

WAR STORY

32nd in a Series on Ephesians called, "Messages to the Misfits"

Passage: Ephesians 6:10-12 – Topic: Spiritual War

Some time ago I read a brief true account from one of our Special Forces soldiers of something that happened when he was deployed several years ago in Afghanistan. He was part of a team of ten men that were looking for a particular enemy leader in the mountains one night. He wrote, "So we are up in the mountains about 0100 hours looking for a bad guy we thought was in the area. Here are ten of us, it's pitch black, a crystal clear night, about 25 degrees. There are bad guys around us. A few shots have been fired, but no big deal. But we decide we could use some air cover, and the only thing around is one B-1 bomber. He flies around at 20,000 feet and says he can't see anything in our area that he could attack. But then he asks if we would like a low level show of force. Stupid question. Of course we tell him yes. Pilot asks if we want it subsonic or supersonic. Very stupid question. Pilot advises he is 20 miles out and stand by. The controller gets us all sitting down and points out the proper direction to look. So picture this. Pitch black, ten killers sitting down, dead quiet and overlooking a 30-mile long valley. All of a sudden, way out below our level you see a set of four 200-foot long white flames coming at us. The controller says, 'Ah, guys, you might want to plug your ears.' Faster than you can blink, a B-1 arrives, supersonic, right over our heads, blasts the sound barrier and it feels like God just hit you in the head with a hammer. He then stands it straight up on its tail with four white trails of flame coming out, goes straight up and disappears. Cost of gas, probably \$50,000. Hearing damage: for certain. Bunch of Talibans thinking twice about shooting at us: priceless."

Do you suppose that the man who wrote that or any of his fellow soldiers forgot even for a moment that they were in a war zone? That's hardly likely. It was an ever present reality. It would have been foolish and dangerous to lose track of that reality. Their lives were totally dependent on what pilots call situational awareness. They needed to have a clear picture of their situation and of what threats existed around them. And yet there are people who live in a war zone often somehow blithely unaware that combat is raging around them. In fact, it is quite common for people to have no situational awareness at all. It sometimes happens to us! For the next few weeks we will be looking at a war that we are caught up in whether we like it or not. We get our first glimpse of this in Ephesians 6:10-12. Hopefully we will significantly raise our situational awareness in coming weeks.

WE ARE IN A STRUGGLE

Paul tells us we need to be strong in the Lord and put on his armor. In verse 12 he says, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." So the first thing he tells us is that we actually do have a struggle we are engaged in.

Ancient Greeks had a number of different words for war. Just like we have the words war, combat, battle, fight; they had words like agonas, mache, polemos, and strateuomai. That first one, agonas, meant a contest or fight. We got the word agony from it. They had mache, which meant battle or combat. They had polemos, which meant fight or warfare, and we get polemic from it. They

had strateuomai, which meant to make war, or serve as a soldier. We get strategize from that one. Paul didn't use any of those in verse 12. He used the word pale, which meant a wrestling match or fight.

In my younger days at various times I played three different contact sports in which things could get very physical. At times I played football, hockey and rugby. All of them required quickness, strength, agility, coordination and knowledge of the game. They were all demanding, and the high degree of physicality involved in all of them carried a significant possibility of injury. But in all of them there were brief moments when I would have a respite. There would be moments when the focus of play would be in a part of the field or rink separate from where I was, where other players were carrying the play. I could not just check out, but I could let down momentarily.

I never wrestled, but I had some good friends who did. And I observed in wrestling there was never that moment of brief respite. Wrestling is one-on-one, and if at any moment you let down your guard, your opponent will attack and take advantage of your inattention. At every moment you are striving with your opponent, matching wits and strength. So what that tells us is that first of all, we are in a fight, and second, it is like a wrestling match in that it is relentless, going on every moment of every day of our lives.

The Christians of ancient Ephesus had no trouble believing that they were in a struggle like that. They faced a hostile world that made life difficult for them. Acts 19:9 says that when the church first started there, some opponents "Publicly maligned the Way" (meaning the Christian faith). The opposition got worse. At one point there was a near riot that culminated with a mob dragging a few Christian leaders up to the front of the amphitheater in Ephesus while they all shouted at them. Verse 34 tells us the crowd began shouting "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" at them. That amphitheater seated about 25,000 people. Can you imagine having 25,000 people chanting at you? It's like those huge crowds we have seen on TV in Iran chanting "death to America." The crowd kept it up for two solid hours! How intimidating that must have been. Things had gotten better since that rough start, but it was still hard. They still had to deal with opposition, ostracism, rejection and ridicule, sometimes from family and former friends.

