

## "Resistance Is Not Futile!" - 1 Peter 5:8-14

As I was first looking at this passage, it reminded me of a line from an old Star Trek program. An incredibly powerful enemy, was running rampant through the galaxy, defeating and assimilating every culture they encountered. Does anyone remember the ominous line with which they greeted new cultures?

"We are the **Borg**. Your biological and technological distinctiveness will be added to our own. Resistance is futile."

If you have placed your faith and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ, you too have an incredibly powerful enemy. The Bible calls him the prince of the power in the air. He is in control of this world's system and he wants to be in control of you. He would have you believe that resisting him is futile, or if that doesn't work, he will come at you from a different direction. He will work to deceive you, to distract you from the truth.

*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)*

Christian, you have to be on guard. You have to recognize the fact that you have an enemy and you have to recognize the tactics of your enemy. Whether he tries to discourage you or deceive you, you need to know how to resist his attacks.

Fortunately, when it comes to the enemy of your souls, resistance is NOT futile. But there is only one way to defeat Satan; you have to find your life in Jesus Christ.

*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. (Revelation 12:11)*

Let's turn now to our text for this morning.

*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8)*

There are an awful lot of Christians around who doubt the existence of the devil. I find it odd, because they generally don't doubt the existence of a personal Savior, but too many look at Satan as a sort of literary device. To them, he is just evil personified. He's a symbol. And often he is seen as nothing more than a bumbling, comic-book character wearing red pajamas and holding a silly forked scepter.

Pretending an enemy doesn't exist is a bad idea. It lulls you to sleep. It keeps you from being prepared. Christian, you have an enemy who is determined to do you harm.

*Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." (Revelation 12:12)*

Satan is real. Satan is personal. Satan knows he has been defeated, and it really ticks him off. His time is limited. His destiny is the Lake of Fire. And he wants to take as many souls with him as he can.

Satan is perhaps the most intelligent, most beautiful, most powerful angel God ever created. We read in Ezekiel, where the prophet reveals the true power behind the evil king of Tyre:

*"You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you. "By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones. (Ezekiel 28:14-16)*

You cannot stand against this enemy on your own. Fortunately, you don't have to. But you do have to recognize that he exists, is active and is targeting you.

Peter tells us we need to be sober. In other words, you need to be in full control of your senses. The Greek, *νήφω (νήφω)* literally means to abstain from wine. Those who are intoxicated simply are not capable of exercising good judgment. Haven't you found that to be the case? But this involves much more than just avoiding chemical intoxication. In all things, we need to be self-controlled.

And we also need to be vigilant. We need to be alert. We need to be ready to respond to outside influences in a positive way because Satan is very real, very powerful, and is most definitely on the prowl. He is in the business of building strongholds in your life. A stronghold is a defensible position, a place where he cannot easily be defeated. It might be a chemical addiction. It might be one of life's blessings that has turned into an idol. Anything can be an idol if it stands between you and God, your job, your family, your money, your possessions, your recreational pastime. Enjoy the gifts that God has given you, but don't let them take the place of your relationship with Christ. Hold them loosely.

Satan wants to devour you. He wants to bring you into his system. He wants you to accompany him to hell.

Satan is powerful, but he is already defeated. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, entered the creation He spoke into existence. He lived a perfect, sinless life in perfect obedience to God the Father. Oh Satan tried to win Him over. We're going to look into that in our evening service. Jesus refused to go along with the devil's rebellion. He submitted perfectly to the Father's will.

And then, He took that one, sinless life to the cross. He endured the punishment you deserve. He suffered the death penalty for your sins ... and for mine. Yet on the third day, He rose from the dead, proving that the penalty was paid in full. Then, after appearing to many witnesses, He ascended into heaven. He sat down at the right hand of the Father. Seated, because His work was finished, yet He continues to intercede for all who believe. All you have to do to participate in His victory is just believe. Just say "yes" to the most precious gift that has ever been offered.

