

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 8/29/93
I Peter 5:8-9 "How to Survive in Spiritual Warfare"

Intro: There are few things more terrifying than the ferocious roar of a lion.

Illust: Gary Richmond is pastor to single parents at 1st Evangelical Free Church in Fullerton, CA, where Chuck Swindoll serves as Pastor-Teacher. Mr. Richmond also spent 7 years at the Los Angeles Zoo working as a zookeeper. He has written a fascinating book entitled "A View From the Zoo." In it, he shares some amazing true stories of life in the zoo which illustrate powerful spiritual truths.

Here's a breathtaking example. It happened when it was time to close the L.A. zoo one day. At 15 minutes to 5:00, the animals anxiously were waiting to be let in for the night. The routine was the same every day. The zookeepers would let the animals into their night quarters and feed them.

Here's how Richmond tells the story...

"Dave, the keeper who cared for the lions, had performed this ritual a thousand times before. The lions' night cages were clean and dry and several pounds of Zupreem Feline Diet were awaiting them...(p. 97)."

Obviously the victim was deluded by drugs. He was beguiled into thinking that the dangerous lion was his friend. But he was wrong, dead wrong.

"Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." That's I Peter 5:8-9.

My friends, the Bible is clear about this. We have an enemy.

Eph 6:11 "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." II Cor 11:3, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his craftiness, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

We have an enemy. And because we have an enemy, guess what else is true? We are in a spiritual warfare. We're told this in II Cor 11:14-15 (Phillips Modern English), "...Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is only to be expected that his agents shall have the appearance of ministers of righteousness--but they will get what they deserve in the end."

Q: How can we survive in spiritual warfare?

That question is a hot topic in Christian circles these days. It's also a controversial topic. I feel compelled to warn you to beware. 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 me illustrate.

Illust: MacArthur's example from How to Meet the Enemy (181-83)

Q: Are those methods biblical? Is that how the Bible says to survive in the spiritual battle? Certainly not. You'll find no such counsel in Scripture.

Q: What then is the biblical instruction for survival in spiritual warfare?
That's the question we want to answer as we turn this morning to I Peter 5:8-9.

Proposition: According to I Peter 5:8-9, if we are to survive in spiritual warfare, we must follow 2 marching orders.

- I. Be Alert (8).
 - A. The Devil is our Adversary.
 - B. The Devil is an Aggressor.
 - C. The Devil is on the Attack.
- II. Be Aware (9).
 - A. We are in a battle.
 - B. We are not alone.
 - C. We are on the winning side.

Last Week: We learned that God cares for us (7). What an incredible truth! As Christians, we are not immune from anxiety in life. But 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. You can imagine what this hope would have meant to them--God cares for you.

Tran: But listen. 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. It puts us on the battlefield.

We find our first marching order in v 8.

I. Be Alert (8).

V 8 "Be sober, be vigilant."

One of the things that impressed me most 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 streets, 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 v 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 the commands sergeant Peter gives us in v 8.

"be sober"--to abstain from wine; speaks of self-control

We must be in clear control of our faculties.

"be vigilant"--to be awake; to watch (NASB "Be on the alert.")

Q: 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, "My

soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death; tarry here, and WATCH with me" (Mt 26:43).

You remember what happened. When Peter and the others should have been watching and praying, they were 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!

Q: Why do we need to be alert? Because we have an Enemy. The Devil. Peter tells us 3 characteristics about the Devil in v 8.

A. The Devil is our Adversary.

V 8 "because your adversary the devil"

The word "devil" is the greek translation of the Hebrew word "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!" (see I Jn 1:6)

Illust:

B. The Devil is an Aggressor.

V 8 "like a roaring lion"

Q: 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 (MacArthur, 67). It's when a lion has cornered or killed its prey that it roars in triumph, right before he devours it.

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

But having said that, listen. The devil is an aggressor. He is as dangerous, and more so, than a famished lion loose on the streets.

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

Q: Do you know when we are most vulnerable to the attack of the enemy?

One time 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."

