

## 1 Peter 5:8-9

**1Pe 5:8 (NKJV) Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.**

Anyone who lives under the illusion that there is no devil is living in a fantasy world, a world of spiritual make believe. Peter refers to him in v8 as “**your adversary**”. He is a very real and active opponent, someone who is incredibly and tirelessly intent on literally destroying your life, your marriage, your family, and your future. In reality, you have to be incredibly naïve if you do not believe in an actual devil. I would go so far to say that you have been greatly deceived by him if you doubt his existence. The evidence of his existence and his work in the world are undeniable, not to mention Scriptural. Everywhere that we look we see the evidence of where he has been and what he has done to destroy anything, anyone, anywhere. He destroys families, he destroys marriages, he destroys people’s lives, he destroys people’s hope, he kills people’s children. I think of this young girl who lost her life recently on Whiskey Road – no seat belt, travelling at a high rate of speed, and dead in just the blink of an eye. It should never have happened, but it did, and unfortunately it happens all the time.

Last week we saw that the word “**devil**” means a slanderer, someone who falsely accuses and defames another, and who does everything possible to divide people and destroy their lives without any reason. He is constantly accusing you in some way to your own conscience, always finding some reason so that he can condemn you. Then to make it worse, he not only slanders you personally, but then he slanders you to other people as well, and you do not even know he is doing it. Whenever you fail, he magnifies that in the mind of someone else. He tries to convince them how bad you are and that you will never change. He magnifies all of your bad qualities to someone else. It seems like it is just human nature to see the bad things in someone than the good things. It makes us look good to ourselves. He does this all of the time in marriages where one partner fails and so the devil takes that failure and just magnifies an enlarges it to the other partner. Then to make it worse, he tells the offended party how good they are so that he can lift them up in pride. So, he is constantly condemning you or lifting you up in pride. It is a relentless cycle. After nearly 50 years of marriage, I tell my wife almost every day of our life that I do not want to change one thing about her – not one thing, and that I love her exactly like she is. I do not even want her to work on anything. She does not have to change one thing for me. I love her exactly like God made her. I see her that way and I love her that way. So, this slandering and condemning and lifting us up in pride is exactly how the devil divides.

We also saw last week that you have to understand the difference between the condemnation which comes from the devil and the conviction which comes from the Holy Spirit. Both the devil and the Holy Spirit will confront you about the same sin in your life, but for completely different reasons. The devil wants to destroy your life and the Holy Spirit wants to build you up and use your failure to strengthen your faith, to restore you, to cleanse you, and to show you how amazingly powerful forgiveness is – both yours and His.. Listen to how [John 10:10](#) describes this spiritual dichotomy,

**Jn 10:10 (NKJV) The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.**

It is so critical to always remember [Romans 8:1](#) which says,

**Ro 8:1 (NKJV) *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.***

We also saw that the areas in which the devil may be seeking to deceive you are utterly endless. He is the very author of deceit, lying, and illusion, and his chief weapon is that he never tells you the truth. He may tell you a half-truth, but never the truth. Now, listen very carefully. The only hope that you have to defeat his schemes against you is your rock solid belief that the Word of God is true and will always yield to your life the very best possible. You **MUST** have an unwavering faith in the trustworthiness of God's Word. You **MUST** have an unwavering confidence in the Word of God. You cannot and will not be able to defeat the lies and the deceitful notions that the enemy places in your mind if you do not have this unwavering confidence in God's Word. The Word of God is fully and completely truthful. You must believe that. Everything that it says to us is true. Either we believe that or we do not believe that. The Word of God is authoritative. You must believe that. When the Word speaks, God speaks, and what God says is fully and completely reliable and trustworthy. The Word of God is powerful. You must believe that. It has the power to change a man's life forever in just one simple moment. It is able to convert the soul, to save the sinner, and to redeem the lost. It is able to reprove and correct. It is life-changing and life-transforming, and you **MUST** deeply believe that reality or you will never be able to defeat the schemes and the wiles of the devil.

I am not exactly sure how to communicate this effectively, but the Word of God must be inside of you. It must be embedded deep inside your very being. You can believe it intellectually and you can believe it outwardly, but until what God says is changing your life on the inside, what you have is nothing more than deadly religion. Unless you have spiritually embraced the Word of God personally for your own life, then in reality it cannot help you and it will not make a difference in your life. You can live the Christian life outwardly and do all of things that Christians are supposed to do, but until the Word of God has gripped your inner man or inner woman, you have not lived the Christian life at all. Jesus told His disciples in [John 6:63](#),

