 5:19).

Richison explains that...

The heart of pride is self-sufficiency. A phenomenal pride thinks that we can get along without God. Humility, on the other hand, recognizes the need to depend on God. Humility empties self of self-sufficient independence from God. **Humility places self under God** so that He can dispose of us as He pleases. ([James 4:7 4:7b 4:7c](#))

Alec Motyer explains that after the **therefore** of James 4:7b the apostle issues a series 10 staccato-like preemptory (urgent; insisting on immediate attention) commands (all aorist imperatives) which help define what a humble walk looks like, a walk that is summarized in his last command in Jas 4:10.

In other words, the Bible, as so often, not only tells us what is true but also how to respond to what is true. The truth is a superabundant supply of grace (Jas 4:6); the response is an obedient walk with God, itemized in Jas 4:7, 8, 9. James begins his description of the humble walk with God by commanding active allegiance (Jas 4:7a) Christians must have no doubt in their minds whose side they are on; and by their lives they must leave no doubt in the minds of others that they are God's enlisted subordinates and the devil's unyielding opponents. ([The Message of James: The Tests of Faith. The Bible Speaks Today](#))

Submission to God is the fabric (the attitude) that should be woven into **every** area of our life, **every** day of our life.

J. H. Jowett spoke of the inestimable worth of submitting to God when he wrote that...

We get no deeper into Christ than we allow Him to get into us.

D L Moody in his no nonsense way alluded to submission to God when he said...

Let God have your life; he can do more with it than you can.

Dr Charles Ryrie spoke of the motive for submitting to God when he said...

The awesome purchase price of the very life of the Son of God should be more than ample motivation to make every child of God eagerly want to yield back to the Lord the very freedom which his death bought.

Major Ian Thomas spoke of the promised power inherent in submission and surrender to God when he wrote that...

When all that you are is available to all that God is, then all that God is is available to all that you are.

Do we dare sing the words of **Francis Havergal**? Do we dare not!

TAKE MY LIFE

Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of Thy love.
Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing always, only, for my King.
Take my lips, and let them be filled with messages from Thee.
Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect, and use every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it Thine; it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own; it shall be Thy royal throne.
Take my love, my Lord, I pour at Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee.

-- **Francis Havergal**

([YouTube - Chris Tomlin - Take My Life](#))

Isaac Watts' hymn conveys a sense of the sweet surrender which should be part of the life of every child of the Living God...

Father, I wait Thy daily will;
Thou shalt divide my portion still;
Grant me on earth what seems Thee best,
Till death and heaven reveal the rest.

Isaac Watts

The great Puritan writer **Richard Baxter** said it well...

Lord, what thou wilt, where thou wilt, and when thou wilt.

Submission to God clearly implies submission to every word God's Truth in Scripture. As **Stephen Olford** once quipped

I'm tired of hearing people say, 'I'm standing **on** the Word of God.' We should be standing **under** it.

As **Martin Ansley** eloquently phrased it...

The primary qualification demanded in the reader of the Bible is not scholarship but surrender, not expert knowledge but willingness to be led by the Spirit of God.

Thomas Manton explains that **submission**...

means placing ourselves under God, and so it denotes the whole duty of an inferior state.

There must be subjection to God's will—the whole man to the whole law of God. To submit to God is to give ourselves up to be governed by his will and pleasure; our thoughts, our counsels, our affections, our actions must be guided according to the strict rules of the Word. Usually the work of conversion stops here; we are loath to resign ourselves to God's will. Some of God's commands, such as those which are inward, are contrary to our affections; others, such as those which enforce external duties, are contrary to our interests. But we must "take [Christ's] yoke" (Matthew 11:29). A main thing to be looked at in our first supplication to God is this: are we willing to give ourselves up to his will without reservation? Can I subject everything, without any hesitation or reluctance, to the obedience of Christ (2Corinthians 10:5)?

It implies a humble approach to God. Submit yourselves, then, to God; that is, lay aside your pride and stubbornness, humbly acknowledging your sins. Come as lost, undone creatures lying at the feet of mercy. How long it takes before our faces are buried in the dust (Lam 3:29), before we can come and say in truth of heart, "If we are damned, it is just; if we are saved, it is through much mercy."

It is handing ourselves over to the disposal of God's providence. "The Lord's will be done" (Acts 21:14) is a truly Christian way of speaking. Discontent is clearly rebellion; we want our will done, and not God's. When we

complain, God and we contend; his will must be done to us as well as by us.

Thus you see there is a threefold submission: our worldly hearts to his holiness, our proud hearts to his mercy, our stormy minds to his sovereignty, that we may be obedient, humble, patient...

Submission must be performed...

Sincerely. We must do his will because it is his will. God's will is both the rule and the reason of duty. So 1Th 4:3 urges us, "It is God's will that you should be holy"; see also 1Th 5:18 and 1Pe 2:13. This is warrant enough and motive enough; God wants it to be so. Hypocrites do what they have to, but they have other motives. To do it sincerely is indeed to do a duty as duty, to do what is commanded because it is commanded.

Freely. Subjection is best when it is willing. If the beast came to the altar struggling and unwilling, men never offered it to their gods but counted it unlucky. Certainly the true God looks most of all for a ready mind: "I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands" (Ps 119:60)—without doubting, disputing, or consulting with flesh and blood. To offer Isaac was a hard duty, and yet that morning Abraham was up early (see Ge 22:3).

Faithfully. To the Lord's glory, not our own ends. The Christian life must be for God (Gal 2:19), according to God's will, for God's glory. The creatures' hardest task is to subject our ends to God's ends, as well as our ways to God's will.

[\(A Practical Exposition of James\)](#)

John MacArthur feels that James is addressing unbelievers in James 4:7-10 commenting that these verses constitute...

one of the clearest calls to salvation in all of Scripture. Unfortunately, many commentators have assumed that this passage refers to Christians and is a call for them to turn away from worldliness back to faithfulness to God. Consequently, this great invitation is often missed... The "greater grace" James has just mentioned (4:6) is God's justifying, sanctifying, glorifying grace of salvation, that divine, sovereign, loving favor that He freely bestows on undeserving sinners who trust in His Son, Jesus Christ, as Savior and Lord. His redeeming grace is greater than the power of sin, greater than the power of the flesh and the world, greater than the power of Satan. ([MacArthur J. James. Moody](#))

Spurgeon on the other hand feels that James' command in to **submit** to God applies both to **believers and non-believers** alike. In the following sermon excerpt, **Spurgeon** is applying James' command primarily to non-believers (In his sermon on Unconditional Surrender he addresses submission of believers - see next note below) commenting that...

the lighting spirit within many men shows that they have not submitted themselves to God—lusting, envy, strife, contention, jealousy, anger (cp Jas 4:1, 2, 3, 4)—all these things declare that the heart is not submissive but remains violently self willed and rebellious. (Ed: **How do you know if you are not submitting to God?**) Those who are still wrathful, proud, contentious and selfish are evidently unsubdued. There are some men to whom the very idea of submission is distasteful—they will be subjective to no one, but wish to be their own gods and a law unto themselves. "Submit" is a galling word to them. They say in their hearts, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?"

They are willing, enough, to accept His favors, willing enough, after their fashion, to say, "Thank God," but as to submission, they will have none of it—it suits not their high mightiness! They strive for the mastery. They push for the front place, aiming to advance their own interests and make the great I to be lord above all. The Apostle quietly indicates in the words of our text that many Christian professors need to submit, for at present their unhumbled nature leads them to lusting and striving—and effectually prevents their asking so as to receive at the Lord's hands.

A lack of submission is no new or rare fault in mankind. Ever since the Fall it has been the root of all sin. When the heart submits to God in sincerity, the work of Grace is begun. And when it submits perfectly, the work is complete. But for this, Divine Grace must display its power, for the heart is obstinate and rebellious.

From the moment when our mother Eve stretched out her hand to pluck the forbidden fruit and her husband joined her in setting up the human will against the Divine, the sons of men have universally been guilty of a lack of conformity to the will of God. They choose their own way and will not submit their wills. They think their own thoughts and will not submit their understanding. They love earthly things and will not submit their affections. Man wants to be his own law and his own master. This is abominable, since we are not our own makers, for, "it is He that has made us and not we ourselves." The Lord should have supremacy over us, for our existence depends on His will...

To submit to God is to find rest! The rule of God is so beneficial that He ought readily to be obeyed. He never commands us to do that which, in the long run, can be injurious to us, nor does He forbid us anything which can be to our real advantage. Our God is so kind, so wise, so full of loving forethought, that it is always be to our best interest to follow His lead. Even if we could be left to choose our own way and were under no bonds of duty, it would be wise and prudent to choose the way of the Lord, for it is the path of pleasantness and safety.

Beloved, the Lord is far too great to have any need to deal unjustly, or unkindly with His creatures. Indeed, He is so great that He cannot desire any personal advantage from His government, but He condescends to govern us because without His rule and guidance we would be utterly undone. It is for our good that like a father in a family He commands us this or forbids us the other. It is wanton cruelty to ourselves when we break away from the liberty with which Jesus makes us free, to place ourselves under the tyranny of selfishness and the baser passions of the mind. It is madness to forsake the honorable service of the great King to become the slave of Satan. O that men would submit themselves unto God and be willing to be blessed!

All resistance against God is, from the necessity of the case, be futile. Common sense teaches that rebellion against Omnipotence is both insanity and blasphemy. The Lord's purpose must stand and His pleasure must be done! His power will assuredly crush all opposition and it is idle to raise it. Why, then, should a man contend against his Master? Wisdom as well as righteousness call upon him to submit to God.

And then let it always be known that submission to God is absolutely necessary to salvation. A man is not saved until he bows before the supreme majesty of God. He may say, "I believe in Jesus," but if he goes on to follow out his own desires and to gratify his own passions, he is a mere pretender, a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Dead faith will save no man! It is not even as good as the faith of devils, for they "believe and tremble," and these men believe in a fashion which makes them brazen in their iniquity. No, salvation means being saved from the domination of self and sin! Salvation means being made to long after likeness to God, being helped by Divine Grace to reach to that likeness and living after the mind and will of the Most High.

