

Spiritual Warfare 1 - Prayer meting

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- [0 : 0 0] A short time, turn back to the chapter we had, 1 Peter chapter 5. 1 Peter chapter 5, we are, we will be I guess, continuing on through our Confession of Faith journey, but we're going to add into that every second or third week, or every so often, a new study.
- It's more a topical study, looking really, to be honest, if we could get a title, sounds grand, but it's real, spiritual warfare.
- I'm going to get a very broad title, because as time goes on, we'll cover various parts of Scripture. We'll focus mostly, perhaps, on Psalm 91, and we'll follow Psalm 91 as that leads us, but that's for future weeks.
- For tonight, we have a foundation sermon, we could say. That's a text we all know well, it's a text we've read before, a text that I'm sure you've heard plenty of sermons on, but just for a short time this week, and God willing, next week, we can focus on verses 8, and of course, verse 9.
- This reminder of just who the enemy is. Be sober-minded and be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour, so on.
- [1 : 2 0] Now, we covered before together, looking at the gardens in Scripture, we saw the downfall of a casting down, really, of Satan, from his place of glory down to creation and out away from glory.
- We touched briefly on who he was before he fell, the glory he possessed, the beauty he possessed, that he was, as far as we see, as it were, the worship leader of heaven, at least for a time.
- We covered that before, but he was there as a pinnacle of the angelic host. He was there as one of the most glorious and most beautiful. Of course, he sinned where he rebelled and he fell.
- We've covered that before, but here this evening, a very practical look at who the devil is. And we must be careful. As Christians, but not just as Christians, as people, we have, and this is Bob's, Professor Ackroyd's, his favourite reminder for us was, we always fall off the horse, one way or the other.
- And people were bad for that, and Christians were bad for that. And he meant by that, we always either go too far one way or too far the other way. And we're called to be balanced as Christians.
- [2 : 3 9] Balanced in how we see the world, balanced in how we address the world, balanced in our scriptural understanding of the world. We know ourselves, indeed, we perhaps have encountered Christians who will say that, yes, the devil is real, but who then give no thought to him whatsoever, who live their lives believing the Bible and believing he is real, but then live lives that are somehow then surprised every time they see evil, every time they see something which is so unexplainably dark.
- They're then surprised, and they forget, the devil isn't just real, but he is active. Then, of course, there's also Christians who go too far the other way, and they begin to obsess about the occult.

They begin to obsess about the devil. They see him in every problem. They see him in every corner. There's one person that I know, not on the island at all, and not even with our own domination, but he's a beloved brother, but every time his printer wouldn't work for him, he blamed the devil, not the fact that his printer was ancient.

You can go one way or the other, as Christians were called to be balanced. Now, saying all that, I'm seeing myself in notes tonight. We're only covering one end tonight, so this is my bargain for you to come back next week.

I hope you would anyway, but next week we'll see perhaps the positive side, but just this evening, a short and brief, and not for lack of content, but for lack of wanting to talk about him too much.

[4 : 15] But a brief overview of who our enemy is. We see in our verses 8 and verse 9, there are eight verbs used. Now, for any like myself, who perhaps English wasn't your strong point, at least English grammar wasn't your strong point in school, is not appropriate, but if you want to see how true that is, look at my notes, if you want, after the service, you'll see just how many spelling mistakes there are, but there are eight verbs, and just a reminder for us, verbs, of course, describe actions.

They're the doing words, to go back to our primary school explanations, but that's the level I sometimes need for grammar, but there's eight verbs. There's many more than that, but there's eight verbs we can focus on tonight, and God willing, next week.

There's four verbs in verse 8 and 9, which tell us about the enemy, and there's four verbs which tell us about how we react, how we defend against him. Four verbs, four doing words.

What does the enemy do? Four ways in which we see his actions described, his very being described. First of all, we see he prowls, he prowls around.

The first verb we see here, let's turn again, look again, verse 8, be so reminded, be watchful, you're an adversary, the devil, he prowls around. Brothers and sisters, he is active.

