

- I. I. Be Holy In All Your Behavior With A Holiness Like God's Holiness
 - A. I Peter 5:8-11 . . . Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. [9] But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. [10] After 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. [11] To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.
 - B. Last week we talked about how humility and a humble faith is essential for casting all our cares on God, instead of bearing them and trying to solve them all by ourselves.
 - 1. Today, we just read about being serious minded, vigilant, and committed to resisting the devil's wiles and temptations. And though it may seem like Peter is introducing a new topic, he isn't.
 - 2. Humility is just as essential for Peter's exhortation about resisting the devil as it is for casting all our cares on God.
 - a. For example, you must be sufficiently humble to believe and even acknowledge that you have sinful desires, thoughts, habits, and behaviors in your life that the devil can take advantage of through his temptations.
 - b. You must be sufficiently humble to press God to help you discover the selfishness and sin that you do not yet see. And why does this take humility? Because discovering you are more sinful than you thought you were is humbling. And without humility, you will not pray until God shows you what you currently do not see.
 - c. And you must be sufficiently humble to believe you need God's help – all along the way – to resist the devil and defeat your sin.
 - 3. So though today, we will focus on the practical side of resisting the devil, please keep in mind that humility is an essential part of this activity.
 - C. Pray
- II. Resisting the devil, firm in your faith
 - A. I Peter 5:8 . . . Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

1. The first truth I want us to see here is that Peter does not exhort us to begin our fight against sin and our pursuit of holiness at the point when temptation strikes.
 - a. Rather, Peter exhorts us to begin preparing to resist the devil's temptations long before the moment of temptation comes.
 - b. Why? Because without proper preparation, there is a strong probability we will give in when the temptation strikes.
 - c. In other words, hoping you can resist temptation and remain faithful to godliness without prior preparation is as foolish as hoping you can pass your section tests or mid-term exams without studying sufficiently before the exam starts.
2. The second truth is that preparing ahead of time includes (1) being sober of spirit and (2) constantly on the alert.
3. To be sober of spirit is to be serious minded. And when we speak of being serious minded in relation to resisting the devil in your fight against sin and pursuit of holiness, we are talking about being mentally prepared to see temptation coming, to know exactly what to do to resist it when it arrives, and to direct your attention away from the temptation back to God and your pursuit of godliness.
 - a. For example, in order to resist the temptation to think angry or anxious or immoral or self-pitying or any other ungodly thought, requires sufficient serious mindedness to stand at the door of your mind and evaluate every thought that enters or crosses it.
 - b. But to do that, you must first have a measuring stick that you know how to use and is ever-present on you mind for use at any moment.
 - (1) One measuring stick I often use is Philippians 4:8 . . .
"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."
 - (2) But knowing scripture is not mean you know how to use it. Discovering how to use certain scriptures in your war against temptation takes study, contemplation, self-examination, and observing how your chosen scripture works when you use it. And of course, this kind of preparation and observation take serious mindedness.
 - (3) Now, though knowing scripture and how to apply it is vital to resisting the devil, it is not all that is needed. You must maintain a sufficient level of serious mindedness, all the time,

in order to be prepared all the time to resist when tempted.

And so you see the need for and value of being sober of spirit.