Submission to God is the salvation which we preach, not a mere deliverance from eternal burning, but deliverance from present rebellion, deliverance from the sin which is the fuel of those unquenchable flames. There must be conformity to the eternal Laws of the universe and according to these God must be first and man must bow to Him—nothing can be right till this is done. Submit is a command which in every case must be obeyed—or no peace or salvation will be found...

I think I am not suspicious without reason when I express a fear that the preaching which has lately been very common and, in some respects very useful, of, "**only believe and you shall be saved**," has sometimes been altogether mistaken by those who have heard it. Cases occur in which young persons go on living light, frivolous, giddy, and even wicked lives—and yet they claim that they believe in Jesus Christ. When you come to examine them a little, you find that their belief in Christ means that they believe that He has saved them, although everybody who knows their character can clearly see that they are not saved at all! ([Spurgeon's sermon on James 4:7-10 The Reason Why Many Cannot Find Peace](#) - **Herbert Carson** agreed with Spurgeon when he said "The path of submission is the way to peace.")

Spurgeon (Read [Spurgeon's sermon - Unconditional Surrender](#)) writes...

"Submit yourselves unto God" is a precept which to thoughtful men is a plain dictate of reason, and it needs few arguments to support it. Yet because of our foolishness the text enforces it by a "**Therefore**," which "**Therefore**" is to be found in the previous verse,—"**He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God.**"

His wrath and His mercy both argue for submission. We are both driven and drawn to it. The Romans were wont to say of their empire that its motto was to spare the vanquished, but to war continually against the proud. This saying aptly sets forth the procedure of the Most High. He aims all His arrows at the lofty, and turns the edge of His sword against the stubborn; but the moment He sees signs of submission His pity comes to the front, and through the merits of His Son His abounding mercy forgives the fault. Is not this an excellent reason for submission? **Who can refuse to be vanquished by love?** Who will not say as our hymn puts it—

"Lord, thou hast won, at length I yield;
My heart, by mighty grace compell'd,
Surrenders all to thee;

Against thy terrors long I strove,
But who can stand against thy love?
Love conquers even me."

If resistance will only call forth the omnipotent wrath of God, but true submission will lead to the obtaining of His plenteous grace, who will continue in arms? I shall not tarry to carry the argument further, but aim at once to press home this precept upon you as God the Holy Ghost may enable me. I believe it to be addressed both to **saint** and **sinner**, and therefore I shall urge it home first upon the child of God, and say to all of you who love the Lord, "**Submit yourselves to God;**" and then we shall take a little longer time to say in deep solemnity to those who are not reconciled to God by the death of his Son, "**Submit yourselves to God**" if ye would be saved.

To THE PEOPLE OF GOD **"Submit yourselves unto God."**

He is your God, your Father, your Friend, yield yourselves to Him. What does this counsel mean? **It means, first exercise humility.** We do well to interpret a text by its connection: now the connection here is '**God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble,**' (Jas 4:6-note) and therefore the **submission** here meant must include **humility**, even if it be not the chief thing intended. Brothers and sisters, let us take our right place before God. And what is that? Is it the highest seat in the synagogue (cp Mt 23:6)? Is it the place of those who thank God that they are not as other men are (Lk 18:11, 12)? I scarcely need reply, you who are the children of God will not dream of occupying such a position. If by reason of temporary foolishness you ever boast, I am sure, my dear friends, when you think over it in the watches of the night you are very much ashamed of yourselves, and would be glad to eat your own words. A pardoned sinner boasting! A debtor to sovereign grace extolling himself! It is horrible.

Nothing can be more out of place than boasting upon the lips of a child of God If I heard Balaam's donkey speak I should impute it to a miracle that it should use the language of man, but that a man of God should use the braying of vanity is a miracle another way, not of God but of Satan. Is it not one of the fundamental truths of our faith that we are saved by grace? And what says the apostle? "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." (Ro 3:27-note) The word "excluded" means shut out. Boasting comes to the door, it knocks, it pleads for admission, but it is excluded. Possibly through our unwatchfulness it gains a momentary entrance, but as soon as ever the grace of God within us ascertains that the intruder is within our gates it ejects him, shuts the door in his face, and bars him out, and in answer to the question "Where is boasting then?" free grace replies, "It is excluded, by the law of grace."

If all the good we have has been given to us freely by divine favor, in what can we glory? If we possess the highest degree of spirituality, if our life be perfectly clear from any open fault, and if our hearts be wholly consecrated unto the Lord, yet we are unprofitable servants; we have done no more than it was our duty to have done. But, alas, we fall far short of this, for we have not done what it was our duty to have done, and in many things we fail and come short of the glory of God.

The right position of a Christian is to walk with lowly humility before God, and with meekness towards his fellow Christians. The lowest room becomes us most, and the lowest seat in that room. Look at Paul, who knew far more of Christ than we do, and who served him far better. It is edifying to notice his expressions. He is an apostle, and he will by no means allow any one to question his calling, for he has received it of the Lord; but what does he say? "Not meet to be called an apostle." (1Co 15:9, 10, circa 55AD) What can be lowlier than this? But we shall see him descending far below it. He takes his place among the ordinary saints, and he will not give up his claim to be numbered with them, for he has made his calling and election sure; but where does he sit among the people of God? He styles himself "less than the least of all saints." (Ep 3:8-note, circa 61AD) There is no small descent from "not meet to be called an apostle" to "less than the least of all saints;" but he went lower yet, for at another time he confessed himself to be still a sinner, and coming into the assembly of sinners where does he take his position? He writes himself down as "the chief of sinners." (1Ti 1:15, circa 63-66AF)

The Stool of Repentance **The Foot of the Cross**

This is submission to God, the true surrender of every proud pretension or conceited claim If, my brethren, the Lord has called us to be ministers, let us ever feel that we are not worthy of so great a grace:

since He has made us saints, let us confess that the very least of our brethren is more esteemed by us than we dare to esteem ourselves, and since we know that we are sinners let us look at our sins under that aspect which most reveals their heinousness, for in some respects and under certain lights there are evils in our character which make us guiltier than the rest of our fellow sinners. The stool of repentance and the foot of the Cross are the favorite positions of instructed Christians.

Such humility is not at all inconsistent with believing that we are saved, nor with the fullest assurance of faith, nay, not at all inconsistent with the nearest familiarity with God. Listen to Abraham: "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, I that am but dust and ashes." He has drawn very near to the Lord, and speaks with him as a man speaketh with his friend, and yet he says "I am but dust and ashes." (Ge 18:27) His boldness did not destroy his humbleness, nor his sense of nothingness hinder his near approach to the Lord.

My dear brethren, we know that in Christ we are accepted (Ep 1:6KJV-note), we know that we are dear to God and loved with an everlasting love, we know that he hears our prayers and answers us continually, we know that we walk in the light of His countenance (Ps 89:15-note); but still our posture should always be that of deep humiliation before the Lord, and in the attitude of complete submission we should sit at the Master's feet and say, "By the grace of God I am what I am." (1Co 15:10) May the Holy Spirit work this gracious submission in every regenerated soul.

Let us next observe that our text bears a second meaning, namely, that of submission to the divine will: that of course would strike you in the wording of the verse—"Submit yourselves therefore to God." Beloved Christian friends, be willing to accept whatever God appoints. Let us each pray to be

Simple, teachable and mild,
Awed into a little child;
Pleased with all the Lord provides,
Wean'd from all the world besides.

Richison reasons that...

Submission to God is an emptying of self-sufficiency. Humility offends the devil because it betrays his original sin – pride. The foundation of victory in the Christian life lies at submitting to the ultimate authority of God over our lives. There is no Christian liberty without that premise. Capacity to live the Christian life means that we have capacity for God. It rests on a volition that submits to God's system of values as ultimate.

If we reject the ultimate values of God, we will enter into misery. **There is no victory in the Christian life without the discipline of submitting to God.** This submission to God's authority is no vague, unreal submission. Only when we fully submit to God in our values do we submit to God in actuality. It is one thing to know the principle; it is another thing to apply the principle to our experience. To the degree that we live with the principles of God's Word and apply them to our lives, to that degree we "submit to God."

May God help us to take a position in the rank and file of those who accept His authority over our lives. This means accepting God's will as His sovereign plan for us. We accept His superiority as God and our inferiority as creatures in doing this. We obey God Almighty because His providence is best for us, for God knows everything from beginning to end. ([James 4:7 4:7b 4:7c](#)) (Bolding and color added)

Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains that...

Every time a believer sins, he is rebelling against God and is not subject to Him. Therefore, he must subject himself to God, and the means of doing so is by confession of sins (1Jn. 1:9). ([Fruchtenbaum, A. G. The Messianic Jewish Epistles : Hebrews, James, First Peter, Second Peter, Jude. Page 292. Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries](#))

Lehman Strauss comments that...

This is one of the most positive neglected formulas offered to Christians. It tells us why so many fail to resist the devil. The first step that every backslider must take is submission to his heavenly Father. Never try to withstand the enemy in human submission. No matter what it might be that has defeated you, if you "humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, He shall lift you up" (Jas 4:10). No hope nor help is available for one caught in the grip of worldliness, refusing to renounce self-will and to take God's will as his own. There must needs be submission both to divine love and divine law. (James, Your Brother: Studies in the Epistle of James)

Gingrich has an insightful comment writing that...

Submit yourselves therefore to God is needed and is the same thing as “humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord,” Jas 4:10. Humility manifests itself in submission. So Jas 4:7a and Jas 4:10 are summary statements of what is needed by the readers. All of the other eight imperatives (There are a total of 10 aorist imperatives in Jas 4:7-10!) between the two summary statements are explanations of how the readers are to **humble** and **submit** themselves. ([Roy Gingrich's Commentaries in Outline Form 100 Volumes](#))

Shall I, I pray Thee, change thy will my Father
Until it be according unto mine?
But no Lord, no, that never shall be, rather
I pray thee blend my human will with Thine.

Amy Carmichael

Submit (5293) (**hupotasso** from **hupó** = under + **tasso** = arrange in orderly manner) means literally to place under in an orderly fashion. In the active voice **hupotasso** means to subject, bring under firm control, subordinate as used in (Ro 8:20-note). **Hupotasso** also implies that the one who is subordinate is ready and willing to obey his or her superior's commands.

