

SUBMIT AND RESIST

(A Meditation for the New Year)

“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7)

Joe Garman recently returned from New York where he was privileged to see the second largest collection of Bibles in the world. He said that a defining moment came when he touched the braille Bible of Helen Keller. She was a prolific Bible reader. The American Bible Society gave her 3 different Bibles and have pictures of her with 8 or 9 other editions.

This testimony touched my heart and I returned to the office and “Googled” Helen Keller and Bible. To my amazement I found an article claiming that she was an atheist. I must confess a moment of confusion and doubt. Had I been duped by an urban legend? Then a sense of reality set in. Does any rational person believe that an atheist would collect and read a dozen different editions of the Bible?

Further, it dawned upon me that I should expect the enemy of our souls to sow seeds of doubt about those who love God. The devil is the father of lies and specializes in creating ambivalence. He knows that a double minded man will receive nothing from the Lord. His insidious strategy was first seen in Eden where the truth of God was clouded by clever questions. Then he tricked Cain with another enticement too tempting to resist. Down through the ages he has consistently raised thoughtful questions for the specific purpose of creating doubt.

Even to Jesus this ingenious deceiver dared to say “If” you are the Son of God. Our blessed Lord, however, was equal to the task. With steadfast resolution and singleness of heart He submitted to God. There was no ambivalence or uncertainty in Jesus! As you know, Jesus resisted the devil. Like a cockroach runs from the light the wicked one ran away, but only “for a season”. The cowardly devil cannot stand to be resisted, but like a deadly predator waits patiently for our moments of weakness and indecision.

As we face the frontiers of another New Year we can expect the devil to do what he does best. He will try to sow seeds of doubt about your faith, your marriage, your church, your job, your friends, and every other godly relationship and commitment that you hold dear. Be on your guard against such negative thoughts for he is so “subtle” that you may not even recognize his presence. The Biblical cure for such a problem is simple - “resist the devil and he will flee from you”.

In the early morning hours of May 20, 1927 Charles Lindbergh took off from Roosevelt Field, Long Island, for the first ever solo crossing of the Atlantic. He arrived at the field in the middle of the night after only 2 hours of sleep. He lifted off between rain storms from the soggy grass field headed straight for Paris. A take off to the west would have been safer. Several times his plane lifted briefly into the air only to return to the rain soaked runway. With high lines looming ahead lesser men would have throttled back and given up. He did not! Fighting sleep deprivation and discouragement he flew through a thousand miles of fog, sleet, and snow. Sometimes he was only 10 feet above the icy sea, and at other times he was at 10,000 feet. 33 hours and 29 minutes later he arrived at Le Bourget Field in Paris. This historic flight could not have been achieved by anyone who was ambivalent and uncertain. Neither is any other meaningful accomplishment achieved by those who are timid.

Jesus said it like this: “No-one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62). Paul said it like this: “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.” (2 Tim 1:7) What do you say?

There is no better time than now to submit to God and resist the devil. The liar and deceiver will whisper in your ear that it cannot be done. He will try to poison your mind with a long list of failures, but his only power is in deception. Like a clever con artist he offers treasures that are not real and pleasures that quickly turn to pain. When the wicked one places such thoughts in your mind, resist him! Don’t let the demon of discouragement trick you into turning back and giving up. He that is within us is greater than he that is in the world. May this Biblical command be your own personal New Year’s resolution. Let us all “Submit to God and resist the devil”.