

Spiritual Warfare 2 - Prayer meting

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[0 : 0 0] we had in 1st Peter chapter 5. So we're carrying on what we started last week. Last week for me it felt quite strange, I'll be very honest. It felt strange spending 20 minutes, 30 minutes looking at Satan and not giving us much hope. Well our hope this evening to come back to this passage in 1st Peter chapter 5 is to see the hope that this chapter gives us. 1st Peter chapter 5 we can read again verses 8 and verse 9. Be sober-minded, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

Just to recap, as we said in these two verses we have, well we're moving at 8, but there's at least 8 verbs. And again if you're like me and it's been a long time since you last had to think what a verb was, we saw last week they are the doing words we could say, they're the action words. And last week we saw four verbs in these verses, four ways in which Satan attacks, in which he desires to go after the Lord's people. Four ways in which he acts, which should help us and open our eyes to realize that we are facing a real unpleasant danger. And we said this last week in detail, it's not just a small enemy, it's not just a part-time enemy. No, we face an enemy, as we saw last week in our four verbs, who is always there, who is always moving, is always prowling, who is roaring, who is vicious. An enemy who is seeking, who is on the move to find those he'll destroy and distract and distress. Also he wants someone to devour. When we come to look at the attack of Satan, the attack of the enemy, it is not an attack that we ourselves have any hope in and of ourselves of facing. There's nothing we can do in and of ourselves to fight back against his power. And we said we left last week, for me anyway, I went home thinking, man, what a heavy half hour that was. And I know there's hope in the horizon, but it's very hard giving a message and not giving any of that hope, just a glimmer of that hope. Well, this evening we have the next four verbs. And these are four words, four verbs, which tell us of our defense, of how the Lord instructs us to face up to the evil one, however to face up to Satan.

And the truth is, brothers and sisters, as we come to these verses, as this is the start of a longer series, we'll intersperse within our Confession of Faith series. We'll take a few weeks in the Confession of Faith and a few weeks looking at a spiritual warfare. For many of us, indeed, for perhaps all of us here who know and who love the Lord, this is not just a learning experience for the sake of learning, is it? For those who have been on the journey for many years and those who are perhaps new on the journey, you'll have different experiences with the evil one, a different perhaps amount of experience, a different length of experience. But one truth is, I'm sure, in one way or another, we have all faced, as it were, the spiritual heaviness, the spiritual attacks of the devil. And we come this evening, as we did last week, not just to grow our understanding, not just to learn methods. No, we come because this is real. I know we always say that, and I hope we always believe that, but this is real. Brothers and sisters, as we engage in gospel work in Tulsa, in our own homes, our own families, we must know what it is we're doing.

We must understand their enemy, and we must, as we see this week, understand what it is to fight against him. It's never just theory, this is reality. It's the first verb we have on how we counteract the enemy.

How do we face him? How do we defend ourselves? How do we protect ourselves in the face of such evil, in the face, as we heard last week, of constant attack? The first verb we have here is to be sober-minded, in verse 8. Be sober-minded. Literally, be clear in your mind. Be precise in your mind.

[4 : 55] As Christians, we are called to be clear in our thinking. In the context of these verses, it's clear in our thinking when it comes to the enemy we're battling. So what does that mean for us?

Well, I suggest there's some areas here, at least three areas, we should be clear about. Three areas of thinking as Christians. We should strive to do our best to understand what Scripture has to say to us about these areas. And if we understand these areas better, then we have a better fight, better defense against Satan. We're to be clear-minded, sober-minded, clear thinking. First of all, about who we are.

When we come face to face with the enemy, we come, yes, as those who know and who love the Lord, but we also come face to face with the enemy as ourselves. When the devil comes and he faces off towards me, he doesn't face me as the minister of North Tulsa. No, I face him as Donald.

When he encounters you, brother, dear sister, he encounters you as you are. We have to be clear-minded about who we are. We said this last week, but worth saying again, we have to understand that as people, we're prone to a wrong view of the evil one.

We said this last time, we go one way or we go the other. We either think about him too much, or we think about him far too little. Both are unwise, both are unsafe, and both lead to us being distracted from what we should be thinking about. We should not pretend he doesn't exist.

