

Resist The Devil And Stay Strong

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 March 2021

[0 : 00] 1 Peter chapter 5 verses 8 and 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.

As we know, this letter that Peter wrote, he wrote to Christians that were suffering for their faith.

And they were being despised and they were suffering sometimes severe persecution.

And they were being scattered all over because he writes it. He's writing to those who are scattered.

And it was a very difficult time because it was a time where it counted a lot to be a Christian.

You couldn't be a fair-weather traveller in these days. You either had to nail your colours to the mast or not. So Peter is writing to these Christians.

[1 : 14] And as he comes to the end of his letter, his teaching is very practical. And it's a letter of great encouragement to all believers, but especially those who are facing trials and troubles.

And that's why it's as real and relevant to us here where we are, that we'll find that there's a warmth in Peter's writing. It may be different to the Peter of the early days.

It's the same with the Apostle John. We always tend to think of John as the Apostle of love. And so it would appear, but we've got to remember that James and John were the sons of thunder.

And it would appear back in the day when they were in the early days, when they were with Jesus, that there wasn't the same warmth and compassion and love that was evident in John's writings.

When we come to read his writings in 1st, 2nd and 3rd John, as you'll find when he followed the Lord Jesus. And it's the same probably with Peter.

[2 : 21] But that's what happens. We change, or we should be changing. And there should be a growing warmth and love becoming evident within the heart. And that's very, very obvious in the writings of Peter.

So in this final chapter, Peter is emphasizing the responsibilities of the elders to shepherd the flock. And he's exhorting the young to be subject to the older.

And then he's exhorting all the Christians to be resolute and to be steadfast in the faith. And of course, these are the things that's great advice.

Peter isn't just saying to Christians, right, come on, tough it up. You've got to, you know, give no quarter, the stiff upper lip sort of idea.

You've got to be, you look, you're Christians here. And you must never give up and just keep going. And speech like that might all be very well.

[3 : 21] But that kind of, when we speak in that way to one another, that is, in a sense, speaking more to the human nature that we are. Now, of course, don't get me wrong.

It's important that we do encourage one another as much as we can. And we have to be resolute. But it's so easy to pander, as it were, to the flesh and to try and, as it were, to toughen up, as it were, just according to our own strength.

But that's not what the apostle is saying in any shape or form. Peter comes to the very heart of the problem and he recognises that, as Christians, we are in a warfare.

And that there is an enemy who is out to get us. And that is Satan, the devil. And we're told that he's an adversary. Now, as we know, an adversary is a person or a force that opposes and attacks.

The adversary is an enemy. And, of course, Satan is our sworn enemy. And we see here that he's likened to a lion, a prowling lion, a roaring lion.

[4 : 33] And when you see a lion prowling and a lion roaring, but particularly that prowling lion, as you would see it, you might see, sometimes we see film of the lion in the jungle.

And you see the way that it's moving with probably a hungry lion. It's moving with intent. You see it prowling and it's searching.

It's looking. It's looking. And it's looking basically for something to devour. And as we know, a lion has a ferocious appetite. It's a tremendous capacity to eat.

So here is this picture of Satan that he's going about lurking and he's going about with intent. Satan is never just idly drifting by and then sort of thinking, oh, well, I'll have a go at this person or I'll go at that person.

He has an agenda. Remember, we talk about the kingdom of darkness. Now, a kingdom is a place with laws. I'm not saying that there's laws in hell, but I believe there's strategy in hell.

[5 : 37] I believe that the evil one is working in a way that they're always seeking to strike at the heart of God's purposes and plans.

Because Satan is a sworn enemy of God, a sworn enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, then he is our enemy as well. And so that's what the apostle is talking about here.

Now, we also know that the lion is very subtle and cunning in its way, in the sense, you know, you often see these pictures of it just creeping so stealthily, creeping up to pounce on its prey.

You can see just a little cat doing that, a cat going after a mouse, a cat going after a bird. And you see it just the way that it moves so quietly through the grass or wherever and getting us ready to pounce.

And of course, all the more so you can see it with a great big beast, the lion. And that's who Satan is. And Satan knows how to attack us and he knows when to attack us.

[6 : 44] Because we've got to remember that he's had thousands of years of experience. Satan has been at this game, I shouldn't call it a game, but you know what I mean, for thousands of years.

And he knows exactly our weaknesses. He knows when we're vulnerable. He knows when we're down. He knows what gets us. He knows how to get us. And he's a master of drawing us in so gently so that the temptation becomes or appears to us the most normal thing possible.

And we feel that, well, it's all right, that there's nothing wrong with us. And he is brilliant at hiding the devastation that happens or what happens to you once you yield, once you give in.

He covers that so that he kind of blurs the boundaries and blurs the lines. And makes it so that he compromise is the easiest thing.

And he's a master at drawing us aside. And as we also know that the lion, as we know, is the king of the beasts. The lion has tremendous strength.