It is interesting to observe that the idea of submission is usually directed to human authority (Lk 2:51; Ro 13:1; Ep 5:22; Titus 2:9; 1Pe 2:13) and not to God (as here and He 12:9).

The **1828 Webster's Dictionary** offers an excellent definition of "**submission**" as...

the act of yielding to power or authority; surrender of the person and power to the control or government of another...a yielding of one's will to the will or appointment of a superior without murmuring. Entire and cheerful submission to the will of God is a Christian duty of prime excellence.

Motyer makes the point that...

The English translation **submit** does not do full justice to the Greek it translates, chiefly because some ways in which we use the idea of submission point to the end of struggling and the onset of passivity. In this way, we 'submit' to superior forces: further resistance is useless. For the duration of the war we will stand idly by as prisoners of the enemy. But the word James uses is much more an 'enlistment' word, the taking up of allegiance to a great Superior in order to engage in the fight under his banner. ([Motyer, J. A. The Message of James: The Tests of Faith. The Bible Speaks Today](#))

Hiebert notes that while **hupotasso** is in the **passive voice**...

The passive is to be understood in the sense of the **middle**, calling for an action that centers on ourselves. "It is an action that we must bring about ourselves as the Holy Spirit operates in us.' It is a call for their voluntary subordination to God and His will. God does not want forced obedience. Thus they must express their recognition of God as supreme in their lives. This subordination, so hard for the proud and self-reliant, is essential to cure their worldliness. "Submission to God is the beginning, middle, and end of the prodigal's return from disastrous familiarity with the world to the security of the Father's home." (Ibid)

While **antitasso** in Jas 4:6 means to array **against**, **hupotasso** in this verse means to arrange **under**, something the humble person willingly does. The idea is to accept one's proper station **under** God. Submission or placing one's self under proper authority is a foundational Biblical principle - Jesus submitted to His parents (Lk 2:51); believers are to submit to government (Ro 13:1-note); husbands and wives are to submit to one another (Ep 5:21-note); the wife is to submit to her husband (Ep 5:22-note, Ep 5:23, 24-note); slaves were to submit to their owners (Titus 2:9-note).

As **Lenski** says both the preceding verb **antitasso** and **hupotasso** obviously are derived from **tasso** so that...

God "ranges Himself against" the proud—"you range yourselves under" God.

James is commanding his readers...

- ...Be aligned under the authority of God, assuming your proper position.
- ...Line themselves up under God.
- ...Subordinate yourself to God that you might obey Him
- ...Put yourself under God's orders and chain of command.
- ...Give over your "rights" and your will to God.

Like soldiers in the military James is saying we must submit to our "Commander in Chief" giving Him our sole allegiance and loyalty.

Like slaves we should submit to our loving Master.

Take your position in the rank and file, which in the context of James 4 means **under** God, your "Commander in Chief", to do His will and obey His Word, the aorist imperative calling for decisive, effective, definite obedience! And remember that delayed obedience is ALWAYS disobedience! God is not mocked, so if we do not humbly submit to God, we should not be surprised that the devil and his minions can and will launch successful attacks on our mind (this is the battlefield and the attacks are always fiery missiles in the form of lies meant to counter God's truth, cp the devil's basic nature Jn 8:44). It is utter presumption (as well as self-deception) to think we can sin freely and not open ourselves up to enemy assault.

The safest spot for saints is submitting to the Savior!

Submit is in the passive voice which generally speaks of action exerted on the subject [man] from outside [God]. In the NT a number of the uses of **hupotasso** are in the **passive voice** with a **middle sense** signifying the **voluntary subjection** to the will of another. This idea is found in non-military secular uses where **hupotasso** described a voluntary attitude of giving in or cooperating. This "motif" of voluntary subjection is especially critical in marriages, lest husbands and wives misapply the Scriptures. It should come as little surprise that the call for submission in marital relationships follows the command for the believer to be continually filled with (controlled by) the Holy Spirit. How else can one truly, from the heart, submit to another? How else can a husband unconditionally love his wife so that she willingly submits her will to his loving leadership? (see discussion Eph 5:18-note, Ep 5:21, 22-note, Eph 5:23-note)

SPURGEON'S PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING TO GOD

The reader is strongly encouraged to take a moment and peruse **Spurgeon's** excellent sermon on James 4:7 ([Unconditional Surrender](#)) in which he gives several practical guidelines regarding what it means to submit to God. Here are a few excerpts (in addition to the sections quoted earlier in this note) to wet your appetite...

Are you quite sure that you are submissive to the divine will as to your rank in society? Have you accepted your position in the scale of worldly wealth? Are you satisfied to be sickly, obscure, or of small ability? Are God's appointments your contentments? Too many professors are quarrelling with God that they are not other than they are. This is evil, and shows that pride is still in their hearts, for were they conscious of their own deserts they would know that anything short of hell is more than we deserve, and as long as we are not in the pit of torment gratitude becomes us. It is a happy thing when the mind is brought to submit to all the chastisements of God, and to acquiesce in all the trials of His providence...

It is a great thing to have the soul entirely submitted to God about everything, so that we never wish to have anything in providence other than God would have it to be, nor desire to have anything in his Word altered: not one ordinance of the church of God, not one doctrine of revelation, not one precept or warning other than it is. We shall never be at rest till we come to this. It is essential to our happiness to say at all times, "Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt." (Mt 26:39)...

Submit, then, my brethren. Beseech the Holy Spirit to bow your wills to complete subjection You will never be happy till self is dethroned. I know some of God's children who are in great trouble only because they will not yield to the divine will....

(Submission) means also obedience. Do not merely passively lie back and yield to the necessities of the position, but gird up the loins of your mind, and manifest a voluntary and active submission to your great Lord. The position of a Christian should be that of a soldier to whom the centurion says "Go," and he goes, and "Do this," and he does it. It is not ours to question, that were to become masters; but ours it is to obey without questioning, even as soldiers do. **Submission to our Lord and Savior will be manifested by ready obedience: delays are essentially insubordinations, and neglects are a form of rebellion.** (1Sa 15:22, 23) I fear that there are some Christians whose disobedience to Christ is a proof of their pride...I am afraid there are some who do not obey the Master because they are proud enough to think that they know better than he does; they judge the Lord's will instead of obeying it.

"Submit yourselves to God" by yielding your hearts to the motions of the divine Spirit: by being impressible, sensitive, and easily affected. The Spirit of God has hard work with many Christians to lead them in the right way, they are as the horse and the mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle. There is the stout oak in the forest, and a hurricane howls through it, and it is not moved, but the rush by the river yields to the faintest breath of the gale. Now, though in many things ye should be as the oak and not as the rush, yet in this thing **be ye as the bulrush and be moved by the slightest breathing of the Spirit of God.** The photographer's plates are rendered sensitive by a peculiar process: you shall take another sheet of glass and your friend shall stand before it as long as ever he likes, and there will be no impression produced, at least none which will be visible to the eye; but the sensitive plate will reveal every little wrinkle of the face and perpetuate every hair of the head. **Oh, to be rendered sensitive by the Spirit of God, and we can be made so by submitting ourselves entirely to His will.** Is there not a promise to that effect?—"I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." (Ezek 36:26KJV)...

Sometimes the Spirit of God whispers to you, "Retire to pray." At such times enter your closet at once. Remember how David said, "When thou said unto me, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face Lord will I seek." (Ps 27:8-[note](#))

The Spirit of God will sometimes impel you to a duty which involves self-denial, which will take up much of your leisure, and will bring you no very great honor as a reward. Be not disobedient to his call, but go about your work speedily. Say with the Psalmist, "I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments." (Ps 119:60-[note](#))

The Spirit will at times urge us to deep repentance on account of faults in which we have been living, he will rebuke us for some ugly temper which we have indulged, or for some hard word which we have spoken against a brother, or because of the worldliness of mind into which we have fallen. Oh, brother, bestir thyself at such times, and examine and purge thy soul. Let a hint from the Holy Spirit be enough for thee.

As the eyes of the handmaiden are towards her mistress, so let your eyes be to your Lord. The handmaid does not require the mistress to speak: it will often happen when she is waiting at table, and there are friends, the mistress nods or puts her finger up, and that is enough. She does not call out "Mary, do this or that," or speak to her loudly a dozen times, as the Lord has to do to us, but a wink suffices. So it ought to be with us; half a word from the divine Spirit, the very gentlest motion from him, should be enough guidance, and straightway we should be ready to do his bidding. In this matter it is not so much your activity as your submission to the Holy Spirit which is needed; it is not so much your running as your willing to be drawn by him. There is to be an activity in religion: we are to wrestle and to fight, but side by side with that we are to yield ourselves to the Spirit's impulse, for it is He that works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure; He strives in us mightily, and if we will but resign ourselves, and no longer be obstacles in His divine way, He will carry us to greater heights of grace, and create in us more fully the likeness of Christ.

"Submit yourselves unto God." Learn the sweetness of lying passive in His hand, and knowing no will but His: learn the blessedness of giving yourselves up entirely to His divine sway, for in so doing you will enter into heaven below. (Read the full sermon - [Unconditional Surrender](#))

Spicq has some excellent, insightful comments noting that **hupotasso** is...

a major virtue in the Christian pastoral writings, expressing the relations of subordination in the cosmic and religious order. God has placed everything in submission to Christ, to whom the angels are subordinate (Heb 2:5; 1Pet 3:22); the church is in submission to the Lord (Eph 5:24); Christians submit to God, to his law and his training, but also to one another to cooperate (1Cor 16:16) in the fear of God (Eph 5:21; cf. Ro 13:8). Woman is subordinate to man, the wife to the husband, the children to the parents (1Ti 3:4; cf. Marcus Aurelius 1.17.3), the young to the old, slaves and servants to their master (Ep 6:5, Titus 2:9; 1Pe 2:18), subjects (cf. Ep. Arist. 205, 207, 265; Josephus, War 2.140; Polybius 21.43, hoi hypotattomenoi) to their sovereign; and finally the Christian must submit to every human creature. We may conclude that the baptized (Ed: I would qualify that only one who is born by the Spirit, Jn 3:3, 5, independent of water baptism if that is what Spicq is alluding to here. cp baptizo conveying the sense of identification with Christ's death - Ro 6:3.) person is a "son of obedience" (1Pet 1:2, 22) in all the larger or smaller human communities in which he is placed (1Pe 2:13-3:12), contributing to the maintenance of the order fixed by the plan of providence whereby all creatures are ordered in a hierarchy (Wis 11:21).

