

How Does Satan Devour Us?

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- [0 : 0 0] You're listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee. To learn more about us, visit our website at gracereformed.org.
- And now, today's sermon. To pick up where we left off last week, we were discussing how to handle anxiety. And Paul's Peter, one of them, is a solution, is by submitting to the loving hand of our gracious Father.
- Humility is to see yourself as wholly insufficient and our Father entirely sufficient for all of life.
- That is a great way of seeing humility. We will always be anxious when we seek to control our lives and the world around us and to conform it to our wills.
- We're not sufficient in power and strength to do this. This is why we're anxious. We would never be anxious if we could always do what we wanted or the outcome was always in our will.
- [1 : 0 7] But to see the world from the Father's eyes, we have every reason to move from anxiety, that which is not going to be fulfilled in our will, but to hope and comfort, knowing that he has all under his mighty hand and all under control.
- And we have nothing to fear, even though there is fear in this world. So as soon as Peter says, don't be anxious, cast your anxieties on the Lord, humble yourselves, the very next verse is this, seven.
- Sorry, the very next verse, he is going to then go into what can then come in and rob you of your hope and your joy and your fear and replace it with anxiety once again.
- He says, it's your adversary, the devil. For the last two or three years, I've been slowly trying to teach our church to see their life from a spiritual perspective, to not just see what, not just to believe and interact in what you can see, but to embrace what you can't.
- I've done a series on prayer, spiritual warfare, and now we're walking through 1 Peter, dealing with much of the spiritual warnings and really strange passages that we covered in chapters 3 and 4 about giants and angels and demons and the underworld.
- [2 : 3 6] And all of this, Peter feels it's sufficient for your life. It's necessary for your faith. And over the last few years, I have seen an attitude of speculation and resistance to this type of view.
- Many in our church and outside of our church look at this spiritual realm with suspicion.
- It sounds medieval. It sounds like a distraction from the gospel. But those who understand what Peter is speaking of and Paul, they understand how it is only here to increase and strengthen our faith in the gospel.
- The skeptics who do not believe in this real danger that we face when it comes to Satan and his dark forces within the gospel. Often hurl at me the accusation or not the accusation, but the solution of, well, John, do you not believe in the sovereignty of God?
- Do you not believe that God is more powerful than these dark forces? It is almost to say that if you believe in the sovereignty of God, there will be no reason for you to ever protect your mind and wear the armor of God.

[4 : 04] As if these instructions that are given to us fly in the face of an all-sovereign God. Now, I haven't met anyone who claims to be a real Christian denying the existence of Satan and his army of evil demons, but they don't really think that it's a threat.

They're out there to mess with the unbeliever, but the believer greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. So what is there to fear? Have you ever watched a nature video?

And as they're describing it, you've got the low voice and the intense music, and it's the fields and the plains. And you see these unsuspecting animals who are grazing and enjoying the calm of life.

And then the camera pans over to the grass, down in the grass, and all you can see are these little two eyes. What is it? The predator, right?

Why do the prey feel safe? Because they're unaware that they are prey. They're unaware of the predator. Peter literally uses this illustration for you.

[5 : 17] He says you cannot just wander around life assuming that there isn't danger. He says you have an adversary. You have someone who is seeking to devour you, and he prowls about.

Not only that, but sometimes we think, oh, well, it's just Satan himself. The idea is that Satan is literally the leader, the army of the forces.

Because he says to this particular church, they're feeling this attack. But he also says that it's evident around the world, that those who are around the world take heart.

Many around the world are feeling his attack. There always seems to be a way for us to be distracted from his presence.

And I understand the warning as well. People come to me and say, John, if you focus too much on Satan and his demons, then you'll become infatuated with them, and you'll lose the focus, which is the gospel.

[6 : 27] I understand this as well. But what's the best way for you to be attacked according to Satan's plan? It's for you to ignore him and ignore his power.

The threat remains. Peter starts literally with saying, before the foundations of the world, by God's sovereign power and divine, he saved you. And everything for your life, and everything for your afterlife, is all carried by his power.

Peter says that. Peter teaches us the sovereignty of God, and at the same time, Peter says, oh, by the way, there is a threat. So Peter, yes, understands the sovereignty of God, and in God's sovereign will and plan and design, there is still a threat.

Not because there's a power greater than God, but to how God is designed to work in the world, Peter says there's a way in which this works, and you cannot ignore it.

