

I thank Hunter for stepping up this morning in this way. I actually feel the best I felt in about four days. I just sound the worst I've sounded in about four days. So I really feel okay. I just don't sound very good. So Lord willing, my voice will be able to stay with us so that we can hear God's word proclaimed this morning.

For anyone who maybe missed a session or two over the weekend, specifically men, I want you to know that those sermons were recorded and I have really not discussed this with anybody. They were all really, really good. But I did find sessions two and three especially good. So if you only caught the first one and you felt like it was at least worth listening to, which it is, But I think numbers two and three are even more incredible.

So God has really blessed the preaching of the word this weekend, and we praise him for that. But also, that will be available for anybody, not just the men. But I did want to specifically make sure the men knew that that should be online in the coming days.

With those remarks, let us turn our attention to God's Word. If you have a copy of the Bible, please turn to 1 Peter 5. We'll be looking this morning at verses 8-11. 1 Peter 5, verses 8-11. And the verses we looked at last week, we saw Peter talking about the humble man.

He said the humble man is needy, the humble man is Godward, and the humble man is praying. And the reason the humble man is needy is because he actually believes that he is a sinner, and that he can't save himself, so he's needy. But he's also Godward. He's Godward because he believes that although he is a sinner, God has saved him, and that God is able to sanctify him and grow him in grace and in holiness of life. So in his neediness, he turns to God, but he's also praying, and he's praying because he realizes that he is constantly in need of dependence upon his God, that by the flesh he can do nothing, but by the spirit he indeed can serve the Lord and grow in grace and godliness.

This morning we turn our attention to Christian warfare that's the topic that Peter by divine inspiration begins to address the topic of Christian warfare in verses 8 through 11 of chapter 5. So this in mind let us pray and ask God to bless the reading and proclamation of his word.

Dear Heavenly Father, indeed we remember from last week that the humble man is praying. And Father, surely all of us have fallen short in that category this week, praying. But oh God, we do come before you praying now, praying that the Spirit indeed would descend upon us, because we know that the opening of your word, the proclaiming of your word, is of no spiritual significance in the hearts of your people if your spirit does not bless it to our lives. So we pray that we would be as our forefather Samuel, and we would say, speak, O Lord, for your servant is listening. And indeed, we would be listening. And we ask this all in Jesus's name, amen. We'll hear now the word of God, 1 Peter chapter five, beginning in verse eight.

Be sober-minded, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the

dominion forever and ever. Amen. Lessons reading of God's holy word. May he bless down the proclamation of it to our lives.

Today we are going to consider the topic of Christian warfare. As we come to this topic of Christian warfare, we need to realize that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but we wrestle against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places. Now, when we say we're wrestling against spiritual forces, don't misunderstand what I'm saying. I'm not saying that these forces aren't real. I'm simply saying that these forces are immaterial. They are spiritual, but they are real. This is no joke.

A number of years ago, I was talking to somebody at a restaurant, And he was a server or something and he said to me, sometimes, excuse me, sometimes I think there are evil forces at work in the world around us. And I said, there are evil forces at work in the world around us. He said, do you really believe that? And I said, yes, the Bible says so.

These forces against which we fight are very real. These forces that we fight are as real as a room in which we sit this morning, and the truth is you felt them. You know the forces about which I speak, and you see their effects in your own life, and you see them in the lives of those around you and in the world around you.

So we come to this topic of Christian warfare, and we have three points this morning. Our enemy, our weaponry, and our God, our enemy, our weaponry, and our God. So first this morning, our enemy, verse eight, be sober-minded, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Notice that the devil here is called your adversary. This word literally carries with it the idea of an opponent in law. or an opponent in the court of law. In other words, the imagery here is that your opponent, the devil, is coming to you in the court of law, and he is accusing you.

You can picture it, can't you, in your mind right now. The devil comes to you, and he comes to you in the court of law in your mind, and there he is, just you and him in the court of law in your mind, and he says to you, look at you. Just look at yourself.

Did you or did you not do that thing in your youth about which you are ashamed? You say, yes, I did. Then he says to you again, did you or did you not do that thing today about which you are ashamed? And you say, yes, I did. And then he says, and did you or did you not do that very same thing again about what you claim you repented? And with shame, you say, I did.