It is clear that **hupotasso** does not have the same range in these differing communal relationships; but it is

always reverent submission, seen as a **self-offering** (cf. Titus 3:1, 2). It means first of all accepting the exact place God has assigned, keeping to one's rank in this or that society, accepting a dependent status, especially toward God (Jas 4:7), like children who are submissive to a father's discipline (Heb 12:9), after the fashion of the child Jesus. **This religious subjection is made up of an obedient spirit, humanness of heart (Ep. Arist. 257), respect, and willingness to serve.** To submit is to accept directives that are given, to honor conditions that are imposed, to please one's superior (Titus 2:9) or honor him by the homage that is obedience (cf. Ep 6:1), to repudiate egotism and aloofness. It is to spontaneously position oneself as a servant toward one's neighbor in the hierarchy of love. (Spicq, C., & Ernest, J. D. Theological Lexicon of the New Testament. 3:424-26. Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson)

Roy Hession alludes to an attitude that is **willing to submit** as a vital part of personal revival, explaining that...

Revival is just the life of the Lord Jesus poured into human hearts. Jesus is always victorious. In heaven they are praising Him all the time for His victory. Whatever may be our experience of failure and barren-ness, He is never defeated. His power is boundless. And we, on our part, have only to get into a right relationship with Him, and we shall see His power being demonstrated in our hearts and lives and service, and victorious life will fill us and overflow through us to others. And that is Revival in its essence. If, however, we are to come into this right relationship with Him, the first thing we must learn is that our wills must be broken to His will is the beginning of Revival. It is painful, humiliating, but it is the only way. It is being "Not I, but Christ, (Gal 2:20-note) and a "C" is a bent "I." The Lord Jesus cannot live in us fully and reveal Himself through until the **proud self** within us is broken. This simply means that the hard unyielding self, which justifies itself, wants its own way, stands up for its rights, and seeks its own glory, at last bows its head to God's will, admits its wrong, gives up its own way to Jesus, surrenders its rights and discards its own glory - that the Lord Jesus might have all and be all. In other words it is dying to self and self-attitudes.

And as we look honestly at our Christian lives, we can see how much of this self there is in each of us. It is so often self who tries to live the Christian life (the mere fact that we use the word "try" indicates that it is self who has the responsibility). It is self, too, who is often doing Christian work. It is always self who gets irritable and envious and resentful and critical and worried. It is self who is hard and unyielding in its attitudes to others. It is self who is shy and self-conscious and reserved. No wonder we need breaking. As long as self is in control, God can do little with us, for all the fruit of the Spirit (enumerated in Gal 5:22-note, Gal 5:23-note), with which God longs to fill us, are the complete antithesis of the hard, unbroken spirit within us and presupposes that it has been crucified.

Being broken is both God's work and ours. He brings His pressure to bear, but we have to make the choice. If we are really open to conviction as we seek fellowship with God (and willingness for the light is the prime condition of fellowship with God), God will show us the expressions of this proud, hard self that cause Him pain. Then we can stiffen our necks and refuse to repent or we can bow the head and say, "Yes, Lord." (cp Jas 4:7)

**Brokenness in daily experience is simply
the response of humility to the conviction of God.**

And inasmuch as this conviction is continuous, we shall need to be broken continually. And this can be very costly, when we see all the yielding of rights and selfish interests that this will involve, and the confessions and restitutions that may be sometimes necessary.

For this reason, we are not likely to be broken except at the Cross of Jesus. The willingness of Jesus to be broken for us is the all-compelling motive in our being broken too (cp 2Co 5:14NIV). We see Him, Who is in the form of God, counting not equality with God a prize to be grasped at and hung on to, but letting it go for us and taking upon Him the form of a Servant - God's Servant, man's Servant (Php 2:5, 6, 7-note, Php 2:8, 9-note). We see Him willing to have no rights of His own, no home of His own, no possessions of His own, willing to let men revile Him and not revile again, willing to let men tread on Him and not retaliate or defend Himself (cp 1Pe 2:21, 22, 23-note). Above all, we see Him broken as He meekly goes to Calvary to become men's scapegoat by bearing their sins in His own body on the Tree (1Pe 2:24-note). In a pathetic passage in a prophetic Psalm, He says, "I am a worm and no man." (Ps. 22:6KJV-note) Those who have been in tropical lands tell us that there is a big difference between a snake and a worm, when you attempt to strike at them. The snake rears itself up and hisses and tries to strike back - a true picture of self. But a worm offers 'no resistance, it allows you to do what you like with it, kick it or squash it under your heel - a picture of true brokenness. And Jesus was willing to become just that for us - a worm and no man. And He did so, because

that is what He saw us to be, worms having forfeited all rights by our sin, except to deserve hell. And He now calls us to take our rightful place as worms for Him and with Him. The whole Sermon on the Mount with its teaching of non-retaliation, love for enemies and selfless giving, assumes that that is our position. But only the vision of the Love that was willing to be broken for us can constrain us to be willing for that.

**Lord, bend that proud and stiff necked I,
Help me to bow the head and die;
Beholding Him on Calvary,
Who bowed His head for me.**

But dying to self is not a thing we do once for all (Mk 8:34, Lk 9:23 adds "daily"). There may be an initial dying when God first shows these things, but ever after it will be a constant dying, for only so can the Lord Jesus be revealed constantly through us.' All day long the choice will be before us in a thousand ways. It will mean no plans, no time, no money, no pleasure of our own. It will mean a constant yielding to those around us, for our yieldedness to God is measured by our yieldedness to man. Every humiliation, everyone who tries and vexes us, is God's way of breaking us, so that there is a yet deeper channel in us for the Life of Christ.

You see, the only life that pleases God and that can be victorious is His life - never our life, no matter how hard we try (Col 1:27b-note; Col 3:4-note). But in as much as our self-centered life is the exact opposite of His, we can never be filled with His life unless we are prepared for God to bring our life constantly to death. And in that we must co-operate by our moral choice...

People imagine that dying to self makes one miserable. But it just the opposite. It is the refusal to die to self that makes one miserable. The more we know of death with Him, the more we shall know of His life in us, and so the more of real peace and joy. His life, too, will overflow through us to lost souls in a real concern for their salvation, and to our fellow Christians in a deep desire for their blessing. (Hession, R. The Calvary Road)

Resist the devil and he will flee from you: antistete (2PAAM) de to diabolō, kai pheuxetai (3SFMI) aph humon

- Mt 4:3-11; Lk 4:2-13-note; Eph 4:27; 6:11,12; 1Pe 5:8,9; Rev 12:9, 10, 11
- [James 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [James 4:7-10 Resolving Conflicts God's Way](#) - Steven Cole
- [James 4:6-7 Drawing Near to God, Pt. 1](#) - John MacArthur

SPIRITUAL WARFARE 101

Expositor's Greek Testament observes that...

It is not a question of subjection either to God or the devil, but rather one of the choice between self-will and God's will; it is the proud spirit that has to be curbed.

Lehman Strauss warns...

Whatever you do, never resist God and submit to the devil. Those who have erred in this respect know full well what a tragic and costly mistake was theirs. Our Lord was the greatest example of submission to the Father's will (Mt. 26:39), and in the hour when Satan attacked Him He was able to resist the foe so that the devil fled from Him (Mt. 4:11). The devil is powerful, but if we resist him, according to the Scripture, he will be put to flight. Lehman Strauss Commentary - Lehman Strauss Commentaries – James, Your Brother: Studies in the Epistle of James) (Bolding added)

Warren Wiersbe makes a great point writing that...

Before we can **stand** before Satan, we must **bow** before God. Peter resisted the Lord and ended up submitting to Satan! ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

John Flavel once wrote that...

Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's reach as humility.

C H Spurgeon comments that...

Where the root Grace of faith is found, other Graces will grow from it. Now notice how the Spirit of God, after having bidden us submit, goes on to show what else is to be done. He calls for a brave resistance of the devil. **“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”** The business of salvation is not all passive—the soul must be awakened to active warfare! I am to fall into the arms of Christ, that He may save me—I must trust Him completely. And when I depend upon Him I receive life—and the very first effort of that life is to strike with all its might the adversary of Christ and of my own soul. I am not only to contend with sin, but with the spirit which foment and suggests sin! I am to resist the secret spirit of evil as well as its outward acts. If you are to have peace with God there must be war with Satan! You cannot rest in your spirit and know the peace which faith gives unless you wage war to the knife against every evil and against the patron and Prince of Evil, even Satan. Are you ready for this? You cannot have peace unless you are! ([Sermon](#))

Motyer remarks that the command to **resist**...

is not a word for one who is carrying the attack over into the enemy camp, but for one who is manning the defenses, knowing that enemy pressure is ceaseless and that he is constantly under fire. We do well to notice that it is those who have subordinated themselves to God who are commanded to stand firm against the devil. James knows of no act of consecration to God which takes us out of the conflict. On the contrary, it is the very act of decisive enlistment as his underlings which brings us into the firing-line and calls the devil's attention to us as objects of attack. (Ibid)

Ralph Martin says we are to...

desist from aligning with the devil (shown by the pursuit of “demonic” wisdom, Jas 3:15; selfish ambition, Jas 3:16; murder, Jas 4:2; and friendship with the world, Jas 4:4-note) (Martin, R. P.. Vol. 48: Word Biblical Commentary : James. Dallas: Word, Incorporated)

Resist the devil - This is the other side of the basic demand to submit. Submit first. Then resist. Don't run. Resist! There is no middle ground, no neutrality. Wholehearted submission to God is only possible as they resist God's archenemy. Stand against him decisively and definitively (aorist imperative). Take your stand against the devil. Fear the Lord and you won't fear the devil! Stand against the adversary in the strength provided by your submission to Christ.

Deep guile and great might
Are his dread arms in fight:
On earth is not his equal...
Scowl fierce as he will;
He can harm us none,
For he is judged—undone;
One little word o'erthrows him.