But another great time of vulnerability is when we're in the middle of a time of affliction. In the middle, not at the beginning. When a trial first begins, we 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, and an Aggressor.

C. The Devil is on the **Attack**.

V 8 "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"

Caution: I agree with Wiersbe, "Some people see a demon behind every bush, and blame Satan for their headaches, flat tires, and high rent." (432-3) It's one thing to be alert. It's another (and unbiblical) thing to blame everything on the devil.

Illust:

But having pointed out this dangerous obsession, never forget this. The devil is on the prowl. He's walking about seeking whom he may "devour" (=drink down).

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.

The devil is on the attack. He walks about (NASB "prowls about"). He's not omnipresent. The devil is a created, spiritual being. And he has a host of apparently well-organized wicked cohorts.

Illust:

Tran: There's our first marching order. In order to survive in spiritual warfare, we must be alert.

II. Be Aware (9).

V 9 "Whom resist..."

We need to be aware of the Devil. Again, these were not idle words to Peter. About 3 decades before he wrote I Peter, Peter heard a sobering message from Jesus.

Here's what Jesus told Peter in Lk 22:31, "Simon, behold Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat."

Satan wanted Peter. Why? Because he was going to be a leader in the early church. Satan hates the servants of Christ.

Jesus continued in v 32, "But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not. And when you are converted, strengthen your brethren." 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.

Q: What had Peter learned about how to deal with the devil?

V 9 "Whom resist."

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.

READ Eph 6:12-14 "...withstand...stand..."

Caution: 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." (MacArthur, 41).

Another leader in this movement 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." (MacArthur, 42, quoting C. Peter Wagner)

I have recommended reading 2 novels by Frank Perretti, This Present Darkness and Piercing the Darkness. They will challenge your prayer life. But remember. Those books are novels. They are fiction, not factual theology. We must always build our beliefs, not on an experience we had, or on what somebody wrote, but on what the Bible says.

Q: What does the Bible say we must do if we are to survive the warfare?

A: V 9--We must be aware. Of what? Three key truths...

A. We are in a battle.

V 9 "Whom resist steadfast in the faith"

The key word is RESIST. It is a stark reminder that we are in a battle.

Q: How can we experience victory in the battle of the Christian life?

There are 2 very different and common answers to that question (MacArthur, 69-70). One group says things like, "Let go and let God," and "I can't; He can." They are known as the Quietists, and take II Chr 20:15 as their motto, "The battle is not yours but God's." Quietists believe the only way to live the Christian life is through passive surrender rather than self-discipline. I need not struggle, but merely surrender to God.

At the opposite extreme is Pietism. 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.

Q: Which approach is biblical?

Obviously, we need a balance between the 2 extremes. On the one hand, if we're going to be victorious in the battle, 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.

Observation: 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 say this. 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. Do you know why? Because you're not practicing v 9. You're not resisting the devil. In fact, you're doing just the opposite. You take little time for Bible study in your life. Church attendance is on the back burner, and even though you always have an excuse for missing, the bottom line is that you don't realize the seriousness of the battle.

I fear for you.

Be aware of this--We are in a battle.

B. We are not alone.

V 9 "knowing that the same afflictions..."

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."

Be aware of this. We are not alone. That's great to know in spiritual warfare. We are not "one man armies." We need each other.

II Cor 2:11 "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices."

II Tim 2:25-26 reveals that some Christians have been "taken captive by" the devil, and need to be recovered.

Illust:

C. We are on the winning side.

Did you see the connection in v 9 between Satanic activity and aggression against the church. Satan hates Christ. And Satan hates the Body of Christ. Satan is active in attacking the church.

But remember this. We are on the winning side. God is sovereign. Even when we suffer the brunt of Satan's attack. God can use Satan's attack to strengthen the church, and bring honor to Himself.

Q: Do you know what happens when we resist the devil?

A: 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 will flee from you"

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

Q: How can we survive in spiritual warfare?

Here are our marching orders. Be alert. Be aware. Are you? Are you on the winning side?