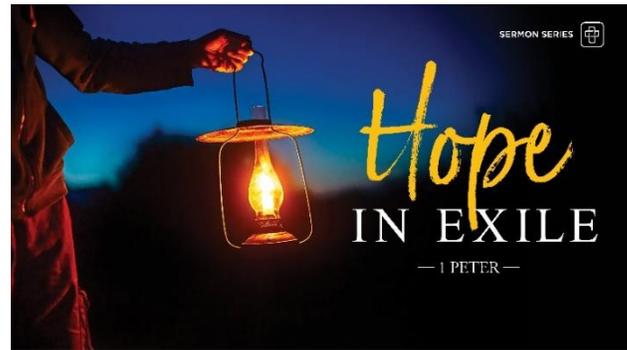


## The Roaring Lion

1 Peter 5:8-9

David Sunday August 23, 2020



It's so great to see you this morning, New Covenant Bible Church! I'm rejoicing in the fact that we're going to be able to do this for several more weeks, through the month of September. God has blessed us with a beautiful day and He will bless us with the food of His Word now, as we turn to 1 Peter 5:8-9 of this great letter. We are coming to the end of our time in 1 Peter and next week will be the last message in this book. God has given us such feast.

Let's pray together.

Father, we pray that You would open our eyes that we may behold wonderful things in Your Word today. We thank You that You will empower through Your Holy Spirit the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts. May they be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

First Peter 5:8-9:

*<sup>8</sup> Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.*

*<sup>9</sup> Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world.*

This is God's Word. Thanks be to God.

Kate and I enjoy watching mystery shows on Masterpiece Theater. Often when a murder takes places, the detectives will come to the home of the victim and ask the relatives, "Did he have any enemies?" Invariably the people will respond, "None at all that I'm aware of."

I suspect that's the way most of us hope to live our lives. We hope to live in such a way that when it comes to enemies, we will have "none at all that I'm aware of." We try to be friendly to people. We try not to cause offense. We try to get along as best we can. No one here is hoping or even trying to make a new enemy this week, I'm sure. We all want to be enemy-free.

### **Christian, you have an enemy and he is ferocious.**

God's Word is telling us today to be aware. We are in a continual, irreconcilable war with an enemy who is ferocious. Verse eight says, "*Be sober-minded, be alert*" —or be watchful.

*“Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.”*

Now, what’s the opposite of sober-minded? It’s to be drunk. What happens when a person is drunk? He has a diminished grasp on reality. His perceptions are dulled and distorted. God is saying, “Don’t let that happen to you spiritually. Keep your spiritual perceptivity alert and engaged. Don’t intoxicate yourself to the point that you’re no longer aware of the fact that you’re in a war with danger all around you and within you.”

Back in World War II, the Richmond Golf Club in the suburbs of London wanted to stay in business during the war. There were posh suburbanites living out in those suburbs who wanted to enjoy a round of golf, even as the German Luftwaffe was flying over London and doing their air assaults. The golf club decided, “Well, we’re just going to keep calm and carry on.” so they made a series of seven temporary rules for 1940, among which are these:

- “In competitions, during gunfire or while bombs are falling, players may take cover without penalty for ceasing play.”
- “The positions of known delayed-action bombs are marked by red flags at a reasonably but not guaranteed safe distance therefrom.”
- This one was my favorite. “A player whose stroke is affected by the simultaneous explosion of a bomb may play another ball from the same place. Penalty—one stroke.”

I looked this up and it was for real. I’ll leave you to judge for yourselves whether it was wise for golfers to continue playing golf during World War II.

There’s no question that for a Christian to ignore the reality of our enemy is extremely reckless. Jesus didn’t invite us to a picnic when He said, “Come, follow Me” (Matthew 16:24). When He brought us into His Kingdom, He called us into what the Westminster Confession of Faith calls “An irreconcilable and continual war” which requires sober-mindedness and watchfulness.

