

Main Idea: According to 1 Peter 5:8-9, there is a great need for spiritual warriors. As Christians we are at war and if we are going to survive, we must follow two marching orders.

Some thoughts about spiritual warfare:

1. Some people ignore the spiritual forces of evil.
2. Other people see a demon under every rock.
3. What we need is to live with a warrior's mentality.

I. To live with a warrior's mentality we must be alert (8).

- A. The devil is our adversary.
- B. The devil is an aggressor.
- C. The devil is on the attack.

II. To live with a warrior's mentality we must be aware (9).

- A. We are in a battle.
 1. The Quietists say that victory is up to God.
 2. The Pietists say that victory is up to us.
 3. The Bible says that victory involves cooperation.
- B. We are not alone.
- C. We are on the winning side.

Response: Three questions to ponder...

1. Are you living with a warfare mentality?
2. Are you winning the battle for your mind?
3. Are you sure you are a soldier of Christ?

We have a mission. That was last Sunday's message. God has given us the amazing and privileged assignment to make known the good news of His Son in this world. That's our mission.

If that's the case, why are we often not experiencing the joy of missional living? Today we're going to address one of the main reasons. We tend to forget something, namely, that *we have an enemy* who does not want us to fulfill our mission, and this enemy is vicious and crafty.

So what does it take to fulfill your mission when you have such an enemy? We need to know the answer to that question, and God's Word gives it to us. According to 1 Peter 5:8-9, it requires that we live with nothing short of *a warrior's mentality*.

Let me give you a picture of a warrior's mentality, and then we'll go to our text to learn how to develop it. A couple of weeks ago I received a letter from the director of *The Voice of the Martyrs*, Tom White, which told the story of an evangelist in Colombia named Celso. Here's the story:

Celso is one of the evangelists *The Voice of the Martyrs* works with in Columbia. He goes to areas controlled by Marxist FARC guerillas, carrying with him Bibles, radios, and Christian books to give to them. He is nearly 70 years old.

Recently Celso took a boat loaded with Bibles and Christian materials deep into the Colombian jungle. When they arrived at a guerilla camp, the commander told them he did not have a problem with what they were doing, but his superiors had ordered them detained. The next day, the guerrillas marched Celso to the guerrilla commander's camp. As he marched to what could be his death, Celso prayed remembering Mark 13:11 which promises us the Holy Spirit will give us the right words to speak to our captors.

The guerrilla commander was furious. Celso and his group gave away *Marx and Satan*, a book by Richard Wurmbrand that shares the gospel with Marxists. "This book makes us look bad," the commander shouted at Celso. The evangelist knew he could be living his final day. He chose to share the gospel.

"We have all done bad things," Celso told the commander. "But only God can make us good. Many people around the world are praying for you. They know you have a soul and care about you."

For six weeks the guerrilla commander held Celso at the camp. The rainy season set in and the heat and humidity became almost unbearable. Celso became discouraged, but God provided encouragement. Many of the young guerrillas secretly would talk to Celso about God and love. Some had read the books printed by VOM, or heard gospel broadcasts. Celso was encouraged.

After 49 days Celso and the others were allowed to leave the camp. Many of the guerrillas came to see them off. They wished them well, even waving white handkerchiefs as a symbol of good wishes.

Shortly afterwards, word leaked out about Celso's distribution of *Marx and Satan*. A top FARC commander ordered anyone found distributing the book should be executed immediately.

Even under the threat of death, Celso continues God's work. There are too many guerrillas who have not yet heard Jesus loves them and that there is a better way than violence to change the hearts of men.^[3]

Now that's a warrior's mentality, and that's what we likewise need if we're going to fulfill our mission.

But let's face it. We tend to live with a *peacetime* mentality. Indeed, we'd rather live with a peacetime mentality. In peacetime the focus is on pleasure. In wartime it's on survival. In peacetime we think about personal comfort. In wartime our thoughts are consumed with the mission at hand. In peacetime our agenda is to accumulate. In wartime it's to sacrifice for a greater cause.

The fact is, you look at life differently when you're at war. You *live* differently when you're at war. And we are at war.

Some thoughts about spiritual warfare:

Before we go any further I must say a word about the subject of spiritual warfare. That is a hot topic in Christian circles these days, and a controversial one. I must warn you to cautious. There are a lot of ideas being circulated in "Christian" books about spiritual warfare that grow out of the imaginations of men more than the Word of God.

Let's keep three things in mind...

1. *Some people ignore the spiritual forces of evil.* That's a foolish thing to do for there is a devil and his intent is hostile as we'll see in a moment.

