

**Text: I Peter 5:8-9**

**Title: “Spiritual Warfare”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Open your Bibles to I Peter 5:8.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Veterans Day was last Thursday. We honor men and women who wore and who wear the uniform of one of the branches of our military. They are familiar with battle. I wonder if we understand that we are all veterans of spiritual warfare. We may not realize it, but we are in the battle. And that’s what Peter has in mind as he writes I Peter 5:8-9.

**1 Peter 5:8 (NIV) - Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.**

**1 Peter 5:9 (NIV) - Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.**

Now there are many ways we can approach these verses, but let me just break them into two categories.

### **1. OUR WARFARE (v.8)**

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we are engaged in a spiritual war, whether we realize it or not. Look at what Peter says about it.

**1 Peter 5:8b (NIV) - Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.**

Now the evil one is given many names in the Bible. In John 8:44 Jesus calls him a murderer and a liar. II Corinthians 11:14 says that Satan masquerades as an angel of light. He is a joker. He is also called a destroyer in Revelation 9:11. In Revelation 12:10 he is called the “accuser of our brothers.” In Genesis we see him as the deceiving serpent.

And Peter gives the evil one three names here in v.8

- Your enemy
- The devil
- A lion

**ENEMY** = He is our adversary. This is similar to the word Satan, and it means “opponent.” This word actually isn’t a military term; it’s a legal term meaning an opponent in a court of law.

Note: Satan is “*your* enemy.” Yes, he is the enemy of God and of the truth. But he is out to get *you*. He is *your* personal adversary. This is personal for each of us. But we are like unknowing children wandering onto a battle field with bullets flying in every direction, and we’re playing in the dirt.

The Bible says we should not be unaware or uninformed about his devices and his methods.

Why is Satan our enemy? It is because we have been redeemed by God. We belong to God, and Satan hates God. Ephesians 2 tells us that once we were dead in our trespasses and sins. We used to live following the ways of this world and of the kingdom of Satan. That's where we used to be, but we were saved and rescued from that kingdom of darkness ruled by Satan, and we were delivered into the Kingdom of Light ruled by God. And so now Satan is our adversary.

**DEVIL** = The word means "slanderer." We get our word "diabolical" from this word. Satan is a diabolical slanderer. He speaks against God to men. And he speaks against men to God. He is the accuser.

And there is another word that Peter has for our nemesis:

**LION - 1 Peter 5:8b (NIV) - Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.**

**This lion prowls around.** Satan and his demons never sleep. They are always moving about. He is restless in his search for victims. Don't underestimate his desires.

**This lion roars.** This is the howl of a beast that is hungry and on the prowl for prey. And with his roar the lion announces his presence and his power. And he does so to intimidate.

**This lion looks for someone to devour.** Satan is looking to swallow up and gulp down people, just like a lion.

**ILLUSTRATION** – As you think of a lion you may think of going to see them out at the Fort Worth Zoo. Oh, they're so cute. But that's not what Peter has in mind.

**ILLUSTRATION** – I have a friend here in our church who has been on several African safaris, and in close contact with lions on several occasions. He said it is very rare for someone to survive a lion attack. Unlike other predators a lion jumps on its prey and won't stop until it kills its victim. They are unbelievably powerful ... 400-500 pounds of pure muscle ... a killing machine. Those rare individuals who aren't killed by a lion are killed by the infection that comes from the lion's claws that are filled with "leftovers" from previous kills ... a breeding ground for infectious germs.

Well, we're pretty sure Peter never saw lions in a zoo. But he probably heard about or saw what they did in a coliseum, like the grand Coliseum in Rome, where for the pleasure of the emperor and a blood thirsty audience, Christians and others were fed to lions. Spectators watched the lions devour people.

And so Peter describes Satan as a lion prowling around looking for someone to devour.

Now the big question: How does the devil attack us? How is his intimidating strength unleashed? He does it in many ways, but it seems that Peter has something particular in mind here ... suffering.

We see this in v.9 where Peter says that believers everywhere are going through this same kind of “suffering.”

Let me show you how I think this works: Satan will take advantage of suffering that comes into our lives ... sickness, depression, temptation to sin, money problems, rebellious children, or whatever. And friends, this suffering is inevitable. These things come upon all of us.

And Satan’s desire is to completely overwhelm us. Remember the lion roars to intimidate. And if he can sufficiently overwhelm us, then we might lose our faith; we stop believing the truth and the victory we have in Jesus Christ. And then we begin to act and think as though God has no power, and Satan has all power.

Question: Well, just who causes suffering? We’ve studied here in I Peter that God permits suffering into our lives to perfect and purify us ... to refine us like a precious metal in fire. But here it says that Satan is the one responsible for suffering. Which is it? It is both.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Think about it in terms of a ride on a bus ... the bus of suffering. There are times we have to get on that bus, but God has a destination in mind, and while what we endure is painful, God is taking us somewhere that is great. But what Satan does is that he tries to hijack the bus. He wants to take us straight to hell with him.

Satan’s purpose in suffering is to devour and destroy you. God’s purpose in suffering is to strengthen and perfect you.