[6 : 46] We should be very mindful he is real, but not be obsessive about him. That's why we're interspersing our sermons and not focusing on one big chunk on spiritual warfare. Because the truth is, it does get heavy after a while. It gets heavy to study it. It gets heavy to preach it. Certainly, I'm sure it gets heavy to hear it after a while. We are dealing here with darkness, with evil, with spiritual heaviness. But we must be ready and we must be willing to do the hard work of the reading and the thinking. But we are facing our real enemy. We must be clear as to who our enemy is.

We are prone to the wrong view of Satan. Secondly, we must be clear-minded because we are often prone to a much too higher view of our own spiritual warfare ability. I won't speak for yourselves, but just speaking generally, I wonder if we think that we are far more capable of dealing with his attacks than we realise we actually are. If you've been on the walk for some years and you face many attacks from the evil one, you have learnt, and indeed, I'm sure, learnt many times what it is to face up to the evil one.

As you face attack after attack, you have realised again and again that in and of yourself, you have no ability to face up against the spiritual attacks. Again, there's a place for discussion, there's a place for personal sharing, and this is not it, perhaps, but just in general, speaking very generally.

When you, in your study, when you, in your time alone with the Lord, when you are going about your business, dear Christian, and you face, perhaps for the first time, perhaps for the tenth time, perhaps for the countless amount of times in your life, you face that reality, that sense, that evil is near. You feel the darkness pressing in on you. You feel the room turn very silent.

You feel the coldness in the air turn that bit more chilly. You then realise that you are just a creature made from dust, and you yourself, you have no power. You are flesh and blood fighting against that which is spiritual, which you cannot see, which you cannot touch to attack. You can't swing your arms and hope you hit it. No, you are dealing with something far above you, far more powerful than you and than I. We are prone to too high a view of our ability in spiritual warfare.

[9 : 26] But with that, I'd argue we're also prone to far too low a view of God's warfaring ability.

With the utmost respect, I worry as Christians sometimes we try and fight these things by ourselves. We like perhaps the image, we like the thinking that we face the evil one and we have our scripture and we have our words and we have our tactics and we will face them head on and we will battle with them and we will win this war. Brothers and sisters, we cannot do that on our own. When spiritual warfare begins in your life, when you find yourself facing the evil one or facing whoever it may be, one of his many angels, we don't know the details of who attacks us, but we feel the attacks nonetheless. When you feel perhaps these fiery arrows of his doubts, of his guilt, of his evil hit your heart, hit your mind, hit your soul, whatever way he attacks you. I'm very careful in saying one way because the devil has plenty of ways to attack the Lord's people. That's a whole series and we'll get to that eventually, but just speaking generally, whatever that attack looks like for you, how often do you turn to yourself first before you turn to the only one who can truly help you? Our too high a view of our own spiritual ability, our own warfare ability often stops us and blinds us even for a short time and we end up taking far too low a view of God's warfaring ability. Dear brothers and sisters, we worship the Lord of hosts.

Now the Lord doesn't need to use angels to assist him, to somehow help him win his battles. He doesn't need to, but we see in scripture he chooses to. We worship the Lord of the armies of heaven. We worship Yahweh who created all time and space, who himself created Satan, who himself created the angel who became the enemy. We are there as we face our spiritual warfare. We should very quickly remember and very quickly turn our minds to the one who does look after us, the one who does fight the battles for us. We covered here before the spiritual armor he gives us, how slow we are, how slow I am at times in putting on that spiritual armor. He has given it to us to use because he ensures and he promises when we use that spiritual armor, he fights that battle. We can't win against the enemy. We can't.

Only through Christ we win. Only through his finished work we win. Only by taking everything to him in prayer and saying, I cannot fight this. This darkness is too heavy. This evil is too close. This dark presence is weighing down in my mind in this room too much. Whatever your situation might be. If we fail to bring that to the Lord straight away, we are in great danger. We must be sober-minded. We must be clear-minded. The second we face spiritual attack, we take it to the Lord.

We put on his armor, take it to him and he fights the battle. He fights the battle. I also say one final point about clear thinking about who we are. Often we're prone to an overly negative view, far too negative view on spiritual warfare.

