

Resisting the Roaring Lion

1 Peter 5:8

Elder Doug Ferrell

I want you to picture yourselves walking around your favorite zoo with your most special loved ones, maybe your spouse or children, or grandchildren..... and all of a sudden, in a panicked voice, zoo security came over the loudspeaker and warned you that its man-eating lion had just escaped its cage and was at this very moment roaming around the grounds and were pleading with you to pay attention and be on alert for this ferocious beast. I wonder how you would react? Would you simply smile at your precious family, shrug your shoulders and go look for a corn dog? Maybe you would neglect the warning and make a beeline to the giraffes because the giraffe area is always busy and maybe now you could get that selfie you always wanted?... Or, would you heed this warning, think clearly, and do whatever it takes to protect yourselves and your loved ones?

Now you might think this is a silly question with about a zero probability of this ever happening to you....and yet the bible gives you a warning of just such a wicked, hungry, ferocious beast....who is at this very moment....out here, looking for someone to devour.....Would you please stand with me now as I read you a verse that speaks of just such a man-eater, who is at this very hour....hungry and on the loose.

This morning our focus will be on 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 8 but I want to read to you from verses 5-9

5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

Now first off I want you to know that I am in a great mood today. I am thrilled to be with you and honored to share Gods Word with you. So what I am about to say is not because I am grumpy or didn't get enough sleep, or because Marci isn't feeding me, but it is out of a genuine love and concern for you...my brothers and sisters in Christ.....

Sadly....I am afraid that too many of you might fear our fictional zoo lion....more than you fear this very real roaring lion here in 1 Peter 5:8. And so it is my desire to use our time this morning to encourage you to take inventory of your walk with Jesus Christ and to be prepared...starting today...to be prepared and ready to wage war against this enemy. That you will leave here this morning with a deeper devotion and commitment, to not simply read the Scriptures, but to desire to study and meditate upon them and to make every effort to apply; to be obedient, to the things you learn about our great God and His desires for how you are live and act as His children. That you make it your goal and pursuit to know the truth; believe the truth; stand firm on the truth by obeying the truth.

Now as we get started it is important for you to remember that this letter was written to believers; to followers of Christ. This is a letter written to those who the Father has lavished His unmerited, underserved, abundant grace upon and have set them apart as a chosen race, a royal priesthood and a holy nation....it is written to a treasured people who by God's mercy have been made a people for His own possession. A people who now find themselves living as sojourners and exiles in a foreign land right alongside those who do not believe in or love there God, and are thus being persecuted and facing hardships and trials and sufferings....all because they are a people who name the name of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior....this is a letter to believers.

And so, if you are a follower of Christ, verse 8 speaks to you and gives you this imperative. God wants you, God commands you, to **be sober minded**; God tells you to **be watchful**. Christian, the Bible says you are to be a clear thinker and to be alert; to think biblically and pay attention.

Now Peter has already made reference to the necessity of sober mindedness back in **chapter 1 verse 13** where he said, **"Therefore, preparing, getting ready, your minds for action, and being sober-minded."** In **chapter 4 verse 7**, he says, **"The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded"** So clear controlled sharp thinking is important in the life of a believer and worth repeating in the mind of God through the Apostle Peter.

You and I are instructed to have an alertness of mind; to have soundness of judgement. This is about having self-control in regards to the issues of life, having the priorities of life in the proper order and proper balance as we live our lives in this foreign land that is our temporary home; as we live in this land of chaos and ungodliness and gender confusion; as we live in this land whose world system keeps selling evil as good.....This is a call for the believer to maintain a discipline of mind that avoids entanglement in all of the very intoxicating attractions of this world. And so, combating your enemy starts with a well-disciplined thought life.... believers need to have a focused attention of our minds.....And sadly only 500 words into a sermon about combating the Devil....and I wonder how many of you have already tuned out?....

