

## Text: 1 Pt 5.8-9

Our passage tonight is familiar. We have the image of the devil as a roaring lion, seeking out Christians as prey. Our text is a verse often included in memory programs.

Familiarity produces, not contempt, but superficial understanding. We will try to dig into our text tonight so we can take real instruction from our passage.

Satan's agenda is to devour the faith. We find that word, "devour," in our text.

Through history, persecution of faithful Christians came from various sources:

- Judaism
- Imperial Rome
- Islamic states
- Christian on Christian persecution [esp. post Reformation]
- Radical revolutionaries in the French Revolution
- Various communist states in the 20<sup>th</sup> c.

There are many instances that one could name. The environment of 1 Peter appears to be one of those times when persecution was imminent or threatened, perhaps by Nero or his officials.

Believers hear of such things and have a sense that persecution "could happen here," but often we think of it as something remote and far away.

Before persecution arises, Peter gives us definite instructions in preparation for the unlooked-for day.

Read 1 Pt 5.8-9

**Proposition:** Christians must maintain watchful determination against the threat of antagonism.

## I. The call to constant vigilance

A. Two aorist imperatives "demand immediate action"<sup>1</sup>

1. Be sober:

a. Etymological: "'take little or no wine', then metaph. 'be sober'"

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<sup>1</sup> D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1997), 313.

- b. NT usage: “only in ext. sense of a well-balanced state of mind over-all”<sup>2</sup>
- c. Overall sense: be steady, focused, serious, ready

The current Prime Minister of Finland is in political trouble for shocking pictures of her partying with friends.

- Excuses are coming out by many in her defense, “can’t she have a little fun?” “If she was a man, no one would complain.” “She’s entitled to a little privacy.” And so on.
- The issue is that it raises questions about sobriety: is she up for the job? Is her mind sober, steady, watchful?

## 2. Be alert:

- a. Not simply “be awake,” but “be alert”
- b. This is the language of security in the night watches

The goal of a security person is to have a boring shift: and amid those boring shifts, the job calls for alertness.

- Watching for the little thing that is a sign of a bigger thing
- Listening for alarms
- Becoming familiar with normal – so the abnormal stands out

## B. The imperatives admit no relaxation

“When we think we have no occasion for our sword, we begin to unbuckle it from our side. We strip off our armor piece by piece, and then it is that we become most exposed to the attack of our enemies.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Frederick William Danker and Kathryn Krug, *The Concise Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Charles H Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: 1 Peter*, ed. Elliot Ritzema and Jessi Strong, Spurgeon Commentary Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 1 Pt 5.8.

## II. The threat of complete destruction

### A. The threat Peter warns against is led by Satan himself

Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion

1. The word *adversary* has a legal connotation, in keeping with various passages

Mt 5.25 “Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

Lk 12.58 “For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on *your way there* make an effort to settle with him, so that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison.

2. Satan as prosecutor a frequent image

Zech 3.1 ¶ Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

Rev 12.10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

Job 1.6 ¶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

### B. He is named, “the devil”

1. Translates the Heb term, *Satan*
2. Means: “slanderer”

### C. He is on the prowl: threatening and intimidating

## D. He seeks to devour his victims

1. The word has the idea of “gulping down” the victim whole

The verb literally means ‘to drink down,’ like our English *gulp down*; it is the verb the Septuagint used for the great fish swallowing Jonah in Jonah 1:17. It depicts the total destruction of the victim.”<sup>4</sup>

2. The objective is not merely hobbling, wounding, hindering, but destruction

The adversary isn’t omnipresent, but he is constantly active (and has many minions).

## III. The requirement of resolution

- A. We are called here to resist the devil (lit., “whom resist” – as in KJV)

1. Resist is “anti-histemi” — “stand against”
2. It is interesting to compare and contrast Biblical instructions for our spiritual enemies:

<b>The Christian’s Three-fold Enemy</b>	
<b>The Problem</b>	<b>The Solution</b>
<b>The World</b> (1 John 2:15-17) Lust of the flesh Lust of the eyes Pride of life	<b>Flee</b> (1 Tim 6.11; 2 Tim 2.22)
<b>The flesh</b> (Rm 7.18-24)	<b>Deny</b> (Rm 6.12-13; 8.13)
<b>The devil</b> (1 Pt 5.8)	<b>Resist</b> 1 Pt 5.9)

Chart from Constable, 1 Pt 5.9

- a. We should “flee youthful lusts” — the world attacks by taking on an appealing garb

<sup>4</sup> Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 315.

- b. We should deny the flesh — the flesh attacks by overpowering our will (starve the flesh, feed the spirit)
- c. We should resist the devil... but what does that mean?

Are we called to pit our strength directly against Satan?

## B. The place we take our stand: the faith

1. The word “your” is italicized in the NAU – and is very unhelpful here
2. KJV: “stedfast in the faith” — notice the article: “the faith”
3. In other words, our resistance isn’t in the strength of our persons, but in the bedrock strength of “the faith”

In Jude, we are called to “contend for the faith” — *i.e.*, the apostolic doctrine, the Christian faith.

4. Here also, the source of strength is our commitment to “the faith”
5. Satan seeks to devour: to overthrow faith, to dissuade from faith, to compromise faith

“Burn a pinch of incense to the emperor, what does it hurt?”

## C. One final motivation: the same experiences of our brethren

1. The commentators all take this to mean, “take heart, other believers are going through the same, you aren’t alone”

“The effect of the motive here alluded to is observed by Thucydides, who, in his account of the misery of the Athenians after the naval defeat at Syracuse...”<sup>5</sup> “Their disgrace and the universality of the misery, **although there might be some consolation in the very community of suffering**, were nevertheless at that moment hard to bear, especially when they remembered from what pride and splendour they had fallen into their present low estate.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004), 238.

<sup>6</sup> Thucydides, *Thucydides Translated Into English with Introduction, Marginal Analysis, Notes, And Indices*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, vol. 1 (Medford, MA: Clarendon Press, 1881), 323.

## 2. I hesitantly take a different tack:

- a. It is small comfort, to me, that, “Oh well, at least I am not alone...”
- b. Rather, it seems that the motivation is for us to take a stand for the sake of our brethren
  - 1) Will they not stand if you stand?
  - 2) Would they be disheartened if you abandon the faith?

Consequently, I think we are exhorted to bear up under persecution, resist the devil by resting in the faith, so we can minister grace to others.

### Conclusion:

**Proposition:** Christians must maintain watchful determination against the threat of antagonism.

Watchful: be vigilant

Determination: others depend on you