[5 : 48] And again, as we said, the Christian's greatest mistake is to think the devil somehow is not active today. He's not involved today in the world. Even more sad and even more destructive is to think that the devil is not somehow involved in seeking to disrupt or destroy or distract or distress God's people and our mission.

And the problem is, if we don't understand or if we don't think the devil is active, it leads to complacency, doesn't it? It leads to us relaxing far too much.

It leads us to not thinking about him. And brothers and sisters, the devil is more than happy not to be thought about. The devil is more than happy to be forgotten about by the Lord's people.

There's whole sections of God's people who love the Lord and their brothers and sisters from one end of the year to the year and they don't think once about the enemy of their souls. They don't ponder once as to what he actually might be doing in their lives, in their congregational life, in the wider world around them.

And apart from ignorance, it leads to one big problem for Christians. If we're complacent about who the devil is, if we're complacent about what he's doing, then friends and brothers and sisters, the second you find yourself as a Christian being attacked by him, the second you find yourself under spiritual oppression, the second you find yourself engaged, always coming face to face with spiritual warfare, you're in for a shock.

[7 : 27] A real shock. I don't know if it's your story here this evening. I don't know how many of us here this evening as brothers and sisters have engaged all that much, perhaps in spiritual warfare.

I know there's perhaps many here this evening or some here this evening, and you know what it is to be engaged in spiritual warfare. You know what it is to face the oppression of the evil one, seeming to come at you at times from all sides.

And again, this is not to shock us, it's not to worry us, it's not to scare us, it's to show us what is in Scripture, that the devil is active. He is prowling around, there's active, ongoing movement.

He is doing, as it were, his job. Also, he's been active for some time. He's been active since the start, the start of creation for us anyway.

Whenever Adam and Eve fell, whenever the angels fell with Satan, the exact timeline we've discussed before, and there's all other sermons for us there.

[8 : 35] But we can say that almost from the start of humanity, at least from the birth of the very first child, Satan is there. His angels are there.

And they are fully engaged. They are fully active from the very start until now. Across all the ages, across all the cultures, across all the sections of humanity, all shapes and sizes, language, cultures and colours, he sees it all.

He's involved in it all. Not that he's all present, we'll see that later on, but he is ancient. He has his angels. And they are active. There's no area of human life they haven't observed in the last several thousand years.

They know their stuff. He knows people. He has watched us for all time. Also the verb that he's prowling, it tells us also that he's unsettled.

It's not as if he's sitting on a throne somewhere watching it all take place. No, he's unsettled. Scripture gives us an image of that, that Satan has no rest. He has no quiet time.

[9 : 51] He has no place to stop. The wording is and the sense is that the evil one, that he is always on the move. He is always on the hunt.

The sense here, the grammar of the word prowl, it's an ongoing action. There's no sense that sometimes he prowls, sometimes he doesn't. No, he is always prowling. He is always active.

He is always seeking to do what it is he is trying to do to disrupt, to distress, to distract the Lord's people. He is organized, dear brothers, dear sisters, he is organized in his attacks, but at the same time he is roaming around.

We get a small insight into that, although this verse raises many questions, not for this evening, but we see the start, don't we, of the account of poor Job, when the Lord asks Satan, where were you or where have you come from?

Job chapter 1 verse 7, the Lord, Yahweh said to Satan, where have you come from? Satan answered the Lord, from roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it. Now, there's at least four verbs there, but it's a different chat in the Hebrew there, that show movement.

[11 : 08] Three definite, and one argued, but at least three different ways from that verse in Job, where Satan is shown to be moving. He's moving, he's roving, he's roaming, there is no rest for him, there's no settling for him, he is always moving.

Brothers and sisters, we have an active enemy. We have a fully active and incredibly restless enemy this evening. Now, we rest, and rest is good for us.