Friend, this is an urgent call to wake up from your spiritual drowsiness in which you end up thinking and responding to situations more like a non-believer would. This is a call for all believers to wake up, to pay attention, to be alert, to sharpen your thinking. This is the opposite of the bad bumper sticker theology of 'let go and let God!' Yes as believers we trust God, we trust Him with our very souls and yes we can throw all our care on Him, but that doesn't mean that we let our minds check out, become lethargic and lazy, and let down our guard.... because if we do that, as we consider what God says here through Peter in verse 8....then you will become snack food for your enemy the devil.

Stay awake, stay alert, be self-controlled, don't fall asleep.... Now, do you think these words had any special meaning to Peter? I cannot help but believe that the events of **Matthew 26** were heavy on Peter's mind as he penned these very words. That night where Jesus was praying in the garden and He tells His disciples that **His soul was very sorrowful, even to death**; and then Jesus instructs them to **remain here, and watch with me!** 'I'm going to go over there and pray Peter and I need you to be sober minded; be watchful'....and you know the story. Jesus went to pray and on the very first of the three times Jesus comes back to the **disciples and he found them sleeping. And Jesus said to Peter, "could you not watch with me one hour?** So I believe this is personal to Peter...he knows the price for not having a sober and alert mind.

Brothers and sisters, because your enemy wants to take you down, it demands you stand watch; it demands that you stay alert and vigilant....and it demands that you be watchful and sober minded. And if you don't already know this then let me make a captain obvious statement to you...your enemy is a very crafty, cunning, and clever opponent. And if you don't believe this.... then danger is already at your doorstep. You are to never underestimate your **adversary the devil** and his subordinates and if you plan on surviving his attacks...then you must be alert and sober minded.

And let me give you a few more verses that speak to the necessity of having an alert clear-thinking mind. In **1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 6** Paul says, **"So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and.....be sober."** And then dropping down to **verse 8**, Paul goes on to say, **"But since we belong to the day, let us....be sober."** And so the Apostle Paul, just like Peter is calling for the same discipline of sober mindedness. Keep your mind focused and awake. Be alert. **Be watchful.** Make it your purpose to train, to discipline your mind on spiritual priorities.

How about **Romans 12:2** a verse I am sure you are familiar with; **"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the what? renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."** You should desire to have a mind that can understand spiritual priorities as God sees them. And our spiritual priority is as **Colossians 3:2** tells us, is to **set our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.**

Brothers and sisters please do not miss this.....there is a great premium, a high heavenly premium set on a pure, sober, alert mind in Scripture. You are not to walk around in some sort of spiritual daze. Because when your mind knows and understands God's Word; when your mind knows what is right and what is best and what is pure and what is holy and what is pleasing to God.....it can then begin to order and align the proper responses of your emotions and your will....did

you hear that or have I lost you again?.....when your mind has a correct biblical understanding of what is best and pure and holy....it is only then that you will be able to have proper biblical responses of your emotions and your actions. Friend, if I could say it bluntly...you cannot survive or properly function as a Christian without this! You need to train your mind to be as one with this Holy Book!.....that you have an attitude of self-control, that you get your mind clear and under control....you must be sober minded and self-controlled and pay attention and be on guard.

Look with me again at **verse 8**. The Bible here in verses 5-8 give you a very good reason why you need to think clearly and to be alert. The reason we must have our priorities right, the reason we need to know and trust God, the reason we need to humble ourselves under His almighty hand, the reason we need to submit to those in authority over us and to God Himself....is because **Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**

Now I understand that we live in a time where non-believers don't like to hear about a literal devil and therefore they don't even give him a second thought. I get that. But sadly, most professing Christians don't think he is real either. That he's more of a cartoon image; like some guy running around in red underwear sporting a go-tee and just looking for a good time!

In 2009 the Barna group took a pole and asked professing Christians about their belief in the following statement; "the devil isn't a living being but just a symbol of evil"... four out of ten Christians, 40%, strongly agreed with that statement that Satan "is not a living being but just a symbol of evil"...40% of professing Christians believe satan's not even real! An additional 19% said they "agree somewhat" with that perspective. And 8% were not sure what they believed about the devil...that means almost 70% of professing Christians lean towards the idea that the devil is not even real and just a symbol of evil.