Before we unpack this passage, I want to take a few minutes to dive deeper into this phrase, seeking someone to devour. Remember, Christians somewhat believe there is a spiritual immunity, as I kind of referenced before, when it comes to spiritual warfare that takes place.

[7 : 47] Well, for some reason, because the spirit lives with inside of me, I have really nothing to fear. So these passages, they somehow just become, I don't know, word count for Bible reading days.

I don't know. How do we approach this? We kind of just gloss over them, as if there is no significance to them. The New Testament writers never give us such freedom from the spiritual war that we face in our world.

Every New Testament letter warns you of the war. And you want to know, all right, am I under attack? Have I been caught?

Am I in the influence of the evil one? The New Testament writers tell you. It manifests itself in your sinful habits. If you are under the influence of the evil one, you can see it.

This is why he calls us to repent and then watch ourselves, that we don't fall back into the same habits that we once were a part of before. Turn with me to Ephesians chapter four quickly.

[8 : 56] In the reformed world, as I've been working through this, I agree and I am thankful for, and I will continue to emphasize, the utter frailness of our flesh, that we have no confidence in our flesh.

We should never trust what our body has the capacity to do on a spiritual level. And the reformed faith has done an amazing job and our confession exposes our hearts and our minds to the utter weakness of our capacities.

But the writers of the New Testament also say there's someone else who's aware of the weakness of our flesh. And he takes advantage of it, often. Notice how Paul connects the two, the weakness of our flesh and the attacks of Satan.

In chapter four and verse 26 and 27. So Ephesians 4, 26, he says, Be angry and do not sin.

Do not let the sun go down on your anger. And give no opportunity, another way of translating that as foothold, to the devil. Foothold is a military concept.

[10 : 09] You can't advance weaponry if you can't plant your foot. So he's saying there is opportunity if you do not handle the anger in which you are struggling with and you do not handle it appropriately, you are actually giving opportunity for Satan to enter into your life.

Do you realize he is not speaking to the unbeliever? Right? Do you feel the utter insanity of that verse that we don't think about?

Our anger opens ourselves up for Satan to come in and influence your life. Does Paul justify, clarify, create some caveat to this warning?

No. He says, don't do it because this is what it will do. It should be a sobering warning. I've seen so much anger destroy people.

It leads to bitterness, vile, hatred. Why? Because in our own self-righteousness, we deem ourselves the rightful judge.

[11 : 20] Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 10. 1 Corinthians 10. As you turn there, I'm going to read, if you want to write this one down, I'm going to just read you Galatians 5.16.

Because of our weak and frail bodies, there has to be a resistance to the sin. But the resistance to the sin is never in our own strength and our own power.

This is why Paul says in Galatians 5.16, but I say walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. So we're not resisting Satan by our own flesh.

That would be foolish. We would fail. But we are resisting him with a power that is far greater than ourselves. We'll get to this in a moment. I've always wrestled with this passage in Corinthians.

More and more it begins to make a lot more sense to me. When you embrace a spiritual warfare, Paul talks a lot about spiritual warfare in 1 and 2 Corinthians. But when you embrace the idea that our faith is under attack, that Satan hates everything about what God is and doing for us, this from Paul makes a whole lot more helpful sense to us.

[12 : 34] This is 1 Corinthians 10.6. Look at this. Now these things took place as examples for us that we may not desire evil as they did.

Do not be idolaters as some of them were. As it was written, the people sat down to eat and drank and rose up to play. We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and 23,000 fell in a single day.

We must not put Christ to the test as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. Nor grumble as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as examples, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

Therefore let anyone who thinks they stand, take heed, lest he fall. No temptation is overtaking you that is common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability.

But the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. I don't think Paul thinks you're immune, church.

[13 : 48] We're not immune. These were written down as examples for you. They did not listen. They indulged. They are trapped and fell. Well, and then Paul says, but God has provided a better way.

There is no temptation that you can look at and say, well, I didn't have the strength to handle that one. God says, no, there's always a strength. There's always a way, and he provides it. Listen to this. That means there's the both and.

There's a way out, and there's a way in. This is the part of pastoring, and part of shepherding, that the elders have been feeling lately. We don't feel like we're just dealing with your flesh.

The issues with your body, desiring the wrong things. We're realizing that there's influences outside of you coming into our congregation, coming into your bodies, and pressuring you with a supernatural pressure, and the writers of the New Testament says, you need to be aware of this.