**Jn 6:63 (NKJV) *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.***

Until the power of the Word of God grips your life personally, until the Word of God is **IN YOU**, your life will lack the power and the strength that you so desperately need to defeat the enemy. You have to be starving for the greatness of God to be working in you, working for you, and that happens through the Word of God. As your pastor, all that I can do is encourage you and teach you. I am convinced that most believers have never come under the power of the Word of God. Yes, they have accepted the teaching of the Scriptures intellectually. They can quote Scriptures to you and they may attend church to hear the Word of God being preached, but they have never truly experienced the power of the Word in their own lives personally. In one sense, they are merely "**hearers of the Word**", but not "**doers of the Word**". The person who is truly and deeply committed to Christ is someone who feels the power of the Word when it is being preached and they are always convicted by it to the degree that it becomes theirs. I say it one last time, but the Word of God must be **IN** you. It must be inside of you and constantly challenging you. You must want it to be in you, to never let you rest if you are disobeying God or are drifting further and further away from His best for your life. I would encourage you even now to ask

yourself this very simple question – *“Is the Word of God truly inside of me and burning inside of me, or is it just intellectual and outward only?”*

Okay, so what does Peter tell us to do? Well, he says first of all in v8 that we are to be very **“sober”** and very **“vigilant”** in how we perceive the devil. If you do not take the devil and his tactics against your life seriously, if you are not sober-minded about what he can do against you, as well as being very alert and watchful for what he may be doing in your life right now, then you are simply his next prey. It does not take much negligence to simply be his next victim. If you are going to take a walk down a very dark and dangerous road, you better be as sober, as careful, and as alert as you possibly can be. I do not even want my wife walking alone in a Walmart parking lot. The worst thing that you can do is become so spiritually drowsy that you respond to your circumstances the same way that lost people respond without ever even considering how God would want you to respond.<sup>1</sup> The word **“sober”** simply means to be watchful, to be attentive, to be alert. Many believers are simply asleep in the light. They have no discipline relative to their Christian life, and unwittingly the enemy is constantly exploiting various areas of their life. They are quickly caught off guard and find themselves reacting to things that trouble them in an unbiblical way. They have never learned how to respond. They just react. They become angry, they may curse at someone, they eventually become bitter. This is a vicious cycle that the enemy uses in their life and it is all because they have never figured out what it means to be sober about their Christian life.

You must appreciate that perception is often much stronger than reality, so your perception of the devil will have a tremendous impact on how you are able to deal with his assaults on your life. You must take him very seriously, very soberly. The very last thing that you want to do is to somehow underestimate who he is and what he is able to do. However, on the other side of that coin we do not want to overestimate Satan’s power. Everything bad that happens to someone may not be the result of the devil’s attack on their life. There is much evil in the world which is simply the by-product of sin that is sustained in our own personal lives and in the lives of unbelievers. Some people blame the devil for everything. They see a demon under every leaf, but that is not spiritually or biblically realistic. For some Christians, it appears that sin is often just on auto-pilot. Nothing ever changes in their life. They are so conditioned to reacting how they want to react that they never even consider what God may want. If I can say it the way that I said it earlier, the Word of God is really not inside of them. It is only intellectual to them and the moment they walk outside of the church walls, they have almost completely forgotten what God may want them to do in their life. They have become satisfied with religion, but not changed by Christianity, not changed by the Word of God.

The point is that giving the devil too much credit can be just as dangerous as underestimating what he can do. He is not omnipotent, omnipresent, or omniscient. He is not sovereign over anything. It is my personal conviction that God has limited what he can do in our lives, especially if we remain obedient to God and His Word. I would not know how to quantify that reality, but I am deeply grateful that whatever attacks the enemy may have on our lives must be filtered through the will of God for our lives. If Satan had free reign in what he could do, we would all be dead. The devil’s greatest asset is his ability to deceive people, but if you are spiritually connected to God’s Word and its truth, much of what the

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<sup>1</sup> Grudem, 195-196.

devil may be doing against you can be easily recognized and dealt with through your obedience to the Word. Both the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit will give you discernment relative to what is from the devil and what is simply sin, but the Word of God must be in you, living in you. Listen to what Jesus told the devil in [Matthew 4:4](#) when He was being tempted. He said,

**Mt 4:4 (NKJV) But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "**

However, having recognized the devil's limitations, without any question, he is still very much able to inflict tremendous pain and heartache on people. Primarily he works through deception, through temptation, and through other demonic beings. He may work quietly against you or he may unleash his fury against you. He may bring great tragedy on your life and even great destruction. As just stated, I believe that God has limitations imposed on him in those areas, but we know that he can certainly work towards that end. He can damage your physical life through really bad habits that may ultimately cut your life short. He can damage your emotional life through depression and discouragement, and your spiritual life through temptations to disobey God and His Word. You can be assured that Jesus believed in the devil and what he was able to do. In [John 8:44](#), Jesus said this about him,

**Jn 8:44 (NKJV) You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.**

So, there are two extremes related to the devil – over estimating his power and underestimating his power. If we overestimate his power we will overreact to what happens to us. If we underestimate his power we will never be prepared for what he inevitably will do in our lives.<sup>2</sup> No commander of an army can be effective if he fails to understand his enemy. In the same way, it is critical that we understand the devil and what he is able to do in our lives or we can be assured that he will take advantage of us.

