

Shepherd the Flock of God

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in 1 Peter chapter 5. I'm reading from verse 8 to the end. I'm not going to read it all, but we read that, verse 8, 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.

And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you, and so on.

As we've been looking at this chapter here, we see that Peter has been emphasizing the responsibility of the elders towards the flock.

He has been exhorting the young to be respectful or subject to the elders. He is exhorting all of us towards humiliation, to be humbling ourselves before God and indeed before one another.

[1 : 21] And we were looking at the importance of casting all our anxieties upon the Lord, something that we're probably not very good at doing. I always believe when we find something being repeated in various parts of the Bible, that it is the repetition of something is because we are slow to do it.

And you will find that in various parts. It's through Jesus' teachings. We find it through the letters, whether it's from Paul or Peter.

We find it in the Psalms. We find this casting all your anxieties upon him. Cast your burden upon the Lord. Commit your way unto the Lord.

Casting all your cares. Over and over we find that. And I believe that is being repeated because we are not very good at doing it. We think we are giving our burden to the Lord.

We think that we're praying to the Lord and giving it to him. But we, as it were, we're keeping our hand on it. We don't cast it. We just sort of tell the Lord about it and we've still got hold of it because we sometimes are afraid to give it to him because we think we need to keep control on the matter.

[2 : 43] But then finally we find that Peter is exhorting the Christians to stand firm because these, as we know, were tough days. We saw that at the very beginning, that Peter is writing to a church that is being scattered all over the place.

The fires of persecution were beginning to burn. It was tough to stand up and be counted on the Lord's side. We here don't understand where there might be.

And I'm not minimizing. For some people in here today, I don't know, you might have a tough time at home since you became a Christian. For all I know, you might have a tough time in school.

You might have a tough time at work. People's attitude to you may have changed for no other reason than because you've come to love and to serve and to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

So I'm not in any way minimizing how difficult it might be for you personally today in your own circumstances. But when Peter wrote, it was so tough that many people were being imprisoned.

[3 : 51] Many people were being put to death. People were losing their work. They were losing their homes. They were forfeiting all their normal, natural rights in life. So it could be a very, very, very costly business to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

But of course, the church was flourishing and growing. So it's against that background we've been looking at that, that Peter has been writing this letter. And he's saying to us, and as he said to them, and the word is still the same, that in order for us to continue as Christians, in order to uphold the faith, we need to be, this is where we pick it up at verse 8, to be sober-minded and to be watchful. Because we have an enemy who's going about. And again, the Bible is reminding us of this truth over and over and over again. Now, I've never wanted, I have often highlighted the enemy of our souls, the devil.

But I never want to overemphasize him for the simple reason, I do not want to give him too much prominence. Because A, it can begin to cripple us if we focus like that.

And we've always got to remember that although he is incredibly malicious and highly dangerous and more powerful than any one of you or than me or anybody, he is still a defeated foe.

[5 : 24] And greater is he that is within you. That is, when you, if you today are following the Lord Jesus Christ, you have, through the ministry of the Spirit, you have at your disposal the power where the Lord has given us an armor.

And he has given us teaching in his word of how we are to meet the enemy of our souls. He is dangerous. The thing is, I'll be quite honest, that any time that I have actually preached about the devil, I've always suffered for it.

Either before or during or after. To the extent that there are times I say I will never preach about the devil again. Because he is a malicious, dangerous enemy.

And let us not underestimate it. In fact, Peter is telling us here, your adversary, the devil prowls around like a roaring lion. And as we all know, a lion is a, well, we'll see that just in a moment.

Now, he tells us, first of all, to be sober-minded and to be watchful. And this sober-minded is to have this moderate lifestyle in everything.

[6 : 37] We'd often tend to think of being sober-minded with regards simply to alcohol or sobriety or to have this moderate way in that. But that's not what we have here.

It's in everything. That this sober-minded, this balanced, this moderate way of living. So that whether it is in our work, our home, our leisure, in any aspect, in any area of our life.