[13 : 26] For the brothers and sisters here who felt the attacks of evil and who've engaged in spiritual warfare, you know it's not a pleasant experience. It's a tiring experience. It's a hard experience.

But brothers and sisters, it should not be a negative experience for us. As you engage in spiritual warfare, be reminded, the devil attacks the ones who are a danger. The devil attacks congregations who are a danger. The devil attacks the good work of the gospel that poses a danger to his kingdom.

And we're doing this series, and not for a second am I doing a prophecy here. Not for a second am I seeing into the future here. I'm just trying my best to be pragmatic and practical as best as I can, to lead as best I can. As we seek, and as we certainly do seek, as we end this year and begin another year, look forward to next year. As we begin to do this and do that, and plan to do this and plan to do that, as we plan the various things and we hope to achieve and see the gospel spread in this community, the various ways we hope to do that, we can be assured for all our efforts, for all our planning, for all the glorious gospel work we long to see in North Tulsa, we will see a rise in the work of the enemy. Where God's work grows, the enemy's attack also grows. We can't afford to be spiritually negative, again we said this before a few weeks ago, as Christians we should be the most spiritually optimistic people there are in this world. We have a saviour who has gone before us, who leads us into battle, and more than that who leads us into victory.

We have to be clear about our thoughts on both the evil one and our saviour. Also clear of course, about the evil one himself. We saw this last week in detail, but just to recap some things. We have to understand as aware our theology of evil. We have to have a right view of who the evil one is.

He is, we said that last week, we have to understand he is powerful, he is ancient, but his power is limited. He's ancient, but he is not omniscient. He's old, but he doesn't know everything. He is very powerful. He is very, I say struggles or great in his power, but he is great in his power in the sense that he is powerful. But he's not omnipresent. He's not everywhere at all times. He's only be one place at a time.

[16 : 08] He has his limits. He is a created creature. Ultimately, God is sovereign, even through all the work of the evil one. God ultimately is sovereign. He permits, for his own mystery's sake, we do not understand why. We can't go into why. But often, as we saw even in Samson's story, what the world and what we and what the devil himself means for evil, God often turns and uses it for his purposes, for good. We need to know our theology of evil. We need to understand his tactics, his methods. We covered that last week. We need to remember he can't see or hear our thoughts, but he can still send his fiery arrows to damage us. He can't read our minds, but he sees us and he knows us. He knows our generations. He knows our grandparents, our great grandparents. He knows the traits in our family lines. He knows what sins we are liable to commit. He knows what sins we have committed before. He's seen us doing them. He's been present, or his people, his agents have been present for most of us for all of history. He knows humanity. He knows our weak points. He knows how to get at us.

He knows how to attack us. He knows how to bring us down. And he is good. Your brothers and sisters, he is very good at doing that. And it seems often like he can read our thoughts, but he just sees and he knows humanity very well. Clear about who we are. Sober-minded. Sober-minded about who the devil is.

A clear biblical view. Not too dramatic. Not too far-fetched. A simple, clear, biblical view of who he is. And most importantly, we must maintain a sober-minded, a clear, biblical view about who God is.

But God remains sovereign in all of our trials. In all of the attacks of the enemy, God is still God. God does not abandon. He does not leave us. Again, if you've been through these spiritual trials and times of spiritual warfare, you will feel very alone, I'm sure. You will feel as if everything is very dark and everything feels very cold, both physically and spiritually.

God is still there. He's still reigning. He is still ruling. We're not a religion or a belief system based on feelings. No, we are based on God's truth. Even when it feels as if things aren't going well, God is still sovereign. We read of our Saviour who became what? He became man. Became like us, flesh and blood. Who felt, as we read here, just a glimpse we were given in Scripture of the temptation and the trials of our Saviour. And there's theological reasons, and that's a whole different study, and we'll get into it one day, the Lord's help, of why Jesus fasted these 40 days and 40 nights. But a very simple reason that's tied into a theological reason. Jesus fasted before the devil tempted him to be weak. Humanly to be weak. Jesus was going to make sure in his sovereign power and his only way that he as God can do that. The second the devil tempted him, began his real temptation. He was going to make sure in his own way that he was able to do that. He had no 40 days of fasting. The very last limits of his humanity. It's at that point our Saviour is tested.

