

THE WATCHWORDS OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

James 4:1-10

Part 1

Intro: For tonight, and the next three Sunday nights, I want to consider with you, THE WATCHWORDS OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE. My text will be James 4:1-10, with special emphasis on verse 7, and the first part of verse 8.

No person is a Christian very long before he realizes that he is at war: at war with himself, at war with the world, and at war especially with the Devil. These are the three enemies that we will face until the day of our death, or until the Lord comes. These are the enemies that we face as we seek to live for the Lord, and as we seek to become like the Lord.

The Devil is, of course, behind it all. But we have an old nature that is attracted by the temptations which he places before us, and we live in a world which, at the present, is under his rule. The Bible calls him, "the god of this world."

I have been in the ministry for over 40 years, and I have never seen spiritual warfare to be any worse than it is today. Christian homes are being broken up by divorce. Young people who have been raised in the church are turning away in large numbers. There is a lack of desire for the teaching of the Word among professing Christians. The spirit of the world has captivated the hearts of many who profess to know the Lord. There is a greater desire in the church for entertainment than there is for edification. And so many preachers are more concerned about entertaining their people than they are guiding their people into those ways of life that are pleasing to the Lord. People have little fear of the Lord. Prayer, for the most part, has become a formality. We are not seeing many people come to Christ. Many will make professions of faith, but they do not, to use a word our Lord used--they do not remain!

The day before Thanksgiving of this year, like many of you, I read James 4. And, as I did, I was impressed that James has given us in this passage, especially the verses I have mentioned, THE WATCHWORDS OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE. The early Christians knew about this warfare. Our Lord, more than anyone else, knew about it. And so it is to be expected that the way of victory over the forces of evil in ourselves, in the world, and headed up by the Devil, should be given to us in the Scriptures.

The three watchwords are these:

1) "Submit."

- 2) "Resist."
- 3) "Draw near."

There are other things in this passage that James has told us to do, but it seems to me that they are all included in these three.

And remember that they must all be obeyed. We cannot take just one of them, or even just two of them; we must have all three, if we expect to have the victory that we so desperately need.

But before I go on, let me answer the question, What is a WATCHWORD?

A WATCHWORD is a rallying cry, or signal to action. It is a word which embodies a guiding principle. In thinking about warfare, it is a command which comes from our Commander-in-Chief, which, as we are obedient to it, sends us into the battle with the Enemy to be victorious.

When Gideon led that small band of 300 men against the mighty army of the Midianites, their WATCHWORD was, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon" (Judges 7:20). This is what they were told to cry out, and this is what they did! And they did not have to use any weapon at all; the Midianites started killing each other, and those who survived, fled.

We go into the battle, not just once in a while, but every day. And our WATCHWORDS are words which we must never forget. To forget them, or not to use them, will always spell defeat. So they become very, very important to all of us. And we need all three. But I just want to discuss the first one tonight. Here it is:

"SUBMIT YOURSELVES THEREFORE TO GOD" (James 4:7a).

I want to suggest to you that this is one of the most hated words in any language, the word "submit."

- I. THE MEANING OF THE WORD. *This is a day when everyone seems to be demanding his own rights.*

It is a hated word because of what it means, what it calls for. Submission calls for three things:

- A. Humility.

We can see this by reading verse 6 with verse 7a.
(Read.)

You probably remember that there are some similarities at this point between James' Epistle and

the first Epistle of Peter. And the word which Peter used at this point in his letter was,

Humble yourselves therefore

under the mighty hand of God (1 Pet. 5:6a).

It is impossible for us to submit without humbling ourselves. And since pride is such a dominant part of our nature, this is extremely hard for us to do. How unusual it is to find a truly humble man or woman or boy or girl!

But submission calls for another thing:

B. Trust.

I hope that, if you haven't read Mr. Jerry Bridges' book, Trusting God, that you will get it, and read it. Peter expressed the need for trust, or faith, with these words,

Casting all your care upon him,
for he careth for you (1 Pet. 5:7).