Look at how James, we know this passage, but do we ever stop and wonder what he means? This is James 4-7, if you want to write it down. James 4-7. Submit yourselves, therefore, to God.

[14 : 59] Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Okay? Peter says he's a prowling lion, seeking whom he may devour. What did Peter just say before this?

He says, submit yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, casting your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. James summarizes it, and just narrows it down even smaller.

He just says, submit to God, and Satan will leave you alone. So if we're not submitting to our king, what's the logical conclusion, church? We're not safe.

Now, our salvation, there's nothing that can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. Perfect love has cast out all fear. God will never lose his own, but our journey here can either be in hope or in hell's grip.

And it's very clear that this is the options. This is why the warnings are coming our way. We're not even, I don't even need to get into Ephesians 6. We talked about the fiery darts that come at us, and we have to wear armor.

[16 : 06] Turn with me to James chapter 1. Just one more passage getting us ready to go into this section in Peter. James chapter 1.

In verse 14, he says this. But each person, James 1.14. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires.

See, we don't lure and entice ourselves. He's already warned us, and will warn us again about who's doing the luring. Right? So our bodies are weak and frail and easily lured.

And so each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed with what? His desires. Then the desires, when they have conceived, gives birth to sin. And sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. This is heavy. He is not saying they're going to lose their salvation, and he's not writing to the unbeliever. He says, my beloved church, don't be deceived, thinking there is no danger.

[17 : 18] There is danger. You see, Satan has no reason to show us his teeth as long as we stay close to his den and play in the fields.

He draws us in closer, away from our king, and towards the desires of our heart. He lures us in to the moment to where we are easily snatched.

So the lion, it's not just a metaphor. This is a real being who has real intentions, and this is why Peter ends his letter once again warning them of the dangers that they face.

The danger is not just the temptations of their flesh, but an actual spiritual army that just wants to destroy them, and this army is vast. Just go read how vast it is in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12.

And it's global. To jump ahead, if you go back with me to 1 Peter chapter 5, in verse 9 it says, the latter part of the verse, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

[18 : 32] The whole world is feeling the enticement of the lion. We don't always understand its tactics, but we understand the results, which is what we're going to pay attention to today.

So basically, I think this is important for us to understand as we see our world really going in a very dark direction. There is nowhere in this world that you can run to to hide from Satan's threat.

This is a good implication of what's being said. This is why Peter does not tell them to run. But notice what does he say. He says, do not run, but resist.

Because there's nowhere to go. You can't leave. You can't leave it. You live in a world filled of battlefields. He even tells them, we must believe our time of resisting is temporary.

Use it as a means of encouragement. Look at verse 10. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ will himself restore with strength and establish you.

[19 : 42] So then, how do we resist? How is it that we hear Peter's warning? I'm going to give you three ways in which we enter this fight against our adversary this morning from Peter's letter.

Here are the three ways in which he is used multiple times, but then reminds us at the end. First of all, he says, be watchful. Second, stand firm.

And then number three, be hopeful. Be watchful. This is not the first time he's reminded us of this. Right?

Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Turn back to chapter 1 and verse 13. I think I've referenced this verse almost every sermon. This is how he starts the letter. He reminds you of the hope that you have in the gospel that it is sufficient to save you by his power and it's his power that's saving you and yet, and yet, your mind is still vulnerable.

Why? Because it's God who chooses to use humans to proclaim his excellencies, which he talks about in verse 3, or chapter 3, proclaim the excellencies of God.

[20 : 56] So we are his plan to save the world. Guess who also knows about this plan? The lion. The adversary. So what does he say? 1 Peter 1.13.

Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, which means two things. There is something we're to do with our minds. They're not lazily sitting around.

And number two, they can be intoxicated. So where do we put our hopes? Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. What he's saying is there's nothing in this world that can satisfy you as Christ will satisfy you.

Therefore, you have to prepare your mind to fight back and don't let it be intoxicated. So Peter is calling us to a certain kind of life, a different kind of view.

Your mind either will be intoxicated by sin or it will be set free to do the work of God's mission by grace.

[21 : 55] There is no other neutral ground according to Peter. Peter doesn't just say watch but says, your mind will have to be engaging in war. Prepare yourself for action to fight, resist, and walk by the Spirit.

I want to take a moment here to be a little bit more specific than I usually am because I think sometimes my generalities leave people vulnerable. The Bible warns us about the types of sin that we find ourselves enslaved to.