And then he says to you, And you call yourself a Christian? Aren't Christians supposed to be holy? Just look at yourself. What kind of Christian are you? I guess you're just not a Christian after all. Just give up. Just go my way. Just do what I want you to do. After all, I'm simply giving you the facts and you've even consented that the evidence is against you. Such are the ways of this prosecuting lawyer, the devil. And look at how he is described here. Not only is he called your adversary, he is also said to be prowling, roaring, and seeking. All of these are present tense. He's actively on the hunt.

The devil, notice in the text, is not interested in biting you. He doesn't care to bite you. That's not his interest. His interest is in devouring you. And this word devour literally means to swallow up in one bite. He doesn't merely want to scratch you with his claws. He wants to gobble you up. This word is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament in Jonah 1:17 about the great fish who swallowed up Jonah in one gulp. That's what he wants to do to you. He wants to destroy you. He hates you. He wants to kill your soul.

This is why at the start of verse eight, we have these commands, be sober minded, be watchful. The reason the text begins with these commands is because you need to have your wits about yourself. You need to be on guard because the devil is no dummy. The devil has been around a lot longer than you and he's a lot smarter than you.

And the truth is the devil is only beginning smarter. For the last, however many thousands of years, he's been alive. He's not omnipotent. He doesn't have all power. He's not omniscient. He doesn't know all things. He's been growing. He's been increasing in the way that he attacks God's people. He hasn't gotten dumber. He's only gotten smarter.

He will twist the meaning of scripture to try to deceive you. That's what he tried to do to Jesus, isn't it? He tried to twist the scriptures to deceive him. That's what he does to you. And he succeeded at some measure in all of our lives. And he succeeded at a mass level in many false religions. Think of the Pharisees. What were these Pharisees all about? Weren't they about the scriptures? And of course their traditions. But they did value the scriptures, didn't they?

But they had been twisted. They had been deceived. They had been duped by the evil one. even with the very Scriptures of God. And you see that in false religions today, who claim some authority in the Scriptures, but then veer from the Scriptures. They don't believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. If you get that wrong, you go to hell. And yet, many people, even fairly moral people, have had the Scriptures twisted by the evil one, and they themselves have complied in the twisting of the Scriptures.

He knows you. He, as we heard this weekend, I wrote this sermon before Seth preached, but he does tailor make his temptations to fit just you. He knows where you're weak. He knows where his arrows, his fiery darts are most probable to strike you. He lets you get puffed up in your pride, doesn't he? Just like we saw with Peter in the Gospels, I will never betray you. I will never deny you. The height of his holiness, he was really just filled with pride.

And what happens? He denies the Lord Jesus Christ. Let this be a warning to you here this morning. When you think you are most impenetrable, you are most liable to fall. And who of us hasn't experienced that? I don't care who you are in this room. You know exactly what I'm talking about. You have thought yourself to be really doing well in your walk with the Lord. And within 30 seconds, you have done something that you wish you had not done. You get puffed up in your pride.

So what hope is there for the Christian who's fighting against this foe? Well, I give you two truths at this point in the sermon, which I think will be of some help as you battle the evil one. First, as John Calvin put it, though Satan rage like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, yet there is a bit in his mouth and it is God who holds the reins. You see, the devil is on a leash and your God holds a leash. The devil can go no further than your heavenly father allows

him to go. And as another author I read this week put it, God makes sinless use of Satan's sinful attacks against us. So that can be some comfort as you go against this evil one, our enemy. But there's another truth. that should bring you courage as you battle the evil one.

Do you remember that courtroom scene that we described a few minutes ago? The courtroom scene in which it is you and Mr. Devil in the courtroom and he begins to bring up real facts about who you really are. They are not lies, they are accurate, they are true. But for the Christian, do you know that there's a third person in that courtroom? It's not just you and Mr. Satan in that courtroom, it's you and the Lord Jesus Christ. He is your advocate. He is your righteousness. He is your advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

And so you can say to Mr. Satan, Mr. Satan, what you've said thus far is true, that I did do such and such, and so and so, and I have repented, and I have fallen again, but you've forgotten just this one fact. That Jesus Christ is my righteousness. And until, Mr. Satan, you can destroy the righteousness of Christ, which avails for me, you will have no dominion over me.

You cannot win this battle. You are a defeated foe because Christ, indeed, is my righteousness. There are chinks in my armor. There are no chinks in his. Christ is my righteousness. You, sir, have no power over me. Though I am weak, my advocate is not the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is infinite strength. Until the grip of my omnipotent father can let me go, you cannot take me from his hands. You see, we must neither minimize nor maximize the power of Satan. We dare not minimize it lest we think that he is not real or that he doesn't have real strength. He does. That is one temptation is to minimize his power.

