

5You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

6Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. 8Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. 10After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. 11To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

12Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! 13She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark. 14Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace be to you all who are in Christ.

These are Peter's final words and he's throwing a lot of really important truth at these beloved christians in rapid fire staccato fashion.

It's like the end of the fireworks show when they send up 15 all at once. Bang bang bang bang.

He may be in a hurry to get it all in, but we aren't. There is so much wonderful truth here, we don't want to rush. Peter says some profoundly important things here about successfully living the christian life.

You shepherds, take care of these sheep. Feed, protect, encourage and, comfort God's sheep. The sheep are under duress. The sheep are distressed and pressured. They need the shepherds more than ever in their situation.

You sheep, especially you young men, submit to the shepherds God has

provided. Humble yourselves to be cared for by the older shepherds. In fact all of you be humble, one to another because God fights against proud people but He is gracious to humble folks. Everyone is to be humble in God's little flock. Pride puts you in a war with God. Don't go there.

Likewise we are to humbly accept the situation that our mighty sovereign God has put us in. The mighty hand of God is a reference to God's sovereignty. Are you persecuted for being a christian. Has someone taken your stuff away. Your property. Are awful things happening because you name the name of Christ.

God isn't in heaven wringing His hands saying "oh dear, oh dear, whatever will we do, this is going badly for my poor christians". God is sovereign over it. God hasn't lost control. And Peter says, you sheep, you christians, accept what God has sovereignly allowed for you, submit to His mighty hand, humbly. He is in control.

But then Peter quickly adds, It's OK to cry out to Him for comfort in whatever situation you're in in this world. We cast our cares, our burdens, our heart break, on Him. And Peter assures us, we do that because He cares. He cares for you. He knows about the distress. He may not change it. You are to humbly accept it. But you cry out to Him. Cast your cares on Him. Because He cares about you.

That's our review and it brings us to where we want to begin this morning.

8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Sober. The word is the same one that would be used in describing someone who is not sober, they are what? Drunk. But Peter is talking about spiritual life. Soul life, not so much the physical drunkenness.

We're experiencing some new realities even as we speak. California says it's OK to get drunk with substances. Marijauna. And we're not here to say much about that. It's interesting and fun to watch because

the state is in defiance with the federal government on this issue.

But why do people want to do that? Why does someone want to imbibe marijuana? Because they want to dis-engage. They want to be happy and this world makes them sad, and with a few puffs of marijuana, you are dis-engaged from this world.

That's really the idea Peter's speaking of. Christians are either engaged with their relationship to Jesus and the christian life, or not. Right? We see that all the time.

Jesus is my fire insurance plan, and He's in a folder and I can look up the details if I wanted to, but He's only there if I need Him. He isn't number one, or two, or three in my life. Then all of a sudden they're upside down in a ditch and they're like, where did I put that Jesus folder. I could really use Jesus right now.

People who claim to be christians, but are disengaged. They're lollygagging through life. Jesus is just a value added option if needed. Sin makes christians drunk. Selfish passion and greed for the things of this life, this world can make christians drunk. Disengaged. Somewhere else.

Three times now Peter has warned against this. And in America where there's no pressure, no push back, where it doesn't cost anything to be a christian, this is our number one problem. We've got everything we need in plentiful supply. Jesus is in a folder somewhere if we need Him, but we're doing just fine without him. Dis-engaged.

This is not something new in this epistle. Peter has made reference to this before. Back in chapter 1 verse 13 he said, "*Gird your minds for action and keep sober.*" In chapter 4 you'll remember verse 7, he says, "*The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.*"

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 6 Paul says, "*Let us not sleep as others do but let us be alert and sober,*" watchful and under control. In verse 8 he says, "*Since we are of the day let us be sober.*" It is used

again in Titus 2:2 *Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance.* And it has always the same meaning, self-restraint, self-control, balancing of priorities.

In every case the idea is that we are engaged. We aren't half asleep like the disciples were in the garden. And that's Peter's next word.

8 *Be of sober spirit, **be on the alert**. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

This one is easy. WAKE UP! We're dis-engaged, and the next thing that happens is, we're not only dis-engaged, we're asleep.