Our times where rest is appropriate, and times where rest is needed, and times as Christians, we rest in our Saviour, and that is good, and that is right, and that should be. But, there's rest, and then there's complacency.

And you can rest, and still be active in your faith, and you can be active in your faith, outwardly, and still be complacent. We have to make sure that we understand that we are living in a world where the Prince of the Power of the Air still conducts his work.

Again, it's a bob quote, but we are very much working behind enemy lines. Yes, the world belongs to the Lord, the universe is his, but we know that for now we're under the power, we're not, but those around us, this world is under the power of the Prince, of the power of the air.

[12 : 24] He is ruling, and he is reigning, and he is seeking to establish his kingdom in the face of God's kingdom. Now, we know who wins, we know the story, how it ends.

But brothers and sisters, we're not called to be smug, we're called to actively engage in the warfare we've been called to engage in. We covered before the armour of God, and all of that entails, and we'll cover that again just in brief, God willing, in the months to come, as we go through these sections of San 91 together.

But the reminder is, we're not called to stop and do nothing. No, we're called to face the enemy. And yes, we will win because of Christ behind us and ahead of us, because he is Lord and he is Seer, because he is sovereign, because he has already stepped and stamped on the head of the devil, the head of the serpent.

We know that we win because our saviour wins, but still we're called to serve, and still we're called to fight. And every day we wake up, we as a weapon on our armour, and we join the battlefield.

We have a restless and an active enemy. But just to remind us, he is not omniscient and he is not omnipresent. He's not omniscient.

[13 : 45] He is not all-knowing. Yes, he is old, and yes, he is wise, and yes, he is an angel, and yes, he's created different to us and of power, we don't understand, but he is created.

And he is not all-knowing. He knows a lot. He has seen a lot. He understands a lot. But he doesn't know everything. He is not all-knowing.

He is still a created being. His demons are not all-knowing. But where they make up for that is that they are organised. And we've seen that before and we'll see it again. They are organised. We face an organised enemy.

We're also not omnipresent. Satan, again, is a created creature. He's only ever himself in one place at one time.

His angels, his demons, are only in one place at one time. The issue is, we don't know numbers, but we know very many of them. And many upon many of them.

[14 : 48] But not everywhere. But they are there. And brothers and sisters, I'm sure if you've experienced that at all, you will know that they are very much present in our island, very much present even in our village.

Again, there are some things we share, some things we don't share. But just safe to say that even within the work of this congregation, there is, and we've experienced ourselves, again, it's all we'll say, but there is ongoing and there is real oppression and spiritual attack towards the ongoing work of fulfilling the mission we have in this congregation.

And yet we fight. Why? Because we fight with the Lord on our side. We'll see you about next week. And any fiber of my being wants to talk about our Savior, but we'll get there. We have to first look at the enemy. He's active.

He's roaming around. Also, he's roaring. It's a second verb. He is roaring. He is a roaring lion. The adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion.

Now, Peter could have written like a lion. It's the same image. It's just as scary, but no. Like a roaring lion. Augustine, talking about this verse in his letters, he notes about this verse.

[16 : 07] He says, Christ is called a lion because of his courage. The devil is called a lion because of his ferocity. The one lion comes to conquer, the other to destroy.

We have an enemy who is vicious. Dear friends, there is no mercy with him. We're seeing much evil in the world the last few weeks, the last few months, the last few years.

Plenty of evil on our screens. Plenty of evil. We read and hear about even the evil in the world at times. It seems so merciless, but there is stories of some mercy being shown even by those who are doing harm to others.

We're still a glimmer of humanity at times, sometimes. With the devil, that's not there. He is merciless. You can't bargain with him. You can't argue against him.

He will attack and he will keep attacking. That roaring is like his prowling. There's no end to it. Grammatically, there's no end to that word. It's that sense that it keeps on going.

[17 : 14] He keeps on walking. He keeps on roaring. He keeps on being ferocious in all his ways. There's no place of hope. There's only attack. There's only evil.