--Martin Luther

As **Donald Barnhouse** reminds us regarding **resist the devil** that...

the one who tries to do this in his own strength will soon feel the force of flaming darts of the evil one. (Barnhouse, D. G. God's Glory: Romans 14:13-16:27. Grand Rapids, MI.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company)

Thomas Manton has an interesting thought on the relationship between **submission** and **resistance**, noting that...

If you will humbly submit to God, you must expect to resist Satan. In this case, note that true obedience finds much opposition from the devil. Since the fall, a godly life is not known by perfection of grace so much as by conflicts with sin. Satan is still busiest wherever he has least to do. Pirates do not set upon empty vessels, and beggars do not need to fear the thief. Those who have most grace feel most trouble from Satan. He envies them for enjoying the situation and interest in God that he himself has lost...

(Satan) regarding the godly, he asks to sift them as wheat (Lk 22:31). Sometimes he buffets them with dreadful suggestions, at other times with worldly temptations. We cannot set upon a duty without Satan suggesting lazy thoughts and worldly advice. So then, you cannot judge yourselves forsaken by God because you are tempted by Satan; no brother in the flesh has not had his share (1Pe 5:9). Such conflicts are not inconsistent with faith

and piety. The devil tried this even with Christ himself after he had a testimony from heaven (Matthew 4). Paul was troubled with one of Satan's messengers (2Co 12:7). The best are exercised with the sorest conflicts. When the thief breaks into the house, it is not to take away coal but jewels...

You must submit to God, but not to Satan. The Scriptures, in order to speak distinctly and clearly, make contrasts of necessary duties like this. So in 1Cor 14:20 we read, "In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults." Similarly in Ro 16:19, "I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil." These sayings match this one of the apostle: you must submit and yet resist.

Note that instead of worldly desires James mentions Satan. The apostle does not say, "resist sin," but "resist Satan." Note that Satan has a great hand in all sins. Survey the pedigree of sin, and you will see it may all call the devil father. Worldly desires are called his desires (Jn 8:44), and it is said that "anything beyond this comes from the evil one" (Mt 5:37)—that is, from the devil. Giving way to anger is, in the apostle's language, giving the devil a foothold (Eph 4:26,27). Survey the iniquities of every age, and is not Satan's hand in it all? It is said of Judas' treason against Christ that the devil prompted him (Jn 13:2). So too with Ananias: "How is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied?" (Acts 5:3). And in 1Chr 21:1 we read, "Satan ... incited David to take a census of Israel." And in Mt 16:23KJV "Get thee behind me, Satan!" (kiv). The heathen, who did not understand the operations of the devil, thought all our conflicts were against internal passions. Now the apostle is clear that we fight not only against worldly desires, but "against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph 6:12), which makes the fight all the fiercer. ([A Practical Exposition of James](#))

STAND FIRM!

RESIST!

In the great section on spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6:10-18, it is notable that three times Paul emphasizes that we are to **stand firm** (Ep 6:11-note, Ep 6:13-note, Ep 6:14-note)...

11 **Put on** (aorist imperative - Do this now. Don't hesitate or procrastinate! This is war and the foe is invisible!) the full armor of God, that you may be able (dunamai - = be continually empowered) to **stand firm** against the schemes (methodeia) of the devil.

12 For our struggle (pale) 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.

13 Therefore, **take up** (aorist imperative - Do this now. Don't hesitate or procrastinate!) the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist (anthistemi) in the evil day, and having done everything, to **stand firm**.

14 **Stand firm** (aorist imperative - Do this now. Don't hesitate or procrastinate!) therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

In the parallel passage Peter (who experienced a personal encounter with Satan who was allowed to sift him Lk 22:31, 32 [NB: Satan **always** has to get the Sovereign God's permission to sift a saint! cp Job 1:8, 9, 10, 11, 12,] ,) issues several wartime commands to...

Be of sober spirit (aorist imperative - Do this now. Don't hesitate or procrastinate!), **be on the alert** (aorist imperative). Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But **resist** (anthistemi in the aorist imperative) him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. 10 And after you have suffered for a little while, **the God of all grace** (cp greater grace of Jas 4:6-note), who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. (1Pe 5:8-note, 1Pe 5:9-note, 1Pe 5:10-note)

I've found the secret of success,
'Tis holding, 'tis holding on;
The way to every blessedness,
'Tis holding, 'tis holding on;
Our warfare may be hard and fierce,
Oft Satan's arrows wound and pierce,
But still we get more smiles than tears
By holding on, by holding on.
([I've Found the Secret of Success](#))

Resist (436) (anthistemi from anti = against + histemi = to cause to stand) is literally to stand or set against.

The definition of the English word **resist** is to withstand the force or effect of (in this case the attacks of the devil). The **1828 Webster's** dictionary adds that **resist** means...

Literally, to stand against; to withstand; hence, to act in opposition, or to oppose. A dam or mound resists a current of water passively, by standing unmoved and interrupting its progress. An army resists the progress of an enemy actively, by encountering and defeating it.

Resist (like all 10 of the commands in James 4:7-10) is in the **aoarist imperative**, which calls for a military like obedience. The **active voice** describes the subject making a volitional choice to resist.

James is saying...

Take a stand against the devil. Set yourself against the devil. Withstand the devil and his minions.

Anthistemi means to arrange in battle against which pictures a **face to face** confrontation. It was used to refer to an army arranging in battle against the enemy force and so to array against. It means to set one's self against, to stand firm against someone else's onset, to oppose (place opposite or against), to resist by actively opposing pressure or power, to withstand (oppose with firm determination). It involves not only our attitude but a corresponding behavior.

The **aoarist imperative** commands the readers (verb is in plural) to resist effectively! Don't put this off. Don't delay. It even conveys a sense of urgency! The **active voice** means that we must make the choice of our will to resist.

Wuest comments that **resist** (**anthistemi**) means

means "to withstand, to be firm against someone else's onset" **rather than** "to strive against that one." **The Christian would do well to remember that he cannot fight the devil.** The latter was originally the most powerful and wise angel God created. He still retains much of that power and wisdom as a glance down the pages of history and a look about one today will easily show. While the Christian cannot take the offensive against Satan, yet he can stand his ground in the face of his attacks. **Cowardice never wins against Satan, only courage.** (Bolding added) ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans](#))

Resist means to defend oneself against the devil **not** to attack him. On the other hand to cower before the devil is to invite sure defeat. Clothed with the garment of a righteous lifestyle (Col 3:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14-notes) and strengthened in the inner man by the Spirit (Eph 3:16-note) ensures effective resistance to diabolical attacks and procures his promised flight. While we are not to flee from the evil one per se, believer are commanded to **flee** from evil attitudes and actions...

- **Flee** immorality 1Cor 6:18, 19, 20
- **Flee** from idolatry 1Cor 10:14, 15
- **Flee** from these things [love of money], you man of God 1Ti 6:11
- **Flee** from youthful lusts 2Ti 2:22 (note)

Note that every preceding use of the verb **flee** is in the **present imperative** signifying a command to continuously flee. Morning, noon and night we are to run from the evil attitudes and actions which seek to seduce and ensnare us. Believer are **never** instructed to **flee** from the Devil but to **resist** him! There are huge texts written on how to conduct spiritual warfare against our invisible foe, but this single command in James 4:7 succinctly presents the primary principle promising victory in our daily struggle against demonic foes. On the other hand we do well to recall that a lack of resistance will practically guarantee ongoing harassment by the devil and his minions. But as powerful as he is, the devil's primary mode of attack against believers is through the fiery missiles of his temptations which are calculated to appeal to our **pride** (our **fallen flesh**) (cp Jas 1:14-note).

Constable adds that

Whereas God commands us to forsake the world (cp Ro 12:2-note, Jas 1:27-note) and deny the lusts of the flesh (1Pe 2:11-note) we should resist the devil. Satan's desire is to get the Christian to doubt (cp Ge 3:1, 2, 3,4, 5), to deny, to disregard, and to disobey (Ge 3:6) what God has said. ([Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#))

Despite the devil's deceptions, accusations, power, hatred and ferocity, we can successfully **resist** because God commands us to do so and His commands always include His empowerment. Be aware that although the devil is a defeated foe, he is also a persistent foe (**prowl**s in 1Pe 5:8-note = continually on the prowl!). For example, Luke records that

when the devil had finished every temptation (of Jesus), he departed from Him until (time phrase =) an

opportune time. (Lk 4:13).

In his **first** epistle **John** has several passages that reinforce the truth that the believer can resist the devil

I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome (nikao - come off victorious over) **the evil one** (the devil and his evil angels). (1Jn 2:14)

Comment: These young men know sound doctrine and so are strong against sin and error because they have His Word in them and are enable to overcome the wiles of the devil, who makes havoc of spiritual children - Ephesians 4:14 -note

You are from God, little children, and have overcome (be victorious over) them; because **greater is He who is in you** (the Spirit of Christ) than **he who is in the world** (the spirit of the devil and his henchmen) (1Jn 4:4).

Comment: The context speaks especially of false doctrine, which the Spirit of God will help the believer discern as error.

We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him and **the evil one** does not **touch** him. (1Jn 5:18, cp 1Jn 5:19)

Comment: The word for **touch** means to lay hold of or to grasp in order to harm. Because the believer belongs to God, Satan must operate within God's sovereignty and cannot function beyond what God allows, as taught for example in Job 2:5 (cp Job 1:6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13). God protects His children and places definite limits on Satan's influence or power!

A word of caution is in order. A believer should never "discuss" things with the Devil or his minions. Eve made this mistake, and paid for it dearly (see Ge 3:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, cp 1Ti 2:14).

Take your **stand** on the Word and then you will be able to with**stand** his attack. Resist the temptation to try special formulas or words directed at the devil or his henchmen. Simply purpose to remain steadfast in the faith, continuing to live in accord with the truth of God's Word . As the believer feeds on **sound doctrine** and **obeys** God's truth, Satan is "resisted". Satan is the father of lies and the prince of darkness but God's Truth exposes the enemy's lies and His Light overpowers darkness.