Perhaps we should turn the verse around and these imperatives would become more . . . imperative!

8 *Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour, therefore; Be of sober spirit, be on the alert.* Since the devil is looking for a meal, and you might be it; Wake up! And get sharp. Get engaged with the spiritual world around you.

Here's the picture. The metaphor is consistent. The sheep have all they need, and they are asleep. The shepherd is out on a date, or whatever. And a lion is prowling nearby. And the lion is shopping for a nice big fat fluffy sleeping sheep.

And that sheep is going to get torn to pieces. Eaten. It isn't a pretty scene.

If you're proud, God is your adversary. If you're asleep and dis-engaged, Satan is your adversary. Let me say that a different way. Satan is always our adversary, our enemy. If we're disengaged and asleep, we give him opportunity to tear us to pieces.

In the land of spiritual life, there's no time for lollygagging. No time to be dis-engaged with Jesus and engaged with this world instead. No time for spiritual slumber. We have an adversary who is waiting for opportunities. He's looking for sleeping disengaged Christians and he's

going to make a meal out of them.

Let's stall here and linger for a useful moment and think about how the devil works.

I was only 18 years old and a brand new christian when Flip Wilson won a grammy award for his schtick about the devil. *The devil made me buy this dress.*

It was hilarious. Some of you weren't born yet. He's dressed in drag, as Geraldine Jones. And of course Geraldine is from the bible belt. And she's explaining how the devil tempted her to buy this dress. *The devil made me do it.*

It was hysterical. And it couldn't be done today. Totally politically incorrect. Racial stereotyping. So let's talk about that for a minute. Not the political stereotyping, but the fact that everybody in America got to laugh about what? Peter's verse. Right here. Your adversary the devil.

The devil can only be in one place at one time. He isn't omnipresent. So did the devil make Geraldine buy that dress. No, probably not.

But consider what Paul says in Ephesians 6. It sounds like a commentary on what Peter just said. *10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.*

The devil isn't wasting time making Geraldine buy a dress. The devil is the head person in a massive network of demons. Revelation 12 says that when God threw Satan out of heaven, he took 1/3 of the stars with him.

A third of the angels. How many is that. Well, thanks to the hubble telescope we're finding out that the stars cannot be counted. Innumerable to us.

The old language that the Bible is written in, there was no word for a number larger than ten thousand. Biggest number possible. And so when God describes how many angels it just says ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands. Innumerable.

So there's a lot of demons. But they're outnumbered. Satan only got a third. That means two thirds are on our side if we belong to God. So that's a comforting number. 2:1 ration, for us.

Then it says some of the demons are locked up in everlasting chains. So whatever that number is, it's from the 1/3rd. And it says there are other demons locked up in the pit that are going to be released like unclean frogs during the tribulation period. So those demons are under lock and key. For now.

Remember when the demons in the wild man at Geresu begged Jesus not to send them to that place. Don't send us to the pit. Don't lock us up. Jesus had that power and they knew it. So He sent them into a herd of pigs that ran over a cliff and perished.

So what's the devil really doing. How is he prowling like a lion looking for unwitting drowsy christians.

Well, Paul is pretty clear. He has an army of demons. And there are divisions and order.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

I counted four ranks. Four divisions in this army of demons. I don't have spiritual eyes yet, so I really don't know how that breaks out, but I do know from Paul's description, that there is order and rank among demons.

And Satan is at the top. And Paul tells us very clearly that what Satan is doing is devising schemes. Satan is working on schemes to mess up christians.

Satan really doesn't care much about non-christians. His schemes are for doing damage to the people of God.

Do you ever wonder why the hatred against Israel is relentless? That's just one of a thousand schemes. God has promised things to His people Israel, and Satan is right in the middle, and has been for thousands of years, to try to interfere with those promises. That's one of his schemes.

Kill Israel. Wipe Israel off the map. Anihilate Israel. Make God's promises to Israel, impossible to complete. He's engaged in that. That's just one in a thousand schemes.

