

LIVING IN VICTORY

1 Peter 5:1-11

Introduction

→ Illust - 227: A POWERFUL ADVERSARY

If you go to Wartburg, Germany they will show you a dark spot on the old walls which they say was caused by the breaking of an ink bottle that Martin Luther supposedly threw at the devil. Skeptics say it was just the rats inside of the wall that Luther heard. Whether the evil one caused the actual physical disturbance, we do not know. What is important is that Luther recognized that Satan sets himself up in opposition to those who champion the Word, and that he never hesitated to stand up against him.

We have a powerful adversary who will do anything he can to bring us down in our Christian life and to destroy us. Peter reminds us of this in the final chapter of his epistle.

→ Illust. - BEETLES IN THE REDWOOD

In his book *The Great Compromise*, Greg Laurie gives the following account: "A giant 400-year-old redwood came crashing down one day, and no one could figure out why. The tree had survived four centuries of storms, lightning, and earthquakes—what had felled it?"

"On closer inspection, investigators found that tiny beetles had found their way inside its trunk and had begun eating away its life-giving fibers, weakening its mighty bulk from the inside out.

"In much the same way, the devil tries to bring Christians down through a steady drone of small, seemingly insignificant temptations. While we are fighting and resisting him in one area, he may be setting up house in another area of our lives. Satan will find ways to creep into our lives for the purpose of eroding our foundations until our fibers have become undone and we come crashing down to the ground.

"Show me a person who has fallen away from their walk with the Lord, and I will show you a person who started making compromises in his or her life long ago." [New Man, Jan/Feb 1995. Page 13.]

As Peter concludes his letter to the suffering believers of his day, he has some words for all of us regarding victory over temptation and the enemy. What I want to do today is to first give a brief overview of this chapter, then we will look more specifically at vv. 5-11.

vv. 1-5a – Leaders and followers; elders and young men – shepherds. *Go through these verses briefly, mentioning Peter's encounter with Jesus when He said, Feed my sheep – John 21.*

vv. 5b-11 – Principles for victory and maturity in the Christian life.

vv. 12-13 – personal greetings and final exhortation – read verses.

Now let us focus our attention on vv. 5b-11 – These verses are addressed to everyone – "All of you..." And what Peter challenges us with here can be summarized in three general points:

1. Humble yourself before God and others.
2. Learn to trust God fully.
3. Learn to deal with the enemy – the devil.

Humble yourselves before God and others – vv. 5b-6

→ Illust. - SOMETHING TO PRAY FOR

It was John Ruskin who said, "I believe the first test of a truly great man is his humility. I do not mean by humility, doubt of his own power, or hesitation in speaking his opinion. But really great men have a... feeling that the greatness is not in them, but through them; that they could not do or be anything else than what God made them."

→ 1184: HUMILITY--A PRICELESS VIRTUE

An unknown author has given this clear description of humility: "Humility is to have perpetual quietness of heart. It is to have no trouble. It is never to be fretted or vexed, irritated or angry. I am to wonder at nothing that is done to me and to be at rest when nobody praises me. When I am blamed or despised, I am not to be rebellious; instead I should retire to my inner closet, kneel to my Father in secret, and find rest even though all round may be trouble."

Peter says, clothe yourselves with humility – why? Because, God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. That is a principle which comes out of the book of Proverbs 3:34 – *"Toward the scornful he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor."*

→ Illust. - 190: ERASE THE ZEROS

A prominent minister was driving in southern California in the days when that area had fewer people than it has today. As he approached the small town where he was to speak, he saw a sign which read: "POPULATION 17500." He decided that some prankster must have added a zero, so he

mentally whittled the village down to its correct size of 1750. After arriving at the church where he was scheduled to preach, he met with the elders to pray and ask the Lord's blessing on the service. The first man to lead in prayer was a relatively young Christian who was far more intent on talking to God than to men. He said, "Lord, we thank You for our guest speaker and for his reputation; but let us remember that no matter how big men are, they still need You." Immediately the preacher's mind flashed back to the sign he had seen earlier, and he said to himself, "This man is rubbing out any zeros of pride I've added to my life."

