

Recognizing The Enemy's Tactics and Resisting Him

by Jeremy Utley

This sermon focuses on the practical aspects of resisting the devil, drawing parallels between recognizing the voice of Satan and identifying specific signs like 'avoid the cross' or 'don't come back to Jesus yet.' It delves into the importance of resisting these temptations by looking at examples from Judas and Peter, emphasizing the need to run back to Jesus and not stay away. The sermon also highlights the significance of taking up the cross daily, using Jesus' actions during supper as a powerful illustration of denying oneself for the sake of others.

Scripture: James 4:7, Hebrews 4:16, 1 John 1:9, Isaiah 55:7, Matthew 16:23, John 13:2, Matthew 6:1

Topics: "Resisting Temptation", "Daily Discipleship"

Description

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Transcript

If you would turn with me to James chapter 4, there's a verse there that I have been blessed to meditate on. In James chapter 4, in verse 7, he says, Submit therefore to God, and then he says, resist the devil and he will flee from you. And that's a phrase that I think many of us know, resist the devil and he will flee from you.

But I want to ask a very simple question, practically, how do I know if I'm resisting the devil? It's a phrase that we can use and it starts to become meaningless unless we know practically what it means. And if I said to you, hey, be sure to resist the devil. I think most people would say, okay, but let me say it differently.

If I said, be sure to resist Jacob Potter. If this verse said resist Jacob Potter, what would you say? Adults would probably say, oh, okay, Jacob Potter, got it. Okay, thank you.

Children, I think, would say what? What would you say, children? If I said resist Jacob Potter, what would you say? Who's Jacob Potter? How do I know when he comes around? I want to resist him, but how do I know when he comes around? And if I said to you, hey, he's always wearing a cowboy hat, he drives a big red truck, he listens to Frank Sinatra, he's, you know, and if a red truck came up and this guy in a cowboy hat and he's blaring Frank Sinatra, you'd think, oh no, that's Jacob Potter. Jeremy told me about Jacob Potter. I've got to be careful, right? There's certain attributes or giveaway signs.

Who is Jacob Potter? Who is the devil? What are his giveaway signs? If we're commanded to resist him, how do we know if we're encountering him? That's something I've been meditating on. I've been blessed to meditate on. What does his voice sound like? You know, we think a lot about hearing the voice of the Lord.

Do we know if we hear the voice of the enemy? What does his voice sound like? And two simple things that the Lord has been teaching me that I wanted to mention, especially for the children, how do you know if it's Satan you're encountering? What does his voice sound like? Two things I found in my life that he often says. One, you don't have to go to the cross. You don't have to go the way of the cross.

It's not that important. And two, you can't come back to Jesus yet. So those are two marks, just like Jacob Potter wears a cowboy hat and drives a red pickup truck.

Satan is often saying to me either avoid the cross or don't come back to Jesus yet. And I want to say a little bit about both of those things, because it's really important to recognize that when we hear that voice, that's the voice of the enemy. And when we hear the voice, and I'll start with the second statement, don't come back to Jesus yet.

I should be growing in my awareness that that's the voice of the enemy. I need to resist it. When I hear that voice say don't come back to Jesus, that's not the voice of God.

That's the voice of the devil. But if I don't know it, I can think, wow, this is a really godly thing to do. I can't come back to Jesus because I'm a sinner.

I've sinned. I've made some mistake. I can't come back to Jesus yet.

And that can sound very good. And if we don't know that that's actually what Satan says, we can think we should listen to it. And I found for myself, let me ask you a question.

What's the difference between Judas and Peter? Both were disciples of Jesus Christ, right? And they both, especially towards the end of Jesus' life, they both disobeyed Jesus badly. You could say they both listened to the voice of Satan. Satan led Judas to betray Jesus.

Satan prompted or goaded Peter into denying that he ever knew him. So both Judas and Peter made the same mistake of listening to Satan. But what's the difference? Judas kept listening to Satan and Peter resisted Satan.

I believe that in both of their cases, for both Judas and Peter, they both fell. And I think for both of them, the enemy said, you can't come back to Jesus. You can't come back to Jesus.