It is very hard for us to put our affairs even in the Lord's hands. We have great struggles against doing this. We may even be fearful of the consequences although this is the clear teaching of the Word of God. A submissive person is a person who is trusting the Lord. He is a person who is walking by faith. It may seem like a foolish thing to do in the light of the circumstances a person may be facing, but a person who submits will humbly trust in the Lord.

But let me add a third word:

C. Obedience.

The writer of Hebrews was using a different word from the word commonly used for submission, but the meaning is exactly the same. And it helps to bring out this third point that I am making. That verse says this:

Obey them that have the rule over you,
and submit yourselves: . . .

The person who is truly submissive is not one who gives up just because he can't really do anything else, but he is a person who submits to do what the person he is being submissive to, wants him to do.

If the other points (humbling and trusting) are hard, this is even more so. And this is where most of us fail. But we learn from this that submission is not being passive; submission calls for action. Remember it is A WATCHWORD OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE. To fail in

our submission is to call for defeat before the Enemy. To be fully submissive is the first step in spiritual victory.

There might be other things that I could say about submission, but I believe this covers the main points. I hope that you will write them down some place so you can refer to them frequently. Of course, one of the best places to write them is in your heart. Only God can give us true submission.

But let me move on to a second point:

II. THE PLACES WHERE WE NEED TO BE SUBMISSIVE.

The best way to answer that is by taking you directly to the Word of God, not only here, but to some other passages as well.

Our text points us to the most important area of our lives where we need to be submissive:

A. To GOD (Jas. 4:7a).

It seems strange that James would have to say this, and that Peter would have to repeat it, and that it would have to be mentioned many other passages of Scripture, but that is the case.

Since God is God, and we are mere human beings who owe our very existence to God, who are dependent upon God for every breath we take, and every bite we eat, the God Who is responsible for our salvation, is it unreasonable for us to humble ourselves before Him, to trust Him, and to do what He says? Would anything else seem right since we are dealing with God?

And yet how we struggle with some Scriptures which ask us to do certain things. How prone we are to want our way instead of taking God's way! But let me tell you something: If we are not submissive to God, we are not submissive any other place in our lives, truly submissive!

And let me tell you something else: If we are to be submissive to God, then that means that we have to be submissive in other areas of our lives. If we have trouble being submissive to God, wait until you see some of the other points I must make. The battle rages today in some of these other relationships just as much as in our relationship with God. In fact, sometimes you will hear a Christian say, "I don't mind being submissive to

the Lord, but I am not going to be submissive to people." That is impossible. Submission to the Lord includes obedience to the Lord, and so we have to include these other relationships. What are they?

B. Children to their parents (Eph. 6:1-3).

We have it also in Col. 3:3:20.

Young people, listen to me. One reason that the Lord has given you the parents that you have is to help you learn what it means to please the Lord, and to keep you from doing things that you will afterwards regret, but not be able to undo. If you learn submission to your parents, it will be a big step toward learning to be submissive to the Lord. You are not only humbling yourself before your parents, but you are humbling yourself before the Lord. You are not only trusting your parents, but you are trusting the Lord. You are not only obeying your parents, but you are obeying the Lord.

This is not popular with your peers, but it is the way of having the blessing of God on your life.

C. Wives to their husbands (Eph. 6:22; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1-6).

Sarah is your example. The Word of God is your guide. Your husband may not always do what he should do, but you are humbling yourself before the Lord, you are trusting the Lord, you are obeying the Lord. And when you see this, then you are seeing what God wants you to see.

Let me give you another.

D. Citizens to our government (Rom. 13:1-7).

And another.

E. Believers to the leaders of the church (Heb. 13:17).

And another.

F. The younger to the elder (1 Pet. 5:5).

And another.

G. All of us to each other (1 Pet. 5:5; Eph. 5:21).

And another.

H. Servants to their masters, or employees to their employers (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-25).

Submission is one of the distinguishing characteristics of all of the people of God. And it is in being submissive that we are taking the first step toward victory over our enemies in living our lives to please and glorify the Lord.