These are some that Peter has already warned us against but Paul, well almost every New Testament writer warns us against things like lust, greed, envy, hatred, revenge, slander.

These are just a few. The list could go on. If Satan is the father of all lies and he wants to devour our faith, destroying us by intoxicating our minds, then the mind becomes the gateway to our souls.

This is why he says, prepare your mind for action because the war takes place here. And so Peter knows this and he calls us to be watching just as if you were to take your children, your family and cross the street.

[23 : 21] Are you going to be texting somebody especially if you have little's? Are you going to be texting somebody while you do that? I would probably aim my car at you if I, get off the phone man. Watch your kids.

Look right, look left. Make sure they're okay. Why? Because someone driving is texting. You know, it's like, listen, I'm guilty.

Like I'm just, I'm with you, right? We shouldn't text and drive. This is the type of life we are living. We are watching what enters into the streams of our minds because the mind controls the heart and the heart controls the body and when we see the sin that comes out, we're trapped in sin.

You just do the reverse. You're expressing this sin because it comes from the desire of your heart. Your desire of your heart was influenced by your mind. See?

Listen, the results are there. Church, Satan isn't going to come to you with flashing red lights warning you he's infiltrating your mind.

[24 : 32] This is why he used the illustration of the lion. It will be something that entices you. It will look, sound, and feel good not repulsive.

I've actually never seen something repulsive where it causes me literally to cringe and then want to engage in it. It's the exact opposite. I've seen how sin has been coated with this wonderful frosting and I don't really care what's in the cake.

I just want the frosting. So when Satan tempts us to lust, he isn't going to use that which is obvious to us or to have greed.

something we will all agree is evil and vile. He will use something that is innocent and seemingly harmful just a little off.

Right? Just a little off. My wife and I are constantly talking to our children about what is biblical love and intimacy.

[25 : 36] intimacy. The world glorifies lust and calls it love. Pay close attention to what influences your mind concerning something as powerful as love and lust.

I promise you if you start to listen to Peter and obey Peter and be watchful and take action, you will quickly begin to see the lies that Satan has planted all around your home.

Many of you don't take me serious and you think I'm overreacting and there isn't real danger and then you come into my office shocked by what is happening in your marriage or in your children's lives wondering how this happened and I'm just going to point back and say let's talk about your home.

You remember it starts here it moves here and then it comes out here. It never skips the process church. You never find yourselves trapped in sin because it skipped the mind and the heart.

So if we stop being watchful we allow the little subtlety the little off color just a little off it breathes and all of a sudden we're intoxicated.

[27 : 03] By the way intoxication what a fascinating concept. You do realize well I have talked to people who don't drink and it's funny how they think intoxication works like if your lips touch alcohol you're intoxicated.

Doesn't quite work that way. Right? It's one sip at a time and you add those sips and for the first well it's just a sip it's okay it's not a big deal I'm not intoxicated. Two sips is fine five sips is fine two drinks is fine five drinks is fine oh my word I'm intoxicated.

This is a great way of using he says do not be intoxicated you allow one sip of sin you allow two and before you know it you're becoming immune. This is why Peter tells the church that they are not alone.

Listen the moment the moment you say we're not going to listen to this we're not going to watch that that is not God's view of love that is not God's view of marriage this is not only just off it's an offense to a holy God and you do this you will be mocked you will be made fun of you will be seen as archaic and fundamentalist verse verse nine knowing knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world why because they're resisting sin they're resisting Satan and they're being attacked for it but Peter doesn't just leave us to only be defensive in our response against sin.

It would be really hard for me to be a pastor if the only thing I ever did to you as a congregation is to tell you to be watchful. Why? We're just waiting for the hammer to drop at that moment.

[28 : 54] If you're always in protective mode only, you guys ever been this way? I remember when we first started taking our kids when they were little to theme parks and stuff, it was not fun.

I was in protective mode always. Don't touch that. Don't eat that. Why is your hand on the toilet? Why are you looking at that guy? This is not fun. Now that they know how to self-govern and wash their hands, it's a blast, right?

I want us to understand that Peter doesn't have the position that we're always in the defense because he puts us in the offense here. This is where he goes from be watchful to stand firm.

Look at me at 1 Peter 5, 9. Resist him, and he moves to the positive. Firm in your faith. Faith is to place trust in a source outside of yourself.