That’s the second phrase we see in verse eight: “Be watchful” or “Be alert.” The crucial duty of a watchman, without which he can’t fulfill any of his duties, is to stay awake. You’ve got to stay awake. When you fall asleep, your senses aren’t only distorted, they’re dormant. Your friends can play all kinds of tricks on you when you’re sound asleep; likewise your enemies can do all kinds of harm to you when you’re sleeping.

We are in a war against an enemy who never sleeps. One of the Puritans said, “Satan is always awake, walking his rounds. “You should be aware that the saints’ sleeping time is Satan’s prime tempting time.” When you’re walking on a narrow path beside a raging river or on the

crest of a steep hill, you don't want to get sleepy up there. You want to stay alert and awake, keeping your eye on the path and keeping your feet secure.

The gospel is a narrow path. Wide is the way that leads to destruction, but narrow is the path that leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14). There are dangers on every side of this narrow path, but there is safe passage in that gospel way. So Christian, wake up if you're slumbering spiritually. You are in a war and you must never forget it.

Actually, it should encourage you that you're in a war, because it means you've been transferred and transformed out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's marvelous light, as we read in 1 Peter 2:9. Now the kingdom of darkness is fighting back, because you don't belong to it anymore.

Before we go on in this text, I want us to just pause for a few moments and reflect on the fact that there is a devil in the world. Satan is real. There are many people in the world today who don't believe in the devil and the devil is perfectly happy to let people deny the reality of his existence. When we deny that he exists, he can carry on his work unsuspected and undetected.

But think about what happens if you deny the existence of Satan. How do you explain the prevalence of evil in this world? How do you explain millions of Jews being exterminated by the Nazis during World War II? How do you explain young African children being press-ganged into armies, put on drugs so that they're high, then being sent into battle? How do you explain human sex trafficking that's prevalent in the world? How do you explain evil like that?

If all you see is what's around you, if this is all there is, if there is no spiritual force of wickedness and evil, then there's no rational basis to be shocked and outraged by the evil we see. Man's inhumanity to man cannot sufficiently explain the level of evil we have witnessed in our world. When people deny the reality of the devil, they look at the problems of the world and think, "We can fix this. We can make this a better place through our economics, better politics, better therapy or greater access to education. We can create a better world."

I'm all for us doing all we can to try to create a better world, but the fact is no matter how hard we try, we've never been successful throughout human history in eradicating injustice and erasing evil from this world—the Bible says we can't. There's more to the human problem than human beings can deal with. We're battling not only against flesh and blood, but against the rulers and authorities over this present darkness (Ephesians 6:12). According to the Bible, there are spiritual forces of evil controlling and coordinating the systemic evils we see in our world.

There's another problem that arises if we ignore or deny the reality of the devil—we start to treat one another like the devil. One of the early leaders of the China Inland Mission said he

would never appoint a man or a woman to the mission field who had not learned to wrestle against the evil one. He said, “If they have not learned to wrestle with the evil one, they will almost inevitably wrestle against one another.”

We see this in the church. When we forget that there’s a real enemy working underneath and behind and through our sin, we start to treat one another as the enemy. The Bible has a much more profound explanation for the problem we see in the world today. We see it in the first few words of verse eight: “*Your adversary the devil...*” The devil is real. The name “Satan” means adversary. He is the enemy of your soul. He’s the enemy of your joy. He’s the enemy of your holiness. Most of all, he’s the enemy of your faith.

The devil is a personal, powerful spiritual being who is much stronger than you are or I am. Satan is in active rebellion against God and in active rebellion against everything God is doing in your life. He wants to destroy it. He slanders you and accuses you. That’s what the word “devil” means. It means slanderer, accuser. Revelation 12:10 says He accuses God’s people day and night. He’s relentless in trying to discredit and malign you, trying to take you down as a Christian.

