

Be Watchful and Resist

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The New Testament frequently urges vigilance toward things that would spiritually hinder us. One of the clearest of these warnings is from Peter:

Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom withstand stedfast in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

The word translated "sober" is a compound word, which means "do not drink or swallow down." It literally refers to a mind unclouded by strong drink, then metaphorically, to a mind not influenced by anything that would prevent clear thinking. When one thinks clearly, he does not ignore danger, but is alert toward it. These actions are necessary because of the devil, our "adversary" (literally, a lawyer who argues the case against one in court). *Devil* means "false accuser." Thus, the Bible depicts the devil, by definition, as a lying lawyer who has prepared a false case against us. The book of Job so describes him (Job 1:6-12). As Peter described him above, he is also compared to a lion that ferociously roars because of a voracious appetite. He is seeking prey to devour (literally to "swallow down").

Although he can be loud, the devil sometimes subtly and quietly lays temptation before us or introduces false doctrines and practices, "slipping up" on the gullible, ignorant, and immature (Eph. 4:14). However, Peter's warning seems to refer particularly to the frontal attacks of increasing persecution the brethren were suffering (1 Pet. 4:12). Again, the devil was doing this back in the days of Job (Job 1:7) – and he still is.

What were they to do concerning their foe? They were to resist his attacks by the only means at their disposal – steadfastness in the faith. Brethren, we must not compromise when we face ridicule and opposition, or even fiery trials and death (Rev. 2:10). Satan cannot ultimately devour us by physical harm or even death (Mat. 10:28). He will swallow us up only if we yield to fleshly lusts, compromise the Truth, or deny the Christ. We live in a day in which the pressures of Atheism, Humanism, immorality, sectarianism, theological liberalism, and even legislation are increasingly making the lot of faithful saints uncomfortable.

Oh so sadly, many preachers, elders, school administrators, and editors – and thousands in the pews – have refused to withstand the devil and have been devoured by him. What a short-range view of things such compromises represent. As long as we remain faithful to Christ, we are secure regardless of what the devil does to us. Let us also remember, when tried, that we are not by ourselves. Brethren all over the world are likewise persecuted, and always have been (2 Tim. 3:12).

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Lighthouse*, weekly bulletin of Northpoint Church of Christ, Denton, TX, October 22, 2006, of which I was editor.]

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