



A BETTER RESISTANCE | THE PRESSURES ARE REAL (16)

MAY 16, 2021

1 Peter 5:6-14

⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

⁸Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

¹⁰And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

¹¹To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

¹²By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. ¹³She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son.

¹⁴Greet one another with the kiss of love.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

BACKGROUND

“For most of the time in this letter we have been aware of persecution coming from surrounding non-Christian culture. Part of it will have been unofficial, simply involving ordinary people sneering, criticizing, ostracizing or using occasional violence. Some of it, though, will have been official, as the local authorities took a hand and made life difficult for the Christians. How easy it will have been, as it still is, for the Christians then to demonize their visible, human opponents, to regard them as the real source of the problem. Now at last we see this isn’t the case. There is a real enemy ... This enemy is seriously dangerous, particularly when ignored.

Peter, however, uses a more obvious animal as the image to describe the enemy. The enemy is like a roaring lion looking for someone to swallow up. The word Peter uses is far more than simply ‘eat’; it implies that the lion will simply gulp you down in a single mouthful. No time to protest or struggle. You’ll be gone.

It’s a terrifying image, and one which alerts us at once to the serious nature of the Christian life. Too many Christians soft-pedal the idea of actual spiritual warfare, of a real confrontation with a real devil. As C. S. Lewis said when writing about his world-famous book *The Screwtape Letters*, consisting of letters from a senior devil to a junior one on how to tempt people, some people dismiss the idea of a devil by thinking of a ridiculous little person with horns and hooves wearing red tights. They can’t believe in a creature like that, so they decide they can’t believe in the devil. Other people become so fascinated with the devil that they can think of little else, and suppose that every ordinary problem in life, or difficulty in someone else’s personality, is due to direct devilish intervention. Lewis steers a wise path between these two extremes, and so should we. But perhaps, for many of my readers, the danger may be more in ignoring the tempter than in over-dramatizing him.”

– N. T. Wright, *The Early Christian Letters*

PURPOSE

To understand the seriousness of spiritual opposition so that Christians find strength in God

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do your ideas of the devil match up with Peter's picture of the devil (v.8-9)?
2. Much of 1 Peter is about suffering. On what basis can Peter end his letter with the assurance of peace (v.14)?
3. To what circumstances and relationships in your life does the entire letter of 1 Peter speak most directly?

LEADER'S NOTES

Question 1: Christians need to be spiritually vigilant, watching for attacks from the devil, their great enemy and opponent. Peter uses the graphic image of a lion to describe Satan's destructive threat: he prowls around... seeking someone to devour, hoping that believers will be terrified in their hardship and persecutions, or that they will be deceived and fall into sin. Though the devil may threaten to "devour" Christians, they nonetheless have assurance that they will be guarded by God's power (1 Peter 1:5).

Christians need not fear the devil, for the Lord has given them power to stand against him by being firm in their faith. Ephesians 6:12-18 is a helpful passage for understanding more about how to be vigilant against spiritual warfare. Trusting God's promises, believers know that suffering is not the final word and that ultimately they will be exalted (James 4:7).
- ESV Study Bible Notes

The Greek word for "devil" means "slanderer," "accuser" or "liar." The devil is a spiritual being in opposition to God and who operates by inciting falsehoods about God. But while he opposes God, he is in no way equal to God. So, while Christians are to be vigilant against the attacks of Satan, they should not overly fear him since Jesus has ultimately defeated the power of evil, sin and death through his death and resurrection (Revelation 20:1-10).

Question 2: Peter opens and closes his letter with the peace that comes through Jesus. In 1 Peter 1:2, he writes, "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for the sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you."

Peter grounds his assurance in God's peace on the work of the triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) to accomplish the work of salvation. For that reason, Christians can be sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6). Genuine spiritual progress is rooted in what God has done, is doing and will do. God's faithfulness ensures that he will be with believers until Jesus returns and that the God who has saved them will never let them go.

Question 3: There's so much in this letter that relates to the present day hardships of following Jesus. Following him faithfully will always put Christians at odds with the world around them in some way. Nonetheless, the benefits of following Jesus are well worth it! (Ephesians 1:18, 2:7, 3:8; Philippians 3:8).