And Judas kept listening and he kept believing that. And what happened? Ultimately, he fell away. His life ended in total despair apart from Jesus.

But Peter, who maybe heard the very same thing, you can't come back to Jesus, what did he do? He resisted Satan. He resisted the voice that said, don't come back to Jesus. And it ultimately resulted in his salvation.

And I have found for myself, there's a voice often, if I sin, when I sin, I do sin. And when I sin, there's a voice that says you can't come back to Jesus. But there's a verse I want to mention in Hebrews chapter 4. If you'll turn there with me.

Hebrews chapter 4, verse 16. It says there, therefore, let us draw near to the throne, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need. And for sure, we want to be more and more.

We want to be approaching the throne of grace to receive grace. But it also says so that we may receive mercy in our time of need. When do I need to receive mercy? When I have fallen away from the Lord, when I have sinned.

And what should be my attitude when I need mercy? It says, therefore, let us draw near with confidence. I can be confident that if I confess my sin, as it says in 1 John chapter 1 and verse 9, there's a verse that we've memorized and that hopefully is written on our hearts. If we confess our sin, he is faithful to forgive us and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.

He cleanses me when I confess my sin. And if I have confessed my sin and if I've repented, then I, and I've turned away from it. I say, I don't want to sin again.

I really want to be with Jesus. Then I have to resist the voice that says you can't come back to Jesus yet. I have to believe with all my heart that I honor Jesus most, not by staying away from him, but by running back to him.

But after we've sinned, it's the time when we can think, I just can't come back to him yet. And it's really helped me to learn that's the voice of Satan. The voice that says you can't come back to Jesus yet is the voice of Satan.

And when James tells us, James is Jesus' brother, and when he tells us resist the devil, the first instinct we have to have when we hear that voice say you can't come back to Jesus, we have to say, get behind me, Satan. The Bible tells me that I can draw near with confidence to the throne of grace that I might find mercy in my time of need. And right now I have need.

And I thought in my own life, there's been times where I thought, how could you possibly not, you know, it says he will cleanse us of all unrighteousness, which means he doesn't see any more unrighteousness. When he looks at us, when we've been cleansed in the blood of Jesus, we confess our sins and repent, he cleanses us in the blood of Jesus. And it says he cleanses us of all unrighteousness, which means there's no more unrighteousness for God to see.

And I can think, how can you not see my unrighteousness, Lord? I'm so aware of it. And that's where Isaiah 55 is a great promise. Isaiah 55 in verse 8, the reason it says that he doesn't see our unrighteousness, and it says here in verse 7, the reason that the wicked can turn from their sin, it says in Isaiah 55 verse 7, let the wicked forsake his way, but the unrighteous man his thoughts.

Let him return to the Lord. Peter listened to this, Judas didn't, and the Lord will have compassion on him. He will abundantly pardon.

Why? And you can think, why will you abundantly pardon me, Lord? And the next verse tells us, for or because my thoughts are not your thoughts and because my ways are not your ways. And just like we can know Jacob Potter from his cowboy hat and his red pickup truck, the first way that we can recognize the voice of Satan is when we hear, don't come back to Jesus. We have to learn to resist that.

We have to remember Jane's words to us in that moment, resist the devil, resist the thought that says I can't come back to Jesus, and instead honor Jesus Christ by running back to him rather than by avoiding him. The second thing that the, that the second mark, you know, the cowboy hat or the red pickup truck, I have nothing against cowboy hats, by the way, or pickup trucks, so if you have a pickup or a cowboy hat, that's great. I'm just using it as a, as a picture.

The second mark that we know that we're hearing the voice of the enemy is when, is found in Matthew 16. If you're going to turn there, Matthew chapter 16 in verse 23, Jesus shows us one time he heard Satan's voice in Matthew chapter 16, and it comes from a surprising place because it actually comes out of Peter's mouth, but it says there in Matthew 16, if you look with me in verse 23, it says Jesus turned and said to Peter, get behind me, Satan. So he heard Satan's voice when Peter spoke, and what Jesus was saying, get behind me, Satan, for is if you look in the previous verse, Peter took Jesus aside and said, God forbid that you should have to go to the cross.