Instead of believing in the lies of Satan, trying to always point them out and pick them out, the better way is to be persisting in truth because it's easy to compare lies against truth.

[30 : 09] I mean, we've all heard the illustration used for years. How do counterfeiters know what counterfeit money is? By handling that which is real.

That when they come across counterfeit, they can tell by the feel, this is wrong. This is what Peter is saying. We're going to fight and resist Satan by standing firm in our faith.

This is why I don't want our church to be a watchdog ministry where all we're ever doing is pointing out the problems in the world and pointing out what's wrong, and this is wrong, and that is wrong. I want us to be a church that emphasizes the wonder and glory of Christ.

If you were to categorize Peter's letter, his first letter, the majority of his letter, like 80 to 85% of it, is a positive reinforcement of their faith, and then 15% of it is, okay, here's why it's so important you stand firm, because there is a problem, right?

So the emphasis remains. If you remember 1 Peter 1.13, I'll read it to you again. Therefore, preparing your mind for actions, or action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[31 : 18] That's the positive way of thinking about the fight. I'm going to resist. I'm going to fight. I'm going to push back because I know it's coming, versus I don't want to fail. I don't want to mess up.

I don't want to do what's wrong. So our hope is not what we might make the, I got to the end and I didn't mess up. No, our hope is there's something more than just not satisfying my flesh.

Our hope is not in the gratification of our flesh for the few moments throughout our life, but knowing that real joy and peace and satisfaction is coming when the king finishes his rescue mission, and we're a part of the rescue mission.

So Peter is calling us to focus on what we are living for. There are times when I sit down with married couples or individuals, and I ask them, okay, what's going on?

Tell me about the circumstances that you find yourself in. Some of you are smiling because you recently had this conversation with me. Now don't be looking around for people that are smiling. I see you. What's the problem?

[32 : 26] And they describe the problem. And what ends up happening is this. We believe that if we get rid of the problem, our life will be better.

We truly believe this. If it's our spouse, it's if our sin, if it's our job, whatever it is, we are convinced that there is roadblocks in our life, and if we can fix the roadblock, the life will get better.

What's the funny thing about, let me ask you this, how many of you have overcome a sin, got rid of a problem or a roadblock in your life? Don't raise your hand because I know you have. And how many of you are right back in the same place again?

Why? Because we're looking at life in the wrong perspective. We're trying to remove the problems in our lives. We're trying to remove our sin in our lives, so much so that the focus becomes the sin.

I just don't want to do this sin anymore. And if I can get rid of that sin, I'll be so much better. I mean, think about it, right? If it's arguing with your wife or it's a bad habit, can you think about it at the end of your life?

[33 : 35] You get to it and you're like, man, I'm so thankful I didn't do that. That's the culmination of your life. I didn't do this one thing. Yeah, well, I get pretty excited because I've never murdered anybody up to this point.

So if I can make the rest of the time here on the earth not murdering somebody, I'll be like, I'm so thankful I didn't do that. Some of you are going to say, I'm so thankful I didn't do it again, you know. Peter is like, listen, it is true.

We are going to get tripped up in really, really horrible ways. And take advantage of each other. Some of you have been, me included, have been really hurt by sin of Christians.

But we're not just a call to just walk around wearing bubble wraps to make sure we don't bump into Satan. He says, you resist him by what you are for.

He says, firm in your faith. So think about this for a moment. Faith in what? Faith in what Christ is and what he's doing. See, your mind will not be intoxicated and your flesh will be set free from these struggles when we look to what Christ is doing and has done for us.

[34 : 49] So when we focus on what we are for, you know, your marriage changes. Instead of trying to change your spouse and you are firm in your faith, you want to love your spouse as Christ has loved you.

It becomes more about leading your home towards a kingdom-mindedness where Christ is the center of it, understanding that if our hope and our mind and our lives and our habits are centered around Christ, then guess what happens?

It changes. Right? It changes. This is true of my own life. A lot of the struggles that I've had in my own journey, I realized that all I am is fear or afraid of failing, afraid of not messing up.

And now I live differently. I realize that my failures and my sin get in the way of what really matters, where my faith is.

And the stronger my faith is in my king and his mission and his gospel for me, well, sin is an annoyance. It gets me away from that which I need.

[36 : 04] So church, let me put it this way. When he says this, be sober-minded, be watchful, there are things that can take your faith off of Christ and put it on your self-gratification. And he says resist him.