And to be honest, there's no end to it. There's no end to it. There's no end to it. There's no end to it. He is terrifying. We come tonight in Christ's peril. We come tonight proclaiming a risen saviour who goes before us and who keeps his people safe and who holds on to us and has full power over Satan himself.

We proclaim that. We believe that. But don't for a second think that the enemy is not terrifying. He is terrifying. He is a roaring lion.

Do not for a second underestimate, as I were, the horrors of his evil. The image, of course, is the blood-covered teeth and the blood-covered claws of a roaring lion, an attacking lion.

That is the image we have of the evil one. It's meant to scare us. It's meant to shock us back into understanding we face a real and present danger. Again, you'll know this yourselves.

[18 : 23] If you faced his attacks, you'll know yourselves with the ferocity and indeed the terror and indeed the horror what it is to face him. Yes, you face him knowing you're saved and loved by the Lord.

Yes, you face him knowing you're covered with the full protection of Christ. But yet you face him and it's still terrifying and horrifying to do so. But yet we must do it.

We're called to do it because we do it in the power of our saviour. I also note he wants to be heard. Of course, there is times that much of his work is stealthy.

There's times Satan hides his work well. But also, he's a roaring lion. He has no problem taking his worth of credit for all that's going on. There is times he appears obvious.

There's times he is loud, we could say. There's times he appears, the scripture tells us, like an angel of light. There's times his work is clearly, clearly displayed.

[19 : 27] There's times his servants, both angelic and human, seem proud of our destruction and proud of the misery they bring into the world. He is active, he is roaring.

Also note he is seeking. Seeking. Someone to devour. He is seeking. He doesn't just attack.

He wants to attack. He longs to attack. He longs to destroy. He is seeking someone, seeking one to devour. Again, note the active language of the evil one.

Again, he's spirit. He is spiritual. He's created being, yes, but he does not rest. He does not need food. He does not need sleep. He keeps on going.

He is able to seek and to destroy without stopping. Again, he's not omniscient, like we said. He's not all-knowing, but he is ancient.

[20 : 31] He doesn't know everything, but he knows a lot. He does know humanity. Well, recently I was reading a very good example of this.

It might sound a bit out there, but stick with me. I promise it's reformed. I promise it's fine. Or just decide for yourselves. I follow a few people.

I read a lot of our content, and two people I follow, both of them were once mystics. They were once engaged in, what do you call it, fortune-telling, I guess.

They took money for it, but the fortune-telling they were doing, you know, there's plenty of fortune-tellers, plenty of mystics who do it just for a trick, and it's very easy to trick people.

There's plenty of magicians who do it just for a show, and you can learn to do it, you can learn to read people pretty easily. But no, these two I'm following just now, I'm reading just now, they've since become believers, reformed believers who love the Lord, and they will say honestly, they weren't performing a trick.

[21 : 39] We will come to them, ask for readings, ask for the future to be seen. They would have, and be given visions and words to say, well, how's that?

How's that possible? Brothers and sisters, we're dealing with real evil. Think back to the magicians and the real magicians in Pharaoh's court.

They replicated, not all of them, but to a point, they replicated at least some of the miracles that God was showing to the people. They weren't doing small tricks, they were, for the power of the evil one, the scripture makes clear, they were doing miracles.

Up to a point. The devil can copy and seem to be doing wondrous works up to a point. Again, he doesn't know the future, he's not God, but he knows people.

And brothers, we are, and sisters, we are predictable creatures. When you've seen every human being, or almost every human being, from the start till now, we're all the same, as different as we are, we all tick the same way.

[22 : 48] There's only so many different ways humanity can act. And the devil's seen it all from the start. And these people I read, they say that, but often their prophecies came through, and came through in incredible ways.

And the words they got from the evil one about the truth that people were asking about, they were so accurate in the truth. We're dealing with an active enemy, but one who doesn't know everything.

But he does know a lot. Also an enemy who has help. As he seeks to attack us, he does so with the help of his legions of angels, his legions of demons, we would say.