Because we can become totally consumed by anything in life. You can make anything in life an idol. You can lose sight of God by and with anything in life.

The good things in life. The blessings of life. Now, of course, we're to enjoy life and to appreciate all that God has given us. And every good and perfect gift we've got to remember is from above.

And we're not to live life in a negative way, but in a positive way. But at the same time, we're not to become consumed by anything.

[7 : 40] And the important thing is to put the Lord first in everything. And we're to be watchful.

We're to be on guard. Because of this enemy, a Roman, when Peter was writing at this particular time, and Peter knew exactly what he was talking about, a Roman guard would be put to death if he fell asleep on guard.

It was a capital crime. If you were guarding anybody or anything in the Roman army and you fell asleep, you were put to death. Peter knew about that.

Peter, remember, was being guarded in prison. He was going to be executed the next day. The guards fell asleep. We know that the angel delivered Peter, and these guards were executed.

Because they had committed the crime of falling asleep. Now, of course, we know that the Lord was over all these things. But it was a serious, serious crime.

Because if your responsibility was to be watching and to be guarding, and if you fall asleep, you'll allow the enemy to come in. So that's what Peter is talking about, the importance of being on guard.

[8 : 53] Because Satan, we're told, goes around like a lion. Now, one of the things we know about a lion is a lion can be very subtle and very stealthy in its approach.

I'm sure we've all seen pictures of the lion. Just the way you would see a small domestic cat.

Sometimes we'll be stalking a bird or a mouse. And you'll see it just going through the grass or going along the ground, and its belly almost crawling on the ground, just moving, moving so slowly, ready to spring.

Very stealthy approach. Very subtle. And Satan often works like that. And often we don't recognize his approach. He takes us unaware so often.

We just look at the Bible. How did Satan get to Adam? He got to Adam through Eve. How did Satan try and get to Jesus?

Through Peter. And Satan will often work. He'll often come sideways. His approach is different. He's had thousands of years of experience. And he knows you far better than you know yourself.

[10 : 10] He knows your strengths. And he knows your weaknesses. And don't think for one moment that it's only in your weakness that he will try and get you. But he will also try and undermine your strengths.

For instance, we see how there's no doubt his successful campaign on occasions against Abraham. Abraham. And he struck at Abraham in his faith. The man who was renowned for his faith.

The father of the faithful. So we've always got to be on guard. Because he knows us. And he will vary the temptation. And even when we are aware of our own weaknesses.

And even when we can sometimes be watching, he will vary it and try and get us in some other way. A lion is also active.

And so is Satan. It's one of the things the Bible tells us. That he is moving to and fro upon the earth. Satan works not just during the day, remember.

[11 : 11] He works at night as well. And that is why your mind, remember, it's important to cover your mind in prayer when you go to bed at night.

And I'm sure we're all aware. We mentioned that before. There are times where you can go to bed and you can be full of the Lord. You might be supposing it's a communion time. A time of blessing. A time of fellowship. It's been a good time.

And you go to bed and you're close to the Lord. And your heart is warm. And you get up in the morning. And you're as dead as a stone. You're cold.

And you say to yourself, what on earth has happened? You don't feel like praying. You don't feel like opening the Bible. Hard as nails. Well, we've always got to remember, Yes, we have a sinful heart, a heart of rebellion.

But we have an enemy who never goes to sleep. Remember, it tells us in Revelation. For the accuser of the brethren is cast down, who accused them before God day and night.

[12 : 15] So we've got to be on guard. He's always at work. Always at work. Again, Satan's attacks are urgent.

Because he knows his time is short. We're told that in Revelation. For the devil has come down to you in great wrath. Because he knows that his time is short.

And I believe that Satan is aware that his days of prowling around in this world and causing so much harm, that these days are numbered.

That he will be wanting to maximize and cause the most damage that he can to God's people. And remember, it's not, in many ways, it is not something that he doesn't attack you out of any particular desire to hit you.