God forbid, and Jesus recognized that's what Satan always sounds like. He's always saying, I don't have to go to the cross, and we know that God's will is that we take up our cross every single day. Jesus tells us in Luke chapter 9 in verse 23, the disciples are those who take up their cross every single day, and the voice of the enemy is the exact opposite.

He says, you don't have to take up the cross every day. You don't have to go to the cross, and so let Jesus go to the cross. Jesus went to the cross.

There's no need for you to go to the cross, and it's exactly, it's not just a little bit off, it's exactly opposite. Anytime we hear the voice say, don't bother with dying to yourself today, that's Satan's voice, and I have to, just like I have to be aware of the red pickup and the cowboy hat, I got to say, that's the voice of the enemy. Why does Satan want us to avoid the cross? There are many reasons why he wants us to avoid the cross, but one reason that the Lord brought to my mind is from 2 Corinthians chapter 4. It's because that's the way the life of Jesus Christ has manifested in this world.

It says there, what the apostle Paul says, is we're always bearing about in our bodies the dying of Jesus so that the life of Christ might be manifested, and we could say, insofar as we're not bearing in our bodies the dying of Jesus, the life of Jesus will not be manifested, and what does Satan hate? Satan hates the life of Jesus. He doesn't want Jesus' life to be put on display, and what he knows is if he can get us to avoid the cross, he will cause us to fail to put Jesus' life on display. As long as we don't go to the cross, Jesus Christ won't be seen, so he doesn't want us to know about the cross.

He doesn't want us to hear about the cross. He doesn't want us to remember the cross, and I want to make it very personal and very practical because in our church, we probably hear a lot about, take up the cross, right? Children, raise your hand if you've heard an adult say, die to yourself or take up the cross. Yeah, keep your hand raised if you really know what it means.

We might think we do, right, but what does that mean exactly? I've got one, there were 12 hands up, and now there's only one. That means less than 10% knows what it means. This is the phrase we use all the time.

What does it mean to take up the cross? Satan tells us he doesn't want us to go to the cross. He says, just like he said to Jesus through Peter, God forbid it. You don't need to go to the cross, and it's very important, so I want to make it very practical.

There's a verse, I see this in Jesus' life. There's just one example, but it's an example of practical daily life, taking up the cross. John chapter 13.

Anytime we want to know the definition of a word or phrase, we should look to Jesus, right? We've heard that many times. I see, what do I see when I look at Jesus? I say, Lord, what does it look like to go to the cross? There's five words hidden in this, in these few verses here that are so important. John chapter 13 in verse 2, and I'll hold up my hand so that you can know what words there are.

The first two words are during supper, okay, and then, and then there's a, there's kind of a, um, a phrase there. It says the devil put into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus, but then it says Jesus, so three words. During supper, Jesus, knowing that the father had given all things into his hand, and that he had gone forth from God and was going back to God.

Verse 4, last two words, got up. Those are the five words I want you to picture when you think about what does it mean to go to the cross. During supper, a time when it's my time to relax, to enjoy, to kick back.

During supper, Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, the one who we're always supposed to look at, fix our eyes upon, follow. Jesus did what? He got up. At my house, there's a funny thing that happens in my house around dinnertime, and if you ask any of my kids, I think they'll tell you, they know, probably they're laughing right now because they know, we all sit down and somebody says, I want milk, you know, or I need something, right? We all sit down, and I've noticed for myself, very practically speaking, during supper, I don't want to get up.

What do I want? I want a hot meal. I've been working or, or I've been the recipient of someone else's work, and I just want to relax, and Jesus Christ, the one who tells us to take up our cross and follow him, just like he took up his cross every single day for 33 and a half years, the last day of his life, the day when he knows he's going to the, to the physical cross, the one day you think, he says, I've earnestly desired to share this meal with you. He's so looking forward to spending time with his disciples, and he knows he's about to go back to the father.

If there's any meal in the history of the world where somebody deserves to not get up, it's this meal with this savior, and what happens when somebody says, I need milk? Of all the people at the table, Jesus, during supper, Jesus got up, and to me, it's a very helpful and challenging picture to think about. That's what it means to take up the cross. There is an idol.

