

## How to Resist Satan

1 Peter 5:8-9 (01/08/17)

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Lions are one of the most magnificent and regal creatures in the zoo. He's the king of the beasts. You may laugh at the monkeys and shake your head in disbelief that we came from those apes, but when you encounter the lion you know he demands respect and fear. If police called and said a lion had escaped from the zoo and is loose in the St. George-Oakhill Road area, we'd be on the alert and probably stay inside until he was captured. This morning we're going to learn about an unseen lion who is loose in our world; a lion more deadly than any lion at the zoo. And he is hungry and destructive. He is hungry for Christians and is prowling about with the goal of destroying God's work.

Turn to 1 Peter 5 for Peter's concluding counsel in this wonderful epistle. In a world of fiery trials where we as God's people live as aliens and strangers, Peter has given us practical directions in this fifth chapter. Submit to church leadership, humbly serve one another, and humble yourself under God's mighty hand. Don't run and rebel and resist what God is doing in your life. Every person and circumstance in your life is there because of the sovereign good hand of God. Cast your worries, cares, and anxieties on your heavenly Father. He knows what you're going through. You're not alone and He has purpose for it. Trust Him.

Now Peter takes us behind the human scene to expose our real enemy, the devil. Peter knows what he's talking about. Jesus told him in Luke 22:31-32 that Satan requested to sift him like wheat. And he did. Peter fell asleep when he should have been awake and denied his Lord when he should have boldly confessed Him in that garden while Jesus was being beaten. Peter ran out and wept bitterly and repented. Jesus also said to Peter, "When you have turned to me again, strengthen your brothers!" That's exactly what Peter is doing in our passage this morning. Maybe Satan has you in his sifter. Listen to Peter.

*1 Peter 5:8-9 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.*

**You have a real spiritual enemy called the devil – your adversary.** If you belong to Christ, you are in the crosshairs of this very real enemy. We can easily go off the deep end when we talk about the devil. Either we don't really believe he exists or we make too much of him. We live in a materialistic, secular world that scoffs at the whole idea of a real being called Satan. On the other hand some people are intrigued by the supernatural. Animism says the world is full of all kinds of spirits and we have TV shows in which people are trying to contact the dead or capture their spirits with a video camera. People are intrigued by this kind of bizarre stuff.

Here is the reality. You are dealing with a real spiritual enemy every day of your life. You don't see him or feel him or hear him. He is invisible, behind the scenes. He was created by God, got puffed up in pride, fell from his high position in heaven, and slithered into the Garden of Eden to tempt God's representatives on earth. With God's permission he went after Job and destroyed everything Job held precious in his life except his wife. Interesting to note that after Job 1 and 2, where Satan is mentioned 14 times, you never hear of Satan again in the story. Job never knew he was the target of Satan cruelty. That's how Satan works – behind the scenes, unseen, unheard, unfelt, but there. He tempted David to number the people against God's will. He tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Jesus taught about him in the Gospels. Satan steals the Word of God from unbelieving hearts (Matthew 13:19). He is a murderer and a liar (John 8:44).

He entered Judas to betray Christ and prompted Ananias and Sapphira to lie to the Holy Spirit. He is real. You have a real enemy.

Revelation 12:9 fully exposes his character and modus operandi of deception. "And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him." Christ defanged this lion through the cross and resurrection. He's a defeated enemy and knows his doom is sure. When Christ comes back, Satan will be locked up in the abyss for 1000 years so he cannot deceive the nations during the millennium. At the end of the 1000 years he will have a final hour of rebellion against God, and then he will be cast into the lake of fire where he will be tormented forever and ever! That's Satanology in a nutshell.

But right now, he's real and alive and you are his target. He's your adversary, your enemy, your accuser. There is so much more going on in this world than going to work, eating, raising your family, reading your Bible, paying your bills, and looking at the sights. Spiritual conflicts and battles are all around you. Satan is the god of this world. He has blinded the eyes of unbelievers to the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4). Lost people are his captives to do his will (2 Tim. 2:26) even though they don't know it. 1 John 5:19 says the whole world lies in his lap! Satan hates God and anything representing God, and that includes every Christian!