- c. However, serious mindedness in relation to resisting the devil does not stop with resistance. Saying no to sin is good. Getting solidly back on track after being distracted by the temptation is equally important to your pursuit of godliness.
 - (1) The reality is, temptation, even though resisted, has a way of pulling us enough off course that after resisting, we need to know exactly how to get back on track and where we need to be to be back on track in order to continue our pursuit of holiness. This knowledge requires serious minded preparation.
 - (2) But there is more, just as we need to consciously resist the devil, so we need to consciously return to the narrow path and our pursuit of godliness following the distraction of temptation. Again, maintaining a serious mindedness is essential to following through on all of this.
- d. There is one more truth that I want to add to being serious minded for the sake of properly preparing and resisting the devil.
 - (1) We have the privilege to know and walk with God as much as any of God's children have had since Adam and Eve. In other words, we can know God and fellowship with Him as much as any child can know and enjoy intimate fellowship with his loving and caring earthly father.
 - (2) However, as with all relationships, so with this one, it takes both sides working together to make it work. James tells us that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us (James 4:8) – which gives us some idea of what our part needs to be.
 - (3) Now it should be obvious that the most significant way we draw near to God is by resisting the devil, dying to those sins and practices that distance us from God, and actively seeking to be holy in all our behavior as God is holy.
 - (4) But we can do more than that, and our fight against temptation provides a great place to do more. For example, Bible reading and Bible study, scripture memorization, meditation, and prayers for God's help in the whole process of preparation, resisting, and returning to godliness are an open door to consciously include God as you would your earthly father when seeking his help.

- e. And how might you consciously include God? Here are two ways that have helped me.
 - (1) First, talk to God as if you were talking things out with your earthly father or with a wise friend or with a counselor. Tell Him everything. Ask Him anything. You may never hear God speaking directly to you in response, but in time, you will see His answers to your questions and requests. You will see His help in understanding how to apply the scriptures or in seeking greater sensitivity to the devil's wiles or in learning to hate your sin. So keep talking to Him as you would a dear friend who is right there with you.
 - (2) Second, keeping relating to Him as you would a dear friend who is spending the whole day with you. You may not talk constantly, but every time you can, you start talking again.
 - f. Now in a world filled with distractions and with a humanity that prefers lightheartedness and entertainment to serious mindedness, you will have to work at being serious minded until it becomes more natural. Remember, serious mindedness is one of the essential ingredients to resisting the devil.
4. Peter's next words exhort us to be on the alert, which speaks of being constantly vigilant – just as a guard standing in the watch-tower is to be constantly vigilant.
- a. If you think being serious minded most of the time is contrary to human nature, being vigilant all the time is not only contrary to our human nature, it is hard work – at least until it becomes your habit, or your more natural way of going through each day.
 - b. And the vigilance Peter is exhorting us to is a constant vigilance against anything that undermines our resolve, or distracts our attention, or leads to foolish or selfish thinking, or excites sinful desires, or feeds ungodly fears, or nurtures discontent, or brings on self-pity, or encourages the kind of discouragement that leads to despair and depression, or stimulates anger, or anything else that weakens our defenses so that we are more easily caught off guard when the devil brings on one of his temptations.
 - c. You see, the devil is like a roaring lion, that is, a very hungry lion whose hunger is driving him to find someone to devour.
 - (1) Now though the devil is unseen, he is not a nobody. He is not weak, or lazy, or stupid. He is the ruler of this world just as the lion is the king of the jungle. He has the strength, speed,

and cunning of a lion. And he is driven by his ferocious hunger to find someone to devour.

(2) Now a lion does not wait for the strongest of his prey to come into view. Rather, he waits and watches for the weakest prey, or for an exploitable weakness in his stronger prey.

(3) And so it is with the devil, which is why Peter exhorts us to be serious minded and constantly vigilant, for when we let down in either of these areas, we make ourselves vulnerable by presenting the devil with an exploitable weakness.

d. Therefore, I urge you to carefully examine your life to see if you are being careless in dealing with a known weakness, or if you have a weakness that you haven't admitted to having, or if you have a weakness you haven't seen before, for any weakness is an invitation to the devil to ferociously attack – which simply makes resisting him all the harder – and unnecessarily so.

B. I Peter 5:9a . . . But resist him, firm in your faith.

1. Let's begin by looking at the FIRM IN YOUR FAITH part of this exhortation.

a. It is God's power that protects you by preventing the devil from throwing temptations at you that are beyond your current ability to resist (I Corinthians 10:13). If the devil were free to tempt you with whatever he wished to throw at you, you would not stand a chance, and he would win every time. But God is constantly guarding you against any attack, any temptation, that is beyond your current ability to resist so as to persevere in doing what is right.

b. It is also God's power that defeats the devil when you resist him, not yours. Michael the Archangel did not count himself strong enough in his own power to take on the devil (Jude 9), and neither should we. But if we will follow Jesus' example, and depend on God's power and use God's word when resisting the devil, we will come out victorious.

