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A Final Word Part 2

1 Peter 5:5-14

In Ephesians 6:6, Paul gave this rather sobering exhortation:

Ephesians 6:11, "Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."

From this it should be obvious that Satan NOT ONLY is real BUT is quite active in this world.

If this wasn't bad enough, he also has a host of fallen angels — called demons — who serve at his bidding. Consider this:

Ephesians 6 6:12, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against [and here we read that ‘our struggle’ includes a hierarchy of demons who hold a variety of authoritative positions in Satan’s kingdom, described here as...] the rulers [referencing a high order of demons], against the powers [another ranking of demon authority], against the world forces of this darkness [most likely in reference to demons who have infiltrated various political systems of the world], against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places* [most likely referring to those demons behind the most wretched and vile immoralities perpetrated by man].”

a. He tells lies (Jn. 8:44).	h. He tempts believers to sin (1 Corinthians 7:5; Ephesians 6 4:27).
b. He influences people to lie (Acts 5:3).	i. He seeks to deceive the children of God (2 Corinthians 11:3).
c. He disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).	j. He takes advantage of believers (2 Corinthians 2:11).
d. He snatches the gospel from unbelieving hearts (Matthew 13:19; Mark 4:15; Luke 8:12).	k. He seeks to destroy the faith of believers (Luke 22:31).
e. He holds unbelievers under his power (Ephesians 6 2:2; 1 Jn. 3:8-10; 5:19).	l. He torments the servants of God (2 Corinthians 12:7).
f. He traps and deceives unbelievers, holding them captive to do his will (2 Timothy 2:26).	m. He thwarts the progress of ministry (1 Thessalonians 2:18).
g. He wages war against the church (Ephesians 6 6:11-17).	

From this we learn that along with Satan, Demons are also quite active in the world. They:

a. Indwell humans and animals (Mark 5:1-16).	f. Perform false signs and wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9; Rev. 16:13-14).
b. Physically afflict people (Mark 9:17, 22).	g. Deceive prophets (1 Kngs. 22:19-23).
c. Terrorize humans (1 Samuel 16:14-15; 18:10; 19:9; Acts 19:13-16; 2 Corinthians 12:7).	h. Encourage idolatry (Deuteronomy 32:17; Ps. 106:37)
d. Initiate false worship (1 Corinthians 10:20-21).	i. Engineer death (Judges 9:23, 56-57).
e. Promote false doctrines (1 Timothy 4:1).	

Now brothers and sisters, according to Ephesians 6 6, it is against this army that we battle! Think of that! Most of us battle daily against their inabilities, their sinful flesh and desires, and even, at times, against God (which is akin to “kicking against the goads” in Acts 26:14). Yet we must understand that a war is being waged in the heavenly realms which if ignored, we

undoubtedly will be a casualty!

That clearly is what Peter did NOT want the people of God to be at this time or ever. And so, his second final word to the people of God as they went into battle is that they must be spiritually vigilant!¹ Notice the command.

1 Peter 5:8a, “Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert...”

Peter gives two exhortations here which aim at two different responses to the warfare in which we are engaged. The first is that we must strive to be of sober spirit. The word is νήφω (*nēphō*) which in Bible times had the literal connotation of NOT being drunk with wine. The idea behind this word is a mind free from any and all negative alien influences. When a person is physically drunk or on drugs, they are under the influence of a foreign/alien substance such that they do not have full control over their body or mind.

In time the word came to be used figuratively of any thought, worldview, impulse, relationship, or inclination outside of Christ which can take control of a person’s thinking or emotive process (which is why the NASB adds, “spirit”). Accordingly, the exhortation here to “be sober” was a call for the child of God NOT to lose spiritual control by imbibing the world’s sinful system. Spurgeon wrote of this:

Satan can never be content till he sees the believer utterly devoured. He would rend him in pieces and break his bones and utterly destroy him, if he could. Do not, therefore, indulge the thought that the main purpose of Satan is to make you miserable. He is pleased with that, but that is not his ultimate end. Sometimes he may even make you happy, for he has dainty poisons sweet to the taste that he administers to God’s people. If he feels that our destruction can be more readily achieved by sweets than by bitters, he certainly would prefer that which would best effect his end. (Spurgeon, 2014, p. 1 Peter 5:8)

The command for us to “be sober” has reference to the “sweet” things of this fallen world which wage war against our soul by taking our thoughts captive. They are the lusts, the inordinate desires, the unholy goals, the false promises, and the ungodly objectives which constitute the “Turkish Delight” by which Satan seeks to hijack our thinking processes. This is why we frequently are exhorted in the Bible.