What about Flip Wilson and Geraldine. That's a scheme. Make christians into a stupid bunch of laughable idiots. Make Peter and Pauls words seem like something that stupid people run around like chicken little. The sky is falling. Satan's trying to make me do dumb stuff.

Think about what Satan accomplished with that particular scheme. The Bible is made a laughing stock. Christian people are ridiculous. And bonus, it's really funny for men to dress up in drag and talk like a women.

Whoa! You mean in 1970, Satan was laying the groundwork for transsexualism and gay marriage? Satan makes up schemes. They are complex. 48 years ago we're all laughing at a man in drag. America wouldn't tolerate a man in drag at that time, unless he was really really funny. Bingo. Scheme. Wake up christians.

I just clicked on my email page to see if there was anything new. Guess what pops up in the ad at the right. Two smokin' hot babes in a 1950's sports car and the message is all about my money. E-trade. If I invest my money at E-trade, those babes and that car will be mine.

Think there's anything subliminal there? It's not even subtle. That is a scheme of Satan. And I know it is, and I don't click on click bate, because I'm alert. I'm wide awake. I know he'd love to devour me today. Chew me up for a while. Render me useless to God's kingdom. Mess me up so I can't feed the sheep.

This came up on Thursday night after the board meeting. We were sitting around the table sharing and Jeff mentioned that he went to Mike Seiferd's funeral at the Mormon church.

And Jeff says the scheme is very very subtle and confusing. They sing the same songs we do. Their hymnal has some of the same songs our hymnal has. They read out of the gospel of Luke. They use all the same religious words we do.

You know, these Mormons are sweet people and that Jim, he can get pretty abrasive. He rubs people the wrong way.

It all gets very confusing. Mormons sweet. Jim sour. They sing our songs. They read from Luke. They use all the same religious speak we do. Maybe I'll give Jim some air and try out this Mormon church for a while.

Now Jeff didn't say that. Because Jeff is wide awake, and after the churchy songs and the sweetness and the churchy talk, they launched into false doctrine and heresy. Big time. I wasn't there, I don't know what was said, but I know my brother recognizes heresy when he hears it. He's wide awake to that.

Mike is in the celestial heaven in his celestial marriage with his sweet bride who preceeded him and together they'll make lots of celestial babies and eventually they can be a god and goddess.

Note the subtlety of Satan. Christians from historically non heretical churches, we have perhaps 3 of them in this town, those folks will be at the funeral, so we'll sing their songs and read from their book, before we launch into the heretical stuff.

That could catch christians snoozing. That is a scheme of Satan and his armies of demons. Go do a study of the percentages of converts to mormonism who came out of dead christian churches. It's a big number folks.

There's a reason why I'm standing here speaking abrasive things that are hard to hear. I love those folks too. They are sweet sweet neighbors, and in the war on secularism, they are co-belligerents with us. We welcome that and we love them. They're easy to love. But beware.

Our kids always thought their mom and dad were over protectively mean people. We wouldn't let our girls go join in the basketball game at the Mormon church. For young people, that could be deadly. We didn't want our girls to be devoured. So we were mean mom and dad. Sorry, you can't go play basketball at the Mormon church with the nice Mormon kids.

That's only 3 schemes. OK, maybe 4 counting Israel. We briefly touched on just 4 out of thousands of schemes that Satan has devised to devour christians. But I wanted you to see how he works.

1 John 5:19 says something well that is said many times by Jesus and the apostles. We've said it often in this pulpit; *We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*

The greek word translated world in that verse is Kosmos. Ever pick up Cosmopolitan magazine and marvel at the pornography on the cover? Kosmos means world systems. The kosmos isn't the real estate. Kosmos is the evil systems that rule this world.

We know that we are of God, and that the kosmos holos (holos means totality. All of the Kosmos) lies in the power of the evil one

Satan does not have sovereignty over this world. That belongs to God Almighty. But it pleases God to allow Satan to have authority over this world in this period of time. It's in His ultimate plan. He's coming to take it back.

But right now, Satan is in control of all of the evil systems that rule this world. Money. Power. Sex. Pornography. Drugs. Evil men in control. All of it. Satan's. Except for God's people who have come out of that system. And those folks make Satan furious.