It's always to get at God. That is always his aim. His aim from the very beginning was to attack the glory of God. His hatred for God, his glory, and his church, his cause, his everything.

[13 : 23] This is what burns in the very heart of Satan. And so that is why he will always try and get you. And just like the lion, you'll see the lion is cruel.

The lion, you'll see the lion ripping the throat out of its victim. And so, Satan is cruel. And remember, my friend, when his desire is to take you to hell, he will gain no pleasure in that.

There will be no welcome. But it is, as we said, it is to get at the glory of God. And the lion, of course, as we know, is all-powerful.

And Satan is powerful. And that's what I said earlier. Let's not try and resist him in our own strength because we cannot. And so, Peter is saying, look, in light of this enemy that we have, be sober-minded and be watchful.

And Peter knew what he was talking about. Because Peter was somebody, he says, Peter knew 100% what he was talking about because Peter had been warned by Jesus.

[14 : 31] Jesus said to Peter one day, You know, Peter, Satan has desired to have you and to shake you, to put you through a sifting process just like wheat.

But I prayed for you that your faith won't fail. And so, Peter knew all about this. And Peter, in his own strength, out of a heart that was full of love for Jesus, said, No, Lord, I will go to prison with you.

I'm ready to die for you. Peter genuinely thought that Jesus had completely misunderstood him. Peter, in his own pride and arrogance, thought he was a strong follower of Jesus.

And Jesus is saying to Peter, Peter, the enemy is far greater than you are. But I'm praying for you. Jesus didn't pray that Peter wouldn't stumble or fall, but he prayed that his faith wouldn't fail.

And we know Peter knew what he was talking about. Because Jesus, earlier on, had also said, remember in the Garden of Gethsemane, Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation.

[15 : 55] But the disciples just slept. Every time he came to them, they were asleep. He woke them and he says, Look, they didn't realize that this was one of the most dangerous times ever.

Because the powers of darkness were unleashed, in a way and in a manner that had rarely occurred. How can we say that? Because Jesus said it.

He said, This is talking of Satan and his kingdom. This is your hour and the power of darkness. It was a time where, as it were, God's restraint was pulled back.

And where he allowed the forces of darkness to do their worst. And that's what Jesus is saying to them. This is dangerous times.

Watch and pray that you don't enter into temptation. But Peter was falling asleep. And Peter fell into temptation.

[16:55] And afterwards, his heart was broken. I believe that Peter walked with a limp, a spiritual limp, all his days, because he wasn't sober-minded and he wasn't watchful.

He wasn't on guard. He wasn't prayerful. He was a slumbering Christian who ended up following Jesus afar off. So it's wonderful in many ways.

Although we know that this is spirit-breathed, the Word of God is spirit-breathed, we also know that as Peter writes this, he's saying, I can testify to everything that I'm writing here.

I know it. I've been there. I've experienced it. And Peter was the one who went out and he wept bitterly because he hadn't been watching and praying.

And so he says, resist him firm in your faith. And we've got to remember this, as we said, that a hundred times out of a hundred, if we try and meet Satan on our own strength, we will fail.

[18:00] It's in the faith. Now, you know, temptation is very subtle. And particularly when temptation is powerful. And when you have been, in whatever particular shape or form, I mentioned, for instance, to the young people today, just about lying.

We could, this morning, we could talk about 101 different things. The temptation not to tell the truth. And very often, when you are confronting a particular situation and the temptation is, there's all of a sudden, there's this temptation to do whatever, and it seems the easy thing to do, if we resist in the faith, we will grow stronger.

You see, temptation is so subtle. Well, temptation says, ah, this is going to be tough. It's going to be tough. If you're going to fight against this, it's going to be tough for you.

The easy thing is just give in. You know, one of the things Satan is so good at doing is whispering to you, whatever the temptation is, just give in this time. Start again next time.

Start from afresh. And he'll even whisper to you, and he'll say, God is merciful. God will forgive you. Just give in to the temptation. And then start afresh.