Romans 13:14, “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ [IOW, be bound in your thinking and desiring by Christ alone], and [so] make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts.”

Colossians 2:8a, “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception...”

There are so many teachings, worldviews, and allurements which easily can take our minds captive and so control our flesh. What must rule us and so dictate what we think and so desire is Christ, His Kingdom, His glory, and His will! The word used in the Bible to denote this is

“sobriety” and hence Peter’s exhortation here.²

Yet there is more, for Peter gave a second exhortation when it comes to our response to the warfare in which we are engaged. We must also be on the alert. This is the same exhortation Christ gave to the disciples in the garden.

Matthew 26:41a, “Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation...”

The word comes from the Greek, γρηγορέω (*grēgoreō*). It literally means “to watch”³ and so could refer to the activity of a soldier who stood on a city wall and “watched” by day and night. Yet that is NOT its primary use in the Bible. Figuratively, it speaks of a vigilance in light of an impending crisis. For example, it is this word Christ used when He exhorted the disciples.

Matthew 24:42, “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.”

Christ is coming back to judge the living and the dead! We don’t want to be surprised or caught off guard. Accordingly, Christ exhorted His disciples, “Be alert”- “*strive toward spiritual vigilance!*” That is the idea here!

Now in this context, the impending crisis was Satanic/Demonic attack designed to make us question or curse God! God’s people truly were in the process of “being sifted as wheat” (Luke 22:31)! Accordingly, how it behooved them to wake up spiritually and be ready to endure whatever physical, spiritual, or emotional hardship that soon was coming against them.

When placed together, we get an idea of two of the fronts when it comes to our war against sin and Satan:

1. Internal, alien influences in the form of thoughts, motives, desires, or worldviews which seek to control/influence us and
2. External influences in the form of threats, temptations, crises, or attacks which likewise can undermine our faith, love, and commitment to God!

In light of this, Peter says that we must ever and always remain spiritually vigilant! And he brings us to the cause.

1 Peter 5:8b, “Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary⁴, the devil [which means ‘slanderer, false accuser’⁵], prowls about like a roaring lion⁶, seeking someone to devour.”

If you saw “The Ghost and the Darkness” (about the two lions in Africa which hunted man for sport) you will have before you a vivid sense of what Peter is talking about here. Palestine had lions which every now and then attacked the unsuspecting traveler with a suddenness and ferocity unparalleled in that world! And it is because of the nature of lions that people could be caught unaware, because lions “prowl about”! In fact, this is the image used of Satan in Job.

Job. 1:7, “And the Lord said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ Then Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘From roaming about on the earth [lit. ‘prowling like a lion’ on the earth] and walking around on it.’”

That is what Satan and his demons do on a daily basis, they prowl about looking for a Christian to devour! Chuck Swindoll put it this way:

Like wanderers in the wild savannahs of Africa, we must always be aware that someone is hunting us. The lion lurks quietly in tall grass, stalking our every step, waiting for a moment to catch us off guard. If we stray from the group, put down our weapons, or doze in the sun, he’ll strike. Satan knows our weaknesses and our strengths. He’s had thousands of years to observe humankind and has become an expert on human nature. In fact, Satan knows the depths of your depravity far better than you do. We must never forget that we are his prey and that this roaring lion is ravenous with hunger. (Swindoll, 2014, p. 248)

In this context, what is Satan after when it comes to us? Peter says that he is “seeking someone to devour”! The word is a compound coming from πίνω (*pinō*) which means to drink and κατά (*kata*) which intensifies the verb. Together it means to swallow something whole (like the great fish which swallowed Jonah, Jonah 1:17)! This is what Satan and his demons are after!⁷ They are not content with compromise or spiritual indifference when it comes to the Christian. They want to undo our faith, devotion, and love for the Lord completely! As with Adam and Eve, they want us to reject God, His authority, and so His word. And so, they are constantly seeking to ‘gulp down’ the Christian unto their destruction!⁸ Thomas Schreiner wrote of this:

The devil roars like a lion to induce fear in the people of God. In other words, persecution is the roar by which he tries to intimidate believers in the hope that they will capitulate at the prospect of suffering. If believers deny their faith, then the devil has devoured them... (Schreiner, 2003, p. 242)

Because this is the case, you must come to see what the true battle is in this life! It is NOT “according to the flesh” (2 Corinthians 10:3) and so has very little to do with the things of this life like elections, viruses, wars, natural disasters, and the like. These no doubt rightly give us pause. Yet to confuse these with the true war that right now is raging around us is naïve! Recall the exhortation Paul gave in 2 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. (1) *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and (2) *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and (3) we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.”