Let me make one more point:

III. OUR GREAT EXAMPLE OF SUBMISSION.

Please turn to Phil. 2, verses 1-8.

The whole earthly course of our Lord is a great lesson in submission. And it was His submission to the Father that brought about the ultimate defeat of Satan and all of the forces of evil.

Concl: So let us ask the Lord to teach us this lesson for ourselves, in all of our relationships--first to the Lord, then in our families, then to each other in the family of God, and finally to our government. Things may not be right in any human relationship, perfectly right, but that is where we trust the Lord, that when we do His will, He will bring the blessing that we so much seek, and He will give us deliverance from all that our Enemy can possibly place before us.

Next Sunday night, the Lord willing, we will thinking about RESISTING THE DEVIL.

THE WATCHWORDS OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Part 2

James 4:1-10

Intro: James has given us three watchwords, three rallying cries, for our conflict with the Evil One, in the fourth chapter of his Epistle, especially in verse 6 and 7a.

We discussed the first word last Sunday night, the word "submit." James said that we are to "submit" ourselves "to God"! Peter used the word "humble" in 1 Pet. 5:6 where he was speaking of the same thing. And instead of just saying, "to God," he said, "under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

To submit ourselves, or to humble ourselves, before God, is to put ourselves in His hand, yielding ourselves to Him for His care, and for the carrying out of His will. We cease striving with Him. We accept His dealings with us as good, and we look to Him for whatever our needs might be at the time. It is not just something that we do in an emergency, but it speaks of the way we live. The most hazardous position we can be in is when we are seeking to withstand God.

We go on tonight to the second of the three watchwords: "RESIST"!

No two words could possibly be more opposed to each other than the words "submit" and "resist." When we "submit," we surrender ourselves. When we "resist," the last thing we are going to do is surrender. The person who resists is not even thinking of surrender, but of all-out warfare.

This word is used in the NT two other times that are related to our passage in James. One of them is in 1 Pet. 5:8, 9 where we read,

Be sober, be vigilant;
because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion,
walketh about, seeking who he may devour:
Whom **resist** stedfast in the faith,
knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished
in your brethren that are in the world.

The other is in Eph. 6:13:

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God,
that ye may be able to **withstand**
in the evil day,
and having done all, to stand.

THE SAME WORD IS USED IN ALL THREE OF THESE PASSAGES. And so we will be looking at all three verses tonight to get the understanding that we need of what it means to "resist the

devil." May the Lord make this a profitable time for us.

I. WHAT IT MEANS TO RESIST.

We have two words used in these three verses to translate the same Greek verb: one is "resist"; the other, "withstand." It means that we oppose him. We strive against him. We seek to defeat him knowing that he is out to defeat us. Lit. we are taking our stand against the Devil.

Like the word "submit," this is a command. This is God's word for us. It does not mean that we wait for him to attack, but we are continually seeking to either prohibit anything he might do, or undo and defeat anything that he is already doing.

The very fact that the Lord has given us this command gives us hope. We certainly cannot oppose our Enemy by ourselves, but, with God's blessing and help, the command itself, coming from God, puts victory within our grasp.

The Devil has been very clever in getting us to reverse these first two watchwords. All of us are more inclined to resist the Lord, and to submit to the Devil, than we are to submit to the Lord, and to resist the Devil. We need to get them straight, and to keep them in the right order. It is folly to think of being able to overcome the Devil if we are resisting the Lord in some way at the same time. Just as God's way is the way of victory, so to try to change God's way means certain defeat for us. In Eph. 6 before Paul mentioned that we are to stand against the wiles of the devil, he said that we are to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." And later he said that we are to put on the whole armor of God so as to be able to "withstand" (resist) "in the evil day." So we have business to take care of with the Lord before we face our Enemy, or can face him, with any hope of victory.

Are you living a submissive life? Are you seeking to please the Lord in everything you do? Are you concerned about your thoughts and words as well as your actions. This is where we must start.

