

Our Great Foe

How often do we stop to consider our greatest foe, the devil? God tells us over and over again in scripture to beware of this mighty enemy. We have a most timely warning to our young people found in I Peter 5:8 "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Whom do you think the devil targets? The children of the God whom he hates. He targets each and every one of us daily. Do we consider how much hold we let him have when we don't even consider the fact that he lurks, waiting to pounce at any second? It takes only one small little turning away from our Father in heaven. The devil will grab hold of that door that is opened to sin and start to pry it as far open as he is able. So sly is he that he often uses the word of God itself. He twists it just slightly so that we think that what we do is ok and agreeable with the word of God. Young people, beware of this foe!

In order for us to beware of the devil, we must know this mighty foe that we are up against. We turn to God's word, which reveals to us exactly who we are up against. Satan, who was created by God and was made the highest commander in the angelic world, turned against the very God who created him, convincing many angels to follow him, and was cast out of heaven with a significant part of the angelic world. Until Christ accomplished his work on the cross, though, the devil was still allowed access into heaven. When Satan was finally, fully cast out, the church sang a great song of victory because their adversary was cast out fully, never to return. The heavens belong to God, but the devil still seeks to make this earth his own.

Young people, we are those who are called to represent the cause of Christ against Satan. We see how he tried to convince even Jesus Christ, our savior, to turn against God. He slyly twisted God's word, and had he been able to be successful, it would have resulted in every one of us being destroyed. We know that he could never have been successful with Christ, but we see how yet today he uses this same ploy on us, saying he will give us the whole world and its pleasures if we will just heed him and bow down to him. We know from scripture that Satan will never win over God's elect, but so wicked and hateful of God is he that even though he knows he will never win, yet he tries with all his might to succeed. Revelation 12 speaks of how the devil knows his time is short, and so now he turns in fury against us, trying to destroy the cause of God. If we look outwardly at the circumstances of this earth, it appears to be that the devil is succeeding, as the world takes his side. The apostatizing church also fights on his side against the true church. The devil often uses our own human natures as well to seek to turn us against God. He holds before us young people the allurements of this wicked world. Satan loves it when we go through the motions of being a Christian, but our hearts are not in the right place. The devil has access to our minds so that he not only shows us how "good" the world is, but whispers the lie in our ears. Our minds and hearts often dwell on all kinds of corruption. Satan's goal is the destruction of God's children, and he holds great sway and power because of our depraved natures.

How are we to resist this powerful enemy? If it were not for God's saving work within us, and the guideline he gives us in his word, we would give in and fully succumb to the devil's rule. In 1 Peter 5:8 God makes known two specific ways by which we can be sure to resist this great foe of ours.

First, we are called to be sober. According to the dictionary this means negatively not to be drunk, and positively to be clearheaded. Of course being sober spiritually will be affected greatly if you are physically drunk all of the time. You will not be on your guard against Satan, and thus will easily be snared by him. I want to focus more on the positive aspect, though. We are to be clearheaded. This means to see things as they really are, as shown to us in scripture. We understand that what is real is in heaven and is sitting at God's right hand. Our savior who has earned our salvation sits there ruling over the whole world, and in time he will take us also to dwell there with him forever. We weigh this over against the lie whispered in our ears, as the devil seeks to lead us to find happiness on this earth. We see that the way the devil leads us is the wide path of ease here below, slipping ultimately down to the pit of destruction.

The other way that we resist, which is closely connected to soberness, is by being vigilant. This, according to the dictionary, means keeping careful watch for possible danger or difficulties. As young people we must be aware of what is going on around us, and not close our eyes against the realities of sin all about us, and even of the old man within us. If we think we can rest, we will be caught unawares like the five foolish virgins who were caught unaware when the husband arrived. Every moment we must be on our guard. The devil constantly looks for weakness and strikes us when we are weakest and least expecting it. He is deceitful and knows how to use our weakness in favor of his cause. Constantly we must watch, looking at the circumstances in which we are placed, making sure to be on our guard against him and his sly tactics.

In order to be able fully to resist this mighty enemy of ours by being sober and vigilant, God tells us in 1 Peter 5: 9 that we must be steadfast in the faith. Faith is the root out of which soberness and vigilance grows. The devil is too smart and powerful for us, but God has given us the gift of faith, which is the bond that unites us to Christ, and by faith we will most surely win. Satan cannot do us any harm when we resist him. We rebuke him with the words of Christ. We tell the devil to go away because we belong to Christ and even though we sin and are no better than any others by nature, we are looked at as righteous in Christ. He has paid for our sins and earned our deliverance. We must follow the instruction of Ephesians 6, putting on the whole armor of God to resist the devil. In this way the devil will not be able to find a weak point. Faith is victorious, and in faith we go forth as soldiers of the cross, resisting the devil all our lives long.

We have taken a moment to stop and consider this greatest foe, the devil. I encourage you young people to continue to do so. In all situations of life, be aware of this mighty enemy who stands against our God, seeking to cause us to fall away from the Lord who has saved us. Use the tools God has given to us in his word to resist this enemy. Pray to God that he will strengthen your faith that you may be sober and vigilant, and may stand strong against Satan.