

A STUDY OF 1 PETER

The Reality of Satan (1 Peter 5:8-9)

Christians should never doubt or underestimate the ferocity of Satan. Peter warns his readers to be sober-minded and watchful because the devil “prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

The Christians that Peter first addressed were going through great persecution. This persecution was not some random event, but directed from the devil. Satan is a real being, not an impersonal evil and his desire is to destroy Christians.

In Africa, lions will lay in wait to pounce upon unsuspecting prey. They watch for the weak, the injured, and the straggler. As Christians, we must always be prepared for the devil’s attack. His assault is severe, may come at our most vulnerable times, and aimed at our total defeat.



Peter’s advice is to be sober-minded and watchful. We must be vigilant and be ready for the devil’s offensive. The words “sober-minded” and “watchful” can be translated as “pay attention!” or “wake up!” These are imperatives. Watch Out! You are going to be attacked. GET READY.

1. What does it take in our lives to be “sober-minded” and “watchful?”
2. Why is the thought of being prepared a reoccurring theme in the New Testament? (Matt 24:42-43; 25:13; 26:38-41; 1 Thess 5:6; 2 Tim 4:5)
3. Why is Satan our adversary?
4. Describe why the metaphor of the devil being like a lion is appropriate.

Definitions

Adversary originally was an opponent in a lawsuit. The word came to mean an enemy in general.

The term **devil** means “slanderer” or “false accuser.” It is equivalent in meaning to the term Satan.

Definitions from Dr. James E. Smith in Smith, *Teacher’s Commentary: General Epistles*. Lulu.com. p. 101.

The Christian response to the attacks of Satan is not panic or fear, but firm resistance in faith. Verse 8 tells Christians to “resist him,” and to stand “firm in your faith.” James 4:7 is quite similar to this passage where it reads, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

The call to resistance tells us that we can control the outcome of our battle with the devil as he cannot defeat us as long as we resist and stand firm in our faith. Though he is powerful, he is not powerful enough to overwhelm us if we remain faithful.

5. What is the definition of the word faith as it is used here by Peter?

Peter gives another word of encouragement to Christians when he says, “the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.” In other words, “you are not in this alone.” The persecution that confronted Christians in the first century was widespread just as many Christians in many places face persecution today. Every Christian is a part of “the brotherhood” and this brotherhood is worldwide in scope.

6. What is the brotherhood? (See also 1 Peter 2:17)

The God of Grace (1 Peter 5:10-11)

Peter closes this letter with additional words of encouragement. First, any suffering endured by Christians is temporary. Peter calls it “a little while.” Second, our God is a God of grace. While we suffer, he is not aloof and disinterested. God loves us and Peter wants all Christians to know that the Father has not abandoned his children, but is involved to provide for their needs. Third is the promise of eternal glory in Christ. Christians should be encouraged to overcome persecution because an eternity in heaven awaits. We should note the contrast between suffering that is for a little while and the glory that will be for eternity. Fourth is the promise that God will provide spiritual power. Peter says he will “restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”

7. How does it aid the Christian to know that suffering is temporary while glory is eternal?

8. Define the following words:

A. Restore --

B. Confirm --

C. Strengthen --

D. Establish --

Words of Encouragement

1. The devil can be resisted.
2. We are part of a worldwide brotherhood of Christians.
3. We serve a God of grace.
4. Suffering is temporary.
5. Eternal glory awaits the Christian.
6. God will provide spiritual power to restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish the Christian.

1 Peter 5:12 flows naturally out of what Peter has just written. We have a God who is gracious, who is preparing an eternal glory for us, who will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish us. The natural response is that of praise, so Peter writes, *“To him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.”* The God who provides so wonderfully for his children has all dominion. He has all rule and all authority over all things forever. The word *“Amen”* means “so be it” and closes off the section of praise.

Concluding Words (1 Peter 5:12-14)

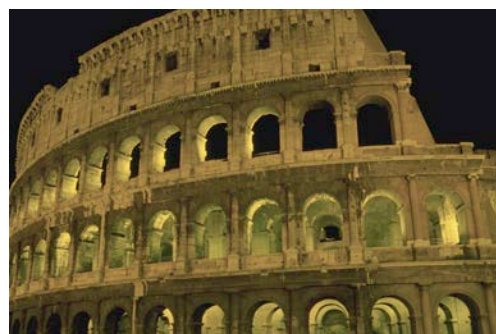
Peter mentions three individuals by name at the end of the chapter. They are Silvanus, a woman in Babylon, and Mark. People were important in the life of Peter and they are important in our lives as well.

Silvanus is the Latin form of the name Silas. We know of him from Acts 15:22-27 and Paul’s companion on his second missionary journey in Acts 16-18 (See also 2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1.)

In 1 Peter, Silvanus has an important role in the transmission of this letter. There are three possibilities: 1) Peter used Silvanus to carry (or delivered) the letter; 2) Peter dictated the letter to Silas to copy or 3) Silvanus wrote the letter expressing the thoughts of Peter. We know for certain that Peter had a very high regard for Silvanus referring to him as *“a faithful brother.”*

9. What does Peter claim as the purpose for this letter? (1 Peter 5:12)

Peter next mentions *“She who is in Babylon”* in verse 13. This most likely refers to the church in Rome. In Revelation 14:8; 17:5; 18:2 Babylon is used as a designation for Rome. This is a reference for Rome highlights the city as the world headquarters of organised godlessness. *“The verse suggests that Peter himself was with the congregation in Rome when he wrote this letter. Early Christian tradition connects Peter with Rome.”*¹



¹ Smith, James E. *Teacher’s Commentary: General Epistles*. Lulu.com. p. 105.



Mark is also named as sending greetings. Peter met with the church at Mark's mother's house in Acts 12:12-17 and they are so close that Peter calls him "my son." John Mark traveled with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but deserted them before the trip was completed. Later Mark and Paul reconciled and Mark spent time with Paul in Rome (Col 4:10; Philemon 24). Now Mark must have been in Rome with Peter. "Beginning in the early second century a strong tradition developed that the Gospel of Mark was written under the influence of Peter. Obviously a very special relationship existed between the old apostle and the younger Mark."²

Finally Peter concludes with the instruction to "*Greet one another with the kiss of love*" (which was a kiss on the cheek and a customary greeting among family and close friends) and the the blessing, "*Peace to all of you who are in Christ.*" If a persecuted church needed anything it was peace.

² Smith, *ibid.* p. 106.