If you are here this morning and you fall into that 70% camp...I simply want to ask you....do you put any value into the words of Jesus Christ concerning satan? From where do you get your authority?...from culture, tradition, your friends, from how you feel?... or is your authority from the Word of God? Do you believe anything Jesus said about the Devil? Because Jesus never referred to the devil as a "it" or a "that".... it was always personal pronouns, always a "he" or "him".

Satan is very real and you are never to underestimate your adversary the devil and his soldiers. And though our text describes him as a roaring lion, the truth is that he rarely shows up roaring. He and those who follow him are all about deception and deceit. Satan is a master con artist. He is a fraud. He doesn't come off as an enemy but a friend. He shows up in the garden with Eve and immediately starts questioning God's goodness and intent....no roaring lion, just a mouthful of lies trying to make good look evil and evil look good.

And the Bible speaks of his brand of deception. According to **2 Corinthians chapter 11: 14-15** the Bible tells us that **Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.** You see, contrary to the cartoons, Satan isn't running around in a red jumpsuit like Elvis! He doesn't show up with horns sticking out his head and a pointy chin with a 3 bladed pitchfork with flames of fire shooting out his mouth!....in fact Satan very rarely shows himself for who he truly is.

And let me just inject something at this point....Satan's number 1 priority is that everyone burn in hell forever. That's his 'best day ever' scenario. Jesus in **John 10** says **the thief, satan, comes for no other reason but to steal and kill and destroy.** And the only way Satan can accomplish his primary mission is to get you to say no to Jesus Christ's free gift of salvation; to get you to refuse Jesus Christ and not be born again. But if he can't get that from you because you have already trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior, then the next best thing he wants is to make you a weak, lazy, indifferent, ineffective, Christian. If He can't get you into the prison of Hell with him, then his next goal is to get your mind so weighed down by things of the world; bogged down thinking about work and toys and money and leisure and pleasure and appearances and any and everything except for advancing the kingdom of God. Satan wants you to just be existing and doing no damage to him or his mission of death and destruction.... he wants you to practice a lazy lethargic joyless silent Christianity....and he certainly doesn't want you having any deep meaningful personal communion with God and experiencing Jesus Christ in the fullest...

And everyone in this room has some type of relationship with satan.... he is either your friend or he is your enemy....it is that plain and simple. Every one of you have a relationship with satan as either your friend or your foe. And for the believer, he must be identified and treated as your enemy.

Now this brutal enemy of the believer is here called the devil, *diabolos*. He is called the slanderer; he is called the accuser. He is your malicious enemy who slanders; your malicious enemy who attacks. The Bible in Revelation 9 calls him Abaddon and Apollyon, names given for his destructive conduct. He is the slanderer; He is the accuser; He is the destroyer.....and brothers and sisters, the Bible makes very clear that this enemy, this adversary, your enemy who is **prowling about like a roaring lion.....is seeking someone to devour**. This is not a game. You might be playing but I assure you he is not. This is why you must be alert and vigilant. Satan is vicious and evil and wicked and he is hungry....he is on a relentless pursuit for his next victim.....and weak, gullible, ill prepared Christians are on his menu....and listen to me... if you have a home or a life that is full of bickering or backbiting or excuses or hatred or selfishness or pridefulness.....if you are idle or lazy or unconcerned about your walk with Jesus and the knowledge of God.....if you only like to talk about godly things and look holy but never put them in practice outside of church....then you are doing the devils bidding. You are doing his job for him....and you are allowing yourself to be devoured by him.

Your adversary, the devil wants to pick you off and devour and consume you; and he is always active and he's always been looking for an opportunity to overwhelm Gods people since the very beginning. Satan first shows up in Genesis chapter 3....and his career and path of destruction will not end till Revelation chapter 20. In other words...his work spans all of human history.