2. *Other people see a demon under every rock.* That's just as foolish and dangerous as John MacArthur warns in his book *How to Meet the Enemy*: "More and more Christian leaders seem to be championing such efforts. I know of a large conservative mission organization that is requiring all its missionaries to attend special training seminars to learn how to confront and assault the powers of darkness. Their strategy includes speaking to demons and learning techniques for exercising them. It is becoming very popular to deliver incantations against Satan and supposedly rebuke or bind him."^[4]

Are those methods biblical? Is that how the Bible says to survive in the spiritual battle? No, you'll find no such counsel in Scripture.

So we mustn't ignore the danger, nor be consumed by it. What's needed?

3. *What we need is to live with a warrior's mentality.* What's that, and how do we do it? According to 1 Peter 5:8-9, we must follow two marching orders.

I. To live with a warrior's mentality we must be alert (8).

Notice the first words of verse 8, "Be self-controlled and alert." The KJV renders it, "Be sober, be vigilant." In other words, be on your guard!

That's an interesting command in light of the context. Look back at the end of verse 7, "He cares for you." God cares for us. What an incredible truth! As Christians, we are not immune from anxiety in life. Yet when the anxiety comes, we can cast it upon the Lord, knowing He cares for us.

The Christians to whom Peter wrote needed to know that. They were being black-balled by the authorities in the Roman Empire. Many had lost a lot for Christ. They had suffered much for Christ. You can imagine what this hope would have meant to them—*God cares for you*.

But know this. Hope is not a sedative. It's a shot of adrenaline! Hope doesn't put us in a rocking chair to wait passively for Christ's return. It puts us on the battlefield.

Here's our first marching order in verse 8. *Be alert*.

One of the things that impressed me greatly when I spent a semester in Israel was the Israeli soldier. Every citizen of Israel joins the military at age 18 and serves his country with mandatory active duty and then in the reserves. He carries his gun with him wherever he goes, walking down the street, in the dining hall, wherever. He doesn't allow you to take his picture. Do you know why? He is *alert*. One thing is true of the Israeli soldier. He is alert, in time of peace and in time of war.

In verse 8 Peter sounds like a drill sergeant talking to his troops. That ought not surprise us, for we are in a battle. And we need to be alert.

Notice again the commands sergeant Peter gives us in verse 8. First, "Be self-controlled." [KJV "Be sober"] The Greek verb *nepho* means "to abstain from wine, to be temperate." In 2 Timothy 4:5 it's translated, "*Keep your head* in all situations." If we're going to survive in the spiritual battle, we must be in clear control of our mental faculties.

Next, "be alert." [KJV "be vigilant"]. This term means "to be awake" or "to watch."^[5] Do you remember what Jesus told Peter and the disciples the night of His arrest? There in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter heard this plea from our Lord (Matthew 26:38), "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and *keep*

watch with me.” Remember what happened? When Peter and the others should have been watching and praying, they ended up sleeping. They failed to be vigilant, and the adversary played havoc with their souls.

Peter is writing with the authority of first-hand experience. Be sober! Be vigilant! Be alert!

We find this admonition throughout the Scriptures. Earlier in this same letter Peter had this to say in 1 Peter 1:13, “Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.” And in 1 Peter 4:7 “The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.”

Peter of course got it from Jesus who said in Luke 21:36, “Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

We hear it from the apostle Paul too in 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8, “So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. ^{77?} For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ^{78?} But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.”

The order is clear. Be alert!

But why? Why do we need to be alert? The answer is because we have an enemy. He is the devil. “Be self-controlled. Be alert.” At this point in the text the NIV inserts a period, but in the KJV we see the word “because,” which is more literal. What follows is the reason for our need to be alert. It’s *because* “your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” There’s the reason we’re on alert status. It’s the devil.

Just who is this being the Bible calls “the devil”? Peter tells us three things about the devil in verse 8.

A. The devil is our adversary. “Your *enemy* the devil prowls around.” The KJV actually uses the term “adversary.”

The word "devil" is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word for "Satan." The word means "slanderer" or "accuser." That's what the devil does. He slanders. He accuses. Remember how he accused and slandered Job right in the very presence of God?

It's no wonder Peter describes the devil as our "adversary." The term comes from a legal background. An adversary refers to an opponent in a lawsuit. The devil is our opponent. He is our adversary.

It amazes me how easy it is for people to become enamored with the devil and things associated with the demonic world. Even professing Christians seem to fall prey to this fascination. Movie producers make big bucks off of themes of the occult and demonism. And no small share of contemporary musicians glorify the evil one in their lyrics. And sadly, more than a few fill their minds with such things and call it "innocent" entertainment.

