

# "Our Adversary"

1 Peter 5:8

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Most of us understand that we are living in a world with some very dangerous people. We can go to the website for the FBI [▶PPT▶](#), and we can even narrow it down, and we can find a list of the ten people who are considered to be the most dangerous in the world. We recognize the name of Osama bin Laden, but there are others. We look at that list, and we find men who have been accused of murder, and armed robbery, and kidnapping, and child trafficking, organized crime, extortion, arson, and many of them have been accused of a wide variety of bizarre combinations of all of these terrible things. Some have escaped from various prisons; others have murdered police and sheriff's deputies; and virtually all of them are considered **"armed and extremely dangerous."**

However, as dangerous as these ten men may be, they are almost nothing compared to an enemy who is described for us in the pages of the Bible. We will never find his picture on a **"Most Wanted"** poster. We will never see him featured on **"America's Most Wanted."** And yet he is ruthless. He is dangerous. He is brutal and vicious. And so this morning I would like for us to study a request from one of our members who has specifically asked for a sermon on Satan.

And what an important request it is, because we are living in a world where people would prefer that we never talk about Satan. Several years ago, our family went to the state capitol building to see the Christmas tree, and while we were there we went up to the second level to get a better view of the tree. If you have ever been there to see the Christmas tree, then you know that in the spirit of love, and tolerance, and open-mindedness, there was a sign [▶PPT▶](#) that was so lovingly provided by the Freedom from Religion Foundation, **"At this season of the Winter Solstice may reason prevail. There are no gods, no devils, no angels, no heaven or hell. There is only our natural world. Religion is but myth and superstition that hardens hearts and enslaves minds."** And so there are people all around us who would love for us not to believe in Satan.

And yet when we look at the word of God, we very quickly find that Satan is very real. In fact, the first reference to Satan comes almost immediately—only three chapters from the beginning of the whole Bible. In the opening verses of **Genesis 3**, we find that Satan is both a deceiver and a liar, and as we read through the Bible, it only gets worse from there. He is referred to by every New Testament writer. On top of that, Jesus directly referred to Satan at least fifteen times Himself. And all combined, Satan is referred to in the Scriptures a total of 174 times. Satan is alive and well, and yet he would love for us to believe that statement that is posted every year in our state capitol. He wants us to forget that he is very real.

This morning, therefore, I would like for us to study a single verse—and it comes from a man who had been very specifically warned by Jesus Himself that Satan was about to attack, and yet he gave in even after the warning. You might remember (on the night before He died) how Jesus talked to Peter, and Jesus said to Peter, "**Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat.**" There is the warning, and yet before that night was over, Peter had denied the Lord three times. As we continue reading, we find that Peter recovers from that fall. He repented of his sin, the Lord forgave him for what he had done, and then the Lord encouraged Peter to go out and tell others about that experience. That, of course, is exactly what Peter did.

This morning, then, I would like for us to look at Peter's inspired advice for dealing with Satan. The verse is found in **1 Peter 5—1 Peter 5:8**. »PPT» In our pew Bibles, the passage is found on **page 1899**. As he wrote this verse, I am sure that Peter was thinking back to his personal experience with Satan, and so (looking back on it many years later) Peter is now giving us some inside advice on how to survive an attack by the Devil. With all of this as background, let us please look together at **1 Peter 5:8**. Peter says, "**Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**" This morning, I would like for us to divide our thoughts on this passage into two parts. First of all, let us look at what we know about the Devil himself. And then secondly, let us consider what we need to do about it.

**I. But first of all, let us look at Peter's words very carefully as we consider WHAT PETER IS TELLING US ABOUT THE DEVIL HIMSELF.**  
»PPT»

And as we start thinking about Satan, one thing we notice here is that his physical appearance is not what sets him apart. In other words, Peter does not say, "**Watch out for a creepy-looking guy dressed in red with horns, a long tail, and a pitchfork!**" Peter did not say that! In fact, in **2 Corinthians 11:14**, the apostle Paul tells us that, "**...Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.**" So we are not looking out for Satan based on appearance.