[7 : 57] And when you look at that lion, you can see the rippling muscles, as it were. And Satan is powerful. Satan is stronger than you and me.

And will always be so. And we must always remember that. And if we go out every day on our own strength, dependent upon ourselves, we're going to fall.

We're going to struggle. And it is only as we are clothed with the armour of God and taking our strength in him and from him that we have any hope.

It's the only way that we have any match for the evil one. And he never stops. Satan never takes a day off. He's always on the go.

You have this idea of prowling. He's going this way and that way through the earth. Because, you know, he knows his time is short. He knows that a day is coming when this world. He's a god of this world at this moment.

[8 : 55] And part of his job is to blind the mind of those who do not believe. But he knows his time is short. He knows that a day is coming.

And that's why that Satan believes in God and he actually trembles. But he's at us day and night. Not just during the day. Satan is at work at us through the night as well.

I'm sure we've all experienced times where maybe we've gone to bed and we've had a good day or a good evening with the Lord. It's one of those days you've maybe been in fellowship with people or you've read something or you've had a quiet time before going to bed.

And your heart is, you feel really at peace with God. You feel there's a sense of comfort, a sense of God's presence. There's a joy in the Lord.

And you lie down and you say to yourself, you know this, I am so content as a Christian. And you're waking up in the morning and, you know, you're as hard as a stone, just hard like a rock.

[9 : 59] And you say to yourself, what else happened? Well, we've got to remember that we have an enemy who never slumbers nor sleeps either. He's not omnipotent or omniscient like the Lord is. But he's on the go and he's got a whole team of demons.

And we believe that they are at work day and night. In fact, we're told that in the book of Revelation. We're told for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

Not just during the day, but day and night. And you and I know that sometimes Satan will really come at us at night and he'll tempt us. He'll bring things to our mind and he'll worry us and disturb us and bring anxieties.

And he knows how to get us and to disturb our sleep. And there's just so many different things he does. We also know that a lion is cruel. When a lion's victim is screaming and screaming in agony, the lion cares nothing for the screams of its victim.

All it's concerned about is ripping its throat out and devouring it. And you know, Satan is like that. Satan knows what hell is and what hell is like. And he hasn't one ounce of sympathy or pity for the souls that he's leading to hell.

[11 : 22] It's quite an extraordinary thing. It's there that you see his absolute evil. That he knows how awful hell is. And yet his aim is to take every soul that he can into the lostness of hell.

That's his work. And he does so with a hatred because of his hatred of God. Knowing that man was originally made in the image of God. So everything that Satan does is to get at God.

So we see his incredible cruelty, his incredible evil. So Peter, in light of all that we're seeing here and seeing this terrible enemy, he tells us how we're to deal with it.

And he says we're to be sober minded and we're to be watchful. Now, say, for instance, if a person was drunk, if you had a soldier who was drunk and that soldier was put on guard, you might as well not have him there at all.

And in fact, a drunk person's no use on guard. In fact, a drunk person's really no use at all because he or she doesn't have their wits about them. And they're not functioning in the normal way at all.

[12 : 38] I'm sorry, somebody's trying to phone through and I don't want to stop. Hello. Sorry.

Somebody was trying to phone through on the phone just now. And that's what happens when a person is drunk. They're just not in control. Now, it's not just in strong drink that we have you.

Sober minded means that anything that gets in the way, anything that consumes us in life, anything that we put all our heart into as opposed to God, which imbalances us.

Basically, the apostle is saying we ought to be self-controlled. We ought to be moderate in all that we're about. And we're to be vigilant.

We're to be watchful. And we need to be on the lookout for Satan because remember what the apostle Paul says. We're not ignorant of his devices. And you, particularly as you go on in the Christian faith, you recognize often when it's him.

[13 : 42] We're not unaware of his strategies and of his attacks. And we've got to remember who it is who's writing this. This is the apostle Peter. And if anyone knew what he was writing about, although he's writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as God has given him this, Peter is somebody who knew all about Satan's strategies and attacks.

Do you remember how Jesus had warned Peter? And he said to Peter, watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.

But before that, he actually said to Peter, Peter of all people, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.

Jesus put out a specific warning to Peter, saying you really need to be on your guard. And that's what Jesus said. The two things you're to do, you're to watch and you're to pray.

He says the same things to us. What did Peter do? Peter went to sleep. And we know what happened. It wasn't long after that, when the temptation came in power.

[14 : 53] And you see, this is what happens, that very often Satan gets us when we are not in charge, not in control. Because so often as we think, we think we're in control of things, we're not.

And Peter thought he was in control, but he wasn't. And all of a sudden he found himself in a situation where he was denying the Lord he loved with oaths and curses. And we know the pain that Peter experienced when he went out into the night and where he wept bitterly.

And so this is such a dangerous place to be when we're not watchful. And Satan knows. And Satan knows. He knows when we're not watching and when we're not praying.

And so the word then goes on to say, resist him firm in your faith. Now, unbelief is a dangerous situation to be in.