We heard a few weeks ago from our brother Bobby about idols. At the end of 1 John, it says, little children, guard yourself from idols. I found one of the great idols in my life is convenience, just enjoying what's convenient, and Jesus, our Lord and master and example, the last meal of his life, it says during supper, he got up, and I don't think it was the first time that he got up during supper.

I think he'd gotten up many times before, and he had become accustomed to denying his enjoyment of a hot meal and his right to have somebody else serve him. That's the Lord that I want to follow. You know, Brother Zac has said before in an argument, who should apologize first? If both people are wrong, there's never a case where one person is 100% wrong and the other 0%.

There's always some shared responsibility. Who should apologize first? As we've heard, the most spiritual one, and it's challenged me to think at mealtime, who should get up first? I think it's the same answer, the most spiritual one. It's not a matter of competition or to be showy or anything like that, but it's to say that's what it looks like to deny our will.

That's what it looks like to take up our cross is to set aside our own convenience, our own enjoyment for the sake of on behalf of others. As the Lord leads, not as a law that we live by, but as the Lord leads, I'm willing to get up. I want to be willing to get up.

For me, I've noticed that if I get up, there can be this, you know, if I get up to get the milk, for example, there can be a little bit of a huff or a little bit of fanfare, and I can, you know, I can want to be noticed, but Jesus tells us, you look at Matthew chapter six, I'll end with this passage. How should we get up? If we've decided that's a good way to go the way of the cross, I know that Satan's telling me you don't have to go to the cross, but I know that Jesus, my Lord, during supper, he got up. If I want to do that, how should I get up? Matthew chapter six, verse one, Jesus says, beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them.

Don't huff and puff if you obey me, otherwise you have no reward with your father in heaven. So when you give to the poor, and I could substitute there, when you get up to get milk, do not sound a trumpet. I can substitute there, don't make a huff.

When you get up to get milk, don't make a huff as hypocrites do. Truly, you'll have your reward in four, but when you give to the poor, when you get up, when you are willing to be inconvenienced, don't even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Don't even announce it.

I noticed everybody's probably going to ask for milk. Don't even announce it. So that your giving will be done in secret, and then your father who sees what's done in secret, then he will reward you.

What do we need? We have to have our perspective radically renewed to see things the way God sees them. We have to have a heavenly perspective. We have to be heavenly minded, and it's only when we see the cross, ultimately it's the only way that Satan is defeated.

Satan isn't defeated by his death. He's defeated by the death of Jesus Christ, and I appropriate that, and I defeat Satan in my life. I resist Satan when I die with Jesus.

He's defeated when I die, and he always wants to cover our eyes. He always wants us to not see it. He always wants us to think there's some other way for him to be defeated, but there's not, and it's only when I have a renewed perspective, when I see the beauty of the way of the cross, that I'm able to resist him in the name of Jesus, and anytime I fail to do it, it's because I haven't really seen the beauty of the cross.

I haven't really taken seriously Jesus' command to take up my cross every day, and it's why it's so important. In Hebrews 3, it tells us, encourage one another day after day, so that none of you forget the beauty of the cross, so that none of you become hardened to start to seek your own convenience again. Encourage each other every day.

If we know that Satan is always trying to get us to avoid or ignore the cross, then we'll always be encouraged to remind one another and tell one another how beautiful it is to go the way of the cross, how necessary it is, how that's the way we defeat the enemy, and I'll just close by saying this. We have to know. It says elsewhere in the Bible that we aren't ignorant of the enemy's schemes.

We, at the very least, we have to be growing, especially disciples at NCCF, especially children at NCCF. We have to know what the voice of the enemy sounds like, and he will always say, don't come back to Jesus yet when you sin, and you must resist him when he tells you that, and he will say, you don't have to go to the cross. You can indulge your convenience.

You can indulge your enjoyment, and just like we resist him in coming back to Jesus, we must resist him when he tells us to avoid the cross. Then we can be true disciples of Jesus Christ. May the Lord help us.

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