



+ **YOU**

Fall 2023

Staying True in a World Far From God

**Sermon Title:** The Church on Full Alert

**To be used with Session 4:** Live Courageously

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 5:7-10

**Connection with Bible Study:** To complement the Bible study “Speak Truth Boldly,” this sermon will build upon the study’s main point to do the right thing in God’s strength.

**Introduction:** Ever since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, we have learned a few things about alerts. Yellow alert means there’s an elevated risk of an attack. Orange alert means the threat is high, and red alert means, “Get ready; it’s coming!” Most Americans also know about weather alerts. My wife and I have one of those radios that warn us when hazardous weather is on the way. It’s pretty irritating when that thing goes off in the middle of the night to tell us about a storm fifty miles away, but it is nice to have when there’s a real emergency. We were very grateful to have it when a tornado swept through our area several years ago.

In the closing verses of his first epistle, the apostle Peter put his readers on full alert. To be on full alert means a hazardous situation is at hand, and you need to be ready to act right away. Peter warned his readers of a very real danger—not a physical danger, but a spiritual danger. He told them to be on guard against the devil. We need to be balanced in our understanding of the devil. On the one hand, he is very real and we need to be aware of Him. On the other hand, we need to remember that God is bigger, and He’s going to prevail in the end. What does it mean to resist the devil, and how do we do it? Peter told us to do three things.

**1. Take care (1 Pet. 5:7-8).**

**a. Peter instructed his readers to be “sober-minded” and “alert” (v. 8).**

The word “sober” in the original language is the Greek word *nepho*, which means to be well-balanced, temperate, or self-controlled. In other words, Peter was saying we should keep a handle on our passions and our emotions, because the devil knows how to exploit them for his purposes. Peter also said to “be alert.” which means to be vigilant and watchful.

**b. We need to be on guard because the devil wants to “devour” us (v. 8).**

Peter said the devil prowls like a roaring lion. From what I’ve read, lions sneak up on their prey very quietly, and then they attack suddenly and viciously. Likewise, Satan sneaks around and waits for his chance, and then he attacks when you least expect it. When Peter said the devil is “looking for anyone he can devour,” he obviously meant in

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a metaphorical sense. The devil can't literally eat you alive, but he will do whatever he can to destroy your service for Christ. He can't take you out of God's hands, but he will try every trick imaginable to destroy the credibility of your witness for Christ.

**c. What are some of the devil's favorite strategies?**

One of Satan's most common strategies is fear. When problems crop up, the devil makes them look bigger than they really are. He will also play on your fleshly desires. He'll use them to nurture ungodly desires and lusts. He will also use the tactic of discouragement. This is a big one for those of us in the ministry. You try to be a good witness for Christ, but other people just don't seem to care. The devil will tell you that's it's just not worth it.

**2. Take courage (1 Pet. 5:9).**

**a. What did Peter mean when he told us to "resist" the devil? (v. 9)**

Peter said to resist him "firm in the faith." When Peter spoke of "the faith," he was talking about the body of truth that we as Christians believe. The best way to resist the devil is to stand by the truth of God's Word. Several years ago, a friend and I attended a conference where Dr. Albert Mohler of Southern Seminary was the main speaker. We got to talk to him during a break, and my friend commented on how he always quotes the Bible when he appears on CNN or other programs. Dr. Mohler replied, "If you read the list of spiritual armor in Ephesians, you'll see that there's only one offensive weapon: The Word of God."

**b. Peter reminded his readers that they weren't alone (v. 9b).**

Peter was writing to churches that were experiencing persecution, and he wanted them to know they weren't alone. Other churches around the Roman Empire were fighting the same battles and facing the same afflictions. The same holds true today. Christians around the world are fighting the same battles we are, except many of them are paying a much higher price for it. We pray for them regularly, and we should, but isn't it great to know many of them are also praying for us? We're all in this together. The haters of God like to taunt us, and they say the church is dying out. Just remember, they said the same thing in the last century ... and the century before that ... and the century before that! Jesus said the gates of hell would not prevail against His church, and that's why we can take courage.

**3. Take comfort (1 Pet. 5:10).**

**a. God has "called you to his eternal glory" (v. 10).**

Like many people, I often get depressed when I watch the news. Our world is in a mess, and it has been ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden. The Bible says Satan is "the prince of this world." This world is his domain for the time being, and that's why it's in such a mess. Aren't you glad to know there's a better day coming? Peter noted that we will suffer in this world, but it's only temporary. We will suffer for

just a little while, but then God will take us home to heaven, and our suffering will be over forever.

**b. We should keep trusting “the God of all grace” (v. 10).**

We can be certain of going to heaven when we die, but it’s not because of our own goodness. It’s by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Peter used four different words in this verse, but they all mean pretty much the same thing. He was probably repeating himself for emphasis. He wanted his readers to understand that better days are ahead. We may have to suffer in this world, but someday our suffering will end. We face temptation, but a day is coming when we’ll never be tempted again. The devil may attack, discourage. And demoralize us, but one day he will be cast into the lake of fire for eternity, along with all of those who have served him. Those of us who have trusted in Jesus will spend eternity in heaven with the God of all grace!

**Conclusion:** Dr. Jerry Glisson was pastor of Leawood Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee for thirty-five years. He’s in heaven now, and he was kind of an institution among Tennessee Baptists. When I was in seminary, he came and spoke in one of my classes. The class was about cults, and there was a lot of occult activity in the neighborhood around Dr. Glisson’s church. He told stories about his dealings with people who were demon-possessed. He wasn’t the kind of man who would sensationalize things, so I believe his stories were true. Dr. Glisson told of some times when he and his church leaders prayed for certain people, and the demons left them. People in the church heard these stories, and they were really excited. Some of them wanted the church to start a “deliverance ministry.” Dr. Glisson said he quickly put the squelch on that idea, and I agree with him. The devil does plenty of work in churches today as it is, so the last thing we need to do is open the door and invite him in.

Nevertheless, if you’re living for Jesus, you can be sure the devil will come after you sooner or later. That’s why you need to be on full alert. He wants to tear you down and destroy your testimony as a Christian. Remember, God is bigger than the devil, and He’s with you at all times. He’s also given us a powerful offensive weapon: His written Word. Immerse yourself in this book, and always remember, there’s a better day coming. The devil might make things rough for you in this world, but we know who’s going to prevail in the end.

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