And brothers and sisters; He is relentless and will always be after us as long as we are exiled and stuck in this foreign land. He hates what we believe in and stand for. He hates this...he despises our gathering and fellowship and our worship of the One True God. He hates our love for one another. He hates homes and people living out the gospel in spite of life in a fallen world. He despises men of God who stand up and say the kind of things we say every week from this pulpit and in our class rooms. And His aim, his goal, his mission.... is to sow conflict, to break up the fellowship and love the people of God have for one another; he wants you and I bickering and fighting and backbiting; he wants your marriages to suffer and you families at war....He wants fighting in your marriages, homes, workplaces, communities and even churches. He wants your testimony to be seen as weak and have others view your God and His life saving gospel as powerless. Satan wants to undermine your confidence in the Truth found in the Bible; to silence your confession of all that Jesus Christ is; and to get you to stop serving God and proclaiming the name of Jesus Christ....

And that is why Peter tells you to be on the alert because you have a personal adversary, an enemy, the slanderer, the destroyer..... who is moving through the earth with one goal in mind.....finding people who name the name of Christ and to rip and tear them to shreds.....to destroy their testimony of God's mercy and grace to sinners.....So do you understand why it is important that you think clear, think sober and stay alert?....you must do so because as a Christian you have stepped into a spiritual battlefield....You are in a warzone and it will get very messy if you are not prepared.

Brothers and sisters....it is essential that you stand watch; that you be alert and vigilant and watchful and sober minded. You must engage your God given brain, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and get in the battle! We are people of the Book! We are not about emotion and feeling and mystical experiences. Our worship experience is centered around the Word of God and the Person of Jesus Christ. We are not a people looking for an experience that knows little or has no biblical definition; because without a foundation built upon the Word of God you get an end product that is more focused on social life, social issues and political concerns....you end up with feelings and emotions and current events driving the ship....

And my dear brothers and sisters.....when that's all you have.....then you end up with a sort of mindless Christianity that is the very antithesis of everything that God has designed for you, His precious bride. God never intended that His blood bought purchased people would just show up once a week to worship Him without the use of their minds and without basing that relationship upon a very clear and precise proclamation and understanding of His Holy Word. In

Psalm 32 verse 8 listen to what the Bible says, **I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.**" Then listen to what it says next in **verse 9; Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.**" Do you hear what the scriptures declare! There is no advantage in not understanding. There is no premium in you not knowing. In fact in not knowing you are compared to a horse or a mule.

Listen to what the psalmist says in **Psalm 73:21-22** **When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you.** Senselessness and ignorance before God is considered to be that which is more characteristic of an animal and not a man!

Listen to **Jeremiah 4:22; "For my people are foolish; they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding. They are 'wise'--in doing evil! But how to do good they know not."**

In **Hosea** the prophet says in **chapter 4 verse 6** **My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge....** Oh brothers and sisters, God never put a premium on mindlessness; God has never passed out gold stars and cookies to mindless Christianity....just the opposite, just the opposite.

But hey if we are going to be slayed by Gods Word and sit in sackcloth and ashes then let's make it worth our time. Let's look at one more. This time let's look at **Philippians chapter 1:9-11** **And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.**

Now I want you to look at that piece of scripture in reverse, going backwards from verse 11; we are to be **filled with the fruit of righteousness** so that we may be **pure and blameless**. And to **be pure and blameless** we must **approve the things that are excellent**; and to approve the things that are excellent....we must have deep, meaningful.... **knowledge and all discernment**. You see there are no attaboys for lack of knowledge.

In **2 Peter 1:5** Peter writes, **make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge....** knowledge....you need to know...you must know...