John records that

the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it (did not overpower it). (Jn 1:5)

The devil is far more intelligent and powerful than we are, so we cannot resist him in the strength of the flesh (cp 2Co 10:3, 4, 5note, Eph 6:11, 12, 13, 14, see note). Our example in combating Satan is the Lord Jesus who defeated the devil's temptations by citing appropriate passages from God's Word. For example when

the **tempter** came and said to Him, **"If** You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."
Jesus "answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD (from Deut 8:3).'" (Mt 4:3, 4, cp Lk 4:4)

The devil in fact is already a defeated foe for Jesus

partook of (flesh and blood), that through death He might render powerless **him** who had the power of death, that is, **the devil** (He 2:14-note).

However, for personal victory "against the schemes of the devil" in our present circumstances, we must "put on the whole armor of God" and then we are enabled by God's grace to **stand firm** (Ep 6:11-note)

Thomas Manton offers several practical points on resisting the devil...

a. **Negatively.** We must not fear him; the devil has no power to force us, but only the skill to persuade us. Distrustful fear gives him the advantage. We are to "resist him, standing firm in the faith" (1Pe 5:9-note). And again, we must not "give the devil a foothold" (Eph 4:27-note). Anger may make way for malice; and when the first thoughts of sin do not grieve us, the actual practice of them is not far off.

b. **Positively.** We must demonstrate our resistance, partly by refusing to commune with him. Sometimes he must be checked simply by a rebuke and abomination. When the temptation tends to a direct withdrawal from obedience, for example, it is enough to say, "Get behind me, Satan" (Mt 16:23) and to chide the thought before it settles. Sometimes we must counter him with reasons and thoughts of grace. For example, when the temptation has taken any hold on the thoughts, and corruption rises up in defense of the suggestion, this is

called “standing your ground” when the day of evil comes and extinguishing the flaming arrows of the evil one (Ephesians 6:13-18-note).

The next thing is the way and means of maintaining this war by the graces of God’s Holy Spirit. I will mention the chief ways:

a. **Faith** (1Pe 5:9, 10-note). You need faith, so that you may overcome mystically, by taking hold of the victory of Christ, and morally, so that you may reflect on the glorious rewards appointed for those who stand out in the course of trial and on the spiritual help that is at hand to encourage you in the fight. Faith is necessary in every way; it is called “the shield” (Eph 6:13-note). The shield covers the other parts of the armor; thus faith supports the other graces when they are assaulted—by getting help, by encouraging them, etc.

b. **Prayer**. Never cope with a temptation alone, but try to bring God into the combat: “pray in the Spirit on all occasions” (Eph 6:18-note). I believe “Spirit” here means not the Holy Spirit, but the heart or soul; when you are assaulted, lift up your spirit in holy groans to God.

c. **Self-control** (1Pe 5:8-note). We need to be watchful, to take heed of every worldly desire; and we need to be self-controlled too in the use of every support, every created thing, every activity. I think that by “self-controlled” the apostle means moderating our affections in worldly things, which is necessary for this purpose since all temptations are insinuated into our minds under the guise of pleasure, honor, profit, etc.; and so a heart drowned in the world is soon overcome.

d. **Watchfulness**. Those with gunpowder natures need to take care not only of burning arrows but of the least sparks. God is soon offended; therefore we must go about “with fear and trembling” (Php 2:12-note). Our hearts are soon overcome; so we need to watch what comes in, lest it proves itself a temptation, and what goes out, lest it proves itself corrupt. We should keep looking for victory in the fight and for the fight in the victory.

e. **Sincerity**. The apostle speaks of “the belt of truth” (Eph 6:14-note). A double-minded man is his own tempter, and unsettled souls simply invite Satan to make an alliance with their own doubts and anxieties. Such a mixture, like civil wars in a country, makes us prey.

Either you must resist him or be taken captive by him; there is no middle course.

Satan flatters the creatures; but the snares of sin will at length prove chains of darkness. We look at the trouble of resisting him, but the sweetness of victory will abundantly compensate for it. Usually we make the mistake of seeing how delightful sin is and what a nuisance it is to resist it, and so we create a trap for ourselves. The right comparison is between the fruit of sin and the fruit of victory. We have often experienced what it is to be overcome; let us now see how delightful victory will be. Nothing reveals the power and support of Christianity so much as the spiritual conflict. If people give in to temptations and commit sins without remorse, it is no wonder they are so cold and dead in religion or that they have such dim and doubtful evidence of heaven; they never tried the truth and power of grace. The spiritual combat and the victories of Christ are riddles and dreams to them.

Satan is a foiled adversary; Christ has overcome him already. All that is required for victory is a strong “No.” Do not give him any further reply. To resist him, not to yield to him, is the only way to be rid of him.

Christ has foiled the enemy, and he has put weapons into your hands so that you may foil him. He trod on this old serpent when his heel was struck on the cross (see Ge 3:15). Now he wants you to set your feet on his neck; “the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Ro 16:20-note). You need not doubt his help; though Satan is an “accuser,” Christ is an “advocate.” The Spirit of God strengthens us against the suggestions of the evil spirit, and the good angels wait on us (Heb 1:14-note), just as much as the bad angels molest us. Do not fear being deserted; when you are in Satan’s hands, Satan is in God’s hands.

Jesus Christ himself was tempted, and he knows what it is to be exposed to the rage of a cruel fiend; therefore “he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Heb 2:18-note; see also Heb 4:15-note). Those who have suffered with gallstones will sympathize with others who are wracked with pain and torture; Israel was a foreigner, so had to be kind to foreigners. Christ’s heart is made more tender by his own experience; since he grappled with Satan, he is full of compassion for all who are attacked by him. ([A Practical Exposition of James](#))

THE BEDEVILING DIABOLOS

The devil - Why does James mention the devil at this juncture? How does the devil relate to the context? For one thing James had just described earthly wisdom which "is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, **demonic**" (James 3:15). Then in Jas 4:4-note he mentions friendship with the **world**, which would naturally equate with friendship with the **devil** because "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1Jn 5:19). The world and the devil are always associated.

This truth in James 4 (and the parallel passages in 1Pe 5:6, 7-note, 1Pe 5:8-note, 1Pe 5:9-note - Observe that **humility** is to precede engagement of the enemy just as we see in James 4) are vitally important in our ongoing, daily war against our mortal foe, the Devil. Paul pointed out that believers are not to be "ignorant of his schemes" so that no advantage would be taken of us by the Devil (cp 2Co 2:11 - see review of some of the **Schemes of the devil**)

Later in Second Corinthians **Paul** reminded the saints that...

though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. (2Cor 10:3, 4, 5-see notes)

Devil (Latin diabolus) (1228) (**diabolos** from **diá** = through, between + **ballo** = to cast, throw) means a **false accuser**, **slanderer** (one who utters false charges or misrepresentations which defame and damage another's reputation), **backbiting** (malicious comment about one not present), one given to malicious gossip or a **calumniator** (one who utters maliciously false statements, charges, or imputations about, this term imputes malice to the speaker and falsity to the assertions).

Hiebert writes that the word **diabolos** pictures Satan as...

"the slanderer" and gives a description of his principal activity. But James here simply thinks of him as God's enemy and does not stress that activity. In the Septuagint, this Greek term (diabolos) is used almost uniformly to render the Hebrew term Satan." But the articular (**Ed**: Definite article "the" precedes diabolos in Greek = *to diabolos*) designation, in the context, makes it unmistakable that James thinks of the devil, the chief power of evil, as a person. As God's inveterate enemy, he is constantly engaged in seeking to subvert the allegiance of God's people by leading them to self-centered and world-centered attitudes and activities. Satan is the prime and most perfect enemy of God, the beginner and finisher of all pride leading to apostasy from the Supreme, to whom all things should be submissive...He cannot lead a man into sin without the consent of the man's will. As long as a man's will is submissive to the control and guidance of the Holy Spirit, he can stand victorious against all the seductive arts of the devil. As a defeated foe Satan now has no power over the Christian except the power of seduction. But he is a persistent foe. When confronted with the sword of the Spirit he surely flees, but "he returns again and again, sometimes, immediately after the most shameful defeat." (Ibid)

Diabolos is used 37 times in the NAS -

Mt. 4:1, 5, 8, 11; 13:39; 25:41; Lk. 4:2, 3, 6, 13; 8:12; Jn. 6:70; 8:44; 13:2; Acts 10:38; 13:10; Ep 4:27; 6:11; 1Ti 3:6, 7, 11; 2Ti 2:26; 3:3; Titus 2:3; Heb 2:14; Jas 4:7; 1Pe 5:8; 1Jn 3:8, 10; Jude 1:9; Re 2:10; 12:9, 12; 20:2, 10)

Diabolos is the noun form of the verb **diaballō** which describes not only those who bring a false charge against one, but also those who disseminate the truth concerning a man, and do so maliciously, insidiously and with hostility.

Notice how the root words (**diá** = through + **ballo** = throw) picture what the devil does. He constantly throws between seeking to divide whether it be between a husband and wife, a child and parent, a church, etc. Resist his divisive, condemnatory accusations firm in your faith.

Wuest has an interesting comment that the literal meaning of

"to throw through" means "to riddle one with accusations." ([Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament:: Eerdmans](#))

Diabolos is applied some 34 times to **Satan**, the god of this world, and in each case has the definite article in the Greek ("**the**" = defining a specific entity) and is never in the plural (the three uses below in the pastoral epistles are all plural) as when applied to men who, by opposing the cause of God, may be said to act the part of the devil or to side with him.

Paul warns Timothy that in the last days difficult times will come and one of the characteristics is that men will be "**malicious gossips** (diabolos)" (2Ti 3:3-note)

Paul also instructed Timothy that

Women must likewise be dignified, not **malicious gossips** (diabolos), but temperate, faithful in all things." (1Ti 3:11, malicious gossips = diabolos also in Titus 2:3, 4-note).

Diabolos thus is the term used to describe those who pick holes in others and spread criticisms and innuendos. What a telling statement about the diabolical effects of slanderous gossip or malignant misrepresentations in the church! Oh, how each of us need to set a guard over our tongue in God's house!

A T Robertson has no mercy, calling these women "*she devils*" (but in an effort to be "politically correct" note that in Titus 2:3 (note) they would be "he devils"! These men and women actually do the work of the arch slanderer, the Devil himself!