Paul outlines a three front war which currently is raging about us, whose focus is on:

- The honor and glory of God, v. 5a.
- The character of Christ, His authority to command us, the certainty of our position in Him, and the reliability of His word (and so our trust), v. 5b.
- The loss of souls in hell and/or compromised Christians, v. 6.

That's the real battle which right now is in full force! Let me ask you: how many of you have been so wrapped up with the recent presidential election or the COVID crises that you have completely ignored the real battle which is waging around us? If we could see this world as God does, I think we would be amazed at the scorched lives, the moral devastation and debris, and the fires that are burning on account of the "flaming missiles of the evil one" (Ephesians 6 6:16)^{9,10}- all aimed at the honor of God, the character of Christ, and the loss of souls in hell!

That brings us to a third point: The battle and our defense revolves around being spiritually vigilant, then practically what ought we to be concerned with when it comes to this war?

1 Peter 5:9a, "But resist him, firm in *your* faith..."

I love this! Naturally we would think we should fear such a being. But that couldn't be further from the truth, as Christ said in Matthew.

Matthew 10:28, "...do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul [that would be Satan and his demons]; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

So, we must NOT fear Satan. RATHER the call in Scripture¹¹ — as it is here — is

1. To "resist" his wicked devices by
2. Standing "firm in our faith"!

Let's consider both expressions. The first is that we are to "resist" Satan and his demons (for if we do this, in the words of James, "he will flee from us," James 4:7).¹² What does it mean to "resist"? The word means to take a stand against. It speaks of a soldier standing his ground in a Phalanx or a person standing against the wind. When it comes to Satan, what does this mean? Paul literally gives us the answer in Ephesians 6.

Ephesians 6 6:11-17, "Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil [The word for 'scheme' was used in Paul's day of wild animals who cunningly stalked and then unexpectedly pounced on its prey- like a lion!]. 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*."

THEREFORE, take up the full armor of God, THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO RESIST in the evil day [that is the same word used in our text in 1Peter 5:9! Paul here is explaining how we are to do this! And how is that?...] and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth¹³, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness¹⁴, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace¹⁵; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil *one*¹⁶. And take the helmet of salvation¹⁷, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God¹⁸.”

There are many ways in which our faith, devotion, love, assurance, confidence, and commitment can be attacked! Yet this is how we “resist”- by daily clothing ourselves with the Spiritual Armor of God!! That is how we “resist Satan”!

Yet Peter has something more fundamental in mind, which brings us to the second word which summarizes what is meant by “resisting him”... “Firm in our Faith”! I love this! We DON’T resist Satan with confidence in our own power or ability. RATHER, we resist with confidence in God’s goodness, God’s ability, and God’s power! The expression speaks NOT of the content of what is believed (truth) BUT the level/sincerity of our reliance upon God!

Remember the first two things Satan did in his attack against Adam and Eve in the Garden.

Genesis 3:1, “Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Indeed, has God said, “You shall not eat from any tree of the garden”?’

The first thing Satan did in tempting Adam and Eve was to draw into question the goodness of God! That bring us to the second thing he did.

Genesis 3:4, “And the serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely shall not die!’”

Here Satan completely contradicted God’s word telling Adam and Eve that NOT ONLY can it NOT be trusted, BUT that it is optional as to whether or not it is to be obeyed!¹⁹ The Fall occurred when Adam and Eve came to doubt God’s goodness which made them susceptible to misunderstanding God’s word (which ultimately led them to rejecting God’s word as well as His authority over their lives)!

As that is the pattern of Satan’s attack on man, a pattern that is repeated again and again in our lives, the response we must give is that which Peter exhorts here: Unlike Adam and Eve, “we must be firm in our reliance upon God, His word, His goodness, and so His moral right to rule us!” That is what is denoted by “firm in your faith.” Paul essentially taught the same when he wrote this:

Colossians 1:23, “...continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel.”