This is why Peter charges you to be sober and alert. These are commands, not mere suggestions. You can't be drunk and sleeping in war; you need clear thinking and on high alert. Clear thinking means you see things as they really are. In a spiritual war you must have God's truth in your mind so you can discern dangerous stuff in your life. Pride and self-righteousness and love for this world and all its stuff clouds the clarity of your thinking about spiritual things. The evil witch in C. S. Lewis' book *The Silver Chair* threw her green powder into the fire to cloud the thinking of Scrubb, Jill, and Puddleglum so they would be convinced that the overworld of the sun and moon and green trees and Aslan didn't exist. She succeeded until the marshwiggle put his foot in the fire, felt the pain, and woke up to what the wicked witch had done. Be careful and alert; the world can be like that green powder and cloud your thinking.

Not only do you have to be sober with clear thinking, you must stay alert and spiritually awake. Like a soldier on guard duty, be alert and keen to every sound and movement around you. Don't ever underestimate the power or intent of your enemy. Neville Chamberlain did this very thing when he returned to England after meeting with Hitler in Munich and announced, "Peace for our times. Here is Herr Hitler's signature agreeing never to go to war again!" How foolish to underestimate the power and intent of the devil! Be on the alert. Your daily life is more than just the stuff you do see; you have this real enemy who wants to make lion food of you.

**Your spiritual enemy is busy and vicious.** He is prowling around looking for Christians who have dropped their guard, who are being allured by the world, who are giving in to all kinds of sin. He knows your weaknesses and will use them to tempt you. He's a roaring lion – fierce and vicious.

What's he after? He is the deceiver of the whole world. His main game is false religion in the world and the great promoter of false teaching right in the church. From the beginning of the church age you can see God's people thriving, fully alert and clear thinking with the Word. Then like some magic potion, she goes to sleep and stumbles through the middle ages like a drunkard. Satan hooked up the church with the state and during those Middle Ages, power, greed, and lechery ruled much of the leadership of the church. Satan is alive and well and attacking God's truth and God's people to this very day. 1 Timothy 4:1-4 talks about church leaders being lured into unbelief by doctrines of demons. God revived the church at the Reformation and into the Puritan age, but then it sank into formalism and sterile orthodoxy. God revived the church through Wesley and Whitefield in the 1700s, but then it sank again into liberalism. Spurgeon fought liberalism in the Downgrade controversy of his day in the late 1800s. Today you have Protestant denominations that completely reject the inspiration and authority of the Bible and have embraced just about everything the world has come up with. Plus Satan has launched all kinds of cults in the last several hundred years. Our church gives no place to them as a religion. We don't invite a Mormon or Jehovah's Witness or Christian Science rep or an Imam or rabbi or Unitarian to come and share with

us or to have a panel discussion over the pros and cons of their religion. We respect individual people, but we don't give false teachers a platform for their teaching.

Now, let's bring Satan's work down to our level. What will Satan use to devour you? Ephesians 4:27 says you can have a part in giving the devil a foothold. How do you do that? What gives Satan a place to plant his foot into your life? Remember, he is prowling, roaring, and looking for Christians to devour, to take home and swallow. You're his favorite juice! He's intent to put you into his "Christian" juicer, push the button, and gulp you down! He does this by ruining relationships, marriages, families, and churches. Warren Wiersbe in his book *The Strategy of Satan* gives several areas where Satan looks for a foothold into our lives.

Anger gives Satan a foothold. Satan loves when couples or believers let anger rule their hearts. Open that window just a bit and he'll come right in and create a bigger mess.

Lying and hypocrisy are great snares. Ananias and Sapphira opened the door for Satan by lying about what they gave in Acts 5. They wanted to be thought highly of and make a good impression. They paid with their lives. Satan loves hypocrisy.

Pride is a huge front door for Satan to come marching right in. 1 Timothy 3:6 warns about being lifted up in pride and coming into the condemnation of the devil. Bunyan tells about someone who came up to him right after preaching and told him how great the sermon was. Mr. Bunyan replied, "Yes, the devil said the same thing as I was coming down from the pulpit!"

An unforgiving spirit is one of Satan's most effective footholds to ruin Christians. He'll buzz in like a swarm of hornets and make matters worse and worse, destroying your walk with Christ and keeping you at odds with other believers or even a spouse. Satan just loves to destroy God's work. He'll use bitterness and anger in marriages and Christian friendships to quench his thirst. Bitterness and grudge holding are harvest times for Satan. He loves it.

Slander is a huge platform for the devil. His name "devil" means slanderer. He slanders you to God. Thankfully you have Christ representing you as your advocate because a lot of what Satan accuses you of is true, right? Satan really pumps up slander and backbiting and gossip in Christians, trying to tear down and wreak havoc on people's walk with God.

