

# “Sheep and Shepherds”

*1 Peter 5:8-14*

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**1 Peter 5:8 – 14** *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. 10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. 11 To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 12 By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand. 13 She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son. 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.*



Leonardo Da Vinci once remarked “It is easier to resist at the beginning than at the end.” Ah....yes indeed! It is so very easy to **start** this Christian journey. But it is a far different thing to, *as Paul put it*, “finish the race” and “keep the faith.”

So thus over time many have “*departed from us, proving they were never part of us.*” (1 John 2:19) And not just from **us**, but in droves from churches and fellowships around this country. 2 Thessalonians 2:3 speaks of a great last days “falling away.” A mass departure from God and His church. Such is not an issue of just rejecting God at the onset, but rather of those who were more or less “in the game” and eventually bowed out. Welcome to prophecy fulfilled.

The reality is that so many Christians, *as Charles Stanley puts it*, have a “*commitment of convenience. They'll stay faithful as long as it's safe and doesn't involve risk, rejection, or criticism. Instead of standing alone in the face of challenge or temptation, they check to see which way their friends are going.*” We live in a “ME – centered” age. And what used to require a typhoon now only takes but a “breeze.” We appear to be the most emotionally fragile generation in the history of man.

Satan is today attempting with everything he has to pervert the gospel;

- 1) **Easy Believism** -- just say the magic words -- "I believe in Jesus" -- no commitment; no repentance; no change in who you recognize as the ultimate authority in your life; not much different than rubbing a rabbit's foot; No genuine faith involved -- just speaking some formula. Lordship is a distant philosophy reserved for pastors and missionaries.
- 2) **Legalist** -- Like the Pharisees back in Christ's day; or like some of the present day teachings of the Roman Catholic Church; God's Grace is available; He wants to freely give it to you; but you have to step up and earn it by doing for God. Pray more, serve more, give more money, worker harder, and then God will owe us some level of prosperous or comfortable life.

- 3) **Health and Wealth Gospel** – The heavenly “santa” has all sorts of goodies in this life ready to hand out to you -sort of like Christmas – “Name and Claim” what you want; deliverance from any type of physical problems; financial prosperity; your favorite sports team will always win -you name it. This also is a perverted presentation of the Grace of God. Yes, God is a good God, God delights to give good gifts to His children. God is powerful enough to give you any of these things. But NO, this is not God’s design for how you will best grow spiritually or how He will receive glory from your life and testimony. A simple scriptural review destroys such a view if we just take the time to seek such.

Our study in 1 Peter -- if it has taught us nothing else – has taught us that we should expect to follow in the footsteps of Christ and experience some level of suffering before we enter into our eternity with Him.

Charles R. Swindoll once stated: *“I’m here today to warn you: I want you to watch out for the adversary. Guard yourself from any spirit of entitlement. Restrain any and all subtle temptation to gain attention or to find ways to promote yourself.”* Despite a plethora of teaching to the contrary, we still tend to run away when we feel slighted or in are fear. Yet Christ clearly tells us that His perfect love casts out all fear, so where does that fact leave us?

Peter begins to wrap up his letter now, with a call for us to be “sober.” The word in the original means “to be calm and collected in spirit.” To be “circumspect.” It is the springboard from which he will wrap up the whole of this letter in which from start to finish he surrendered no ground, he yielded no Christ directive. Despite the difficulties, the trials, and the testings, Peter has been loving yet unrelenting. From the onset of his letter he exhorted the readers to serious, disciplined, self-controlled living. We have no idea how the letter was received, but one would not have to imagine much to envision a tepid reception. For such fails the “palatable” test even today as a popular concept within the greater church, and we are far from contending with Nero yet.

However, the “field of play” is changing even now, as the sheep are being separated from the goats, and the “tares”...the “weeds,” are being pulled. Those who were not serious about their faith and committed to the battle, are bowing out. Oh, not out of the faith, for they never had it, but out of the church, out of the journey, out of the vision, out of the struggle. People are finally coming to realize that Christianity is not “fish” bumper stickers, hip t-shirts, praise music, and Sunday church. It’s a *war*. (2 Timothy 2:3-4, 2 Corinthians 10:3-4) And unless we get serious about the conflict before us, we will ultimately fail. Peter says, “Be *sober*.” Time to “get serious.” Yet most confessed Christians are anything but serious! The fact is, most of us are ruled by our emotions: our fears, our passions, our wants and desires, even our anger and jealousy. And yes, *most of all*, **our pride**.

*“be vigilant.”* That’s an old word. Perhaps so because it simply fell out of use...fell into “disrepute.” It means to “watch”...*to give strict attention to, to be cautious yet active.*” To “*take heed lest through some excuse and laziness that some destructive calamity suddenly overtakes us.*” 20 times in the NT, believers are reminded to be on the alert, to watch. Most of the time it is Jesus who commands it. Yet it seems the world in general is “asleep at the wheel” these days. Peter calls upon us to remain vigilant and alert always. We can never let down our guard...we can never “check out”...we can never take a spiritual vacation, for Satan never does! As long as we live, we remain within Satan's reach, and so very many of us...*as you well know*... have famously “went down in flames,” and lost years of their lives. Satan is thoroughly “in the game” and he is playing for keeps.