Greek philosopher, Celsus, ridiculed Christians and depicted them saying, "Let no cultured person draw near (to us), none wise and none sensible, for all that kind of thing we count evil; but if any man is ignorant, if any man is wanting in sense and culture, if anybody is a fool, let him come (to us) boldly..." He then said Christians were "the worst, the vulgarest, the most uneducated persons...they are like a swarm of bats or ants creeping out of their nest."

Today we face less opposition in our society than they did, although there are people in our nation who believe exactly what Celsus did. Opposition to following Christ is like a gathering storm. I have a hard time believing how much more intense and open the opposition is now, than it was when I started out in ministry. Especially in the past ten years, that opposition has increased dramatically. At some point, probably not too far down the road, the full force of the storm is going to hit.

On top of that, there is just the struggle of getting through life. Occasionally you will see a bumper sticker on a car that says, “Life is hard, then you die.” No one really disputes that. It is hard. Why should it be that way? The Bible says it is because we are in a war, a struggle, that goes on unabated every moment of our lives. It is relentless.

When we were on vacation we heard a number of entertainers performing at restaurants. Most of them played and sang primarily Hawaiian music. There were two songs that seemed to show up in almost everyone’s set. One of them was a song originally performed by a man named John Cruz that had the line, “On the island we do it island style. From the mountains to the ocean, from the windward to the leeward side.” We heard that song constantly. The other song that showed up often was not Hawaiian at all. It is a medley of “Somewhere Over The Rainbow” and “What A Wonderful World.” It was first performed by the late Israel Kamakawiwoole. The song proclaims that this is a wonderful world. And there are many wonderful, beautiful things about this life. But after 40 years as a pastor I can tell you that there is also an immeasurable amount of pain. There is literally a world of hurt. To make matters worse there is also ever present conflict between people. These are evidence, some of the effects, of the struggle we face.

There are other evidences and effects. Just open your eyes and you will see them. Have you ever noticed that in order to do anything good, to accomplish anything worthwhile, you always have to make some hard decisions, you have to overcome hardship and you will have to do something difficult. To me a great analogy is getting in good physical shape. That happens only because you choose to work at it, you subject yourself to some pain. If you don’t, it won’t happen. So much of life is just like that. Why is that? Why is it that doing good or accomplishing something worthwhile always seems to involve overcoming obstacles? It is because we are in a struggle, a war.

Here’s another curious thing about this wonderful world. Have you noticed that no matter how good some place or thing might be, it’s never quite perfect. There is always some negative or some potential threat. Here is how life goes so often. Laurie and I were at the airport on Maui, waiting to start our trip home. Laurie had to go to the ladies’ room. When she got back she told me a story. She encountered a woman in the ladies’ room who was in a wheel chair and was having a difficult time navigating the ladies room. Laurie asked her if she needed any assistance. She gratefully accepted Laurie’s offer. As Laurie was helping her she said, “Never break your leg on Maui.” Obviously, she was in the wheel chair because she had broken her leg. Well no one intends to break their leg on Maui. No one intends to break their leg anywhere, so I guess that was sound advice. But then she told Laurie what had happened to her. She had gone on a zip line adventure with her family. When I heard that I immediately thought, “Well easy to see what happened there. She made a bad landing and broke her leg. Maybe I’ll scratch zip line off my to do list.” But that wasn’t what happened. She made it through the zip line adventure with no problem. Then when they were walking back to their car she accidentally stepped awkwardly on a rock, tripped and broke her leg. After doing something adventurous and a tad risky, she broke her leg walking! That kind of thing happens in this world. Far, far worse happens. While we were on our vacation we got a call from Kevin Thompson, who told us that his wife, Denise was dying from early onset Alzheimer’s and he asked if we could lead her

memorial service. That disease began affecting her while she was still in her 40's, and she died at the age of 54. Welcome to the war.

