

HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY SIXTEEN

Hope Beyond the Battle: Standing Nose-to-Nose with the Adversary

1 Peter 5:8–11

Maybe you've never thought of it like this before, but the devil is a prowler. He comes by stealth. He is working in secret. His plans are shadowy. He never calls attention to his approach and to his attack. He is "like a roaring lion." His roaring is like the howl or the growl of a hungry beast. He is starving for anyone!

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IMAGINE you're on a safari on an African savanna. As you move across the quiet landscape, you see a lone gazelle lapping water from a river. When you cast your gaze aside, you notice a slight rustle in the distant bushes that disturbs the peace of the moment. You grab your binoculars and pull them to your eyes to find a lion crouching in the shadows.

With eyes locked on the vulnerable gazelle, this lion begins to move—slowly, silently, subtly. The predator must wait for the right moment, or else the prey will escape his eager claws. Step by step, the beast inches closer until he crouches in anticipation of his attack. The gazelle turns around and looks into the lion's eyes just feet away. The gazelle freezes. It's too late. The lion has already won.

The frightening image of this prowling lion is how the apostle Peter viewed Satan. The devil is hungry, and he's on the prowl. If you don't keep a careful watch, you will be like that helpless gazelle. Satan will sneak up on you to destroy and devour you.



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So how can we stay vigilant in our watch and stay safe from Satan's relentless prowl? This *Searching the Scriptures* study will look at Peter's answer to this question so that, when you stand nose-to-nose with the adversary, you will be able to stand strong against his ferocious attacks.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

The greatest weapon we have to defend us from Satan is prayer. Ask God to come to your defense as you prepare to study this sobering topic.

Father, I often feel like that lonely gazelle—so vulnerable to the devil's violent attacks against my soul. I want to resist him and continue to fight the good fight of faith. Equip me to do so through my time in Your Word today. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Those living in many regions of the world today maintain what's called a *naturalistic* worldview. Under this system of beliefs, everything that happens in the world occurs according to the unbreakable laws of nature. Similarly, nothing exists that you can't experience with your five senses. No God. No miracles. Does that sound common in your cultural climate?

Yet the biblical worldview is *supernatural* in its outlook. It affirms the existence, not only of a sovereign creator-God who became flesh in Jesus Christ, but also of other spiritual beings. And, in *1 Peter 5:8–11*, the apostle Peter introduces the chief spiritual enemy of God and our world.



Observation: Identifying the Enemy

Read *1 Peter 5:8–11*. As you read the passage, ask yourself, "What does it say?"¹ We will determine the meaning of Peter's words and their application later in this study.



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According to *1 Peter 5:8*, who is the “great enemy” of Jesus and His followers? What two exhortations did Peter offer at the beginning of this same verse regarding the existence of this enemy?

To what creature did Peter compare this enemy in *5:8*? How does this creature—and by extension, this enemy—act?

In light of the reality of the presence of this fearsome foe, what command did Peter extend to his readers in *1 Peter 5:9*?

Peter knew that carrying out this command was easier said than done. So, in *5:9*, how did Peter encourage his readers to persevere?



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Despite this encouragement, Peter recognized that many of his readers would still feel uneasy regarding the presence of this enemy. So, in *1 Peter 5:10–11*, he offered a final word of hope. In your own words, summarize the key ideas from these verses.

I wish I could tell you that resisting the devil is easy or painless. It's not. I wish I could tell you that it's always a victorious result. It's not. We don't always stand firm. But Jesus gives us hope beyond the pain. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Knowing the Enemy

Stay alert. Watch out. Resist him. These three imperatives demonstrate how a believer should respond to Satan's presence. Yet, in order to resist your enemy, you must first know a thing or two about him.