The way you resist him is by positively standing stronger and stronger in your faith in the Lord. So let me ask you this question. Do we govern our lives in such a way where our faith is becoming stronger, where we can stand firm?

Is our life geared around our faith or is our life geared around our gratification? Now listen, I know I'm stepping on toes here, but it's part of my job is to be watching for your soul.

Some of you are in here and you know that the priority of your faith in results of obedience to Christ and loving and caring for this congregation, listening to the word, being dedicated to it, is not what you're standing firm in.

We have allowed the gratification of our jobs, our money, our entertainment, our children, their sports, to become what is the priority. And then you wonder why they wander off and why you wander off because you're not standing in the very means that God has given you.

[37 : 18] So my encouragement to all of us is that you can either take Peter's warning and say, yeah, that's nice, but it's not for me, and find yourself a victim of his or you can hear his warnings and be set free and have a life of meaning, have a life of purpose, have a life that is significant because it's based on your faith in Christ, not falling to the temptation and the lies of our gratification, which is leading us to our last point.

Listen, it's exhausting to live this way. It's very exhausting to live this way. And so, Peter says this.

This is the last point. Be watchful, stand firm, be hopeful. Verse 10. 1 Peter 5, 10. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Isn't this interesting? The lion is described as prowling about, and Peter says, but it's not his dominion.

It's God's. It's important, I think, that we understand that the suffering that we are facing is normal. This is why, going back, he says in chapter 3, why are you surprised at the fiery trials that you meet?

[38 : 53] The hope that we have, church, is not in the relief that we can get now. And I'm not saying we're these weird people who like to be, you know, under pain. I don't like pain. If you know, well, if you've talked to my wife, I hate pain.

You know, these people who like to run for fun, I'm like, that's pain. Why would you run? That's dumb. I run from danger and towards food. You run for fun? That's painful.

And it's easy to start becoming discouraged, watching what's going around, watching what happens to our own families and to our own children. Peter says, listen, stand firm in your faith and remember that this is temporary and that God, not us, we're not restoring this world.

I'm gonna get like a 30 second political here. You guys never see me go political. I'm going political. He has called you to his internal glory, will himself, who?

Not you. Not the way you vote. Not your political policies. Not the side that you choose. We get so hung up in thinking that somehow God is using one country over another or God is using one party over another.

[40 : 17] We get angry with each other. And the things I see Christians saying about each other is horrendous. God's using his local church to advance his kingdom, whether nations rise or nations fall.

And the moment you start putting your hope that this world can be better if we had this leader, you have fully forgotten where to stand firm in your faith.

Church, we need to do what that is right. Every action that we take, whether it's in our home, our neighbors, in our country, we need to reflect Christ. We need to reflect his mercy and his kindness.

We need to stand up for the innocent. But our hope is not in what the collective Christian body does globally. Our hope is in what Christ will do. And our hope is in the advancement of his local assembly here.

I cannot control what happens in this country. I cannot control what happens around the world. And many of us get on our phones and we start conversations about global problems.

[41 : 17] And yet our church and our homes and our city are the ones who are suffering. My encouragement to us, let's start thinking local. Local, local, local. Local is crazy. Let's start thinking about what's happening here in this church.

Let's gather, let's pray, let's encourage. Let's think about the lost centers that are around us. We may not be able to influence the United States, but we can influence this church and this city and we leave the rest to God.

So my encouragement to us this morning is, let's be watching for each other. Let's be watching for ourselves. Let's take the positive position, stand firm in our faith. Let's not be fearful.

We can cast our anxieties on him because he cares for us. And let's quickly and immediately repent of our sins. In Christ's name, amen. Let's pray. Father, we are so thankful that we are not left here in our own strength.

We live in a world that is in between. It has your fingerprints from your creation and yet it's in a war for those who rebelled against you.

[42 : 32] May we be strengthened and encouraged by the faith that we have in Christ, his mercy, his kindness, and his comforting. And many of us who have been trapped in sin, Lord, may we see this morning as an opportunity to realize that we do not have to stay here, that we don't have to remain in Satan's grasp, that the church, the local church, is designed as a place where we comfort and care and lift one another up, that we confess our sins to each other, that we remind each other of the gospel, we think about the hope that is beyond these circumstances.

May our homes and our marriages be a reflection of this this week in Christ's name, amen. Thanks for listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee, where everyone is in equal need of grace.

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