But another temptation is to maximize it and to forget that Christ is your righteousness. And Satan wants you to forget the doctrine of justification. He wants you in that courtroom to forget the declaration that you are righteous in the sight of God because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ for you. He wants you to forget that because he knows if you forget that you will fall a tremendous way away from the Lord. The devil wants to minimize Christ's righteousness for you. I call you this morning to maximize it to remember that Christ's righteousness is your salvation and rejoice in his righteousness for you.

But secondly, this morning, we see our weaponry in verse nine. Resist and firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. Peter sets forth in verse nine, two weapons for you to use in your battle against the evil one. These weapons are faith and friendship. Look at the start of verse nine, resist him firm in your faith.

Now, why does Peter say faith here, resist him firm in your faith? Why does he not say resist him firm in your sober-mindedness or resist him firm in your watchfulness? He's called us to be those things in verse eight. Or why doesn't he say resist him firm in your diligence?

Well, it's because faith does not find its strength in itself. Faith finds its strength in its object, in the one in whom the faith is placed. Our strength does not come from our believing. Our strength comes from the one in whom we are believing. So he is saying, essentially, when he says, resist them firm in your faith, he's saying resist them firmly and completely relying upon Christ. Resist the evil one firmly by not resisting him in your own strength. Resist him firmly by trusting in Christ for you.

You know, faith is fundamentally extraspective, not introspective. Faith fundamentally is looking away from the self, unto an object outside of the self, And that object must be the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, the world around you is always telling you to look inside yourself. The world around you is saying, just look within yourself. You just have to have faith in yourself. Just believe in yourself. Well, you know where you will go if you exercise that philosophy to believe in yourself? You'll believe yourself right into eternal hell. You can't believe in yourself into glory. Yourself doesn't have anything worth believing, does it?

I remember when we were gathered around my father's, on his deathbed, and he preached something of a sermon to us. And in that sermon, he said, do not look within yourself. You will never find what you are looking for in yourself. You will never ever find within yourself anything other than despair. Look outside of yourself. Look to Christ Jesus alone for your salvation.

You remember that story in Exodus chapter 12 where God comes and he says he is going to bring about this 10th plague upon the Egyptians. And that 10th plague was that all the firstborn children of Egypt would die and even their livestock. But he said there was a way for the Israelites to not experience the death of their firstborn.

Perhaps you remember what that was. It was to take the blood of a lamb and to put it on the doors around their homes. And when God would come, if he saw the blood over the homes, he would pass over those homes. Well, J.G. Voss, commenting on this, says the following. Suppose two families lived side by side. Both have killed the lamb and put the blood on the door.

One family is rejoicing in conscious certainty of safety from the destroying plague. The other family is troubled by doubts and worries. questioning and worrying about whether they will really be spared or not. Which of these families is safer? Which family is safer? Think about that. Which family is safer? You have two families. One is in despair and doubts. One is consciously rejoicing in certain. The answer is Both are alike, safe, though one has assurance and the other has doubts.

For God had not said, when I see a house where the people have no doubts or worries, I will pass over you. What God had said was, when I see the blood, I will pass over you. Exodus 12, 13. The person who is putting his faith in the blood, whatever doubts about himself he may have, is saved in God's sight and belongs with the covenant people of God. If your faith in the blood this morning, then you are safe. It's not so much about your faithfulness as it is his faithfulness to his people. But faith is not your only weapon here in verse nine. We see a second weapon in verse nine and that is friendship.

We read there, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. The experiences that you face as you fight against the devil, he is saying, are not unique to you. These are

Christian experiences that your brothers and sisters in Christ know right here in this room and around the world. And this should help give you courage, shouldn't it? Because you know that you have brothers and sisters enduring throughout the world in this very room, around this city. And they're facing these same sort of, generally speaking, satanic attacks as you are. I'm not saying there's not a particular way he'll craft his arrow for you, but there is this same enemy and he is out to get you as he is out to get your neighbor in Christ. And they're enduring these same afflictions.

You know, it's sort of like, I don't know if others had this experience, but I remember when I was maybe 13, 14, and I would look around, I would see all these people driving cars, and I would think, okay, it clearly can't be that hard. Every 16-year-old seems to be able to figure it out. But I'm a little bit nervous that when I get 16, I'm not gonna know how to drive a car. But it gave me some sense of courage to know that all these other 16-year-olds somehow figured it out. It's gotta be possible to drive a vehicle.