Let me show you a couple of biblical examples of this:

The first one is found in II Corinthians 12 where Paul talks about what he calls his “thorn in the flesh.” We don’t know exactly what it was, but it is clear that it was some sort of affliction. I believe it was a physical affliction. Paul said he prayed to God time after time that this affliction would be removed. But the Lord said to him, “Paul, my grace is sufficient for you. I know that this affliction weakens you, but My strength is perfected in human weakness, not in human strength.” So God is clearly at work through this affliction, this thorn in his flesh. But Paul also calls this affliction “a messenger of Satan.” So while this affliction was permitted by God, it is clear that Satan the lion wanted to use it to devour Paul.

There’s another example that comes from the life of our man Peter himself. On the night that Jesus was betrayed Jesus spoke these words to Peter.

**Luke 22:31-32 (NIV) - “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. <sup>32</sup> But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”**

Sifting wheat was a tumultuous process where the wheat was tossed up in the air so that the chaff would be blown off, allowing the unadulterated wheat to fall to the ground. Sometimes we feel like we are getting tossed around like that. But be reminded that Satan had to ask Jesus for permission to do this to Peter. And Jesus permitted it and prayed for Peter in the

midst of it so that his faith would be strengthened. And after Peter had gone through this tossing, and even after he had failed the test, Jesus knew he would turn back and strengthen his brothers with his own strengthened faith.

**John 10:10 (NIV) - The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.**

We're not wringing our hands wondering who is going to win this war. Read the end of the book; God wins! Satan still has some freedom. But one day the one who holds the power of death will be destroyed. He will be cast forever, along with all who follow him, into the Lake of Fire called Hell.

## **2. OUR WEAPONS (v.9)**

**1 Peter 5:9 (NIV) - Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.**

So what weapons do we have in this war against the enemy?

- **FOCUS**

**1 Peter 5:8a (NIV) - Be self-controlled and alert.**

These are twin imperatives. Exclamation points would be appropriate: Be self-controlled! Be alert!"

"Be self-controlled" = one writer puts it this way: "keep a poised, razor-sharp mindset."

There's an allusion here to the effects of alcohol on a person. Your translation may say "sober." It means to be un-intoxicated by the things of this world.

"Alert" means staying awake as opposed to being asleep.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Driving at night, you need to be self-controlled and alert. If not, you will find yourself in a ditch, or worse.

But remember, we are talking about something where the stakes are high. We are engaged in a spiritual battle every minute of every day. If we forget that ... if we are distracted and sluggish, we will be defeated.

So keep your eyes open and be alert. You never know how Satan will come at you. It may be the words of a song, or in a scene in a movie, or in the comments of another person. Satan can flood your mind with thoughts that are not true and not righteous.

And before long, if you're not focused ... self-controlled and alert ... you'll be in sin and in trouble.

- **FIGHT**

Now there are some things the Bible tells us to run from: temptation, sexual immorality, idolatry, and materialism. When you see temptation coming your way, get out of there.

But in this case when Satan comes at you to overwhelm you by suffering of any kind, the Bible says to resist him ... fight the enemy.

**1 Peter 5:9a (NIV) - Resist him...**

Resist! It is a defensive term, not an offensive term.

Now one of the most powerful ways we resist is through prayer. And the reason we need to focus before we fight is for this matter of prayer.

**1 Peter 4:7 (NIV) - Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.**

In the Garden of Gethsemane, with the battle raging all around them, Jesus told his disciples them to watch and pray. What did they do? They dozed off. When the battle was at its apex, with the eternal destiny of every soul that ever lived hanging in the balance, with the Cross looming before Jesus ... the disciples dozed off.

**James 4:7b (NIV) - Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**

Satan has been defeated at the Cross. Our power over Satan is not in ourselves. We are to be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. He still has limited freedom to move about and to do his dirty work, but only because of Sovereign God grants him that freedom. So we do not fight *for* victory, we fight *from* victory.

- **FAITH**

**1 Peter 5:9b (NIV) - Standing firm in the faith...**

We do not resist in our own strength or power. We resist in the power of the Cross of Jesus Christ, the Gospel and the truth.

“The faith” is biblical revelation, the whole body of revealed truth contained in Scripture, and embodied in the Gospel.

Jesus shows us how to use this weapon. When Satan hurled his vicious assault at Jesus in the wilderness of temptation, with each attack Jesus answered with the truth of Scripture ... “It is written.” And after that the devil left him. Jesus was standing firm in the faith.

In the Revelation Jesus speaks to the church at Smyrna.

**Revelation 2:10 (NIV) - Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution ... Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.**

- **FRIENDS**

**1 Peter 5:9c (NIV) - Because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.**

Brothers = the brotherhood of believers ... the family of God. Temptation, persecution, and suffering are all things that believers around the world have in common.

Remember that other Christians are going through the same trials and that you are not alone. If Satan can get us to feel that we are alone, that God has singled us out, then he will discourage and defeat us.

Right here in this room are people who are going through the same things you're going through. We have heard the roar of the lion. We have all experienced this same kind of suffering. You're not alone.

## **CONCLUSION**

The devil prowls around like a roaring lion. But one day he will be vanquished by the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. But in the meantime we resist him standing firm in our faith.