That's what we need to do – rub out the zeros. Recognize that greatness is not in us, but through us.

v. 6 – let God do the lifting up. Jesus said, *"If any of you would be great, let him be the servant of all."* That is a hard lesson for some of us. But that is the example Christ himself gave us – see *Philippians 2:5-11*.

Learn to Trust Him Fully – v. 7

When faced with difficulties, our natural tendency is to worry, to become burdened with care and concern. Peter reminds us that we are to put all of our concerns and burdens on the Lord Jesus.

→ Illust. – Troubles

I heard a story of a man named John who hired a plumber to help him restore an old farmhouse, and after he had just finished a rough first day on the job: a flat tire made him lose an hour of work, his electric drill quit, and when it came time to go home his ancient pickup truck refused to start. So, John offered to drive the plumber home. As they drove, he sat in stony silence. On arriving, he invited John in to meet his family. As the two men walked toward the front door, he paused briefly at a small tree, touching the tips of the branches with both hands. As he opened the door he underwent an amazing transformation. His tanned face was wreathed in smiles and he hugged his two small children and gave his wife a kiss. Afterward he walked John back out to his truck. As they passed the tree, curiosity got the better of John, and he asked him about what he had seen him do earlier. "Oh, that's my trouble tree," he replied. "I know I can't help having troubles on the job, but one thing's for sure, those troubles don't belong in the house with my wife and the children. So, I just hang them up on the tree every night when I come home and ask God to take care of them. Then in the morning I pick them up again." "Funny thing is," he

smiled, "when I come out in the morning to pick 'em up, there don't seem to be nearly as many as I remember hanging up the night before."

Learn to trust Jesus and leave your troubles with him.

Learn to Deal with the Devil – vv. 8-9

There are two key instructions in these two verses – First, be self-controlled and alert. Second, resist him – that is, the devil.

This is not the first time Peter has given this type of instruction – 1:13 – prepare your minds for action – be alert; be self-controlled. If we are ever to find victory over the onslaughts of the enemy, the first thing that we need is to be aware of his tactics and to be strong when his attacks come. Once again Peter speaks to us out of personal experience. *Refer to the experience of Peter the night of Jesus arrest.* Jesus was fully aware of the test that would come to Peter and how he would fail. He exhorted the disciples to "...watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation..." Yet, he fell asleep in the garden – he was not alert when the time of trouble came.

We need to be alert – we have an enemy who does not let up in his attacks. In fact, his greatest threat comes when we are at our time of least strength, our time of lowest resistance, and often our time of greatest pride. We cannot separate this verse from those that come before it. It is only as we humble ourselves under God's mighty hand, and as we learn to cast our cares and anxiety on him, and as we remain alert and self-controlled that we will ever be able to stand up to our enemy.

So how do we deal with the devil? Besides being aware of him, and alert to his evil schemes, the Bible says *"Resist him."* This is the same instruction that James gives in 4:7 – *"Resist the devil and he will flee from you."* What does that mean? How do we resist him?

I would suggest to you that resisting Satan does not mean attacking him. Even Paul was reluctant to take him on (see Acts 16:16-18). Taking Satan and his henchmen on is dangerous business (see Acts 19:13-18). Resisting Satan does not mean "rebuking," "binding," or "defeating" him. I hear Christians doing these things, and yet I see no command to do so and no example of the saints having done so. I believe that resisting simply refers to our refusal to submit to him and our standing fast

against his onslaughts, by divine enablement. Don't allow him to control your life or dictate your behaviour.

Just as the key to submitting to God is faith, so the key to standing fast against Satan's attacks is faith. Remember, once again, the words our Lord spoke to Peter just before his denial: *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."* (Luke 22:31-32 ESV)

The key to Peter's survival under Satan's attack was his faith, just as our Lord had prayed for him that his faith would not fail. Faith is likewise the key to our resisting Satan's attacks.

So that is how we deal with the devil. Not by "taking him on", doing battle with him, but by resisting him, standing firm in the faith.

Conclusion

Peter knew that many of the people to whom he was writing were going through tremendous trials and suffering. But he wanted them to know that behind the accusations and persecution of men there was a greater enemy. He also wanted them to know that they were not alone in suffering (see v. 9b). And he wanted them to know that there is a way to victory. It is by faith in Jesus Christ. He is the key to victory over the devil, the enemy of our souls.

Close by reading vv. 10-11.