So we look around and we think not to make light of our battles or the sense of defeat that we're experiencing at one moment or another, but you look around and you say, not because you think less of that person, you're thinking that person over there is making it, and that person over there is making it. I don't know how they're making it, but I know they're experiencing, generally speaking, the same evil when I am, and yet somehow they're enduring. Somehow it's gotta be possible to keep going. Somehow it's gotta be possible to press on. The pastor under whom I was raised shared this when preaching this sermon from this text. He said, years ago I had a temptation from without, pestering my mind rather constantly. It was there day and night. I couldn't get it out of my mind. I did nothing to encourage it. I didn't want it. I hated it. I did nothing to foster it. I did everything, as a matter of fact, quite the opposite.

I was constantly in the word. I was constantly in prayer, loving the Lord, following the Lord, resisting the devil. And so I called my friend Sinclair Ferguson and we talked it over. And after a while he said, well, David, it's obvious. This is satanic attack.

Well, what do you do? Well, you live through it. You persevere through it. With the means of grace as you're doing, you persevere through it. It is satanic attack. So you're not alone believer here this morning. You keep looking to the same old rugged cross again and again and again.

And let us help one another in this way as a church. Let us encourage one another as our brothers and sisters face these attacks from the evil one to press on, to keep looking back to the cross. When our brother or sister is struck by a fiery dart from the evil one, let us do our best to point them back to Christ, to point them back to the sure foundation of our salvation and the finished work of Jesus that we might, alongside of them, press on in the faith. Let us not look down upon one another, but let us help one another as we press on to glory, believing in the promises of God.

What is the shield of faith in Ephesians chapter 6? You know, the shield of faith isn't the strength of the person. The shield of faith is believing again and again and again in the promises of God in the gospel. The shield of faith is looking again to Christ. The shield of faith isn't something so powerful in the person. It's the goodness of the shield is what brings that person protection. It's the object. We must keep pointing one another back to the cross.

Sometimes I felt like in different counseling settings, not here yet, but it'll happen, where I feel like all I do is tell people, to Jesus over and over and over again. I want to be able to do more, but there's nothing more that can be done. I'm not saying that means every particular struggle we face has the exact same remedy in all the exact same ways. I'm not discouraging trying to search the scriptures for different ways of articulating these truths. Don't mishear me.

I think there's a lot of wisdom in an arrayed understanding of Christ and his beauty and what he's done for us. But I think we all know that temptation in our own hearts. I want to find something that can solve this other than just the goodness of God in Jesus Christ. Well, our third point this morning, our God.

Verses 10 and 11, our God. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever, amen. It's verses 10 and 11.

You know, a right doctrine about God is fundamental, not only to being saved, but it's fundamental to growing in your relationship with God. To put it bluntly, how well can you love and obey someone that you don't really know? You can't do it very well. This is true on a human level. Every single relationship on earth, to quote J. Gresham Machen, is just bristling with doctrine. Every single relationship on earth is just bristling with doctrine.

How is that so? Well, you all believe something about everyone in your life, and it impacts how you interact with that someone in your life. For example, if you have a spouse, if you believe your spouse is a selfish liar, I promise it'll affect how you interact with your spouse, won't it? If you believe your spouse is a selfless truth teller, it will impact the way that you treat your spouse. But it's not just in those most intimate relationships.

It's as broad as a stranger that you meet tomorrow for the first time. Think about it. You meet that stranger tomorrow. And you immediately, whether you consciously are processing this or not, you begin to make assessments. You believe that stranger you meet tomorrow is probably up to no good. I assure you it'll affect what kind of information you share with that stranger.

But if you think this stranger seems really welcoming and engaging and a likable person, it'll affect how you interact with them. What you believe about every other person in your life, the doctrine that you hold in relation to that human being affects how you relate to them. How much more so, I ask you, do you think that is going to be true of your relationship with God? What you believe about Him, who you think He really is, must impact how you relate to Him and how you think He relates to you. Why do I say all of that? Because in this final point, we're considering our God and who does verse 10 or how does verse 10 and 11 describe our God? Verse 10 tells you, He's a God of all grace.

Did you catch that? As someone here told me the other day, God's grace is God's riches at Christ's expense. God has grace upon grace upon grace for weak sinners. Does the God that you are serving this morning have grace for

you, a weak sinner? This text says he's the God of all grace. The God you ought to be serving is the God of all grace. You don't earn grace. In fact, by definition, you cannot earn grace.