II. WHO IS IT THAT WE RESIST?

In all three passages our Enemy is called "the Devil." In Eph. 6 see v. 11. In Ephesians we also have the armed forces of the Devil listed, and in verse 16 he is called "the wicked," of the Wicked One, the Evil One. What he does is never good. It sometimes may look like it is

good, but that is only to deceive us.

But what does the title, "the Devil," mean?

It means that Satan, our Adversary, is our Accuser. He maligns us. He speaks evil of us. He seeks to disrupt our fellowship with God.

In Rev. 12 where Satan is cast out into the earth (v. 9), a loud voice is heard in heaven rejoicing not only because "the kingdom of our God" is come, but also because "the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (v. 9).

An illustration of the kind of accusation he brings is in Job 1:9 where the Lord and Satan were talking about Job. Satan said,

Doth Job fear God for nought?
Hast not thou made an hedge about him,
and about his house, and about all that he hath
on every side?
thou hast blest the work of his hands,
and his substance is increased in the land.
But put forth thine hand now,
and touch all that he hath,
and he will curse thee to thy face (Job 1:9-11).

It seems very likely that when the Apostle John wrote 1 John 2:1, that he had the adversarial work of Satan in mind. This is the verse:

My little children, these things write I unto you,
that ye sin not. And if any man sin,
we have an advocate with the Father,
Jesus Christ the righteous.

Unfortunately we often give the Devil reasons to accuse us. Sometimes he will use other people. Sometimes, our own consciences. But all of his work is designed to get us to doubt our relationship with God, to doubt the promises of God, to doubt the necessity of what we are seeking to accomplish in the work of the Lord.

His accusations, his opposition to us, can lead to discouragement and to defeat. The story of Job tells us the troubles that can follow the work of the Devil, but it also tells us the wonderful way in which God can and will overrule for our good, and for His own glory.

But never forget it: WE HAVE A VERY REAL, A VERY POWERFUL, A VERY VICIOUS ENEMY. And he is out to do all that he can to disrupt our fellowship with God. If he could, he would destroy our relationship with God, i.e.,

get our salvation taken from us.

The Devil is an angelic being who revolted against God before the creation of the universe in which we live. He sought then, and still seeks, to un-seat God from the throne of the universe. That is why he is called Satan. He is opposed to God, to the truth of God, to the purposes of God, and, of course, to the people of God. He is mightier than we are, and wiser than we are. He and the demons who fell with him are our unseen opponents. But, in the final analysis, they are the ones we are fighting.

III. HOW DO WE RESIST?

James does not say how in specific terms, but when we see all of the exhortations that are given in James 4, we can see that we resist through our obedience to God!

But Peter stated it very much to the point. He said, "Whom resist stedfast in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:9a).

And Paul also made it very clear in Eph. 6:11 when he wrote,

Put on the whole armour of God,
that ye may be able to stand against
the wiles of the devil.

I call your attention to the words "the faith" in 1 Peter 5, and "the whole armour of God" in Eph. 6. They both are referring to the same thing: the Word of God.

Do you remember that we have discussed that expression, "the faith," a number of times? I have said that it is close to meaning, the statement of faith, i.e., the doctrines which make up the sum-total of what we as Christians believe. "The faith" is, to quote Thayer (p. 513), "the substance of Christian faith or what is believed by Christians." And it is believed by Christians because it is the teaching of the Scriptures. Thus, the teaching of Biblical doctrine is very, very important, not only for our growth, but also for our conflict with the enemy.

But Thayer, in his Greek Lexicon, quotes another man by the name of Weiss who adds another thought to what is involved in resisting the Devil "stedfast in the faith," or putting on "the whole armour of God." He said in his Biblical Theology of the New Testament that "the faith" is "the form in which the truth (as the substance of right doctrine) is subjectively appropriated" (italics mine).

What did he mean, "subjectively appropriated"?

He meant that it is not only important for us to know the truth of the Word of God, but we also need to be living the truth of the Word of God. And is this not what Paul meant when he said, "**Put on** the whole armour of God"?

We can so easily fail on both counts:

- 1) We fail because we do not understand the truth of the Word.
- 2) We fail because we do not put the Word of God to practice in our lives.