Those who are unsaved are called **children of the devil** for as John explains

By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. (1John 3:10).

The most notorious use in this regard is Judas. Jesus, referring to Judas, declared to the 12 disciples that

one of you is a **devil** (diabolos) (Jn 6:70).

As **Vincent** writes

It is of the very essence of the devilish nature to oppose Christ.

Luke records that Satan himself "*entered into Judas...Iscaiot*" as a prelude and preparation for his betrayal of Jesus to the chief priests and officers (Lk 22:3)

The point is that the devil clearly uses men to carry out his devilish work, and some of those men may appear to have a close relationship with Jesus! Jesus in His explanation of the **parable of the tares** of the field records that

the field is the **world** (contrary to the persistence of many interpreters maintaining that this is a reference to the church!) and as for the **good seed**, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the **tares** are the sons of the evil one and the **enemy** who sowed them is the devil, and the **harvest** is the end of the age; and the **reapers** are angels." (Mt 13:38, 39)

Addressing those Jews who had superficially (but not "savingly") believed in Jesus, He declared

You are of your father the **devil**, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a **murderer** from the beginning (see Genesis 3:1-15, see his demise predicted in Ge 3:15, Ge 4:8, 1Jn 3:12, 15) and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a **liar** (see Ge 3:4), and the father of lies. (Jn 8:44)

And they went on to prove their relationship to the devil when shortly

they picked up stones to throw at Him. (Jn 8:59)

Barclay writes that is but

a small step from the thought of one who searches for everything thing that can be said against a man to the thought of one who deliberately and maliciously slanders man in the presence of God." ([Barclay, W: Mark - The Daily Study Bible Series. The Westminster Press](#))

Barclay also writes that **diabolos**

the devil, is the patron saint of all slanderers and of all slanderers he is chief. There is a sense in which slander is the most cruel of all sins. If a man's goods are stolen, he can set to and build up his fortunes again; but if his good name is taken away, irreparable damage has been done. It is one thing to start an evil and untrue report on its malicious way; it is entirely another thing to stop it. As Shakespeare had it...

Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls:
Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands:
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And makes me poor indeed.

Many men and women, who would never dream of stealing, think nothing—even find pleasure—in passing on a story which ruins someone else's good name, without even trying to find out whether or not it is true. There is slander enough in many a church to make the recording angel weep as he records it." (The letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press)

Note that this discussion of **diabolos** is intended to focus primarily on the meaning of the Greek word and not the more general Biblical teaching on the devil. For more all inclusive articles on "the Devil" click one of the following resources - see study on spiritual warfare and the devil's schemes in Ephesians 6:11. note.

Related Resources:

- [Who is Satan? Who is the devil?](#)
- [Torrey's Topical provides an excellent Scriptural summary of "The Devil"](#)
- [Torrey's topic on the various Names of the Devil](#)
- [Holman's Bible Dictionary article has a well done summary on "Devil"](#)
- [Nave's Topical Analysis of Satan](#)
- ["Satan" in International Std Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [What does it mean to resist the devil, and why will resistance cause the devil to flee?](#)
- [Is it possible to make a deal with the devil?](#)
- [Why is "the devil made me do it" not a valid excuse?](#)
- [Is the devil / Satan a person or a force / personification of evil?](#)
- [What does it mean that Satan is the father of lies \(John 8:44\)?](#)

Diabolos is coupled with the word "**Satan**" (transliteration of Hebrew word meaning "adversary") in the Revelation, John recording that an angel from heaven

laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years (Re 20:2- [note](#))

Diabolos is used of one who makes accusations and presses charges. In [Revelation 12:9-10](#), we read that

the **great dragon** was thrown down, the **serpent of old** who is called **the devil** and **Satan**, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for **the accuser** (kategor) of our brethren has been thrown down, who **accuses** (kategoréo - present tense = describes the devil's continual activity) them before our God day and night. (Re 12:9, 10-see [notes Re 12:9; 10](#))

How grateful saints can be that

There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Ro 8:1-note:1)

Are you safe and protected from the devil's accusations '**in Christ Jesus**' dear reader? If not, cry out this very moment to the Most High God for Him to give you His grace that you might this moment experience eternal security in Christ through your exercising of personal faith in Christ's life, death, burial, resurrection and sure, soon return. God is faithful.

William Evans wrote that it is popular in some circles to day to spell the word devil with the letter 'd' left off thus reducing the idea of an actual person called the devil to a mere influence called evil. The devil may be out of fashion, but he's not out of business and as Evans adds...

If the devil can't mislead people that way, he would have them think of him as a horrible, monstrous-looking creature with a forked tail, dressed in a fiery red suit, and with horns protruding from his head. If the devil can get folks to think of him like that, then when he comes as an 'angel of light', he will not be recognized, and so find it easier to beguile his unsuspecting victims.

Diabolos is used 16 times in the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT - 1Chr 21:1; Esther 7:4; 8:1; Job 1:6, 7, 9, 12; 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7; Ps 109:6; Zech 3:1, 2. Several of the OT uses are recorded below. Note that it is not surprising that 10 of the 16 uses of **diabolos** are in Job 1-2 (If you have not studied these chapters, you would do well to take some time to read them carefully, taking careful note of what God teaches about the "limits" of Satan as well as Job's and his wife's reaction - cp 2Co 2:11)! **Diabolos** is the usual rendering of the Hebrew word **Satan** (accuse, accuser) in the Septuagint (LXX), suggesting that these two words are virtually interchangeable or synonymous.

The English translation of the Septuagint (Brenton's [English Translation](#) of the Septuagint) of Job 1:7 is illustrative of the 10 uses of **diabolos** in Job...

And the Lord said to the **devil**, "Whence art thou come? And the **devil** answered the Lord, and said, I am come from **wandering about** (cf *prowls around*) on the earth, and walking up and down in the world.

So even in the OT we see that the Devil was **prowling about like a roaring lion** seeking someone he might devour. He is wandering through the earth looking for victims. He tried to devour Job but was unsuccessful and in fact what that the devil meant for evil, God used for good (see Job's "revelation" in Job 42:5, 6). We need to understand that spiritual warfare is real. Our enemy is not a figment of some science fiction writers imagination. And God calls on us as His children to stand against the Adversary in the grace in which we stand and the promised Spirit which He has given us when we placed our faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In **Zechariah** we read

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord (Christ), and Satan (LXX = diabolos) standing at his right hand to accuse him. (Zech 3:1)

The **psalmist** writes

Appoint a wicked man over him; and let an **accuser** (LXX = diabolos) stand at his right hand. (Psalm 109:6)

In **First Chronicles** we read that

Then **Satan** (LXX = **diabolos**) stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel. (1Chr 21:1)

King David a man after God's own heart (see Acts 13:22, cf 1Sa 16:7) clearly was not immune to the temptations of the Devil. This "attack" on David was not a surprise to God for the parallel passage in 2Samuel suggests that God permitted Satan to attack (God's "permissive will")...

Now again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and it incited David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah." (2Sa 24:1)

What "foothold" had David allowed Satan? Why did God permit Satan to tempt David to number the troops (take a census)? The following verse shows that David recognized his census taking was a sin (even a great sin - read the context for how many lost their lives because of this sin!) and it appears most likely that it was the sin of pride ("Look how big my army is"). For a moment David took his eyes off his Lord and what He had enabled him to accomplish, and gave Satan a foothold or base of operations from which to shoot fiery missiles to his mind...

Now David's heart troubled him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O LORD, please take away the iniquity of Thy servant, for I have acted very foolishly. (2Sa 24:10)

Dearly beloved, stay sober and ever on the alert! We are in a very real war with real victims (70,000 lost their lives as a result of David's sin above!) and real devastation. And yet remember that we are nowhere told to **fear** the Devil nor his power, but we **are** told to be aware of his continuous evil schemes to destroy us.

If you are **fearful** or **doubting**, treasure the truth in your heart that

in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels (including diabolos), nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ro 8:37, 38, 39-note)

Did you notice how Romans 8 begins and ends? It begins with **no condemnation** (Ro 8:1-note) and ends with **no separation** for those in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior forever. Glory!

Elizabeth Barrett Browning said,

The devil's most devilish when respectable.

Samuel Chadwick, a great English preacher, said,

The one concern of the devil is to keep us from praying.

Puritan **Joseph Hall** added that the devil...

rocks the cradle when we sleep at our devotions.

One of the most devious devices of the devil is to convince people that he no longer exists, or to trivialize himself as an old goat in a red costume, with a forked tail. As someone has wisely quipped "God is not dead, but neither is Satan."

William Shakespeare even wrote about the devil stating that

The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose," and in another place noted that "The devil hath power to assume a pleasing shape.

John Robinson describing the schemes of the devil said that

He sometimes slanders God to men, as to Eve.... sometimes men to God, as Job.... and continually, man to man.

Of combat against the devil **Martin Luther** said that...

The best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to the texts of Scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn.

Remembering that Jesus called the devil the "father of lies" (Jn 8:44), **Paul Matlock** framed this telling sentence...

Satan deals with confusion and lies. Put the truth in front of him and he is gone.

THE DEVIL MUST FLEE

He will flee - While this is a promised conditioned on the humble believer's submission to God, the very statement itself teaches that our mighty enemy (and his henchmen demons) can be successfully resisted. The corollary is that when we fail to submit and/or manifest an a double-minded attitude of indecision and/or doubt when confronting the devil, our indecision causes him to become bold and even aggressive in his attacks. We must never forget that Christ's victory of the devil on the Cross (Jn 12:31, 32, 33) has rendered Satan a defeated foe (cp Heb 2:14, 15-note)

Flee ([5343](#)) (**pheugo**) means to flee away in the sense of to take to flight in order to seek safety. To flee in the sense of to escape something, being made safe from danger by eluding or avoiding it (He 11:34-note, Mt 3:7, Acts 27:30). To flee in the sense of to avoid, shun (Webster = to avoid deliberately and especially habitually), have nothing to do with (1Co 6:18). To vanish or disappear (Re 16:20-note, Re 20:11-note).

Webster defines **flee** as to run away often from danger or evil or to hurry toward a place of security. **Pheugo** is the root of our English word "**fugitive**" defined as one who escapes from something or someone.