In his book, *Waking The Dead*, John Eldridge wrote, “We are at war...This is not Eden...This is not Mayberry. The world in which we live is a combat zone, a violent clash of kingdoms, a bitter struggle unto death...You were born into a world at war and you will live all your days in the midst of a great battle, involving all the forces of heaven and hell and played out here on earth. Where did you think all this opposition was coming from?” The comment about the forces of heaven and hell leads us to our next point.

OUR BATTLE IS AGAINST SPIRITUAL FORCES

If we are struggling, who are we struggling against? Paul said it is not flesh and blood, not people, but the “powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Wait, spiritual forces of evil means evil spirits. You believe that the hardship of life, the struggle we experience, is caused by evil spirits? That's more than a little superstitious, don't you think? This is the 21st century. We are in the space age, the computer age, the era of science. I think we've gotten beyond such archaic superstitions as evil spirits, haven't we?

I knew some people who served as missionaries in the jungles of Papua New Guinea in the South Pacific for more than 30 years. The people they worked with were barely out of the Stone Age. In today's post-modern society missionaries are often criticized for corrupting the cultures of ancient societies like theirs. The premise is that no culture or belief system is better or worse than any other. So all of them should be protected. The problem with that is it is just not true. Many of the ancient tribal cultures that these so-called elites want to preserve were dominated by fear. That was most certainly the case with the tribes my friends served. The lives of the people in those tribes were continually ruled by fear of the evil spirits that they believed inhabited their world. The first two missionaries that went to their tribe ran into a big problem because of this. Those two missionaries were the first people with white skin the tribe had ever seen. They decided that these bizarre looking beings were likely evil spirits, but they needed to find out for sure if that was true. The method for figuring this out was to throw spears at them. If they were spirits, they reasoned, the spears would simply pass right through them. As you can imagine, the spears did not pass right through them, proving definitively that they were not evil spirits. It did kill them, though.

If you believe in evil spirits creating havoc in your world, doesn't that make you just as superstitious as those people? Why would you believe such a thing when you have never seen any evil spirits? Plus, isn't it true that much of the struggle we have is, in fact, against flesh and blood people?

Laurie and I were getting ready for a much needed vacation a few weeks ago. We had to leave on Monday evening. We were supposed to have a package delivered on Monday. It was a package we had to sign for to receive. It was something we wanted to take with us on our trip. The delivery company said it would be delivered by end of day Monday, which was fine. But the day was coming to an end and there was no sign of the package. I used the tracking number I had been given, but all

that told me was the package was out for delivery. Realizing we were getting close to a time crunch, that we had to leave soon, I called the delivery company. I explained our dilemma to the nice girl I talked to. She told me that their definition of “end of day” was potentially going to be way too late for us. They should have called it end of evening. She said she would get in touch with the delivery truck and find out what she could do, and that she would call me back. I’ve had the “call you back” promise from companies before and they usually don’t do what they say. She told me if I hadn’t heard from her in 20 minutes to call back. A half hour later as I expected I called back because there had been no word from her. This time I got a young man who proved to be ridiculously unhelpful. He insisted that they would get the package to our house, and couldn’t seem to grasp the concept that we would not be there. Finally he said, “Well, then we can just deliver it tomorrow.” This after I had explained to him twice that we were going out of town and would be gone for 12 days. Exasperated, I said, “How is that going to help? I just told you that we won’t be here for almost 2 weeks.” He had no solution to offer. I suggested an option. “How about if we have you deliver the package to the hotel we will be staying at this week?” He said, “Yes, we can do that.” I gave him the address of the hotel, then he put me on hold. When he came back he said, “No, we can’t do that.” Then I said, “Well, I guess the best we can do is for you to hold the package and deliver it in 2 weeks when we get home.” “No, we can only hold the package for 2 days.” At that point I said, “Well then what exactly do you propose to do?” He said, “Well, we will deliver the package tonight. It’s on the truck for delivery.” It was unbelievable. Exasperated, I said, “What part of we are not going to be here are you unable to understand?” At that point I gave up on him. So I asked to speak to his supervisor. I went through the same runaround with him. Finally I got him to agree that they would hold the package and deliver it when we got home. He confirmed the new date for delivery and said it was taken care of, that he had informed the driver. After all that, they went ahead and delivered it after we had left even though it required a signature and there was no one to sign for it. They just left it on our doorstep where it sat for days. It was remarkably bad customer service. Just to protect the innocent, it wasn’t UPS, Fed Ex, Amazon or the US Postal Service.