We not only need to focus our attention of both of these things, but we need to be "stedfast" in it--which means firmly, stubbornly, strongly, immovably. Nothing must be allowed to turn us away from being obedient to the Word of God every day we live. And this is hard in itself. In fact, it is impossible unless we are really trusting the Lord to make us and keep us obedient. We often deliberately choose to be disobedient just because we don't want to be obedient. **AND WHEN WE DO, WE ARE THROWING OURSELVES OPEN NOT ONLY TO AN ATTACK FROM SATAN, BUT TO CERTAIN DEFEAT!**

If there is anything we all need to concentrate on every day we live, it is these two points:

- 1) Learning more about the Lord and His Word in the Word.
- 2) Living the Word in our daily lives.

But let me add one more important point in order for us to have the complete picture, and I take this from Eph. 6, verse 18.

If we are going to be victorious over the attacks of the Devil, we need to know the Word, we need to live in obedience to the Word, **BUT WE ALSO NEED TO BE FAITHFUL IN PRAYER.** (Read Eph. 6:18.)

By prayer we enlist the help of God. The Christian who prays little, or not at all, is a Christian who greatly overestimates himself, underestimates the power of Satan, and is ignorant of his need for the help and blessing of God.

Check up on yourself regarding:

- 1) What you are doing to increase your knowledge of the Word.
- 2) How obedient you are to the Word of God.
- 3) The place that prayer has in your life.

This leads me to my next point:

IV. WHAT HOPE DO WE HAVE FOR VICTORY?

What did James say? He said, "Resist the devil, **and he will flee from you.**"

As inconceivable as it might seem, this is the promise of God! Although the Devil is older, and more powerful, and, in some ways, wiser, is it true that he will "flee" from me? Yes, it is! It was not just James who was saying this; it was God!

This means that the Devil will not only go, but he will go in a hurry. And the reason for his flight is that he knows he is in danger, in trouble, and he "flees" for his own safety.

This does not mean that he will not attack us. God does not give us a promise like that. But it does mean that when we face the Enemy in conflict, the victory will be ours IF we are steadfast in the truth (as I have explained it), and prayerfully seeking to enlist the help of God on our side.

Concl: Let me close with an illustration from the life of our Lord.

It is found in His temptation by the Devil. And I remind you that, if the Devil did not hesitate in tempting our Lord, he will not hold back from you and me.

We often read about the temptation of Christ as though it only included the three temptations that we read about. These were the heart of His temptations, but He was actually tempted for 40 days and 40 nights. Read Mark 1:13 and Luke 4:2.

We certainly have no question about the godliness of our Lord's earthly life. He always did the things that pleased the Lord. See John 8:29.

And we know that the Lord prayed much. He was praying at His baptism (Luke 3:21), and we can be sure that He was praying during His temptation.

But how did He respond to the Devil?

As the Son of God, He had the right to say things to the Devil that had never been said before, and those words would have become a part of our Bibles. But He did not do that. Instead, He quoted to the Devil, for each temptation, that which had been written 1500 years before. He was wielding "the sword of the Spirit."

What was the result?

"Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him" (Matt. 4:11). Luke said, "And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season."

Not even the Lord was rid of the Devil permanently, but He has left us example, which, according to 1 Pet. 2:21, we are to follow.

So we have the first two watchwords of spiritual warfare. "Submit" first "to God," and then "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." If we follow the Word of God, we will not be able to avoid the conflicts, but we can be assured of victory because "greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4b).

THE WATCHWORDS OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE
Part 3 (Final)
James 4:1-10

Intro: Tonight we come to the third of THE WATCHWORDS OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE which James has given us. These are found in verse 7 and the first part of verse 8 in James 4. The first was, "Submit yourselves therefore to God." The second, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Tonight we come to the third: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."

These exhortations have to do with three personalities as far as each of us is concerned: They have to do with each one of us, then with God, and finally with the Devil. If this warfare had to do only with us and with God, there would still be a conflict because our natural hearts tend to be at enmity with God. We can so easily arise in rebellion against God. But the conflict is intensified by the fact that the Devil is involved, too.