[19 : 55] It's at that point our Saviour faces the temptations of the evil one. We have a Saviour who has gone before us, who knows what it is to face through spiritual warfare.

Who knows what it is to face the evil one, to come face to face with him, to feel the pain and the evil, what it is to face the evil of the darkness of the evil one in front of you. Our Saviour has faced it in ways we will never begin to understand. Jesus has endured great spiritual attack.

Unlike us, who sometimes fold, who sometimes give in, who sometimes run and hide, he did not. He is steadfast. He maintained again and again through all the temptation of his life. He was tempted in all ways as we are, yet what? Yet without sin. We come to a Saviour who endured far more than we ever have to endure and who knows what it is to endure all the darkness and spiritual warfare we engage in.

We come to a Saviour quite simply who does not let it go on forever. Again, the brothers and sisters who have been through it, spiritual attacks don't last forever.

Sometimes they last quite a while, but they don't last forever. Again, God is sovereign over all things. And sometimes we are permitted to see the spiritual work, the spiritual darkness of this world.

[21 : 39] Sometimes we are permitted for reasons perhaps we don't understand. We are allowed in. The evil one and his work is allowed to impact us for a time that never lasts forever. He always rescues us and brings us back to himself. We are to be clear-minded about who we are, who Satan is, and who our Saviour is.

The second verb we are to be watchful. Be sober-minded, be watchful. Literally, be alert, be awake. Quite simply, brothers and sisters, we must not be giving, as it were, the devil a chance to find a foothold in our lives.

Facing spiritual attacks very often does not depend on individual sin. Sometimes it is just part of being a Christian.

And we will find that, I am sure, more time goes on. If you are a Christian, you are facing spiritual attack, and you know you are harbouring any secret sins, or you are striving not to be, and you are confessing your sin, and you are living a Christ-honouring life, and yet you are still facing spiritual attacks.

The reality is, the Lord is allowing it to happen. The Lord is permitting it to happen. The reason may one day be clear, it may not be clear. But you and I, together, must be alert, must be watchful.

[23 : 12] But when we engage in spiritual warfare, we must be watchful to trust in God. Again, not to trust in ourselves, to trust in the one who fights for his people.

Also, we must be watchful. Dear brothers and sisters, we shouldn't be surprised of the appearance, of the cropping up, of the, indeed, perhaps, as time goes on, we shouldn't be surprised as to the almost constant reality of spiritual warfare in our congregation, or in our own personal lives, as we engage more and more in gospel work.

Also, we must be alert in our own devotions, alert and active in our own times of spiritual growth. Attend means of grace is essential.

But alongside that, we must privately be reading or listening to the word of God. We must then, of course, be actively engaged in prayer, continual prayer, that ongoing daily reality of communing with the Lord who knows us and who made us and who loves us.

We also must be watchful. We must be alert in our ongoing trust of God's promises. When spiritual attack happens, and as I were, things feel dark and things feel heavy, it's very easy to forget all the promises God has given us.

[24 : 43] So at these times, we must be ready with all the promises. As I were, in the good times, when things are going well, when things feel easy spiritually, we should be storing up these promises.

Whether that means memorising them, or if, like myself, your memory, perhaps, isn't as good, write them down. It doesn't matter how you do it. We're just storing up God's promises to us.

When spiritual attacks happen, we can take these promises, like our Saviour did. Take God's word, the accusations of the evil one, and lay God's word before him, and say, you say this to me, you say that to me.

I have nothing to say. I feel that small. I have feeling my creatureliness before you. I can feel like I'm made from the dust. I've got no words to say.

But here I have the words of God. And these words I know you cannot withstand. Take the promises of God and remember them when days are hard, when times are dark.

[25 : 47] Take the promises of God and remember them and quote them to yourselves and pray them out loud when spiritual attacks take place. We must be sober-minded, clear-minded.

We must be watchful. We must be active. We also must resist. Verse 9. Resist him. The whole phrase here is important for us to see.

Again, there's a comma in the English for us, in the Greek there's no comma. Resist him firm in your faith. Resist him firm in your faith.