Christian, don't allow any teaching or supposed "intellectual" to cause you to doubt God, His goodness, His authority, or His veracity. This is the battle line! We must never give in here! As such, we must be committed to trusting God no matter what!

In the words of Paul (which got me through a Liberal Arts degree in a very liberal college with my faith intact), "Let God be found true, though every man *be found* a liar" (Romans 3:4)! If this is our day — in and day —out disposition, Satan truly will flee from us!²⁰ With that, Peter closes his exhortation here with a word of consolation.

1 Peter 5:9b, "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."

First, we are comforted here by knowing that what is going on in our lives is NOT strange! The attacks, trials, difficulties, doubts, and struggles to trust Christ are NOT unique to us, BUT "are being accomplished [being faced] by our brethren who are in the world."

I find this to be so encouraging, for throughout my Christian life there have been times when I think that what I am going through is unique; that either God is picking on me or that Christ has forgotten about me! Peter says that that couldn't be further from the truth! It is as Paul said in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 10:13a, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man..."

So, be done with the pity party which loves to think of yourself as a victim in God's Kingdom, that no one struggles like you! For everyone in Christ at times suffers just like you!

Now, is this comforting? Most certainly! When I come to understand that the difficulties and doubts I face as a result of following Christ is something that all Christians at times in their lives have faced, I no longer feel odd, different, or picked on by God! Peter Davids put it this way:

Like soldiers whose morale is strengthened by knowing that the whole army is engaged in the same battle-hardships they are in, these Christians should be strengthened to resist the devil and not to give in to persecution by the knowledge that they are not alone. (Schreiner, 2003, pp. 193-194)

But that is just half of it.

1 Peter 5:10, "And 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."

We are going to return to this verse next week where we will look at it in detail. For now in passing, notice the incredible assurance!

The trials and difficulties that come from following Christ NOT ONLY are NOT an indicator of Divine displeasure BUT are met by God with enabling grace by which He Himself will, "...perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you"! In this regard, think of these faithful:

1. Shadrach, Meshack, and Abed-nego (Daniel 3:24-27)!
2. Elisha's Servant- as God opened his eyes to behold the angelic host surrounding him (2 Kngs. 6:15-17)!
3. Peter- who after being sifted like wheat was strengthened by God (Luke 22:31)!
4. Paul- "when I am weak, I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:8-10)!

As bad as each of these men had it, each were ministered to personally by God in which He "perfected, confirmed, strengthened, and established them" in and through the trial/persecution! What a contrast!

Satan would isolate us from the body, hijack our minds with worldly values, lusts, and objectives so that ultimately, we would question the goodness of Christ as well as His word. *On the other hand* our Chief Shepherd takes "the fiery missiles of the evil one" and uses them to "exalt us in our humility" (cf. 1Peter 5:5-7) by "perfecting, confirming, strengthening *and* establishing us"!

What a glorious Savior! May God give us the grace ever and always to trust Him!

References

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End Note(s)

¹ Peter Davids wrote, "God, however, is not the only one interested in the believer. His interest is only in the good of his own, but the reason there is persecution and struggle is that there is a devil who wants to destroy those who are committed to God. This is the one who has a stake in their giving in to persecution. Thus, after writing his comforting thoughts about God, Peter must go on to warn, 'Be clear-headed! Be alert! Your adversary the devil' is on the prowl." (Davids, 1990, pp. 188-189)

² Thomas Schreiner wrote, "Peter was not merely saying that believers should refrain from drunkenness. There is a way of living that becomes dull to the reality of God, that is anesthetized by the attractions of this world. When people are lulled into such drowsiness, they lose sight of Christ's future revelation of himself and concentrate only on fulfilling their earthly desires." (Schreiner, 2003, p.

79)

³ As in Mark 14:34; 24:43; Luke 12:37.

⁴ A term that originally meant 'opponent in a lawsuit' (Matthew 5:25; Luke 12:58; 18:3).