Adultery is part of Satan's plan to destroy marriages. Satan loves to get couples at odds and destroy the intimacy between married couples. 1 Cor. 7:5 says this is one of his footholds. You may for a time abstain from sexual relations in marriage, but God says you must come together again lest Satan tempt you for your lack of self-control.

The devil has many more methods to use against Christians. How should we resist? Ephesians 6:11 says, "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes, methods, wiles of the devil." He's brilliant. We are not to blame the devil for our sin, but be aware that he is the tempter. He's the one behind the scenes making this world so alluring. He loves to bring false teaching to your door. He loves to see people die without Christ. He knows he's doomed, but he wants to take as many others as possible with him. He is constantly on the prowl, looking for Christians to devour – to destroy your faith, to weaken your convictions, to trick you into rebelling against your Lord, to make a mess of your testimony in this world.

**You have one way to resist him – firm in your faith.**

So how do we deal with this wretched being? Not by cute little formulas. Not by rebuking him. Not by saying, "I bind you in the name of Jesus." There are no once-for-all deliverance methods or sure-fire steps to get Satan out of your life. He'll be on the prowl after you until you get to heaven.

There are three passages that tell you what to do with the devil – Ephesians 6:10-18, James 4:6, and 1 Peter 5:9. You resist him. You stand against him. You resist him with the power of your faith in Christ. You resist and stand with the power of the Word of God, backed with prayer, the Spirit, and obedience to

God's Word. That's what Jesus did with the devil. He didn't have a conversation with him. He didn't argue, discuss, or debate. Jesus did one thing; He resisted with the powerful Word of God. For each of Satan's three temptations, Jesus answered, "It is written" – Bam! "It is written" – Bam!! "It is written" – Bam!!!

That's why you need a clear mind. You need to be rock solid firm in your faith so you can resist when Satan comes at you with any temptation, whether to doubt God's Word, or to yield to some fleshly desire, or to proudly assure yourself that you were right and the other person was wrong, you name it. You need to resist, stand against, and be firm in your faith with your heart rooted and grounded in the truth of the Word!

This is why we preach and teach and study the Word of God and learn the doctrines and principles of Scripture, verse by verse, book by book. These 66 books tell us all we need about God, creation, marriage, man and sin, redemption through the cross, sanctification, and eschatology. We are helping to lay a firm foundation of faith in your heart by the grace of God so we can be strong and overcome the evil one (1 John 2:14). God tells elders and leaders in the church to be on the alert and expose false teaching (Titus 1:9). Whenever I hear of a new author, new book, new church, new voice, new movement, I'm googling and emailing my trusted mentors, "Hey, what do you know about this new movement or voice or book?" There's a lot of weirdness out there. Shepherds are responsible to keep their eyes on the periphery to see if any coyotes or bears or lions are sneaking up to harm the flock.

Wiersbe points out something really important. "Before you can resist the devil, you have to humble yourself under God's mighty hand!" James 4:6 says, "Submit yourself therefore to God; resist the devil and he will flee from you." Only as you are living in humble obedience to God, trusting His Word, praying for His strength, trusting in His grace and the cross of Jesus for you, are you in that position to send the devil fleeing! And that is what you want to do every day until you see Christ face to face.

One final thought:

**You are not alone in this spiritual war against the devil.** Verse 9 says, "Knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world." Every other believer is in this war also. If it's suffering, others are going through it too. You may feel like you are the only one dealing with the mayhem in your life, but you're not. 1 Corinthians 10:13 applies here, "No trial or test has overtaken you but such as is common to man, but God is faithful, He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what He knows you can handle, but with that trial He'll provide a way of escape so you can handle it."

### **SO WHAT?**

Life is more than what you can see. There is God and there's God's enemy who hates everything about God. You have no power on your own over Satan. Paul preached the gospel that could turn people from Satan's power to God's kingdom! Acts 26:18, "To open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." Only Christ can give you spiritual sight and break those spiritual chains Satan has around your life. Have you been set free from Satan's power, Satan's blinding? Will you humble your heart before Him in simple faith?

Christian, you have a victorious Christ you can't see, and you also have a defeated but very ferocious enemy you can't see. How do you know he is active in your life? Because God says so. Don't look for Satan behind every tree; just know that he wants to ruin your life, your marriage, your morals, your witness in this world. Resist him with a clear mind and a wide-awake heart! And give God the glory, which he hates! Go resist the devil every day this week.