[19:29] That's such a subtle temptation. Because the more we give in, the weaker we become. So it is imperative that we, and it's in the faith, and we're saying to the Lord, Lord, this is tough.

And Satan is telling me to give in, that it will be easier, and that I can start afresh. You know, we've got to be honest with the Lord. Tell him how we feel. Tell him what we're going through. The Lord wants us to be honest.

And say, Lord, I need your help. I can't do this on my own. The Lord's saying, yes, I know. And that's why I'm here. In faith. You're coming to me in faith. And this is how we're to go. Steadfast in the faith.

This is how we're to fight him. Resist him firm in your faith. You see, unbelief. If we are riddled with unbelief, we're playing, as it were, into Satan's hand.

We've got to keep praying. We've got to keep watching. The Lord, of course, is that example. And we find how Jesus himself met Satan. And he said, each time it is written.

[20:37] Remember, the Lord has given us, if we went through Ephesians, and I think you'll be going through that with Ivor, looking at the armor of God. The Lord has provided an armor for us.

And we know one of the things given to us is the sword, the sword of the Spirit. That's why we should soak ourselves in the Word, so that we're able to say to Satan when he comes, ah, it's written.

It's written in the Word. And if we bring the Word before him and stand firm in the Word, it tells us, resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

And so, as we said, Peter knows what he's talking about here, but we find that Peter is encouraging these Christians. He's encouraging them. And you know, it's quite amazing because what Peter is actually doing here is the very thing that Jesus said to Peter he was going to do.

Remember after Peter had denied Jesus, and we find Jesus restoring Peter back on the shores of Galilee. We find that Peter, Jesus says to Peter, we find that right in John chapter 21, that he was to, afterwards, he was to strengthen the brethren.

[22 : 05] That was one of the things that Peter was going to do. And it's an amazing thing. Here is Peter, and that's exactly what he's doing.

He's encouraging his fellow believers. He's the one, and he's saying to them, look, I've been in this, I know exactly what I'm talking about.

And then he says to them, he goes on and he says, and after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory, the God of all grace, everything, my friends, is of grace.

You and I are here today because of grace. If you're following the Lord Jesus Christ today, it's because of his grace. If you're not following the Lord Jesus Christ today, the invitation to follow him is being given by his grace.

It's all of grace. Everything is of the Lord. The initiative of salvation is God's. Nothing belongs or was initiated by ourselves.

[23 : 17] Nothing. That's one of the things we come to discover more and more and more and more. There's nothing within us or about us that could say, well, Lord, because of who I am. No, it's all of grace.

And that's what we find here, that Peter is talking about this God of all grace. That's what he says, and after you've suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory.

That's the reason God called you. That's why you've been called. When you're called from somewhere, you're called to come, to leave a place and to go somewhere else.

If somebody calls you, you have to leave where you are and go to where you're called. God is calling you home.

Now, when you were first called in the gospel and you came to receive Jesus and you followed Jesus and you go back in your own mind and in your own heart and you think of the time when you came to know, when you were persuaded and say, you know, I've been converted.

[24 : 38] I know whom I believe. I am now following Jesus. That moment, you don't realize or understand or have an awareness of where you're actually going to go.

you haven't seen what the Lord has prepared for you. It would be like a king leaving his throne and going away, traveling through the land and coming to this huge pit where some people are working all their life.

They're down in this huge, muddy pit. And he sees this young man and he calls him and he says, you come with me. I am going to adopt you into my family and make you my son.

Now, as that man is pulled out of the pit, he has no idea what that exactly involves. All he knows is he's been delivered out of an awful pit and things are looking up.

And you know, in a sense, that's almost how it is for us. When we are called out and when we respond by grace, little do we realize the end in view.

[25 : 56] But it's to glory we're going. That's what grace is in a sense. It's the very beginning of glory. And that's what the end, if we could see the riches, the eternal inheritance that the Lord has prepared for us.