He is also an active enemy. What does Peter say he’s doing right now? He’s prowling around. The emphasis here is not on Satan’s subtlety. In other parts of the Bible we see metaphors for Satan like serpent, angel of light or thief. These emphasize his sneakiness, his subtlety. But here in Peter the emphasis is on his ferociousness, power and activity. He’s a roaring lion, prowling about.

The closest I’ve ever gotten to an uncaged lion was on a safari in Uganda. I was on top of a large vehicle and below me was a park ranger who had in her hands two very powerful rifles. Even then, with all that protection, if they would have begun to roar at us, I can guarantee I would have been trembling.

That’s what Satan wants to do. He wants to intimidate you. He wants to instill fear in you. He wants to intimidate his prey with his terrifying roar so you’ll stand frozen and afraid of him. Peter has in mind throughout this letter the sufferings Christian believers endure. He’s telling us that the devil is roaring through those sufferings, trying to intimidate us and induce doubt.

The roaring lion wants you to believe that in your suffering God has abandoned you. He wants you to look at 1 Peter 5:7: “*Casting all your cares on him, because he cares about you,*” then he will say, “Oh, really? Do you think that’s true? Do you think a God Who lets you go through this kind of suffering actually cares about you? Oh no He doesn’t.”

The enemy wants to make you disbelieve so you will not trust God to care for you, so you'll turn away from trusting in Jesus and "switch sides" to come back under his power. His strategy is not merely to trip you up or make your life a little more difficult. No, he wants nothing less than to devour you. It's the same word the Greek translation of the Old Testament uses when it speaks of God sending a great fish to "devour" Jonah. That's what Satan wants. He's prowling about like a lion in the zoo, waiting for its next meal.

Your unbelief in the promises of God is like a thick slab of juicy red meat to the roaring lion. He wants to terrify you with his roar and convince you that God cannot be trusted, so you'll turn away from Jesus and renounce your faith in Him. He wants to get you back on his side of the cage so that he can swallow you whole and pull you back into himself. That's the strategy of the evil one.

So be sober-minded, Peter says. Don't get drunk. Be watchful. Don't fall asleep spiritually. Be on your guard against an enemy who wants to destroy your faith in the promises and character of God, as well as the hope of the gospel that Jesus has laid up in heaven for you.

Notice that Peter says, "Be sober-minded and be watchful," but he does not say, "Be afraid." Don't panic when you come under attack. It's to be expected. The kingdom of darkness always strikes back when the Kingdom of light is advancing. I think we should see the roaring of the lion as a sign that the enemy is threatened by what Christ is doing in His people and by the gospel.

### **Christian, do not be terrified by your enemy, but mount a strong resistance.**

Look at verse nine: *"Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world."* What an encouraging verse!

We've just heard that this lion is ferocious and is prowling around. He's much more powerful than we are and he hates us. He's hungry for our faith. The devil roars, "Resistance is useless! You're going to cave. You're not strong enough to withstand me. You're going to lose in the end. I can turn the screws on your suffering until you can't take it any longer. Why not just give up now and come over to my side?"

But God tells you, "Resist him." This means that when you're being attacked by the devil, when he's trying to get you to fear, doubt or despair, don't quiver. Don't say, "Oh, no, I'm a goner." Instead, refuse to surrender. Knowing who Satan is and knowing who we are—how puny and weak we are in comparison to him—might seem impossible. But God is not calling us

to some herculean task here. He's not calling us to muster all our strength and do some mighty work. He wants us to remember at this point, "My child, you are not alone in this battle. I care for you in this fight. I have grace for you in this continual and irreconcilable war. I will be with you in this." The fact that He's telling you to "resist the devil" means that a successful resistance is possible for God's children.

So how do resist him? We see two ways in verse nine.