My sweet brothers and sisters we are called to know. We are called to possess knowledge. We are called to use our minds. We are called to understand the truth of the revelation of God. We are not to show up to church or a bible study or even our daily private reading of our bibles to engage ourselves in experiences and feelings. We don't leave our minds in the car when we come to hear the Word of God. (*importance of rest and prepping the night before! Layout clothes, go to bed early, fill up the gas tank)

During our 1 Peter Sunday School class I took several weeks to examine the role of the Shepherd, the Pastor Elder, and while I am not going to do that to you this morning I want to at a minimum say this to you....the role of the shepherd is not so much to make you feel.....we are here to teach, we are here to make you think because proper action and proper response comes out of proper understanding. Christianity is a matter of the mind...it is a battle for your mind.

Think about this, how does the Bible describe the mind of the sinner; How does the Bible describe the mind of the unregenerate; How does the Bible describe the mind of the person without God?.....well in **Romans 1:28** it says he has a **debased mind**; the Bible says the unbeliever has a depraved, corrupt, immoral mind. **2 Corinthians 4:4** it says he has a **blinded mind**. **Ephesians 4:17** he has a **futile mind**, or an empty mind, or a useless mind. In **Colossians 1:21** he has an **alienated mind**; his mind is separated from God and is hostile toward God.

So let me summarize that for you. The Bible, when speaking of non-believing, unregenerate man, describes his mind as a depraved mind, a blind mind, a futile mind, an alienated mind. The Bible says that the unregenerate man can't think properly. He cannot understand the things of God, they're foolishness to him.....But.....on the other hand, the Bible also has something to say about the mind of the believer. Consider **1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 16** it says, **But we,**

believers, followers of Christ,**we have the mind of Christ!**" The believers mind is a Christ-like mind. A mind that is able to think on things that are virtuous, a mind that can think on things that are pure, a mind that can think on things that are noble....a mind that can think on things that are good and holy. A mind that can see through the deception, falsehoods and trials.

In **2 Corinthians 10:5** Paul says with this kind of mind, **We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ....** Your thoughts must be captive to obey Christ. And friends in what place do we learn of the will of God, where do we turn to learn the revealed will of Jesus Christ?.....in the Scriptures, in Gods Word.....And so brothers and sisters....as our minds are filled with Divine truth; that filling of Divine truth begins to displace error and falsehoods.....and when that takes place then we begin to have the mind of Christ and that truth begins to control our conduct.

Please listen and understand this basic truth that I want to say to you.... the purpose to listening to good sermons and reading solid books with good doctrine...the purpose of solid biblical preaching and teaching.....is to flood your mind with truth, to pour God's truth into your mind and to do it in a clear and precise way so that truth continually reinforced into your mind now becomes part of you just like the food you eat becomes part of your body and the life and the energy by which you live! It is the goal of the preacher and the teacher to give you truth, which turns into strength, which turns into action, which turns into usefulness for the Kingdom of God. That's why I pray we are all here this morning! I pray that's why you come to class and come to church and study your bibles and listen to sermons and read good books....

Because listen, what that truth poured into you does, is hopefully to create godly habits. It becomes such a natural part of who you are that it begins to generate godly habits and those godly habits begin to control your thoughts and behaviors and responses. This is what happens to the one that is sober minded and alert.

But if you have a mindless Christianity and if you do not hear precise, clear truth from the Word of God...if you do not have a steady diet of truth of Gods Word....if you do not have any deep personal time of study, reflection, and prayer.....then you will not have a clear mind and you will not have the truth that turns into action, and there will no ability to fight back when your enemy comes to challenge you....

This is why it is of foundational importance for all of us to be continually exposed to Devine truth as much as possible..... because all the other time we are being continually exposed to error, with its roots from the father of lies, that same rascal that's out there seeking to devour and destroy you. And that is why it is important that each one of us place ourselves under the sound hearing of the Word of God and why it is critical that we spend personal quality and quantity time in study and prayer....so that the character of your life might be strengthened and shaped and controlled by God's Truth.