I think part of why it is hidden from us is that we couldn't, we couldn't carry on in this world anymore. You and I wouldn't want to stay here another day if we were transported to glory for a little while and then put back into this world.

We'd say, I don't want to be here anymore. Peter, James, and John were up on the Mount of Transfiguration. And they got a glimpse of Christ in His glory.

And the moment was so special and precious and powerful. Peter says, I want to stay here. Let's build booths here. Let us stay here.

Now, Peter was a married man, probably. And he had everything back down the mountain back. But he just wanted to stay. And if we could see what the Lord has prepared for us.

[27 : 09] And I believe in, to a certain extent, that is why, yes, our own sinful nature is such, and our finite minds and such like. But the Apostle Paul was given glimpses.

Moses was given glimpses. These people were given glimpses. And sometimes we get a little drop, a little taste of the closeness of Jesus.

If you're a believer, there has been a time when you've said, just like the disciples on the Emmaus Road, did not our hearts burn within us? These were special times, precious times.

It's just like a tiniest little drop of what will be forever and ever and ever. This is what the Lord has for you.

But He's preparing you for that by His grace all the time. And so Peter is saying, this is what it's about. And as you are being prepared for this, the eternal glory in Christ, that God Himself will restore you confirm you, strengthen you, and establish you.

[28 : 22] That word restore comes from or has the idea of mending nets. Like a fisherman. There's the nets and they've been ripped. But they're going to be used again. So He's there and He's mending the nets.

That's the kind of word that's used here. That's what the Lord is doing with us. Restoring us. Confirming us. Fixing us firmly. Strengthening us. Establishing us.

Laying the foundation in the sense that we are becoming more established in that foundation. And of course, our foundation is Jesus Christ. Then Peter breaks into doxology.

To Him be the dominion forever and ever. That's where it all ends. That's what it's all about. It's about His glory.

Is that what's in our heart today? You know, sometimes, sometimes we lose our way because our heads are down.

[29 : 23] Our spiritual heads must be up. Our eyes must be up. Our eyes must be fixed on Him. He is the end of everything. Even Christ's work finished or was worked to the glory of the Father.

Everything. That's where everything moves. That's what we're about. Not about our shells. Our worship here today is seeking to glorify.

It's about Him. And that's why, Peter, you'll find the writers that are always breaking into doxology.

The psalmists were the same. And then, Peter, finally, there are other things we could say as we find the Lord equipping us and establishing us.

The very last thing we'll say here, he says, verse 14, greet one another with the kiss of love.

Elsewhere, that is referred to as a holy kiss. And that is a warm greeting.

That's really what it is saying. Some people say, what is the kiss of love? Well, it's not a romantic kiss. It's a warm greeting. I wonder why Peter puts this in. Well, I think it's a very simple thing.

[30 : 35] The church is family. And it's far harder to fall out with somebody if you've just hugged them or kissed them. Your family, as I said, it's not a romantic kiss.

It's just a kiss of greeting or a hug of greeting. Some places might be, we shake hands or whatever. But we, I think we should be even more expressive because we're family.

We belong to one another. We're going to be with one another forever. And we all belong to Christ. So this is, this is what we find here.

May I say in conclusion to any person who is still outside the kingdom, I, I urge you to come inside because it's cold outside and it'll become colder.

It's dark outside and it'll become darker. everything is inside because Christ is at the very center of his kingdom.

[31 : 40] And he's been speaking to you through his word. I know he has. You have an awesome responsibility with what you do.

Are you going to turn away from it? Or are you going to bow the knee of your heart and say, Lord, please, come into my heart.

Become Lord and King of my life. And take me to glory with yourself. Let's pray. Oh Lord, we, we pray to bless us this day.

May we hear and heed what God's word says to us. We ask, Lord, to be with us each one and bless us as we make our way home.

Give us traveling mercies and give us safety. And may the great grace of God be in and upon us all. Do us good and forgive us our sin. In Jesus' name we ask it.

[32 : 40] Amen. Amen.