Satan and his minions, the higher up demons, have authority over rulers in this world we live in. They are scheming to accomplish agendas that damage God and those who belong to Him.

That's why this world is evil and seems to be escalating towards a final conflict. Satan is the ruler of this world. He is scheming and designing ways to destroy what belongs to God.

I hope this church is on Satan's radar. I hope we're an irritation. I hope he's thinking about us. I'd love to be a really big problem for him. I don't think we are. But that's my goal.

I want this church to be a real thorn for Satan. I want him to suffer losses in Tonopah. I want Mormon people to come out of the heretical teaching and learn the truth and be saved. What trophies we could have in the war on Satan.

I want regular clueless Godless people in Tonopah to wonder what's up in that little church up on the hill where the guy is teaching the Bible and talks crazy like there's a real spiritual war going on.

I want them to come and hear the truth and then to make up their minds to come out of darkness into the light. To be made alive together with Christ. Have their sins washed away and have a righteousness not their own, but given to them by Jesus. One less possible dupe in Satan's armies cluelessly doing his bidding. One more enemy combatant causing Satan heartburn.

No wonder Peter says; *8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert.*

Satan has a scheme in place designed to trip up . . . you. He's designed one with your name on it. All of your weaknesses and achilles heels are incorporated into it. Whatever your weakness is, he's got one designed

for you.

For Peter it was pride. Mark 14; 27 *And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, because it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED.'* 28 *"But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."* 29 *But Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not."* 30 *And Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times."* 31 *But Peter kept saying insistently, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!"* And they all were saying the same thing also.

Lord, I can see these other losers falling away, Peter says while he's pounding his chest like Tarzan. But not me. I'm super christian. Satan had a scheme to get Peter, and it was pride.

Luke 22, the same account. Luke sets it up for us in vs. 24 *And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest.*

Jesus is about to be arrested, and the disciples are having a spirited discussion about what? Which disciple is the most awesome. Satan can work with that. He's got schemes galore for proud christians. Picking it up again in vs. 31 of Luke 22;

31 *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; 32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."* 33 *But he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!"* 34 *And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."*

Sovereign God had to grant permission before Satan could put Peter through the ringer. Just like with Job of old. It says Satan demanded permission.

When you're walking in pride; when you're arguing over who the most awesome disciple is, who the top man is going to be, you've just given

Satan a foothold to go before God and make his demand.

Peter learned his lesson the hard way. It's no fun to be broken hearted. This failure and the resulting broken heart might have finished a lesser person off. But Jesus says, he prayed for Peter. Peter is going to go right to the brink, but Jesus prayed, don't let his faith ultimately fail.

30 plus years later, Peter remembers that lesson. Don't fall asleep and allow Satan an avenue to demand that he be allowed to devour you. Watch out. Watch out for pride, and lust, and worldly loves, and love of money, and a whole bunch of other stuff this book warns us about.

Because if you neglect being alert, if you decide to take a little snooze, if you decide to indulge a bit in one of Satan's schemes, you've given him the leverage to demand that God allow you to be sifted. Chewed up by the old lion. For some, perhaps, devoured. You may not be as lucky as Peter.

Well, we didn't finish. Again. Next week we will I think. But it was good to have a little theology of our adversary. It's good to understand how it is that he gains access to really turn us inside out. Sift us like wheat. Devour us like a lion devours a chipmunk. About 2 bites.

He has schemes designed for someone just like you. Keep sober in your spirit. Take your christian walk seriously. This isn't a lollygag through the park on roller skates. The christian life is deadly serious. We need to be sharp. And being sharp, being awake and sober requires some knowledge of this book. This is serious business, learning God's word.

There is a very famous truth in Hosea 4:6. It says very simply; *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.* Satan is eating the church in America for lunch because God's people are disengaged, asleep, and ignorant of what this book says.

Next week we'll shift from the defensive, to the offensive. How do we not only keep spiritually alert, but how do we fight back in this war. We'll see that next week, and we'll look briefly at the final words. Peter

signs off.