Because as you do that....Gods truth then becomes a powerful weapon against Satan. Armed with the knowledge of the truth of Gods Word, you are ready to battle. Comforted by the knowledge that you are not alone in your struggles and armed with Truth, you are now in a position to resist your enemy; look at verse 9 **Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.**

For the follower of Christ, knowledge of Gods Truth is the most powerful weapon in the entire universe. You have studied the manual and you stand alert and ready for action. You are prepared. You are always alert and sober minded. You have knowledge of Truth and your mind is engaged and active and obedient to that Truth, and therefore your attitudes and responses are controlled by Truth. What you believe and how you live and how you function is Truth driven....therefore....when the attacks of your adversary come, you are able to stand firm in that truth. You stand firm in all of the truth of your faith in its transforming work and power of the gospel in your lives and you are to resist the devil with the power of that Truth you know and believe and trust in.

But brothers and sisters I don't think we like the simplicity of that message because with it comes the reality that we have some work and responsibility to bear in this battle. The Bible just declared that satan is your adversary. We are the ones who must be prepared and have our minds engaged for this battle. We are the ones to be sober minded and alert and we're like 'wow really God!' I was hoping for something a little more mystical. I wanted to be like those guys on TV and see some demon binding! And when I ask you Lord "how am I supposed to deal with the devil" this is Your response! When I ask You how am I suppose to resist and do battle with the devil you tell me to be armed with truth and stand **firm in the faith**.....And friends this simple truth is profound!.....Think about this, we talked earlier how Satan is a deceiver, he is a vicious enemy who slanders, he is the accuser, the destroyer, how he is a liar, he stands against truth, always desiring to distort truth, to twist truth.....and that is precisely why your greatest weapon in combating him is truth and obedience to that truth! That's how you fight, that's how you win!

So if you want to know how to deal with the devil, how to combat his flaming arrows of assault, how to deal with the trials and persecutions and issues of life, how to beat him....here it is; We deal with the devil by trusting God and living in accord with God's truth. That's pretty simple isn't it?.... simple and profound. You have this very real and very formidable enemy prowling around wanting to chew you up and destroy you and devour you and show your faith in Christ to be weak and fragile....and how are you going to deal with him, by running faster, by hiding, by being more clever, by binding him?.....no....the Bible says here's how to do it my precious children....stand against him. And how do you stand against him? With clear alert biblical thinking, standing **firm in the faith**; standing firm in the revealed Word of God, which has told you all about God, so that you can be firm in your faith in God.

Brothers and Sisters, there is the key and why I am pleading with you to engage your minds in this very real battle against your adversary the devil. The key is; everything we do and think and what we say and how we respond....must become captive to truth and obedient to that truth. Because as I know truth and I believe truth and I stand on truth and I obey that truth...our enemy, Satan, is resisted and defeated. Whatever enemy comes against me becomes captive as I stand on God's truth; firm in the faith. When you know, believe, stand and obey the truth, you are standing firm against your enemy...and **James 4:7** tells us that he will flee; **Submit yourselves to God, trust God. Resist the devil, James says and he will flee from you.**

And the antithesis of this then is...if you don't know, and you don't believe, and you don't stand and you don't obey truth....then you have no power to combat your enemy the devil and therefore you should not expect any victory and instead you will make a shipwreck of your faith....it's that simple.

If you don't stay awake and alert; if you don't know, then it is going to be very hard to resist and fight back because sleeping, slothful Christians are not much of a challenge or threat to a prowling lion!.... you know, believers are encouraged to run from a lot of things in the Bible; flee from sexual immorality, idolatry, false doctrine, excess riches, evil desires of youth...but nowhere are we told to run from the devil!...James says resist him and he will flee from you. Besides where you going?...at some point you either resist or you will give in.

And if you don't learn to wrestle with satan... inevitably you will wrestle with each other. You will wrestle with each other in your homes, in your marriages, in your workplaces.... and even in your churches... and when you allow that to happen....then it shows you have forgotten who the real enemy is.....