James has given us an order here which certainly must not be ignored.

Each of us needs to live every day in submission to God and to His will. That is basic; that is primary. And there are many times a day when we are deciding whether or not we are going to do the will of God. So it is not something that we can decide once, and never have to face the issue again. It comes up again and again. I can assure you that you will face that question again tonight before you go to bed.

And, as I have sought to bring out in these messages, we cannot really resist the Devil unless we are, first of all, yielded and submissive to God. In fact, I hope you remember that your submission to God means obedience to God, and that obedience to God, to "the faith," is our major line of resistance against the Devil.

Tonight we come to the third WATCHWORD. This word actually helps us to understand why it is that the Devil is allowed to go about seeking to destroy us. It is in order that we will feel our need of the Lord more deeply, and really seek Him!

We have been learning in our study of the Book of Jeremiah that the children of Israel found it very easy to seek the Egyptians, i.e., to enlist the help of the Egyptians against their enemies. What they needed to do was to submit themselves to God, maintain their obedience to Him, and seek His help in their troubles. If Israel and Judah had done that, the OT Books would have had a different story to tell. But they did not choose to seek the Lord.

The same is true of us. It often takes some trial, or some trials, before we will really seek the Lord, before we will "draw nigh to God."

As we might expect, the word means to approach, to come near to, to seek, when it is used as it is used in Jas. 4:8. It suggests that it is possible for us to be living in such a way that we are not seeking the Lord (or the exhortation would be unnecessary). So James has to tell us, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."

But let us examine these words in little more carefully.

As in the case of the two other WATCHWORDS, let me remind you that this word is

I. AN IMPERATIVE: "Draw nigh to God."

This means that God requires it, and that it is urgent that we do this. Whether or not we feel like we are in the midst of a battle spiritually, the command is, "Draw nigh to God." Do it now! Do not let any more time go by until you are found seeking the Lord.

If, as we read our Bibles, or hear it taught, we would take the commands of Scripture seriously and personally and urgently, seeking to put them into practice immediately, how different our lives would be.

But there is a second thing that I want you to see. James was speaking about

II. A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP.

We are to "draw nigh to God". We are to seek Him. We are to establish fellowship with Him. If there are things that need to be made right with God, let us make them right. We are not primarily seeking His help or His blessings; we are seeking Him. We need to be walking with Him. We cannot do this for each other. By the grace of God we must assume this responsibility, and make it become a reality.

But the words of James suggest something else which I do not believe I have been emphasizing up to this point in dealing with these WATCHWORDS:

III. IT IS CORPORATE.

That might not mean a great deal to you children who are here tonight, but let me explain it so that you will understand. You need to learn, too, what James was

writing about.

Corporate means that we all need to do this as members of the Church, the Body of Christ. We do not necessarily do it together, but each one of us needs to be doing it individually. Then, when we come together, we can be doing it together--drawing near to God, seeking the Lord.

In fact, this is one way in which people ought to be able to describe any true church where people love the Lord. People should be able to say, "They are people who are always seeking to draw near to the Lord." And if there is one among us who is not doing that, then our corporate fellowship is hindered.

So if you are concerned about the ministry of Trinity Bible Church, you need to make sure that you are a person who daily is drawing near to God. We are not to be people who are off and running by ourselves. We are members of the greatest Body on earth. And my failure will affect you, and your failure will have its affect upon me. Together we are to "draw near to God." This is what James was saying.

But we need to face some other matters.

IV. WHAT IS OUR PURPOSE?

Why do we "draw nigh to God"? Let me suggest three reasons.

A. Because God has told us to.

This is an invitation, but it is more than an invitation. I have previously mentioned that this is an urgent command. So not to draw near to God is to be guilty of disobeying God. And if we are disobedient here, there is no way of measuring the difficulties that can follow.

B. Because we need to.

Surely no one needs to have proof for this. We may, each of us, be conscious of our need for the God, His guidance, His help, and His blessing, in varying degrees. But surely no true Christian would ever want to say that he (or she) does not NEED the Lord! We have no greater need than this. If we do not have the Lord, who can take His place?