Peter would say, "Be alert! The devil is our adversary!"

I read about a parable a Haitian pastor told to illustrate the need for total commitment to Christ: A certain man wanted to sell his house for \$2,000. Another man wanted very badly to buy it, but because he was poor, he couldn't afford the full price. After much bargaining, the owner agreed to sell the house for half the original price with just one stipulation: He would retain ownership of one small nail protruding from just over the door.

After several years, the original owner wanted the house back, but the new owner was unwilling to sell. So the first owner went out, found the carcass of a dead dog, and hung it from the single nail he still owned. Soon the house became unlivable, and the family was forced to sell the house to the owner of the nail.

The Haitian pastor's conclusion: "If we leave the Devil with even one small peg in our life, he will return to hang his rotting garbage on it, making it unfit for Christ's habitation."^[6]

Are you giving the devil any pegs in your life? Pegs come in many forms. A job that asks you to compromise your testimony for Christ. A music CD with ungodly lyrics. A television program that undermines God's good plan for marriage. A so called “friend” who pulls you away from living God's way. Be alert! Your adversary is at work!

B. The devil is an aggressor. He “prowls around like a roaring lion.”

Did you know that a lion tends to roar only when he already has his prey? Think about it. Otherwise, the prey would be forewarned of impending danger, and flee to safety. It's when a lion has cornered or killed its prey that it roars in triumph, right before he devours it.^[7]

The devil is cocky and proud. He has a inflated view of himself and acts like a conquering lion. Yet the Bible makes it clear that his sentence of doom was fixed. Where? At the cross.

When the Son of God came into the world He allowed wicked hands to nail Him to the tree. The devil thought he had won. What he didn't realize was that this was God's plan, for on the cross the Son of God died as a substitute for sinners. He paid sin's penalty and broke the power Satan held over sinners. If you want to be free from Satan's control, you must come to know Jesus as your Savior and Lord. If you know Jesus you are on the winning side.

But having said that, know this too. The devil is an aggressor. He is as dangerous, and more so, than a famished lion loose in the streets. He knows his time is limited.

Peter says to us, "Be sober! Be vigilant! Be under control! Be alert!"

Do you know when we are most vulnerable to the attack of the enemy? In two situations. One situation is when life is a breeze. When there's plenty of money in the bank, when the kids are healthy, when all is well in the home. When that happens, we tend to let down our guard. We tend to puff up with the pride of self-sufficiency. "Let him that stands take heed lest he fall," the Scripture says (1 Cor 10:12).

But another time when we're very vulnerable is when we're in the middle of affliction. In the *middle*, not at the beginning. When a trial first begins, we typically cry out to God. But after the trial lingers awhile, and when discouragement sets in, we're prone to let down our guard. Oh, we know that "God is in control," yet we start thinking less about God and more about our problem.

Peter says, "Be alert!" The devil is our adversary. He is an aggressor.

C. The devil is on the attack. He is "looking for someone to devour."

Again, a word of caution. I agree with Wiersbe, "Some people see a demon behind every bush, and blame Satan for their headaches, flat tires, and high rent."^[8] It's one thing to be alert. It's another (and unbiblical) thing to blame everything on the devil.

But having pointed out this dangerous obsession, never forget that the devil is on the prowl. He's walking about seeking whom he may "devour." The Greek term *katapino* means "to drink down, to swallow up, to destroy."

It's possible that Peter is giving us a veiled allusion to the persecution that had already begun in Rome. Emperor Nero was notorious for his cruelty. He took sadistic delight in seeing innocent Christians mauled and devoured by lions in the Roman Coliseum.

Peter's point is this. Nero attacked the church, no doubt. But the reason Nero attacked the church was because he was energized by the prince of this world, the devil himself. The devil hates Christ, and anything or anyone associated with Christ.

Last week, on July 13, eight people were killed in Nigeria as a result of violence between Christians and Muslims. Last month, on June 13, Maoist rebels in Nepal attacked Christians at an evening prayer meeting and assaulted the pastor. Back in May, a 17-year-old girl in the Gedo Region of Somalia was severely beaten by her family after they discovered she had converted to Christianity, and her family put her on medicine for a "mental illness."

How do you explain how a human being can exhibit such violence against another? Listen to Ephesians 6:12, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

The devil is on the attack. He walks about, he *prowls* about. No, he's not omnipresent. The devil is a created, spiritual being. But he has a host of apparently well-organized, wicked cohorts.