Now if this morning you have no relationship with Jesus Christ, then please know this out of my genuine love for your soul....you do not belong to God; you are not his friend....being a friend of Satan automatically makes you an enemy of Gods. But the good news is that you do not have to stay in that damning relationship. You do not have to do the devils work any longer. Today you can come to the other side. To the side of eternal glory and victory. Today you can come to Jesus Christ....by simply, right where you are seated, ask God to forgive you for your sin, to repent, to turn away from your sinful rebellion against Him...ask Him to forgive you through the blood of Jesus Christ and then take up your cross and follow Him all the remaining days of your exiled life here on this earth.

And if you do that then listen because this is very important and I want to be perfectly honest with you. If you repent of your sin and put your trust in Jesus Christ to save you; if you desire to follow Him...then you should know that life in this world really doesn't get complicated until we become Christians. Because when you were blind and willfully obeying Satan; doing his dirty work.... there was no real conflict; but once we have been rescued and our life has been taken by Jesus, Satan does not easily let go of the prize and will come after you and want to trip you up and devour you. He will want to take away your assurance of salvation and sew doubt on your decision to follow Christ... because if he can take away your confidence, then he can render you spiritually powerless and ineffective.... but good news soldier of Christ, you don't have to listen to his slander and lies anymore. The accuser is no longer your master...you belong to the God of all grace...

So knowledge is critical to survival for the sojourner and exile.... we need to know. And my guess is we have all failed on some level at this. We are more interested in headlines and final scores than the Divine wisdom we need to combat our adversary the devil.... the good news is His mercies are new every morning. And starting today you can make some changes and commit to a new pattern. Start by repenting to God for your idle Christianity, your casual lethargic approach to God and His most excellent holy Word and make it your purpose to attain real meaningful knowledge of Him right now and the remainder of your sojourning years on this earth. Make it your aim to be a sober minded, clear-thinking Christian.

This is so important because you see, Satan understands that he can't keep you from going to church or reading your Bible or even knowing the truth....but what he can do is keep you from forming a deep intimate meaningful ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ....because he knows that if you gain that kind of deep personal connection with Jesus....then his power over you is broken. So don't let him control you in that way, don't let him steal your time so you can't have that kind of deep experience with Jesus Christ...don't allow satan to distract you from gaining hold of your Savior and maintaining that vital connection throughout your day.

You need to be sober minded and alert because satan is out there and he wants to keep you busy with the nonessentials of life and he has countless schemes to occupy your minds....and if after all of this you still don't think there is any value and power in knowledge of God's Word then let me close with one last appeal from a powerful example.....one I know you are all familiar with. Let's turn our Bibles to **Matthew 4:1-11** and the story of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness. Now I just want remind you that this is Jesus, this is God in the flesh....and friends I confess, if this is me out there in the wilderness, and after 40 days of heat, hunger and thirst and I possessed His kind of power and authority....I would be like, "Jesus to Michael come in please; yeah could you just send in the big guns and take this guy out". But let's read the account and His response together; **Matthew 4:1-10**.

Now here it comes verse 11 **Then** after Jesus battled Satan not with guns and fists or lightning bolts from Heaven, but by standing firm in the faith, by being sober minded and alert; knowing truth, believing truth, standing on truth and obeying truth.... then the Bible says, then after He did those things, **then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.**

Listen, I will close with this....my bride and I were recently talking about this very simple conclusion... Jesus Christ isn't a add on to Christianity. Jesus Christ isn't just something....He is everything!....and that is why satan doesn't want your relationship with Jesus to grow. Satan wants to keep you from the joy of developing a deep, loving, trusting, obedient life with Christ...he wants you to live in doubt and fear and feel insecure and avoid the church and to be led astray. He wants your marriages to fail, your homes to fail, churches to fail.... he wants you to fail.....and if satan can't get you to believe his lies then he needs to go find somebody that will. Because his time and freedom to roam around here on this earth is limited and there are plenty of willing victims who are not sober minded and who are not alert and therefore have no ability to stand firm in the faith....and I don't want that person to be you.