

1 Peter 5:8-11 *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. ¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

The God of grace will confirm you

1. The Devil will attack you
2. God will strengthen you

Two people are greatly concerned about you. Two who have you constantly in mind. Two who will not give up on you, who never rest, who labor constantly for you. Not your mother and father, but God and Satan. Both have a keen interest in you and how you relate to each of them is important for your Christian living and your eternal life. In these verses today, Peter speaks about your relationship with these two. The Devil wants to attack you, tempt you, win you. But God is with you to strengthen you. On this Confirmation Sunday, I want you to know that the God of all grace will confirm you.

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. He is our enemy, Peter said. This isn't a game where you shake hands with the opposition when it's over. He is our enemy. He hates you. And he is dangerous. He is pictured as a lion: the king of beasts, powerful and fierce.

You can almost picture what Peter says here, can't you? You see a lion stalking his prey in the jungle. He is hungry. The first thing that he gets a paw on he is going to eat. Then he spots a young gazelle wandering a little too far from the herd. He wanders too close to the lion and the lion makes his move. In a few strides, he has his teeth around the gazelle's neck. The Devil is such a lion. He wants to eat us up the first chance that he gets.

I saw a video recently about a game preserve in Africa. People could drive their cars in this preserve and take pictures of the lions and other animals. But they were warned not to leave their car. Well, one guy did. He wanted to get a better picture of the lions, and as he got out of the car and walked closer, one of them attacked and killed him right in front of his family. The whole thing caught on video.

You need to respect wild animals. Satan is pictured by Peter as a roaring lion just for that reason. He is dangerous. He is not your friend. He wants to devour you. He is a spirit who does not sleep. He does not rest. Do not underestimate him. We see lions in zoos or from a car in a game preserve and they look so cute and peaceful. We can forget just how deadly they are. Satan also can seem like a joke, a myth, a funny guy in red tights. But he is deadly and he will pounce when he has the chance.

So Peter says *Be alert and of sober mind*. That is be self-controlled and be awake to danger. Satan often operates in the background, wanting us to believe that losing self-control isn't really all that dangerous. We may come to believe that because nothing permanently bad happened to us the last time we lost our self-control, it's not a big deal.

But here's the thing. Satan is just biding his time. He's luring you more and more out into the open – away from your Savior and his Word, so that when he finally does pounce, you'll be an easy score. Isn't that what happened to Judas? He failed to curb his greed so that he became more and more careless until he didn't think much of selling his Savior to make a few bucks.

Satan will try to get us to let down our guard by bringing suffering into our lives. There are times when it feels like life has just kicked you in the gut and left you curled up on the floor gasping for air. Your mother suddenly is taken away by a heart attack. Or your spouse of decades is stricken with cancer. Maybe you always felt that your family is strong and close, but then divorce comes knocking at the door. Maybe, it's

nothing quite so serious: losing a championship game, getting a terrible grade on your report card, or getting dumped by that special someone. We can feel empty, angry, beaten. And Satan will want you to give up on God, to blame God, to think that faith doesn't do a bit of good.

Are you easy prey for the Devil? Who of us can claim that there are never times when the Devil could devour us? does that concern us? Are we taking the threat of the Devil seriously? Here we are in the Devil's country. We are like travelers arriving at a hotel that is a hideout for thieves. Wouldn't a traveler in that situation be on his guard? Aren't we in the same situation on earth where the Devil rules and has the hearts of men in his power, doing through them whatever he pleases? If we think about the Devil and the world in which we live, if we think about our own weaknesses and struggles with sin, should we take the Devil very seriously?

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Be alert, but don't be afraid. *Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.* Resist him, he says. Picture what Peter is saying here. A lion is charging you. What would you do? You would probably run. But Peter says to stand there and take him on. In other words, don't let Satan push you around. Satan is like a big bully. The best way to deal with a bully is not to let him push you around.

Resist him, standing firm in the faith. The Greek word for firm is a word we have taken over into English: steroids. Steroids build up muscle. We resist the Devil by building up our spiritual muscles. We do that with God's Word and sacrament.

During a typhoon in Bangladesh, many parents tied their children to trees with the hope that they would not be washed away in the winds and tidal waves. Unfortunately, the typhoon was so strong, it tore the trees right out of the ground along with the children. The parents had the right idea, but not a firm enough foundation. We need to have a firm foundation in God's Word. That's the only way we can resist Satan.

And that's where we have God's promise: *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.* The God of all grace has called you. That is, the God who is characterized as 100% grace and love has called you. When life gets you down, when Satan has bullied you into sin or coerced you into despair, remember your baptism. The all-gracious God brought you into his family and made you his child. He went to the cross for you to take away your sins and he rose again to assure you of eternal life. He called you to eternal glory. He loves you. He will give you strength.

He has given you strength. He has given you the firm, solid foundation of the apostles and prophets, the Word of God. He has called you by the gospel and enlightened you with his gifts. He has seen to it that you have been instructed in God's truth. He has brought you to know Jesus, his forgiveness and his love.

You know who Dwayne Johnson is, don't you? They call him The Rock. You know the muscular body he has. How did he get like that? By stuffing steak and eggs down his throat almost every day. He ate protein rich foods every day, whether he was hungry or not. He got that way by spending a lot of time in the weight room. Do you think he got tired of working out? I bet he did.

It's the same way with faith. Your strength is in God. Remember him. Stay with him. That means staying with his Word. You may get tired of working out with the Word, you may feel strong enough and think you don't need to work with the Word anymore, but you need to stay in God's Word. If you lose your connection with the Word and sacrament, you lose your connection to Christ and his grace.

Two people are greatly concerned about you, the Devil and God. Only one gave his Son for you. Only one promised to forgive your sins and give you eternal life. Only one loves you unconditionally. And he gives you his body and blood in the Lord's Supper to assure you of your forgiveness. That's the God of all grace. And the God of all grace will confirm you.