

A Roaring Lion
SERMON
By
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TEXT: 1 Peter 5

PROP: Proposition

1 Peter 5 (ESV)

Shepherd the Flock of God

⁵ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰ And 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. ¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings

¹² By 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. ¹³ She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. ¹⁴ Greet one another with the kiss of love.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

As you can see, the text before us begins with an exhortation to the elders of the church. Elders are officers of the church who, as Peter says, "*shepherd the flock of God exercising oversight.*" The elders to whom Peter addresses himself oversee a local church for he refers to the elders "among you". The oversight of the Apostle as a "fellow elder" extends to all the churches to which he writes but his exhortation is directed to the elders of a local church to the effect that they pursue their office willingly. They are not to use their office to increase their wealth or to advance themselves politically. They are to be examples to the flock with their personal holiness. They are not to be domineering but reasonable and humble before God and the church they oversee. Our Form of Government puts it this way, "The ordinary and perpetual offices in the church are those given for the ministry of the Word of God, of rule, and of mercy. Those who share in the rule of the church may be called elders (presbyters), bishops, or church governors. Those who minister in mercy and service are called deacons. Those elders who have been endued and called of Christ to labor also in the Word and teaching are called ministers."

Peter continues to speak of the devil comparing him to a **roaring lion** seeking someone to devour. He tells us to resist him and to be firm in the faith noting that the devil is the source of all suffering for the cause of Christ. Our suffering will be temporary and in the end we will enter into eternal glory in Christ. Jesus himself will, restore, confirm, strengthen and establish us. We could deal with a number of very significant issues Peter sets before us in this text but I would call your attention to verses 8 and 9 where we read, "*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.*" (1 Peter 5:8-9, ESV) We will consider first that the devil is our adversary and secondly that we are able to resist him.

Whatever we know about the devil as a person is given to us in God's word. The Bible teaches that his name is Satan and he is a powerful spirit being. Peter tells us that he prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Similarly we read,

Job 1:6-7 (ESV)

⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. ⁷ The Lord said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it."

We note here that Satan walks about on the earth, which is his domain. In fact he is called the ruler of this world by Jesus.

John 12:31-32 (ESV)

³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now will the **ruler of this world** be cast out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

He is called the god of this world by Paul, who referring to unbelievers writes,

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (ESV)

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the **god of this world** has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

The Greek word Peter uses in our text to describe the devil is translated "adversary" which refers to an opponent in court. The devil, you see, is a legal adversary. In addition we learn from the passage in Job that his name is Satan. However, the Hebrew text literally reads "the satan" which translated means "the accuser", the legal adversary. Thus the name Satan is well chosen, for it describes not an ordinary enemy, but one who acts as an opponent would in a court of law. It is for this reason that we are to be sober-minded and watchful for the devil is a formidable enemy. Finding his disciples asleep in the garden of Gethsemene Jesus said to Peter, "*Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*" (Mark 14:37-38, ESV) Peter who had received this admonition was conscious that, as in his own case, so with these his converts, the spirit might be willing, but the flesh was weak, and the enemy mighty. Therefore he admonishes us in turn, "*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*" (1 Peter 5:8, ESV)

Right from the beginning Satan was an accuser. In Job's case he accused him to his God:

Job 1:9-11 (ESV)

⁹ Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? ¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face."

In the Garden of Eden Satan even accused God Himself:

Genesis 3:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

And with such lies and accusations he assails the people of God continually attacking them in their weakness when their guard is down or by the words of unbelievers, servants of his of which there are a great many. Paul dreaded the power of Satan over his Thessalonica converts writing to them, "*For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.*" (1 Thessalonians 3:5, ESV)

And Peter's words reflect the same fear; for he has the same desire to keep the flock steadfast in their faith. The servants of Satan would say to us something like this: "You are forgotten of God;" "Love could never leave you so long in trial." Or perhaps they would say, "How can you talk of freedom, when your life is one long experience of suffering? All you have to look forward to is one fiery trial after another. What do you gain from faith in Christ, when it gives you no liberty?" And such questions are most dangerous to those who are weak in the faith, who do not use the means of grace, the Bible, the sacraments and prayer, as they should.