**First, we resist him by "*standing firm in the faith.*"** It's your faith that muzzles the roaring lion. It's not the faith by which you believe, but the faith that you believe. In other words, it's not, "Is my faith strong enough to withstand this spiritual warfare?" No, it's the content of your faith, the object of your faith. It's the fact that Christ's saving work has delivered you from the lion's mouth. That faith is sufficient to deliver you in this spiritual warfare.

There were times when Martin Luther would feel tormented by the devil and he was very graphic in the way he described it because he believed in spiritual warfare. Sometimes when he felt the devil was lurking under his bed and ready to pounce on him, he would open the Bible to the book of Romans—those chapters that speak of our identity in Christ—and show it to the enemy crouching under his bed. He'd point at the Bible and say, "You see that, you old devil? I am a child of God. I am a baptized Christian. I belong to Jesus. You have no power over me. You are defeated."

That's what it means to stand firm in your faith. At the cross, our Lord Jesus checkmated our adversary. Satan can still move some pieces around, but he can't change the outcome. He has been defeated by Christ. He can still play his moves. He can still roar, but he cannot devour those whom Christ has purchased with His own blood.

So if you want to fight the devil, don't focus on him. Instead, make much of Jesus Christ. Let the victory of Jesus Christ loom large over your life. Let the fact that Jesus is your King be the controlling song of your life, the motif of your life, claiming that "I am more than a conqueror through Him who loves me" (Romans 8:37). Charles Spurgeon said, "The preaching of Christ is the whip that flogs the devil."

So when Satan tempts you to despair and tells you of all the guilt within, when he roars, "You're a failure. God could never be pleased with you," shut your ears to his roar. Instead hear the voice of Jesus say, "I have ransomed you. I've made an end to all your sin. I've made you My own. I've secured for you an inheritance in heaven that is imperishable, undefiled and will not fade away. I am your victorious Savior."

That can be true for you this morning. You might have come into this gathering today and not really known whether you're a believer in Jesus Christ. You might be questioning or exploring Christianity. I want you to know that everyone who is a Christian was once like a lost sheep, straying from the fold of God. We were vulnerable and in danger. Peter says of those who trust in Jesus, "*But now you have returned to the Shepherd and overseer of your soul*" (1 Peter 2:25). The same thing could become true of you today. You could hear the voice of Jesus calling you into the place of safety and protection that is found in Him. He can protect you from all your great enemies.

Actually Satan is not your greatest enemy. Sin is your greatest enemy. Only unrepentant sin can destroy you forever. Satan cannot destroy those who trust in Jesus. So hear the voice of Jesus, calling you as a good Shepherd into the place of safety that's found in Him. Repent—which means to turn away from the path you were on—turn back toward Jesus and believe in Him.

Believers, if Satan is afflicting you this morning and tormenting your mind or body, I want you to remember that the worst thing Satan can do is kill you. That's all he can do. He can put an end to this life. But the very next verse Blake is going to preach on next week says, "*After you have suffered a little while...the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ...*"

Did you get that? He called you to what? To His eternal glory in Christ. Then He Himself will "*restore, establish, strengthen, and support you.*" The worst the lion can do is eat you, but he can't devour you, because Jesus is the resurrected King Who will give you everlasting life in His presence. He has called you to His eternal glory in Christ and will restore, establish, strengthen and support you.

I heard a pastor say, "We are not fighting for victory—we are fighting from victory." We are fighting from a place of victory because Jesus has already won the victory for us. So stand firm in your faith. Stick with Jesus. Stick with Who Jesus is and what He has done. Hold on to and don't move away from the good news of the hope of the gospel. You're safe on the gospel way.

There's a great illustration of this in Pilgrim's Progress. Christian, the believer in the story, is on his heavenly journey, approaching a beautiful palace. He's coming close to the inheritance. As he's approaching, two ominous-looking men come up to him. Their names are Mr. Fearful and Mr. Mistrust. They tell Christian, "There are two lions in the path to this

beautiful palace.” They’re trying to dissuade him from continuing on this dangerous journey on this narrow path.