And, you know, faith is something that Satan hates. But lack of faith or wavering faith or little faith will open the door sufficient for Satan to get a foothold in.

[16:08] So we are to resist him. That means we're to fight. We're to war. It's a war. This is a good fight. Fight the good fight of faith. We're to fight. We're to battle.

We're to wrestle. And we're told that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and rulers of dark places. And so the Lord has given us an armor. He has provided with all these things. We know the breastplate and the sword and the helmet and all these different things. And sometimes we say, why does God allow us to be tempted? Wouldn't life be so much better if we're delivered, we're free from all these temptations? But it's Martin Luther who always said that temptation was one of the great tools in God's hand to regulate Christian growth.

Because it is often through the temptation that our faith is strengthened. The worst thing that we can do is to give in to temptation.

[17:11] And one of the things sometimes we do is we say, we'll give in. Because sometimes we're trying to resist and we're trying to resist. And then we say, you know, I'm just going to give in.

And next time, I'll really fight. No, you won't. Next time, you'll be weaker. The more you give in, the more you will give in. And so it's imperative that we fight.

And it is through the resisting by God's strength and by God's grace. Of course, we can't do it on our own. If we do, we'll fail. But with the armour, leaning upon the Lord and depending upon the Lord.

And you know the most dangerous time is when we're experiencing Satan tempting us. And we don't want to pray about it. Why don't we want to pray about it?

Because the temptation is attractive to us. And there's a part within our own sinful nature that wants to yield to the temptation. And we know the alarm bells by the Holy Spirit working within us are telling us, you need to pray here.

[18:17] You need to look to the Lord. And there's this human nature is saying, no, I'm not going to pray. I'm ready to give in. That's a dangerous thing.

Even when you don't want to pray, when I don't want to pray, we need to in order that we will gain God's strength and God's help. And Jesus sets us the example himself in the wilderness. Remember when he was tempted? Jesus brought the word, the sword of the spirit. And every time Jesus just answered using the word.

And that's what you and I are to do as well. We can't, as we said, can't fight him on our own. It is with the word. Bring the word to him. With the sword of the spirit and the shield of faith.

You know this, the moment you've got that shield of faith on and you're equipped with the sword of the spirit, you're on the way to victory in the Lord Jesus Christ. Resist the devil in this way.

[19:17] And we're told in James, he will flee from you. That's what happened with Jesus. He left him. And he'll leave you and he'll leave me as well. But sometimes it's hard going.

Sometimes it's tough. And sometimes you might feel that you're being battered. And you say to yourself, you know this, I don't think there's anybody else in the whole wide world that's battered the way I am.

And you feel that Satan is getting you in all shapes and forms and all angles. And, you know, even since, you know, since I decided to preach on this, it's quite extraordinary the battering that I've had.

And I always find that any time that I preach on the devil, that he really goes for the jugular.

Because he does not want, as it were, to be exposed and for us to be made aware of him.

And in these last two or three days, he has really gone for me. And we've experienced that. I remember when you're a student, you don't have any sermons.

[20:25] And you're going around, you're preaching here and there. And you quite often use the same sermon. You used to, you maybe had a half a dozen or a dozen sermons in your sort of like your first, second year. And you're going here, there and there with preaching.

And I used to, and I remember I was sharing a flat with Derek Lamond. And I had this, that sermon from James, resist the devil and he will flee from you.

And I preached it for about six weeks. And I had the worst six weeks of my life. But Derek actually said, well, you stop preaching that sermon. Because not only is the devil hammering you, he's hammering me too.

He seemed to just be throwing everything. Because he doesn't like God's people being made aware of him. So, but the point is, what Peter says here is, look, we're all in this together.

That's what he's saying in verse nine. Now, for them, of course, there was all the fires of persecution and such like.

[21 : 32] But all Christians are experiencing temptation. If you're being battered tonight, remember there are hundreds and thousands of other Christians being battered as well.

Sometimes you think, nobody is tempted the way I am. Oh, yes, you are. They are. Satan will get you one way or another.

So, we're all in this together. That's part of the great encouragement. Because we are all the Church of Jesus Christ are one. And so, Peter is saying, you're not on your own.

You have a duty. Resist it. Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Be vigilant. Be prayerful. And get your faith going. Focused on the word.

And through the strength of the Lord, you and I will discover victory. Let us pray. Lord, we give thanks again for your word.

[22 : 33] Just a wee while thinking about it. And we're so conscious of this enemy that we face. And we pray, Lord, that you will help us. And that you will shield us and shelter us from his fiery darts.

Because he is going about seeking whom he may devour. And he so hurts and he harms and he hinders. But we give thanks, Lord, that although he is a powerful foe, he is a defeated foe.

Because we know that this was part of the wonder of Calvary. And that Satan, although he can hurt, he cannot destroy any of your people.

Watch over us, then, we pray. And give us rest and sleep this night. Bless all our families, all whom we love. We commit to your care and keeping together. We are sinning in Jesus' name. Amen.