Those who fell with him, the angels that fell with him. It's a full host of the enemy. It's all of the layers of a demonic structure we talked on before what scripture gives us.

There is, seemingly at least we see in scripture, organized evil. It's not just random. It's not just sporadic. No. It is organized layers of evil that attack the Lord's people.

[23 : 59] And finally, he devours. He's seeking to devour. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

The final verb we have here discussing and describing the actions of the devil. He is one who devours, at least who seeks to devour. All his being, all his time, all his energy is devoted to one thing only, to the distraction of God's people, to the distress of God's beloved people, to the destroying down of God's people.

And he'll attack us in our own walks. He'll attack us as a congregation. He'll attack us as a denomination. He'll attack us across all these boundaries. Attack all God's people.

He does so day and night in various ways. And when one way as a word doesn't work, he'll try another way and try another way and keep going and keep going.

That's why we daily must do what? Come back again and again to our saviour. I think of the words of Jesus as he describes the thief John 10.10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

[25 : 22] What a description of the enemy. His whole time, his whole being is dedicated to killing, to stealing, to destroying. We're going to end this evening on the joyous note of how Christ, the Good Shepherd, describes himself.

I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. Again, it feels wrong and I would love to squeeze another 40 minutes but I better not.

But there's four verbs in these verses but how with our saviour, how we defend against and how we fight back against the evil one. That'll be for next week's time God willing.

The Lord does not leave us without help, without hope. But also the Lord, as we said before, he is honest. He deals honestly with his people and his word, he tells it as it is.

He doesn't hide from us the reality of the devil. We shouldn't be surprised when we face spiritual oppression. We shouldn't be surprised when we face spiritual attack. You think back to our fathers of old.

[26 : 30] I say before the Victorian times but even in recent memory, recent history, my own granny that wasn't how long ago remembers, when she's a younger girl, probably the 30s, the 40s, she remembers the Christians, the brothers and sisters speaking openly about their spiritual attacks.

We become so scared. We become so worried. I think we think people think we're too new enough if we talk about it too much. Brothers and sisters, that is not what it is to be a family. This is real. As we go through the next few weeks interspersed of our confession of faith, I hope you see that it is real.

As you face spiritual oppression, face spiritual attack, you aren't, as it were, going crazy. It's happening to you. Chances are. But also, in Lord's word, he has given us power, he has given us direction, he's given us guidance.

He has not left his people on their own. The homework, if you call it homework, going forward, we'll take Psalm 91 as our base. And just to briefly close, we're doing that for one good reason, a few good reasons.

Psalm 91, it can be read in various ways. Of course, it speaks about protection. But historically, historically, and when I say historically, I mean the early church. We mean before that, we mean our Jewish, the believers of old, before Christ came, the faithful believers, who look forward to the Messiah, that they used Psalm 91, the early church used Psalm 91, the church fathers used Psalm 91, the reformers quoted often Psalm 91.

[28 : 06] why? When dealing with spiritual warfare. Psalm 91 was used and is used and has been used from the very start, from the very writing time till today, through all the ages of church history, has been used to remind God's people just the beauty and the power of the Lord in the face of the darkness and the destruction of our spiritual enemy, the enemy of our souls.

We'll cover that more, God willing, in the weeks to come. That's our homework. If you look at Psalm 91 and that'll be where we're, our jumping point from the next few times here, but God willing, next week we can cover the positives of verses 8 and verse 9.

For all the negatives this evening, for all of the horrifying realities of the evil one, there is so much beauty and so much wonder and so much glory about our Saviour, about how he has taught us to fight back and defend ourselves against the evil one.

And I can give a spoiler just now. There's no great lesson to be learned other than we find all our power, all our hope we are in him. His finished work, his person, all that he is, all that he has done, he is the one we find all our help, all our hope in.

And this week, if you find yourself under spiritual oppression, spiritual attack, if you feel that you don't want to talk about it, then going forward, brothers and sisters, I say this carefully, I say this off the record.