Sure enough, as Christian approaches, he sees these lions and is utterly terrified. That’s when a friend named Watchful calls out to him, “Don’t be afraid. Look again at those lions. Yes, they’re fierce. Yes, they could devour you. But look—they’re chained. All you need to do is walk carefully down the middle of the path, and you will go through unharmed.”

Walk on the gospel path, knowing that when the lion roars it’s not your job to kill him with your own hands like King David did once in his lifetime. King David’s greater son, our Lord Jesus Christ, has overcome the devil. The resurrected Christ holds the devil on a chain like a cat, keeping it from the sheep of His fold. What does the Bible call Jesus? The Lion of the tribe of Judah. He’s the strong lion and He has overcome. He is the Lion King.

If you’re not trusting in Jesus this morning, if you’re still an unbeliever, I want you to know there is no place of safety outside of finding refuge in King Jesus. If you resist Him, if you rebel against Him, if you refuse to trust in Him, you need to understand that the real lion to fear is not Satan. The real Lion to fear is Jesus. Jesus is not a tame lion, but He is good to those who trust in Him. Put your trust in Jesus.

And believers, I want you to know that Jesus is a strong lion Who defends you and Who intercedes for you. Robert Murray M’Cheyne, who died at the age of 29, said, “If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. And yet distance makes no difference.” First Peter 3 says Christ is praying for us at the right hand of the Father, with angels, authorities and powers subject to Him. His prayers are able to make you firm against Satan’s attacks. So when you are afraid, call on Christ your Champion to fight for you and He will.

**The second way we resist and overcome the devil is by standing united with our fellow believers.** We are to take heart by knowing something, according to 1 Peter 5:9. What are we to know? *“Knowing the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world.”* In other words, when you are assaulted by the evil one, you are not alone. This is part of the Christian life.

For Peter, this brotherhood and sisterhood *“throughout the world”* was in Asia Minor, Rome and Jerusalem with Christians experiencing spiritual warfare and suffering for their faith. For us today, it’s believers who are in Syria, fleeing from an oppressive regime to a place of safety. It’s women in Iran who have left a life of prostitution and become followers of King Jesus, and who are now proclaiming His gospel throughout that country. It’s Christians in

North Korea who have gotten hold of the gospel from a helium balloon that's been sent over from South Korea. They've read about the gospel of Jesus Christ and are believing in Him despite that oppressive regime. It's brothers and sisters right here in this tent who are fighting the good fight of faith alongside you.

We're in this battle together, resisting the devil if we don't act like hedgehogs. What do hedgehogs do to protect themselves? They curl up in a little ball with all kinds of pointy things around them to keep predators away. But that's not how Christians resist the enemy. We resist best when we're like soldiers in the Roman Legion, standing shoulder to shoulder with our armor on. We're safer from enemy assault when we all stick together.

Martin Luther was writing to a young friend who had stayed in his home, had helped educate his children and who was wrestling with spiritual despair. Luther said this to him: "By all means, flee solitude. Flee isolation, for the devil watches and lies in wait for you most of all when you are alone."

So we mount our resistance against the roaring lion, not by our own strength, but by standing firm in the victory of Christ. Not in isolation, but in fellowship with other believers, encouraging one another in the good fight of faith. By calling together on Christ our Champion to come to our aid to defend and protect us. By feasting together by faith on His body and blood through these emblems that we will now take in our hands in communion, as we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

As we prepare our hearts to take communion together, we're going to sing these words:

The cup we drink, the bread we eat  
Reminds us You are all we need  
And makes us long for Your wedding feast

[We Hunger and Thirst, Sovereign Grace Music]

When we arrive at this wedding feast, that roaring lion will finally be cast into the lake of fire, silenced forevermore. Let's praise our Lord Jesus for what He has done for us! Amen.

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*All Scriptures quoted directly from the Christian Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.*

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