Are not the promises of God reminders of how much we need the Lord?

What about verses like Matt. 28:20 and Heb. 13:5, 6.
Also Psa. 23:1, and Psa. 27:1---to name just a few.

But there is a third reason.

C. We need to know Him.

Thayer indicates in his Greek Lexicon, or Dictionary, that this verb in this verse suggests the need "to become acquainted with him" (p. 164), i.e., with God! We do not "draw near to God" just because we want to get something from Him; WE WANT HIM!

And this is why we never get beyond the need of seeking Him--because there will always be more and more that we need to know about Him, and ways in which our fellowship with Him can be deepened and strengthened.

Now I come to my last point:

V. HOW DO WE SEEK GOD?

Perhaps the first thing that needs to be said here is

A. A word of warning.

It is possible to seek the Lord outwardly, but not inwardly. This was one of the greatest sins of the people of God in the OT! In Isa. 29:13 we read these words:

... this people draw near me
with their mouth,
and with their lips do honour me,
but have removed their heart far from me ...

The Lord brought this verse to the attention of the scribes and Pharisees of His day, and told them that they were doing the same thing. Cf. Matt. 15:8, 9.

One of the main reasons we seek the Lord, needing Him, is because we want to worship Him. And He wants to be worshipped. But not just with empty words and a lot of ritual. He wants us to seek Him with our whole heart. And He knows if we are, AND SO DO WE. If we can piously sing songs of worship, and listen to the message, but go out and forget all about it, it is obvious that our hearts are not in it.

How careful we all need to be in this!

B. We seek God through Christ.

Listen to these words from Heb. 7:19:

For the law made nothing perfect,
but the bringing in of a better hope did;
by which we draw nigh unto God.

What is that "better hope"? It is the Gospel. And what is the Gospel? Stating it as simply as possible, the Gospel is Christ, His death, burial, and resurrection.

So we cannot "draw nigh to God" unless we have believed the Gospel, unless Christ is our Savior. That is what our Lord said in John 14:6. So it is important to know that we are saved.

But it is also important for us to remember that, whenever we seek to "draw nigh to God," we can only do that because Christ has given us that privilege. If we were to come on our own recognizance, we would never be accepted. But coming in Christ, the door is wide open!

Let me give you one more verse before I close.

C. We "draw near to God" by faith.

Here is would point you to Heb. 10:22:

Let us draw near with a true heart
in full assurance of faith,
having our hearts sprinkled
from an evil conscience,
and our bodies washed with pure water.

We do not draw near to God as we pray, as we read His Word, as we join in a public service, wondering if we can actually "draw nigh to God." We come in faith, knowing that He has called us to come, knowing that He by His salvation has prepared us to come.

And know ultimately from our text,

VI. HIS PROMISE: "And he will draw nigh to you."

We are not wasting our time when we seek the Lord. He may not answer our prayers. We may not always be blessed in the same way as we read His Word. We may not be able to see His hand in our lives in the way that we would like to see it. But His promise remains! And He will always be true to His word!

Concl: Have you ever wondered what you would do if you were to receive a letter from the President of the United States,

asking you to come to Washington to meet with him, with the promise that, if you will come, he would set aside everything else for as long as you like, just to spend time with you, answering your questions, hearing your requests, and doing all within his power to do whatever you would ask him to do?

That would be a great honor. And I am sure that you and I would do everything possible to get there.

But I have something better than that for you tonight, and you do not have to leave town to take advantage of it. God has not only invited you; He has commanded you to come. He wants you to "draw near to him." And, when you do, He will draw near to you, will tell you what is on His heart through His Word, will listen to your questions, will hear your needs, and will give you blessings that would be far beyond what any earthly leader could do for you.

Will you "draw near to God"? Do you daily "draw near to God"?

Let us pray for each other that we will know more about submitting, resisting, and drawing near in the days to come, that we might see glorious victories in our lives that will bring the glory to God for which He is so worthy!