What can we do about this ever-present threat? A peacetime mentality won't cut it. We must adopt the mentality of a warrior. How do we do that? First of all, by *being alert*. Here's a second marching order.

II. To live with a warrior's mentality we must be aware (9).

Verse 9—"Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings."

We need to be aware of the devil. Peter knew the necessity of this from firsthand experience. About three decades before he wrote this letter, Peter heard a sobering message from Jesus. Here's what the Lord told Peter in Luke 22:31, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you ^{2a?} as wheat. ^{32?} But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail." The language of the KJV is even more intense, "Simon, behold Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat."

Satan wanted Peter. Why? Because Satan hates the servants of Christ.

Jesus continued in verse 32, "But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." That's what happened. Satan sifted Peter. But Peter repented. And Christ used Peter's failure to refine him, and make him more usable in ministering to others.

What had Peter learned about dealing with the devil? He tells us right here. You must *resist him*. Notice that it's a term of defense, not attack. The word means "to stand against, to withstand." We don't fight *for* victory against the devil. We fight *from* victory.^[9] And we resist him by standing firm "in the faith." It's not "our faith" that overcomes him. The charge is to stand in "the faith." *The faith* is the objective truth about Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scripture. "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free," Jesus said (John 8:32).

Again, I believe a word of caution is in order. Be careful about the contemporary notion of "territorial warfare." One advocate writes, "I have come to believe that Satan does indeed assign a demon or a corps of demons to every geo-political unit in the world and that they are among the principalities and powers against whom we wrestle."^[10]

Another proponent says, "Dealing with territorial spirits is major league warfare and should not be undertaken casually. I know few who have the necessary expertise, and if you do not know what you are doing, Satan will eat you for breakfast."^[11]

Several years ago I read two novels by Frank Perretti, *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness*. They're well written, enjoyable reading. They also challenge your prayer life. But remember. These books are novels. They are fiction, not factual theology. We must always build our beliefs, not on an experience we had, or on what a human author wrote, but on what God's Word says.

What does the Bible say we must do if we are to survive the warfare? Verse 9 says we must be aware. Of what? Three key realities...

A. We are in a battle. "Resist him, standing firm in the faith." The key word is *resist*. It's another stark reminder that we are in a battle.

How can we experience victory in the battle of the Christian life? There are three different, yet common answers to that question.^[12]

One group says things like, "Let go and let God," and "I can't; He can." They are known as the Quietists, and take 2 Chronicles 20:15 as their motto, "The battle is not yours but God's."

1. *The Quietists say that victory is up to God.* Quietists believe the only way to live the Christian life is through passive surrender rather. There's little emphasis on self-discipline. I need not struggle, but merely surrender to God. In contrast to the Quietists are a second group, the Pietists.

2. *The Pietists say that victory is up to us.* Pietists stress the need for self-discipline and holy living. When taken to an extreme, pietism adopts a set of legalistic rules. Pietists place the emphasis in sanctification on man's part, and tend to ignore God's role. The Pharisees were early advocates of pietism.

Which approach is biblical? Neither is.

3. *The Bible says that victory involves cooperation.* In other words, we need a balance between the two extremes. On the one hand, if we're going to be victorious in the battle, yes, we must **DEPEND** on God. Without His help, we are helpless. But on the other hand, we must **OBEY** God. That takes effort, commitment, and self-control.

Let me say this as clearly as I can. No, I don't believe a Christian can be possessed by a demon. A house divided against itself cannot stand. But having said that, I would quickly affirm that the devil can cause havoc in a believer's life.

I see it happen all the time. Some of you here today are feeling the destructive attacks of the Evil one. Why? Because you're not practicing verse 9. You're not resisting the devil. In fact, you're doing just the opposite. You spend little time in Bible study in your life. Church attendance is on the back burner, and even though you always have a reason for missing, the bottom line is that you don't realize the seriousness of the battle.

I fear for you. And I exhort you, be aware of this. We are in a battle. Reality #2...

B. We are not alone. "Because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings." Peter reminded his readers in Asia Minor that they weren't the only ones experiencing trials. Other Christians were in the same boat.

Often when we're hurting, we feel like we're the only one facing a trial. We have an "Elijah complex." It's then that we need to be aware of this. We are not alone.

It's vital to know that in spiritual warfare. We are not "one man armies." We need each other. Our brothers worldwide are facing the same assault. Be aware of that. And of this, a third reality...

C. We are on the winning side. There's a connection in verse 9 between Satanic activity and human aggression against the church. Do you see it? Satan hates Christ and His Body, so Satan works through human pawns to create fiery trials for the church.