2. However, resisting the devil is a combination of God's part and our part, which Peter says begins with serious mindedness, includes constant vigilance, and leads to resisting when tempted. Therefore, in absolute dependence on God's part, what do we need to do to resist the devil?

a. When the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus quoted scripture to bring an end to the temptation (Luke 4:1-13). Though

quoting scripture did not stop the next temptation from coming, it did end the current temptation. I believe we are wise to follow Jesus' example, which means we need to read, memorize, and ponder scripture to adequately prepare for temptation, and then use specific scriptures to resist temptation when it comes at us.

- b. Jesus told Peter, James, and John on the night before his crucifixion that they were to KEEP watching and praying in order to keep from giving in to the devil's temptations (Matthew 26:41). Surely, watching – or vigilantly guarding against an attack, and ongoing prayer are two good pre-temptation actions we can take in order to be victorious when the temptation comes.
 - c. Paul talks about preparing to resist the devil by putting on the FULL armor of God – for it is in this way that we can stand firm against the schemes of the devil and resist his temptations (Ephesians 6:10-17). This FULL armor includes knowing the truth, actively and purposefully pursuing righteousness, knowing the way to peace with God and man, nurturing faith in God, being confident who it is who saves you, and clinging to God's word. Most of these are useful for the preparation needed to resist the devil and defeat temptation when it comes. The rest are essential for resisting the devil at the point of temptation and redirecting your attention back to God and His ways.
3. In addition to these recommendations from scripture, I want to add one of my own – which serious minded Christians have practiced for centuries.
- a. In the war against our flesh, the world, and the devil, we most often begin by looking back at what we have said or done – either just moments before or earlier in the day – and realizing we have sinned.
 - b. As you get better at doing the things necessary to properly prepare to meet and defeat particular temptations, you begin to catch yourself in the midst of the temptation, and are therefore able to stop giving in, redirect to resisting, and return to doing what you know is right.
 - c. If you continue daily preparation, prayer, and keeping God's word fresh on your mind, you will soon get to the place of seeing the temptation coming. It is at this point that resisting the devil has its greatest effect in relation to that particular temptation, for it is here that you can side-step (avoid) the coming temptation and continue being godly in that particular area of your life.

- d. If you continue doing your part in putting a particular sin out of your life, your sensitivity to that sin and its common temptations grows to the point of seeing minor incidences which occur hours or a whole day before the big temptation comes. This is good, for it is as you give in to these minor incidences that you weaken your commitment to godliness and strengthen your commitment to selfishness so that you are in a weakened condition when the big temptation hits.
- e. The more you see these prior minor incidences, and the more sensitive you become to them, the more you can resist the devil at these minor points. And resisting here does two important things for you.
 - (1) First, resisting these minor temptations is a lot easier than resisting the big temptation, which significantly increases your probability for remaining faithful in your pursuit of godliness.
 - (2) Second, resisting here means you are cutting off at the root the drivers and motives for the particular sin you are trying to kill off and replace with godliness. And it is this deeper cleansing that begins to change not just your behavior and your thinking, but your heart as well. And this is the depth of victory we all ought to seek.

C. I Peter 5:9b . . . knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

- 1. The truth Peter is wanting us to see is that our temptations are not unique to us. They may not be common to all people everywhere, but our temptations are common to many people the world over. And among them are Christians who are fighting the good fight and gaining the victory – by God’s grace and empowerment.
- 2. So, you are not alone in your war against your flesh, the world, and the devil. Others know what you are facing and the struggles you are going through. But also, others in the Body of Christ are being victorious – which means you can be victorious too.

III. Conclusion: Hebrews 12:1-2 . . . Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith

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