*“...your adversary the devil.”* There it is! It is bad enough that my own flesh and wicked heart is forever waiting to take me out, but now we have the introduction of the ultimate “terminator.” This is where the buck stops. Ironically, he is “out there” like never before. Yet our world today rarely even acknowledges the existence of Satan, and when it does, it paints him as a naughty laughable creature with a red suit, horns, and a pointy tail. Ironically, the Bible says he is beautiful to the eye, and sometimes appears as an “angel of light.” It also says he is the embodiment of evil and is the “father of lies” (John 8:44)

Our text calls him a “*roaring lion*.” And a lion does not roar when he is *on* the hunt. For as he prowls, he is quiet and discreet. A lion roars when he has caught his prey! And it would be unthinkable to turn your back in ease and comfort upon a loose lion, so why do we do so in the presence of Satan? It is because we either do not understand the very real danger, we do not understand the nature of Satan, or, *and this is the biggy*, we have been lulled into a false security outside of the protection of the Father. A lion has great strength, is crafty and deceptive. He can sneak up on you when you are not watching. Some of Satan's favorite traps are moral temptation, to get believers fighting one another, to separate you from the group, and to lull you into apathy. If Satan cannot take your salvation, then he will attempt to take your witness, your peace, your battle gear, and your victory, and if he can, *your very life*.

John 8:43-44 *"Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. "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."*

We are herein told to “resist.” To “*resist steadfast*” and to do so “*in the faith*.” Resist not in our own strength and power, but in the strength and power of the Holy Spirit. Peter isn’t telling us to “suck it up” and “be a man.” At least not based on what **we** have or what **we** are. If that potential was down in there someplace, then Jesus died for nothing.

Sadly, we that are part of the Christian world tend to follow that M.O. We try to *do* instead of seeking to *be*. We exert our efforts into following perceived rules and trying to be tough, instead of seeking to know Christ more and establish our love for Him as primary in our lives. For in the depths of our being we know that nothing plants you more unmovable than real and passionate love.

I am not saying that self-discipline has no place in a Christian’s life or that things like effort and striving do not matter. Scripture would clearly refute that position if I did. But the bottom line is without a close loving walk with Christ, it will not be enough. We will not make it in the end!

Our enemy seeks to focus our attention on what we do *not* have, or what is *not* going smoothly. But God is not limited and is firmly in control whether we acknowledge that or not. Satan likes to tempt us to doubt the goodness of God, but such thoughts come only when we seek another path than the one He designed for us...when we do not trust in His love for us.

Satan likes to present to us an attractive counterfeit to God's will and plan for our lives. After all, if such includes any suffering or discomfort, we naturally want out, and usually at any cost. No doubt that is why Satan tries to use persecutions and hardship...to tempt us away from the believer’s life and lifestyle. Peter says: Be prepared to suffer intensely while staying committed to the will of God. And of course Satan will always try to focus our attention on the present instead of on eternity. On today...the “right now...” instead of the long game...the final review of our lives.

Whenever we go through the fires that are spoken of in this letter, we tend to think we are alone in our position, and then in self-fulfilled prophecy, we move into a solo place, away from the body of Christ, where we are indeed alone and without a friend. And that is just where Satan wants us to be. Away from the pack, away from the family, away from the flock.

The original readers of this letter...as well as so many today in the greater church throughout the world, have suffered under the same trials and persecutions, yet many have survived to tell the story. They stood strong, and experienced victory.

In Peter's closing remarks, he reminds us once again that it is God's Spirit and grace that keeps us standing through the storms. That "free, unearned love and care" of Christ. What is our part then? It is to "*keep 'ourselves' in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.*" (Jude 1:21) That is our one focus and discipline. He began this letter telling us that it was in grace that God chose us. It was His grace that saved us by faith in Christ. In grace we can stand through the trials. And it is His grace that through that suffering He makes us "*perfect*" ...complete, strong, and mature. Sometimes, indeed, His rescue and relief seems so slow in coming. Yet the whole of our earthly days is but a second of eternity.

**God will "establish you."** Sadly today, much of the confessed family of God seem to wander aimlessly through their days on this earth, often living a roller-coaster walk of faith. But such is not God's desire or plan for us. That word "establish" means to "fix firmly, strengthen, and render unmovable." God will not and has not failed us, rather we keep wandering away from Him lured by some shiny object in the dirt. The trials, persecutions, and difficulties of this life will either break us or they will make us stronger. Through them all we experience God separating the "wheat from the chaff." The "real thing" from the "imposter." He wants to "*settle*" us. It means to "lay a foundation." God has spoken often about His desire to see us *unmovable*.

The consistency and continuity of our faith brings glory to God. It speaks of His care, His involvement, and his power. But we must be a willing participant in such a sovereign plan as He has presented in this letter. He will not force us. Certainly few behaviors are more damnable and damaging to the kingdom pursuits than the individual who once "tasted the heavenly gift, and became partakers of the Holy Spirit...tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come..." and then they fall away. (Hebrews 6:4-6) And that term 'fall away' is more than just those who reject Christianity in its totality and apostatize. It means "to slip aside...to deviate from the right path, turn aside, to wander, to depart from the true faith." We also know that that passage goes on to speak those disturbing words that says that for those who do this, it is "impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame." That alone should cause us serious reflection and diligent discipline. Satan's goal is to have us take our eyes off Christ; to divert our attention from the cross. We cannot afford to be asleep on the job.

Revelation 12:11 says "...they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death." Satan's goal is to silence our testimony; to discourage us, to introduce doubts, to divert us into philosophy and psychology so that the power of the Word of God in our own experience will be snuffed out.

The fact is, most folks will never see this journey with such a serious commitment. But if we do not grow and mature we are apt to spend our lives in the "wilderness desert." Never knowing the battles of the "promised land" but never knowing the victories either. We are told in scripture that if you are proud, God opposes you; if you are humble and submit to God, He will be there for you. Nowhere is there room for self-pride. It is the humble man (not the self-confident and arrogant) who can overcome Satan's attacks. We are called to "pick up our cross daily"... count ourselves as dead to this world, and to fight that battle daily. For those who know such battles, as well as such victories in God, those who have experienced the grace that He has spoken of, Peter ends with both a salutation, as well as a promise: "*Peace be with you...*" .