Well, first of all, obviously we must resist him. We must live lives, or at least seek to live lives as Christians where we're resisting the evil one. Where we are faultless, and indeed we won't be faultless, but we strive to be faultless in our own personal lives at home, our private lives, our public service, our devotions, where our spiritual life isn't just outward, but it's truly inward.

We're not just doing the motions on a Thursday and a Sunday. No, we are living through faithful Christian lives. We must, first of all, resist the evil one.

[27 : 10] We must live lives that are a horror to him. We must live lives that disgust him. How do we disgust the evil one? We live lives that glorify God.

We live lives that show ourselves to be those who know and who love our Saviour, and who are known and who are loved by him. And the evil one will hate that.

And he will rail against that. And he will fight against that. And one amazing way that God confirms and affirms his love for his people.

Again, you'll know this yourselves, for those of you who have faced perhaps significant spiritual attack. The devil tries and he attacks and he tries and he tries and he gets in and he fires his arrows and he does the damage he tries to do and he finds a way in.

Now, at the end of it, when it's all said and done, when you pray to the Lord that he would come and rescue you, when you pray that the evil one will be removed, when you pray in a time of peace, when you bring the name of Jesus to the devil and remind yourself that you worship and are saved by a Lord who reigns supreme, dear brother and sister, be confirmed in your faith.

[28 : 34] Be assured in your faith. The devil does not attack spiritually those who he does not consider his enemies. He leaves his friends quite happily alone.

Once you realise that reality, it changes things a wee bit. We should never desire spiritual attacks. To do so is unwise, it is foolish, it is deeply dangerous. But when they do occur, when you find yourself in the midst of them, I'm not saying be thankful for them, I'm not saying take great joy in them, but I'm saying use them to affirm and reaffirm and reassure your faith that you are one who the enemy hates.

And why does he hate you? He hates you because you're loved by the Lord. That's the simple glorious truth. For all the evil, all the pain, all the tears that come with it, if nothing else, hold on to that wonderful reality that gives you hope, that gives you peace, even in the midst of the evil.

resist the evil one. How do we do it? Again, there's no comma in the Greek. Resist him firm in your faith. Resist him by knowing, again, what it is we believe, by being firm in our faith, not in our power, not in our strength.

Resist him by knowing what it is we cling to and why we cling to it. Again, trusting in the God's promises. And here's where, as it were, the wheel really hits the road.

[30 : 08] Knowing it all and trusting it all is one thing, but applying it when these situations hit is quite different. We can know God's promises and we should know them, but then recalling them and trusting God to, as a word, keep his word in these situations.

That's where our faith really has time and trial to be tested and that's how it's supposed to be. We're not firm in ourselves, not firm in our own abilities.

No, we're firm in our faith. Firm in your faith, what? Knowing. There's a final verb. We are knowing.

Knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. Brotherhood there, it's gender non-specific. It's used across brothers and sisters.

It's brotherhood literally it says, but for the church reading this, they didn't read it as brothers, it's brothers and sisters. That's no controversy there. That's not a modern thing. That's just the Greek language.

[31 : 16] But anyway, the church read this, brothers and sisters, you are not alone. Our final verb is knowing. Resist in your faith.

Resist being strong in your faith, knowing you're not on your own. Peter here assures and reassures these Christians they are not alone when they come face to face with the evil one.

Brothers and sisters, one of the tricks, and he has many of them, and we're yet to learn all of them, and sadly, I think we'll keep learning them until Christ comes to take us home.

But one of the tricks of the evil one is very often the trick to make us think we are truly on our own. When we face these times of trial and these times of darkness spiritually, that there's no one else who goes through them.

There's no one else who understands it. There's no one else who is fighting this spiritual warfare. You're on your own, in your darkness. No help, no hope, no one's coming to look after you.

[32 : 24] The church will think you're crazy if you tell them. No one cares for you. Just be miserable, be alone, be in darkness. Peter says, in the face of that, resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering, I know you have the same kinds of suffering.

Every Christian around the world is suffering spiritual warfare. But note, it's the same but different, the same kinds of suffering. So I'm so careful tonight to say Satan attacks people this way or this way because his attacks are so varied.

What I experience, perhaps what Emma and I experience, what we experience in the months is not what you experience in your homes, in your faith, in your life.