He will flee - The future tense can speak of certainty. When we submit to God and resist our archrival, then he must immediately flee! This is a golden promise believers should commit to memory (see **Memorizing His Word**) so that they are always prepared for spiritual battle. But remember that this promise is conditional and must be preceded by our willing submission to God! **Only then** can we "claim the promise" beloved! And in the context of James 4 we see that **humility** manifest by **submission** is not **weakness** but in fact is our **strength** to live the supernatural, Christian life!

John MacArthur reminds us of the foundation which guarantees this promise writing that...

The Lord Jesus defeated him at His temptation and at the Cross (Jn 12:31, 32, 33, cp He 2:14, 15-note) and left him vulnerable. He cannot hold a sinner against that sinner's will. He can't even lead a believer into sin without the consent of that believer's will. When confronted and resisted with the truth of the gospel, he flees, releasing his hold as that repentant sinner who believes is delivered from darkness to light. After salvation he comes again and again through the world system's working on the flesh, but can be defeated repeatedly by the believer who has the "sword of the Spirit" and the rest of the armor (Ep 6:10-17-see notes). ([MacArthur J. James. Moody](#))

NIDNTT writes that in classic Greek...

(cf. Lat. fugere). From the time of Homer, its most common meaning is "flee", "take flight", whether absolutely, or from someone or something (Homer, Plato, Herodotus, etc.). The present and imperfect tenses often express only the purpose or endeavor to get away. Hence the compounds apopheugo, katapheugo, ekpheugo, or propheugo may be added to the participle pheugon in a sentence to denote the escape itself. The accusative (and occasionally the genitive) with pheugo specifies that which is being "shunned", "escaped from", or "avoided"-whether death and war (Homer), evil (Demosthenes), or the consequences of murder

(Euripides). Metaphorically reins may “escape from” the hands of the charioteer. Because a person may flee his country, the articular participle refers to “the exile(s)” (Homer, Xenophon, Thucydides); and since such people may well have been banished, by a natural extension the active verb itself takes on the quasi-passive force of “be banished”, “be expelled” (Herodotus, Xenophon, Dinarchus). Similarly phyge comes to mean “exile”, “banishment”. In Attic Greek, both pheugo and apopheugo occur as law-terms. The pheugon is the defendant, as opposed to the diokon, the prosecutor; and pheugein graphen (or diken) means “to be put on trial”, while an added genitive (e.g. phonou, murder) specifies the charge. To escape the prosecutors (apopheugein tous diokontas) therefore means “to be acquitted”.

Pheugo is used 29x in 29v in the NT and is translated in the NAS as escape(2), escaped(2), fled(5), fled away(2), flee(13), flees(2), ran away(3).

Matthew 2:13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and **flee** to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him."

Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to **flee** from the wrath to come?

Matthew 8:33 And the herdsmen **ran away**, and went to the city, and reported everything, including the incident of the demoniacs.

Matthew 10:23 "But whenever they persecute you in this city, **flee** (present imperative = command to make this your continual practice) to the next; for truly I say to you, you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes.

Matthew 23:33 "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you **escape** the sentence of hell?

Matthew 24:16 then (When? When the Antichrist breaks the covenant with Israel -this occurs at the midpoint of the 7 years of Daniel - see Da 9:27- note) let those who are in Judea **flee** to the mountains;

Matthew 26:56 "But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left Him and **fled**.

Mark 5:14 And their herdsmen **ran away** and reported it in the city and out in the country. And the people came to see what it was that had happened.

Mark 13:14 "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea **flee** (present imperative = command to make this your continual practice) (When? When the Antichrist breaks the covenant with Israel - this occurs at the midpoint of the 7 years of Daniel - see Da 9:27- note) to the mountains.

Mark 14:50 And they all left Him and **fled**.

Mark 14:52 But he left the linen sheet behind, and **escaped** naked.

Mark 16:8 And they went out and **fled** from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Luke 3:7 He therefore began saying to the multitudes who were going out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to **flee** from the wrath to come?

Luke 8:34 And when the herdsmen saw what had happened, they **ran away** and reported it in the city and out in the country.

Luke 21:21 "Then let those who are in Judea **flee** (present imperative = command to make this your continual practice) to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city;

John 10:5 "And a stranger they simply will not follow, but **will flee** from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."

John 10:12 "He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and **flees**, and the wolf snatches them, and scatters them.

Acts 7:29 "And at this remark Moses **fled**, and became an alien in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.

Acts 27:30 And as the sailors were trying to **escape** from the ship, and had let down the ship's boat into the sea, on the pretense of intending to lay out anchors from the bow,

1Corinthians 6:18 **Flee** (present imperative = command to make this your continual practice) immorality. Every other sin that a

man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

Comment: There are over 160 uses of pheugo in the Septuagint, but 4 uses in Genesis 39 that parallel Paul's command to flee sexual sin - cp Joseph's fleeing from Potiphar's advances (Ge 39:12, 13, 15, 18).

1Corinthians 10:14 Therefore, my beloved, **flee** (present imperative = command to make this your continual practice) from idolatry.

1Timothy 6:11 But **flee** (present imperative = command to make this your continual practice) from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

Comment: This sin is the hallmark of all false teachers, who pervert the truth for personal gain. **Wuest** writes that **pheugo** is "in the present imperative which commands a continuous action. Timothy is to make it the habit of his life to be everlastingly fleeing away from a fondness for money. Expositors says that "love of money in ministers of religion does more to discredit religion in the eyes of ordinary people than would indulgence in many grosser vices." ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans](#))

2Timothy 2:22-note Now **flee** (present imperative = command to make this your continual practice) from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

Hebrews 11:34-note quenched the power of fire, **escaped** the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

James 4:7-note Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he **will flee** from you.

Revelation 9:6-note And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; and they will long to die and death **flees** from them.

Revelation 12:6-note And the woman (Reference to Israel) **fled** into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

Revelation 16:20-note And every island **fled away**, and the mountains were not found.

Revelation 20:11-note And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven **fled away**, and no place was found for them.

Comment: This describes the "surreal" time of the Great White Throne judgment, when creation as we know it has "fled" or vanished, and before the appearance of the New Heaven and New Earth (Re 21:1-note)

Pheugo is used 161 times in the non-apocryphal **Septuagint (LXX)** -

Ge 14:10; 39:12f, 15, 18; Ex 4:3; 14:5, 25, 27; 21:13; Lev 26:17, 36; Nu 10:35; 16:34; 24:11; 35:6, 11, 15, 32; Dt 4:42; 19:4, 11; 28:7, 25; Josh 7:4; 8:5f, 20; 10:11, 16; Jdg 1:6; 4:15, 17; 7:21f; 8:12; 9:21, 40, 51; 11:3; 20:32, 42, 45, 47; 1Sa 4:10, 16f; 14:22; 17:51; 19:8, 12, 18; 21:10; 22:17, 20; 23:5f; 27:4; 30:17; 31:1, 7; 2 Sam 1:4; 4:4; 10:13f, 18; 13:29, 37; 15:14; 17:2; 18:3, 17; 19:3, 8f; 23:11; 24:13; 1 Ki 2:28f; 11:43; 12:18; 20:20, 30; 2Ki 3:24; 7:7; 8:21; 9:3, 10, 23, 27; 14:12, 19; 1Chr 10:1, 7; 11:13; 19:14f, 18; 21:12; 2Chr 10:2, 18; 13:16; 14:12; 21:9; 25:22, 27; Neh 13:10; Job 27:22; 30:3; Ps 31:11; 60:4; 68:1; 104:7; 114:3, 5; 139:7; Pr 28:1; Song 8:14; Isa 10:18, 29; 13:14; 16:3; 20:6; 21:14f; 22:3; 24:18; 27:1; 30:16f; 31:8f; 43:14; 48:20; Jer 4:6, 21; 37:13f; 38:19; 46:5f, 15, 21; 48:6, 19, 44; 49:30; 50:16, 28; 51:6; Da 10:7; Amos 5:19; 6:5; 9:1; Obad 1:14; Jonah 1:3, 10; 4:2; Nah 2:5, 8; Zech 2:6. Here are a few of the uses...

Genesis 14:10 Now the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah **fled**, and they fell into them. But those who survived **fled** to the hill country.

Genesis 39:12 And she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand and **fled**, and went outside. 13 When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and **had fled** outside...18 and it happened as I raised my voice and screamed, that he left his garment beside me and **fled** outside."

Ex 4:3 Then He said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses **fled** from it.

Lev 26:17 'And I will set My face against you so that you shall be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you shall rule over you, and **you shall flee** when no one is pursuing you.

Ps 68:1-note (For the choir director. A Psalm of David. A Song.) Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; and let those who hate Him **flee** before Him.

Ps 104:7-[note](#) At Thy rebuke they **fled**; At the sound of Thy thunder they hurried away.

Ps 114:3-[note](#) The sea looked and **fled** (Miracle of the Red Sea - Ex 14:21 and 40 years later at the Jordan River); The Jordan turned back (Josh 3:13, 14, 15).... 5 What ails you, O sea, that you **flee**? O Jordan, that you turn back?

Ps 139:7-[note](#) Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I **flee** from Thy presence?

Pr 28:1 The wicked **flee** when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are bold as a lion.

ILLUSTRATION - Crafty Coyotes - “Like many sheep ranchers in the West, Lexy Fowler has tried just about everything to stop crafty coyotes from killing her sheep. She has used odor sprays, electric fences, and ‘scare-coyotes.’ She has slept with her lambs during the summer and has placed battery-operated radios near them. She has corralled them at night, herded them at day. But the southern Montana rancher has lost scores of lambs—fifty last year alone.

“Then she discovered the llama—the aggressive, funny-looking, afraid-of-nothing llama. ‘Llamas don’t appear to be afraid of anything,’ she said. ‘When they see something, they put their head up and walk straight toward it. That is aggressive behavior as far as the coyote is concerned, and they won’t have anything to do with that. Coyotes are opportunists, and llamas take that opportunity away.’”

Apparently llamas know the truth of what James writes: “Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you” (4:7). The moment we sense his attack through temptation is the moment we should face it and deal with it for what it is. ([Bible.org Sermon Illustrations - Recommended](#))