⁵ As in 1 Timothy 3:11; 2 Timothy 3:3; Tit. 2:3; the word is applied to Haman in the lxx of Esther 8:1. Peter Davids observed, "The term 'devil' is the Greek translation of the Hebrew *šāṭān*, which means 'adversary' or 'opponent' (the general meaning occurs in, e.g., Num. 22:22, 32; 1 Samuel 29:4; 2 Samuel 19:22) and which in later OT literature came to designate an angelic figure (one of the "sons of God"), the opponent or Satan (1 Chron. 21:1; Job 1–2; Zech. 3:1–2)." (Davids, 1990, pp. 188-189)

⁶ John MacArthur wrote, "The devil commands the demonic realm and administrates the human, fallen world system. Personally and through his surrogates the demons, who like him never sleep nor rest, Satan untingly, like a predator in the night of his own evil darkness, hunts to kill." (MacArthur, 2004, p. 281)

⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner made this great observation, "The contrast between God and the devil is quite striking. God tenderly cares for his children (5:6–7), inviting them to bring their worries to him so that he can sustain them. God promises to protect his flock (v. 2) in all their distress. Conversely, the devil's aim is not to comfort but to terrify believers. He does not want to deliver them from fear but to devour their faith." (Schreiner, 2003, p. 242)

⁸ Jeremiah 51:34: "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has devoured me *and* crushed me, he has set me down *like* an empty vessel; he has swallowed me [our word, 'gulped me down'] like a monster, he has filled his stomach with my delicacies; he has washed me away."

⁹ Chuck Swindoll wrote, "I take Satan very seriously. No, I'm not intimidated by him. I'm not afraid of him. But I don't underestimate his power to inflict great harm on people through temptation, deception, and destruction. Satan is the source of all kinds of pain and suffering in the world- even in the lives of believers. His activities may come in subtle forms of temptation and discouragement. Or he may unleash fury, tragedy, and destruction. We can't ignore the potential damage he can do to our physical and spiritual lives. We would be wise to remember that Jesus called Satan a 'murderer from the beginning' (John 8:44). ¶ However, there is no reason to overestimate Satan's power. Too many Christians do this. They believe that anything bad that happens to them comes directly from the devil or his demons. But this is as much a mistake as underestimating his power. Satan isn't the immediate cause of all suffering and sin. Fallen, depraved human beings can do enough damage to themselves and others without the devil's prodding. Furthermore, the world system offers its own evil allurements that can take a vicious toll on the believer's wake" (Swindoll, 2014, p. 247)

¹⁰ Spurgeon wrote, "There is no believer in Christ, no follower of that which is true and lovely and of good repute, who will not find himself, at some season or other, attacked by this foul fiend and the legions enlisted in his service." (Spurgeon, 2014, p. 1 Peter 5:8)

¹¹ Cf. James 4:7 and Ephesians 6 6:11–12.

¹² Thomas R. Schreiner wrote, "The word for 'resist' (*antistēte*) is used of Elymas's resistance to the gospel (Acts 13:10), of Paul's opposition to Peter in Antioch (Galatians 2:11), of Jannes' and Jambres' stance against Moses (2 Timothy 3:8), and of Alexander the coppersmith's response to Paul (2 Timothy 4:14–15). Resistance, then, is not passive but represents active engagement against a foe. Believers will not triumph over the devil if they remain passive." (Schreiner, 2003, p. 242)

¹³ The focus here is on our sincerity or authenticity as Christians in our relationship with God; no play-acting.

¹⁴ The focus here is on our mind, emotion, and will which is protected as they function in accord with God's word.

¹⁵ The focus here is on the peace we have in our relationship with God where we do NOT doubt His good pleasure!!

¹⁶ The focus here is on dependance/reliance upon God.

¹⁷ The focus here is on the assurance of the forgiveness of sin.

¹⁸ The focus here is on living according to God's word.

¹⁹ To continue the analysis: We then read in Genesis 3:2-4: "And the woman said to the serpent, 'From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die."' [You must see that Satan's questioning of God's goodness was working... the woman here agrees that God is mean/restrictive] And the serpent said to the woman, 'You surely shall not die!'"

The perverting/twisting of God's word resulted in Satan contradicting God's word completely! and

the woman bought it hook, line, and sinker! And this led to the climax of Satan's temptation, "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:5). Satan's temptation culminated in the questioning of God's sovereignty by which the devil emphasized the autonomy that sin/rebellion would give to man!

²⁰ Revelation 12:11: listen to how others have and will successfully endure the attack of Satan, "And they overcame him [Satan] because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death." In other words, they held on to Christ! They did NOT allow Satan or his demons to compromise their faith/trust in Him!