The experience felt like a battle. But there were no evil spirits involved. It was just people. The frustration of the experience was caused purely by people. Unhelpful people to be sure, but still just people. The battle was against flesh and blood all the way. Much of the difficulty faced by the Ephesians was caused by people who opposed them and made life hard for them. So why would anyone believe there were evil spirits that were causing all the problems?

Yes, often our struggles are caused by people, but it is not unusual for the difficulties they create for us to be inexplicable. Why do they do the things they do? Sometimes we can understand, but sometimes it makes no sense whatsoever. In 1 Thessalonians 2:18 Paul wrote about how he had wanted to come back to Thessalonica to minister to the Christians there because he had spent so little time with them. He says, “We wanted to come to you, certainly I, Paul, did, again and again, but Satan blocked our way.” But it was actually people who kept him from going there. There were some Jewish opponents of Paul who hired some bad actors to start a riot that was so tumultuous Paul had to leave town to protect the local believers. Those opponents were so determined that when they heard Paul had moved on to Berea down the road they went there and did the same thing. Paul couldn’t go back to Thessalonica because of those people. Yet Paul said it was Satan that blocked his way. The

contention is that yes, people were causing the problem, but Satan was behind those people, manipulating them to try to create problems for Paul.

In addition, all of the problems we face are not caused by people. Why is life so perverse at times? Why is it that trying to do good things always seems to be opposed? We all know the law of entropy, that things tend toward disorder. Why is life that way? For instance, why is it that everything gets old and wears out, including us? Why don't things get better as time goes by? And then there is hardship of life itself. There are so many inexplicable things that happen to us that discourage or even defeat us altogether. A big glimpse into the spiritual realm is given by the book of Job. Job had great tragedies befall him. What Job could not see was that behind the events in his life there were things going on in the spiritual realm that were the ultimate cause of what happened to him. What seemed to be an unusual combination of random tragedies was in fact part of a campaign going on in the unseen realm.

When we look at the way the world is the Bible's explanation of what is going on fits with what we see and actually enables us to understand it. But still, unseen beings manipulating events and people in our world? That's a tough pill to swallow. Perhaps, but maybe not as tough as you might think. In the *Outlander* series of books and now television series, Claire, the central character goes back in time from the 20th century to 18th century Scotland. Wait, she traveled through time? Maybe they should have called the books the outlandish series. Okay, so you have to suspend your sense of reality. Anyway, in the series Claire was a doctor. Back in 18th century Scotland she tried to explain to the people at one point that infections and many diseases were caused by tiny creatures invisible to the naked eye. The idea seemed absurd to them. They had never seen any such creatures. What could be the connection between some supposed invisible creatures and an infected wound, or a case of pneumonia? It sounded like a fairy tale. But it was true, and today we take it as accepted fact, even though I personally have never seen bacteria even once. I believe in those invisible creatures and the damage they cause. Well, yes, but the fact is now using powerful microscopes people can actually see them even though I personally have not. Maybe so, but 200 years ago they couldn't see them. 2000 years ago they couldn't see them, but they were still the cause of disease and infection. Is it not possible that at some point in the future we might actually be able to see spiritual beings that right now are invisible? It would have seemed impossible to see bacteria and viruses hundreds of years ago, but they were still there and technology eventually made it possible to see them. Is it inconceivable that in some way in the future a similar thing might happen in regard to spiritual beings?

In the end, as usual, this comes down to a question of faith. The Bible claims to be God's revelation of himself and of truth. It claims to be a totally reliable source of information about God, about people and about the world. Do we believe that it is what it claims? If we do then we believe we are in the middle of a war in the spiritual realms because God's truth says that is so. This is something we would not have known purely by human observation and reasoning. We know it because we trust God's word by faith.

Theologian Abraham Kuyper said, “If once the curtain were pulled back and the spiritual world behind it came into view, it would expose to our spiritual vision a struggle so intense, so convulsive, sweeping everything within its range, that the fiercest battle fought on earth would seem by comparison a mere game. Not here, but up there, that is where the real conflict is waged.”