Satan is defeated. The universe he has corrupted is coming to an end. His destiny is the eternal Lake of Fire and that really makes him rage. Yes, he is raging, but he is already defeated.

The only question is, are you going to participate in Jesus' victory, or are you going to be devoured by the raging lion? Satan can be resisted. Resistance is not futile, but you have to resist in God's prescribed manner. You have to do it his way.

James puts it very directly, and quite succinctly:

*Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)*

Don't even try the second step before you do the first. You will fail miserably. The only way to defeat the devil is to first submit to God.

Peter says the very same thing. The verses we finished with last week read:

*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:6-7)*

To humble yourself before God is to submit to His will. It actually isn't hard at all to determine what God's will is because He wrote it down for us. This Book clearly communicates God's will to us. All we have to do is read it, listen to it, act on it.

Believe it!

Do you want to know what God wants? First of all, He wants to save you.

I've had people ask me why God puts up with all the evil in the world. Often, it comes in the form of an accusation. "If your God is so loving, why does He allow such suffering?" Peter answers that question in his second letter:

*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, **but is longsuffering toward us**, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)*

God is putting up with the evil in this world because He wants you to come to repentance. He's giving you every chance. Today is the day of salvation, but you don't want to wait. His patience has a limit. Still, God's will is that you be saved.

*Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God ... He cares for you.*

And when you submit to God, then you can resist the devil.

*Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. (1 Peter 5:9)*

This letter was first written to people who were undergoing intense persecution for their faith and their persecution was about to get much worse. Satan was throwing everything he had against them. Paul was writing to Christians who were living in a culture hostile to Christianity.

Well guess what? Our culture is also becoming hostile to Christianity. Satan is going all out to discourage you, to distract you, to make you doubt the grace and love you have found in Jesus Christ. Hang on to your faith – be steadfast in it. Suffering for being a Christian is not an unusual thing at all. It is being experienced by your brothers and sisters around the world, right now.

The key to resisting Satan is found in remembering the promises of God.

*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. (1 Peter 5:10)*

You know, if you trust Jesus, it is because God has called you to His eternal glory. Just stop and think about that for a moment. Jesus said to His disciples:

*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. (John 15:16)*

Think about the implications. This is astounding! Because I believe Jesus, it means that God chose me. God chose you; He elected you to salvation. He's not going to quit on you.

Yes, in this world you will find tribulation. In this world you will suffer for a while, but God has promised to perfect you. He has promised to establish you. He has promised to strengthen you. And He has promised to settle you. Settle you where? Settle you in the new heavens and the new earth where righteousness dwells. Settle you in a place where there is no more death, no more pain, no more sorrow, no more suffering. God has promised to wipe every tear from your eye.

All He asks of you is that you just trust Him.

Trust and obey for there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

So turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

*To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 5:11)*

Verses 10 and 11 comprise a prayer. It is a benediction given at the close of this letter and it is really profound. I spent a ton of time this past week just pouring over these two verses. I invite you to do the same. This prayer is profoundly beautiful. I don't know that I'm capable of mining its depths, yet it is so perfect in its simplicity.

Trust Jesus. Know He cares for you. And give Him the glory due His name.

And so this First Epistle of Peter comes to an end.

*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. (1 Peter 5:12)*

Peter acknowledges that Silvanus actually wrote down his words. This was really quite common in those times. Silvanus was an amanuensis. He took Peter's dictation.

And here also, Peter restates the purpose of the letter: We stand in the true grace of God, even though we might suffer temporarily.

Finally, Peter closes with a few greetings, as is also common:

*She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen. (1 Peter 5:13-14)*

Now remember, we believe Peter actually wrote this letter from Rome, so Babylon is referring to the city of Rome. By the way, this kiss of love, or a holy kiss as Paul calls it ... that's a cultural thing. Please don't feel obligated to greet me in a similar manner. In our culture ... well ... I would probably recoil. I'll take a handshake or a hug, okay?

But I will close this message using Peter's example: *Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.*