Peter calls our attention to the great danger by comparing the devil to a roaring lion like Ezekiel did hundreds of years earlier. Speaking of Israel he writes,

Ezekiel 22:25-26 (ESV)

²⁵ The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a **roaring lion tearing the prey**; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst. ²⁶ Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.

Only one weapon can vanquish the devil and that is our faith strengthened by obedience to the word of God and fanned up by the Holy Spirit. All the apostles agree with the lesson Peter sets before us,

1 Peter 5:9 (ESV)

⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

The Lord knows those who are his. Paul writes, "*But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."*" (2 Timothy 2:19, ESV) And Nahum, "*The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him.*" (Nahum 1:7, ESV) We are able to resist the devil because God knows us unto salvation. We take great comfort in our fiery trials from the fact that God knows all about us. Of course he knows about us. David writes, "*Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.*" (Psalm 139:4, ESV) But knowledge with God is always more than mere cognition. He is omniscient and knows everything about everybody. But he knows his people in a special way. He knows them unto salvation and having set his saving love upon us we take great comfort in his promise to restore, confirm, strengthen and establish us. He will do it and will certainly bring it to pass because he knows us unto salvation. He has caused us to be born again to a living hope. His command to resist the devil is therefore not impossible to perform for the Christian. The ungodly cannot resist the devil because they belong to him in the first place. But we do not belong to our adversary the devil and because God knows those who are his, we can resist him. And we must resist him and we must stand firm in the faith given to us by the grace of God.

That the devil is a roaring lion brings us immediately to the conclusion that he is very dangerous and much to be feared. We would be wise not to trifle with him or discount his strength but the world around us does not seem to take Satan seriously. In fact it is hard to believe that the ungodly view the devil as a real person if they believe that he exists at all. At Halloween time children everywhere in our country dress up as to look like they think ghosts or demons should appear with little thought of the great strength of the powers of darkness. Paul describes them as cosmic powers over this present darkness.

Ephesians 6:11-12 (ESV)

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

If it is difficult for God's people to deal the powers of evil even with the whole armor of God, it is quite impossible for the enemies of God who have no such armor to withstand demonic strength. Make no mistake the devil is real and the world of demons

exists. Roaring lions are fearsome and lethal. I should think we would stay away from the devil and his servants as far as possible. I should think we would not deliberately place ourselves right in front of such a fearsome beast who is slaving to make a feast of us. Perhaps we too do not take Satan seriously. Who among us puts on the whole armor of God. Have we fastened on the belt of truth as we should? Is our breastplate of righteousness ready for battle or is it rusty and full of holes? Are our shoes made ready with the gospel of peace or are they ill-fitting and worn out? Do we have the shield of faith or is it too small and its straps broken or frayed? Have we forgotten our helmet of salvation? How sharp is our sword of the Spirit which is the word of God? Do we know our Bibles well enough to take on the likes of Satan? Do we pray at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication? Even the best us must admit that we appear to be sloppy and unkempt as Christian warriors. But if we expect to stand in front of a roaring lion we must see that we are ready for battle or we will be terribly wounded.

The devil attacks us at our weakest point just as cowardly Amelek who butchered the children and elderly at the rear of the column as Israel traveled toward the Promised Land. He attacks us in our music, our education, our associations and in everything we do. But God cares for his people and works through his Spirit and the means of grace to protect and preserve us. In addition, according to our text, we are given shepherds to be examples to us and to teach us. God has provided his church with men of courage and experience to be examples to us and to administer the means of grace for our benefit. The elders of the church help and protect the flock and they are responsible to God for watching over the souls of his people. Peter tells us that the elders are shepherds of the flock exercising oversight. As Paul puts it,

Ephesians 4:11-14 (ESV)

¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

God's special care for his church is seen in the work of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers who preach and teach and oversee the flock. This is the purpose for and true function of the organized church. It has been well put that the mission of the church is not to entertain goats but to feed the sheep. From Rome which he calls Babylon, Peter exhorts and declares that what he has written to the elect exiles of the dispersion is the true grace of God and we are to stand firm in it. May God in his

great mercy make us wise unto salvation through his word and guide us into all truth by his Spirit. May we indeed resist the devil and stand firm in our faith.