In his book, *Spirit Warriors*, Stu Weber wrote, “earth is a battlefield, quite literally the designated fight site between God and Satan, good and evil, right and wrong, life and death, heaven and hell. Battlefield earth roils with the smoke, pain, shock and disorientation of warfare. Ask any soldier who has experienced combat. If he can put words to it, he’ll describe a scene of chaos, confusion, pain and shock...This battlefield is crisscrossed by wandering, stumbling human beings who are deeply wounded, shell shocked and confused.”

Behind all the turmoil, conflict, hardship, pain and confusion of this life, we have an enemy who is actually able to manipulate people and events in this world. Our opponent is the embodiment of evil. He has no goodness within him to ameliorate the evil to even a small extent. He has no moral code whatsoever that might limit what he does. He is filled with hate. He is twisted to a degree that we cannot imagine. He is not all powerful or ever present, but he is extremely clever and he has a complete understanding of human nature. He is vicious. And he is relentless. He is violently opposed to God and despises everything that has to do with God. That includes you. The astounding thing to me is that God is 100% pure good. Why would anyone be opposed to him? It is because Satan cannot stand that he’s not number 1. He fights against God because he wants to oust him and take over his throne. But that is irrational. Satan did not create anything. He can’t. He doesn’t have the power. Satan is, himself, a created being. Yet he fights against God thinking that somehow he is going to replace him. Satan doesn’t have the power to do what God does, which is to hold the universe together. Yet he refuses to see that. At the end of the day he is so twisted that he will not allow himself to see the obvious. He is in fact insane. That is why throughout history there have been and continue to be irrational and insane attempts to wipe out God’s people.

APPLICATION

UNDERSTAND WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON

This is all about gaining situational awareness. It is about knowing every day of our lives what is going on. It is about waking up to the face that a battle is raging around us, and that if we do not act wisely and appropriately we are going to be casualties of the war. It is about seeing what is really going on behind the scenes. Again I want to quote John Eldridge in his book *Waking The Dead*. “Until we come to terms with war as the context of our days we will not understand life. We will misinterpret 90% of what is happening around us and to us. It will be very hard to believe that God’s intentions toward us are for abundant life...Most people get stuck at some point because God appears to have abandoned them.” He’s right. We want the blessings of this life, and if don’t get them we think God has failed us. Maybe he’s not there at all. We forget that we are in a war zone. We forget that we are soldiers. We fail to take it seriously when Paul instructs us in 2 Timothy 2:3-4, “Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in

civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.” We are soldiers, and we are in combat, and when we lose sight of that truth we set ourselves up for disaster.

I get annoyed by the health and wealth preachers you encounter all too often. They approach life with the “what a wonderful world” mindset. Some time go and watch the opening 15 minutes or so of the movie, “Saving Private Ryan.” It’s hard to watch. It depicts graphically, maybe too graphically, what it was like to land on Omaha Beach in Normandy on June 6, 1944. The violence, the horror, the chaos was overwhelming. If you strolled onto that beach thinking “What a wonderful world” you wouldn’t think it long, because you’d be dead. If you try to walk through this war zone expecting skies of blue, clouds of white, trees of green, red roses too, seeing them blossom for me and you, you are setting yourself up for disaster. First you won’t be able to do what a soldier is supposed to do. You won’t be able to endure the hardship and carry on. Second you will end up disappointed, confused and bitter. You likely will decide you cannot trust God.

But if you go through life saying, “Yes, there are many beautiful, wonderful things here and I will be thankful for every little bit I get to enjoy, but I will also know that I am in combat. The war is on. I will prepare to stand when the enemy attacks. I will be alert so I will not be caught off guard.” We need to see that behind the difficult things, behind the tragedies and losses, behind the opposition from people, there is an enemy who is at work.

If we fail to see the world as it is then we will end up when things seem to go completely off track and life gets almost unbearable asking ourselves, “Why me?” Does a soldier in the midst of battle ask, “Why is this happening to me? Why are those people shooting at me?” That would be absurd. He’s in a war! Of course people are shooting at him, because that’s what happens in war.