And again, tonight it's not appropriate, but the truth is, dear friends, I'll say this briefly and carefully, and it's not to add intrigue, it's just to bring things home and to bring home this verse.

Brothers and sisters, we need one another in this fight. And the mantle is being recorded so we'll say it carefully. Since the last seven, eight months, there have been significant, significant spiritual warfare events taking place.

[33 : 48] And there's one thing before Emma appeared in my life, going through these things on my own, there's one thing going through yourself, it's never a thing then when someone else can see and hear and experience what you have been seeing and hearing perhaps for some time.

I say that not to think, oh man, what's going on in the months? What darkness has taken place? I say that to reassure you, brothers and sisters, if you are going through something, indeed, I fear many of us will in the coming months and coming years of this congregation.

If you feel that spiritual attack, know that you're not on your own. You're not on your own. And if you never go through it and never experience it, we praise the Lord for that.

He is keeping you from it. That is his purposes for his glory. Genuinely praise the Lord for that. But I suspect that many, if not most of us, will go through the reality of spiritual warfare.

We need one another in this fight. And in this fight, it's not minister and elders and congregation. No, we're brothers and sisters together in it.

[34 : 51] Pray for us. Pray for your elders. Pray for one another as brothers and sisters. We are in a warfare.

We are in a fight. And I'd encourage you in keeping with, pardon me, the reminder here of Peter. Brothers and sisters, don't feel you're alone. I say this carefully.

I've seen it honestly. Night or day, please be willing, at least, to pick up the phone. And if nothing else, just phone the manse.

I don't sleep much anyway. I'll be awake probably if you phone any time of night. I'm a very light sleeper. Phone the manse, 423, and don't be in it alone. Or talk to a brother and sister.

Don't be in it alone. We are fighting a real battle. But as we're reminded this evening, in these four ways, and there's plenty more in this section alone, and go willing, we'll see more in the weeks to come.

[35 : 53] We are fighting a battle that has already been won. We fight a battle that's been won on the cross. When our Saviour laid low the evil of his world, where our Saviour crushed the very head of the evil one under his heel, under his foot.

And at this very moment, day by day, hour by hour, second by second, his enemies are being put, as they were, under his feet. He reigns and he rules and he will be glorified eternally.

His enemies are gone. But as it stands for now, we live in this world. We are victors in Christ, yes. We are still in the ongoing battle that involves spiritual warfare.

Do it in his power. Do it resting in Jesus. Do it relying on him. and do it knowing we do it together as brothers and sisters.

Let's close in a word of prayer. Lord, we thank you for this reminder from your word that this topic which is so hard to discuss and this topic which is so hard perhaps for many of us to hear and to think about at length.

[37 : 10] We come understanding that in this topic we deal with things much of which is hidden from us and much of which is so hard to put into words but we come bringing these realities to you.

We are a people who are often embattled. We are a people who often find ourselves attacked spiritually. Often find ourselves at the painful end of the enemy's fiery arrows.

Lord, we pray just now especially for any of the brothers and sisters here this evening or who are part of our congregation who are going through spiritual warfare who have faced it or who are facing it or who indeed may face it for the rest of this week.

You be with them and encourage them. It's only a reminder to them that they are yours and that they are a danger to the schemes of evil. Lord, you keep us united together keep us serving you well in this congregation and we pray as we do we'd see days of revival and days of renewal.

We'd see your people and your power spread in this community. We do ask Lord, we'd see many come to know and come to love Jesus perhaps even having heard about him for the first time and putting their faith and their hope and their full trust in him and his finished work.

[38 : 27] Lord, comfort us and be with us. Help us to come this evening not in fear but to come this evening understanding we have a saviour who knows and who walks alongside us who keeps us and a saviour who loves us who has defeated the evil one who goes before us in that power and we follow on equipped fully in your armour knowing that you will not let a single one of your people perish eternally.

You keep your people you know your people and are kept safe by you. Ask all these things in and through and for Christ in his precious name's sake. Amen.

We can close and sing Psalms Psalm 46 Sing Psalms Psalm 46 46a Sing Psalms Psalm 46a These words of course of encouragement and hope Hazard You Ruth Jesus was res Prague King Psalm 46a Jesus Yeaples verse sur Call P Siteicional Lean developiction Future Commun P olution eas