But remember this. We are on the winning side. Our God is sovereign. Even when we suffer the brunt of Satan's attack, God is in control, and in fact, God actually uses Satan's attack to strengthen the church, and bring honor to Himself.

Do you know what happens when we resist the devil? Peter doesn't tell us, but James does. Turn to James 4:7. "Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." When we resist the devil and submit to God, what happens to the devil? He flees from us.

Why? Because we are on the winning side! "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world (I John 4:4)."

Before becoming a pastor Pastor Gary Richmond served seven years as a zookeeper at the Los Angeles zoo. He wrote a book entitled, *A View from the Zoo*, in which he shares the following true story: “One of our keepers lost his fingers to a hyena named Hatari. Hatari had been used in the John Wayne movie of the same name. This keeper, while under the influence of marijuana, lost two important qualities necessary for working around wild animals. He lost his good judgment and his timing. While trying to do his job after a brief encounter with a marijuana joint, he stumbled and grabbed for the chain link fence to keep from falling. Hatari was only too glad to take his fingers.”

Richmond continues, “Drugs, more properly called pharmaceuticals, derive their name from the Greek word *pharmakia*. Whenever this word is translated in the Bible it is rendered sorcery. It was understood to be the devil’s work. And so it has become in our age. It’s just like the devil to take a wonderful life-saving science like pharmacology and turn it into the number one killer of our youth. Suicide by overdose claims more of our youth than any other single cause of death. In the book of John, verse 44 of chapter 8, we read about Satan’s method of operation. It tells us that Satan is a liar and a murderer and he has been so from the beginning.”^[13]

That being the case, please consider three important questions...

Response: Three questions to ponder...

1. *Are you living with a warfare mentality?* Beloved, if we are going to succeed in the mission entrusted to us by our Savior, we cannot afford to live with a peacetime mentality. We are *soldiers* of Christ

I began by telling you about the Colombian evangelist named Celso. Celso, by God’s grace, is a man who exemplifies what Peter is exhorting us to do and be. I love what Celso said when asked about why he risks his life to take the gospel to the Colombian guerrillas. “Jesus told me to go. He never said I would come back. Isn’t this the life of the Christian?”^[14]

What do you think? Is it? Is this how you view the Christian life, as a call to self-denial and sacrifice?

If you are struggling at this point, I urge you to fix your attention on the cross and what Jesus endured there for us. See Him hanging on that tree. Why is He there? He’s there because He said yes to His Father’s mission for Him. He’s there because of His great love for you and me. He’s there, denying Himself, sacrificing Himself, in order to bring salvation to helpless rebel sinners, like the guerrillas in Colombia, yes, and to sinners like us too who once were enemies of God.

Our Savior didn’t live with a peacetime mentality, but with a warfare mentality. That’s for sure. Can we do less?

2. *Are you winning the battle for your mind?* The battle is won or lost right here, on the battle front of your *mind*. Are you protecting your mind from Satan’s deadly arrows? Are you saying “no” to the lies of this pagan world that urges us to live for the here and now, and saying “yes” to the call of our Savior to seek first His kingdom? Are you filling your mind with God’s truth every day so you can think differently than the world thinks?

3. *Are you sure you are a soldier of Christ?* Are you on the winning side? We mustn’t assume this. Do you know Christ as your Savior? Are you submitting your life daily to His control? To survive in this hostile world, we must.

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

^[2] This message has been adapted from a sermon delivered at WBC on 1/5/03 as part of a series, “Living with a Wartime Mentality.” For further help, please see the other messages in that series.

^[3] Tom White, *The Voice of the Martyrs*, monthly letter, July 2010.

^[4] *Ibid*, p. 9.

^[5] The NASB translates it, “Be on the alert.”

^[6] Dale A. Hays, *Leadership*, Vol X, #3 (Summer, 1989), p. 35.

^[7] MacArthur, p. 67.

^[8] Wiersbe, pp. 432-3.

^[9] We see this emphasis on *standing* in Ephesians 6:12-14, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ^{11?} Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your **stand** against the devil’s schemes. ^{12?} For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ^{13?} Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to **stand** your ground, and after you have done everything, to **stand**.”^[9]

^[10] As quoted in MacArthur, p. 41.

^[11]

MacArthur, 42, quoting C. Peter Wagner

[\[12\]](#) MacArthur, 69-70

[\[13\]](#) G. Richmond, pp. 97-98.

[\[14\]](#) Tom White, *The Voice of the Martyrs*, monthly letter, July 2010.