[29 : 37] As things progress in the church, as we seek to do better and serve the Lord well, as we seek to witness to our congregation, our community, as we seek to put plans into action, as we seek to see the gospel spread in Tolstah, it doesn't take a theological genius to say that we will face increasing attacks, spiritual attacks.

That is a simple reality of how it works. It's how it's worked across the world, across the church from the start till now. We must be ready for it, must be prepared for it. Don't be surprised by it, don't be scared by it, take it to the Lord, he knows, he sees, and he alone does and will help.

It's a heavy night tonight looking at the evil one, but read verse 8 and verse 9 yourselves tonight and see that the hope we have in these verses and we can dig into that more next week, Lord willing.

Let us join together in a word of prayer. Lord, we ask you to be with us this evening, we thank you for the gift and the wonder of your word. We thank you, Lord, you're honest with us in your word that you give us the truth as it is, you do not withhold from us things which we must come to understand, which we must learn.

We come just now as we have learned this evening, perhaps some more about the evil one. we come just now very aware of his presence and very aware of his evil and very aware of his power and very aware of his desire to destroy and to kill and to steal.

[31 : 11] We also come this evening with the full awareness that we worship a Saviour who has destroyed the evil, who has, as it were, stamped and crushed his head, who as he wriggles and revolts and rebels, we have a Saviour who is there at your right hand and one by one, day by day, his enemies are being put underneath his feet.

Lord, give us that understanding that we worship a risen Saviour this day who has full power and full control. I pray just now for any who are facing and who may well face this coming week the oppression and the attacks of the evil one.

Lord, you'd be with them and support them. You'd help them turn their prayers and their eyes to you, understanding that we have no power whatsoever in and of ourselves, but in our Saviour we have his full power, his full glory as we find ourselves protected in him, covered by his righteousness.

We find ourselves covered as one is covered by a loving Father. Help us this evening, Lord, to go home in safety, to go home in peace and to find joy in knowing that we have a God who cares so much about us that you're willing to give us even the most difficult of advice as you show us the reality of the enemy we face but also the glory and beauty of a Saviour who has destroyed the enemy for us.

I pray just now, Lord, for all who are not here this evening, those away, Lord, and those who are not here for various other reasons. you'd be with them and you'd support them. I pray all, Lord, for the meeting, God willing, tomorrow night, Lord.

[32 : 55] We thank you for the women who meet. We ask you bless them as they do their work as WFM. Lord, that they would know that they are an important, a vital part of this congregational life as they seek to spend time together, to abode one another, to uphold one another, at the same time to look towards helping those in the world who need that practical help and that financial help.

Lord, I ask you to bless us and I ask you to bless our final item of praise. Help us to do so with hearts and minds full of understanding and full of love for our Saviour. Let's go all these things in and through and for his precious name's sake.

Amen. Let's close again from the Psalter, Psalm 67. It's called the Psalter, Psalm 67. The first version of the Psalm, page 300.

I thought we should end our night this night in a Psalm which reminds us as to the power and the glory and the reality that one day God will have his full dominion.

All the world will be his. No more evil, no more devil, no more suffering, no more pain. Psalm 67, the first version of the Psalm. Lord, bless and pity us, shine on us with thy face, that the earth, thy way, and nations all may know thy saving grace.

[34 : 20] Let people praise the Lord, let people all we praise, or let the nations be glad and songs their voices raise. The whole Psalm to God's praise. Lord, bless and pity us, shine on us with thy face, and praise the Lord, let people praise the Lord, let people all we praise, O let the nations be glad, in songs their voices raise.

thou justly people, on earth, on earth, through nations all.

Let people praise thee, Lord, let them praise thee, both great and small.

the earth, the earth, our fruit, shall yield, our God, shall blessings send.

God, shall, as blessed men, shall in fear, and to earth, at most end.

[36 : 16] The grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, both of you now and forevermore. Amen.