In Scripture, this chief enemy of God goes by many names, each spotlighting a different element of his crooked character. Take some time to review the names (and their Greek or Hebrew transliterations) below:

- Satan (Hebrew, *satan*): This term refers to an accuser in a courtroom who levels charges against another.
- The adversary (Greek, *antidikos*): The Greek translators of the Old Testament picked this word to translate the Hebrew term *satan*. In the Greek literature, this term referred more broadly to opponents or enemies.
- The devil (Greek, *diabolos*): This word, though referring to the devil, carries the sense of a slanderer. From this term, we derive the English adjective “diabolical.”



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How do these three names paint a full picture of our chief enemy? Write your own description of Satan below, explaining his personality and activities. If you want to dig into this topic deeper, check out *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* available online for free at biblestudytools.com.

How does knowing these things about Satan allow a believer to watch out for him and resist his attacks?

Satan not only sinks his teeth into individuals, but he also rears his claws against communities as well—families, churches, and entire nations. In what ways can Satan subtly influence a group of people? How can a group of believers resist this influence?

The regular gathering of believers reminds us we are not in the battle alone. And when you face the enemy, you're not in a lonely battle. You are in the same battle being experienced by other believers stretching around the world. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: Preparing to face the Enemy

Since the apostles were key pieces in the foundation of the church, they were very familiar with the devil and his schemes that attempted to tear down the church. Just like the apostle Peter, the apostle Paul addressed this topic to instill in believers a confidence that the church is safe from the attacks of its greatest foe.

If you asked the earliest Christians, “Who is your greatest enemy?” many might have felt that their chief opponent was Caesar, not Satan. Throughout the time of the early church, many Roman emperors sponsored an empire-wide persecution of Christians since they rejected Caesar’s imperial cult and bent the knee to King Jesus only.

Despite the bleak reality of opposition, oppression, and persecution from the Romans, Paul offered a different answer to this question in *Ephesians* 6:10–18. According to 6:12, who are believers “not fighting against”? Who are their *true* enemies instead?

Since the church isn’t battling flesh-and-blood enemies, iron and steel weapons are useless. So Paul encouraged his readers to put on a different kind of armor that would allow them to “be strong in the Lord” (6:10) and to “stand firm against all strategies of the devil” (6:11). According to 6:13–17, what Christlike virtues make up the armor of God?



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According to *Ephesians 6:18*, what is the greatest weapon a Christian can use in the spiritual battle against Satan?

Don't run scared of the enemy. Don't play with him. Don't invite him. But don't be afraid of him. Resist him instead. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Resisting the Enemy

As you apply the message of *1 Peter 5:8–11*, let the reality of Satan's existence really sink in. Read *5:8*, and insert your own name into the blank space: "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for _____ to devour."

Seeing your name in that sentence might fill your heart with terror. You may even feel like you're helpless against the enemy's attacks. But Jesus Christ—the holy and mighty Lion of Judah—will protect you. In light of that, Pastor Chuck Swindoll developed two application principles:

1. *Let's never confuse confidence in Christ with cockiness in the flesh.*
2. *Let's always remember that suffering is temporal and that its rewards are eternal.*



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In what ways has your study of this passage shaped the way you understand Satan and the reality of spiritual warfare? What wisdom have you gained that will affect your day-to-day walk following Jesus Christ?

Have you ever stood nose-to-nose with the devil? Even if you've never had a vivid demonic encounter, you've likely battled with Satan several times. Remember, Satan often works in subtle ways, so something like a moment of intense temptation could have come directly from him. How have you felt Christ strengthening you to resist Satan's attacks throughout your life?

As you conclude your study today, reread *1 Peter 5:10* and write your name in the blank spaces: "And the God of all grace, who called _____ to his eternal glory in Christ, after _____ [has] suffered a little while, will himself restore _____ and make _____ strong, firm and steadfast."

It's not too late for you. It's too late for *Satan*. God has already won the battle. "To him be the power for ever and ever" (*5:11*).



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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, Satan is strong—stronger than me. But You are stronger than him. Give me Your strength so that I can stand strong and resist his attacks. When I find my strength faltering, remind me of the truth that the battle is in Your hands. Thank You for securing the victory for me and for my suffering brothers and sisters in Christ. I pray in Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