It is a gift freely giving. In humility, you simply receive again and again the grace of God. So you sin that sin. You know that sin, the one I'm talking about, the one you did yesterday and then you do again tomorrow? You know that sin, that sin, that one that just seems to have a grip on you. You sin that sin again. That's a shameful thing. It is. And I do it too. And it's a shameful thing when I do that thing. Whatever that thing might be in your life that you do again.

But is your God a God of all grace? Is your God a God that will again pick you up, again have mercy on you, again forgive you of your transgressions? He is called, here in the text, a God who called you to his eternal glory in Christ. He called you effectually, savingly to himself. He's been calling us throughout this whole book. Back at chapter one, verse 15, God was called, we are called, called you to be holy. In chapter two, verse nine, God called you out of his darkness into his marvelous light. In chapter two, verse 21, he called you to endure suffering. In chapter five, verse 10, he calls you to eternal glory in Christ. Your God called you to himself and your God, according to verse 10, will keep you for himself in all glory in Christ Jesus. He called you for himself and he called you for all eternity.

When I was growing up, we would be playing out in the fields and my mom would make supper and then she would come out with a cowbell and she would ring it and we would hear the call and we would all come home to eat supper. My mom called us back home. Your heavenly father calls you to himself. You don't call yourself to him."

And notice just briefly how God is described in so many good ways here in verse 10. He will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. He does it all. Doesn't this just make you wanna worship to think that this is who your God is? You serve a God who restores, confirms, strengthens, and establishes you.

What does that mean? Well, think about restoration. Don't you need restoration on a daily basis? We need new morning mercies on a daily basis You and I need to be restored, strengthened, established in the ways of Christ. And here you see that this is exactly who the Christian God is. And what is the result of all this?

Well, he says in verse 11, to him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. You know, there's a word for what Peter does in verse 11. And that word is worship. He's worshiping God. And how could he not worship God? He's worshiping God in verse 11 because he has just contemplated that the God whom he serves is a God of all grace, a God who calls a people to himself for all eternity, and a God who himself will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish his people.

And can't you, with a little bit of sanctified imagination, picture The Apostle Peter, writing by divine inspiration, writing down these words, he will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. And thinking to himself, pausing and thinking to himself, I know that is true because that is what he has done for me. After I denied my Savior three times on the very night that he was betrayed, what did God do for me? He restored. he confirmed, he strengthened, and he established me. And so as he's writing this, again, with a sanctified imagination, can't you picture him pausing and going, I know this must be true for those to whom I am writing who are in Christ, because I know it is true for me. This is who my God is. This is who the real God is. He is this for me. He will be this for those people over there to whom I am writing this epistle.

And then, still writing by divine inspiration, but with a heart burning with worship, I picture him writing these final words, to him be dominion forever and ever, amen. He doesn't just write those words with a divinely inspired heart, he writes it with a burning heart of worship because this is the God who has saved him and he is worshiping him from his heart.

And so I say to you here this morning, Lord in Christ, is this your God too? Are you willing to believe in this God? I know we, Lord willing, all of us in this room have, but if you don't, come to him. But if you do, are you willing to believe that today again? Are you willing to really believe that this is a God who is this good, this kind, this gracious, this unspeakably good to such unworthy people? But maybe there is someone here today and this is not your God. You can't believe in the God of all grace. You think to yourself, I am wretched. I cannot believe in a God of grace towards me.

Well, I call you to be a Christian. I call you to come to this Christian God that we have been considering together this morning. Come to this God and be saved. Come and find that his grace is sufficient. Come and find that he really is as good as this text describes him to be. But for all of you who know Christ here this morning, you're in Christian warfare.

All of us are. We have an enemy, but we also have weaponry and we have our God who is with us. That is our hope. Let us pray. Almighty God, we do praise you that though our enemy often seems so strong and the forces seem too great, we have a righteousness not our own. We have friends around us fighting this same foe, and by the same God's power at work in them, are resisting, even though at times they be stumbling.

O God, let us not believe the lies of the evil one that the righteousness of Christ cannot avail for the chief of sinners. Let us not believe his lies when he simply holds up our wickedness and tries to plague us from forgetting the righteousness of Christ. Lord God, let us not be duped by him in our interpretation of scripture. Let us hold forth the various doctrines in their articulations rightly. Let us not misunderstand what you teach. Oh Lord, lead us in your ways, keep us for your own glory. We ask this almighty God in the name of Jesus, amen.