This has been an interesting year for our family. At the beginning of the year we were concerned about the possibility that Michael and Carissa might not be able to have children. They had been trying for several years with nothing to show for it. They went to a fertility clinic to no avail. Then they tried in vitro fertilization. Not only did it fail but she ended up with internal bleeding that required emergency surgery. It was a real blow. I grieved over the most likely outcome of the whole thing, which was they could never have kids. But then, to our shock and joy, Carissa was pregnant. She had a tough pregnancy, and just over half way through she had to go into the hospital because it appeared she was going to go into labor way too early. We knew that if she delivered chances were a little better than 50-50 the baby would survive, and if it did would have some complications. Right around that time Toby and Anna learned that their daughter, Cara, 2 years old had something called Chiari malformation that was affecting her brain. I admit that I asked, “Why is this happening? What is going on?” Well what was happening, and is continuing to happen is a spiritual war that is impacting events in this world. Fortunately Carissa was able to carry her baby to 36 weeks and delivered a healthy boy. Cara is doing well, but there is no question that her condition is affecting her. We do not yet know what this will mean for her. We are praying for the best, but we have to remember that we are in a war.

Now I want to give one caution. There are Christians who make the work of our enemy the entire focus of their teaching. They are people going around naming demons and binding them. Did you notice that Paul says exactly zero about that? That is nowhere to be found in Scripture. People tend to go to extremes when this idea of spiritual war comes up. One is to be obsessed with it and to start believing things the Bible never says. The other extreme is to reject the idea as superstitious. Both extremes are to be avoided. We should accept the reality of the spiritual war, but let our understanding of it be ruled by Scripture.

We need to be alert, aware that the spiritual battle is being waged, but we don't need to see demons around every corner and under every bed. We don't need to be doing bizarre things to defeat them. Paul says all we need to do is be strong in the Lord and put on his full armor, which we will learn more about in coming weeks. But this does lead to our next point.

ADJUST YOUR TACTICS

First let's think about people. How are we to deal with people that might oppose us or make life difficult in some way for us? Imagine that you are playing a game of chess. You make a move that puts your opponent in a bad situation and sets you up for a win. When your opponent sees that and realizes what has happened he picks up the chess piece you have just moved and starts pounding it on the table, yelling at the piece, "I'll get you for what you just did. I hate you. You are going to pay for trying to beat me." What would you think? Surely you would think that your opponent is crazy. He's taking his frustration and anger out on a piece that is an inanimate object. That chess piece is not his opponent, you are. You are the one defeating him. When I encounter those difficult people, something we all must do from time to time, it is helpful to remember that they are the chess piece. There is an evil genius behind them that is pulling their strings, and he is the one who is the real problem.

Using human power or human strategies to try to defeat the real enemy simply won't work. In 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 Paul wrote, "Through we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds." We must use weapons that have divine power, weapons like faith, love, power and trusting in God's power.

Let's imagine that you look at the moral and political situation in our nation today and decide that clearly a war is on, and you need to do something. Suppose that you decide the best way to act is to gather as many allies as you can and to do all you can to exercise political power to bring about change. Is political power a weapon of the world or a spiritual weapon with divine power? It is a weapon of the world. How effective is it going to be then in fighting the real battle, the spiritual one? How threatened do you think Satan is by political power? Human political power cannot do a thing against him. In the end your political power will fail, because it is fighting at the wrong level. It would be like using a bow and arrow to fight against a satellite in space.

Our impatience with people who get in our way, or treat us poorly, our efforts to manipulate them or overpower them, all miss the point. There is someone behind those mean, unreasonable, unkind

people, and that someone is utterly unaffected by your impatience, your anger or your efforts to manipulate. You must use spiritual weapons to fight back against them.

We will learn more about weapons with divine power in a few weeks, but in the meantime, we need to know that being strong in the Lord, having faith in him and asking him to work, is the most important thing we can do. When the thing that you fear happens in your life and you feel like you are going to crumble in the face of it, you need to recognize that this is a part of the war. You are under attack. You need to remember that the point of the attack is to rip you away from God, to have you become bitter, to quit serving him.

In 1 Peter 5:8-10, Peter wrote, “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” You look like a tasty morsel to him and he wants to gulp you down. But Peter goes on, “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. 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.” Peter says resist him in faith, and God will make you strong.

James makes an astounding promise that is parallel to Peter’s promise. In James 4:7 he wrote, “Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” He won’t compromise with you, he won’t slowly walk away, he will flee, he will run away. When you stand firm in faith, trusting God, you frighten Satan and his minions. They will run from you in fear! So stand firm in faith, recognize what Satan is up to, and trust in God.