The devil has no mercy and is relentless in the efforts of his kingdom to bring about utter chaos and confusion in people's lives. His tactics are ruthless with no holds barred, and he has absolutely no remorse and no regret relative to how deeply and painfully he is willing to hurt you. There are no limits on his ability to deceive people and to convince them of his lies. He is actually called "**the father of lies**". He is the epitome of "fake news". Everything he tells someone or convinces them of is based on a lie, a half-truth, and on deception and manipulation designed to destroy their life. To take him lightly is a grave mistake that will most likely have eternal and irrevocable consequences.

What Peter tells us is that he wants to "**devour**" people – a word which means to swallow. It comes from two words that literally mean to "drink down" or to "gulp down".<sup>3</sup> Have you ever seen someone that was really thirsty and they just gulped down some water. That is the picture. I remember how quickly my golden retrievers would just gulp down the fat off of some meat when I would give it to them. They would almost bite my hand to get the fat, and it was gone before they ever even tasted it. That is the picture – just devoured in a second. It is the idea that he literally wants to take your life and

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<sup>2</sup> Swindoll, 247.

<sup>3</sup> Zodiates, *katapino*, 840.

just destroy it, to ravage it as quickly and as unknowingly as he can. I am convinced that the enemy has a particular plan as how to destroy your life. It may be a specific plan for a specific individual or it may be a general plan for everyone – I do not know and the Scriptures do not tell us. [Ephesians 6:11](#) calls these diabolical plans “wiles”.

**Eph 6:11 (NKJV) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**

In the Greek Interlinear it is described as “schemes” and is a Greek word that you will quickly recognize – “*methodeia*” from where we get our word “method”. It refers to something that is a cunning device and it means to “lie in wait” with a view to deceive the person.<sup>4</sup> It is a very real strategy to circumvent, distort, confuse, and deceive. Deception and lies are his method, his primary weapon that he uses against you. Anyone who does not believe in the devil and his schemes have already been deceived. He has already accomplished what he always sets out to do, and eventually for that person they will find themselves rejecting God’s truth, believing the lies of the devil, and spending eternity in a place of eternal torment from which there is never any relief.

Now, you need to listen very carefully to what I am going to talk about next. One of the advantages that the devil has is that he knows your weaknesses, your flaws, your vulnerabilities, and he has no hesitation about exploiting each one of those shortcomings in any way that he can. You have to appreciate that his exploitation of your weaknesses, of your lack of spirituality in various areas, of your lack of self-control in a specific area – those are his weapons against you. As your pastor, I preach to you week after week after week to become the spiritual man or woman that God wants you to become and to stop ignoring those areas of your life that you know God wants to change. Sometimes I think that I can preach my heart out, teach the Word of God with accuracy and passion, and it make absolutely no difference whatsoever in people’s lives. People come, they hear, they understand, but they leave completely unchanged and unwilling to change as they go forward in their life.

Everyone here has certain areas of your life that the Word of God has touched and wants to change. No one is exempted. I am not exempted. However, you may have simply be refusing to make the changes that God wants you to make. You know what they are, you know the areas that God has touched and spoken to you about, but you simply refuse to make the adjustments. Day after day you refuse to let the Word of God and the Spirit of God control your life. You are never willing to make changes in your life. You blame your personality, your marriage partner, your job, your boss, your circumstances – anything but yourself. My greatest fear is that eventually your resistance in that area of your life in responding to God’s Word will be exactly where the enemy will exploit you and destroy some area of your life. Really, he does not need a lot to work with – just some area where he knows that you are unwilling to submit your life to Jesus Christ. In he rushes and there he exploits you. It happens quickly, and sometimes the damage is irrevocable. If you think for one moment that you are able to disobey God and it not impact your life, even destroy your life in some areas, then you have already become fair game for the devils schemes. He will use your weaknesses and your stubbornness against you in any way that he can. He will even use your unwillingness to submit to Christ as an inroad into destroying someone else’s life.

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<sup>4</sup> Vine, *wiles*, 1228.

Just as an example, this happens all the time when a parent develops a very bad habit in their life and that habit trickles down to their children who may never recover from it. Let us just assume that a father becomes a very poor example of what it means to be a godly man. He makes poor choices, he displays no real spirituality outside of maybe coming to church, he neglects his God-ordained role to his wife and children, and he has no inclination to even change what he knows is wrong in his life. Nothing, absolutely nothing good can come from that – nothing. All the children know what their dad is like, and the impact of that can be utterly devastating to their spiritual growth. This is just a scheme, a wile, a method of the devil – and honestly, it seems to be working quite well in many people’s lives. The devil will exploit everything in your life that you know is not right with God and you are personally deceived if you do not believe that. He knows how to push your hot button so it frustrates you and everyone around you. He knows how to irritate you, how to deplete your hope, how to get you to believe his lies over God’s truth, how to deceive you without you ever even knowing what he is doing. If he cannot get to you personally, he will try to get to you by someone else. Nothing is off-limits in what he is willing to do and in how he is willing to achieve his goal of destroying your life. So, if you know that there are areas of your life that God truly wants to change and you are not willing to allow Him to do exactly that, then do not blame God when Satan destroys an area of your life or of your family. The devil has no hesitation whatsoever in exploiting your disobedience.

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