**A. And with that in mind, we look back to Peter, and we find, first of all, that Satan is described as our "ADVERSARY."** »PPT»

Probably most of us hate to admit that we have an enemy. After all, very few of us have people who want to see us dead. Maybe we have some people who are not our friends. Maybe we have some co-workers who do not see eye-to-eye with us on an issue here or there. But Peter starts out with a shocking statement: Satan is our enemy! And notice how personal it is. The verse starts out with Peter referring to Satan as, "**Your adversary....**" In other words, Satan is not just some bad guy out there somewhere—Satan is not just "representative of evil," Satan is not just an "evil force," Satan is not just "the dark side," but he is a bad guy after YOU. He is "**your adversary.**" He is against you. Satan is out to get us personally. Satan wants to destroy us.

Every night on the news, we see some kind of terrible thing that happens—some kind of gunman kills a bunch of students on a college campus somewhere, there is a terrorist bombing somewhere in the world, there is a sniper attack on a highway somewhere. All of this is horrible, but it does not always make us personally afraid, because it is so far away. It does not affect us. But Satan is a personal enemy. Satan is after us individually. And Satan is the greatest and most dangerous enemy that any of us will ever face. Satan is anti-you. Anything that will lead to our spiritual downfall will be supported by the Devil.

Perhaps we think that the enemy can be avoided. Perhaps we may be tempted to think, **"If I leave him alone, then he will leave me alone."** And yet that is not the case. Ignoring the threat is like the little child who covers his eyes and thinks that no one can see him—like an ostrich with its head in the sand. First of all, then, the apostle Peter wants us to realize that Satan is our **"enemy."**

**B. Not only do we find that Satan is our "adversary," but we also discover in 1 Peter 5:8 that Satan is given a name. He is referred to as the "Devil." »PPT»**

The word is **"DIABOLOS,"** and it literally means **"slanderer"** or **"accuser."** And so Satan is an enemy who slanders and accuses. That is, he speaks falsely about us. Satan is a liar, and as Jesus said in **John 8:44**, he is the **"father of lies."** Satan has also been called the **"Destroyer."** Satan's goal, then, is to destroy the people of God with lies and slander. In **Revelation 12:10**, Satan is described as being, **"the accuser of our brethren,"** as one, **"...who accuses them before our God day and night."** Satan brings false and slanderous accusations against the people of God.

**C. And then we come to something else we know about Satan in 1 Peter 5:8, and that is, he is described as "PROWL[ING] AROUND LIKE A ROARING LION, SEEKING SOMEONE TO DEVOUR." »PPT»**

We are living in a time and a place where there is almost zero chance that any of us here this morning will be attacked and killed by a wild animal. Statistically speaking, it is not going to happen! Thank God for that! Maybe a year or two ago, you might remember the cougar sightings in this part of the country—a footprint here and there, maybe a missing chicken or something, but people were not being eaten by the cougar. Several weeks ago, you might remember that a little dog was attacked by a coyote over on the west side of Madison. So the dog gets some stitches, but people were not being attacked and eaten by coyotes. Maybe the most dangerous animals we have inside the city limits right now would be turkeys. You might remember that over the past year or so, mail carriers have been harassed by wild turkeys over on the near west side. But then again, postal employees were not being swallowed whole by wild turkeys! And so it might be a little hard for us to imagine and appreciate just how strong and ferocious and dangerous and bloodthirsty Satan really is.

Peter, then, describes Satan as a **"roaring lion."** Here in Madison, the only place we ever see a lion is in the zoo—behind thick glass and a chain link fence—we see a nice display with information on where lions actually live. And so the lions are there on display for us to appreciate. But for just a moment, try to imagine meeting a lion face-to-face somewhere out in the wilderness. If you have time, I would recommend going home this afternoon and doing a search on YouTube for **"lion attack."** There is some disturbing stuff out there—people getting their arms ripped off, people being mauled or killed. In our society, we do not always appreciate how vicious lions really are. A lion is faster than we are. A lion is stronger than we are. A lion has a better sense of smell than we do. A lion does not slow down just because we may get tired of running. We cannot call a "time out" with a lion. A lion is a fearsome enemy. But as Peter says (from personal experience), **"...the Devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."**

If you have watched any nature shows, then you know that a lion **"prowls around."** The lion pretty much stays in one general area, he does not follow migrating animals, but he pretty much stays put and he gets to know his own area. But within that area, he **"prowls around."** He knows which way the wind blows. He knows where to hide. He knows where other animals will pass by. He knows where the watering hole is located. He knows how to be so incredibly quiet. A lion is sneaky. He can hide in the tall grass. As a lion prowls around, he is studying the herd and looking for any weaknesses. He is looking for those who are young or old. He is looking for those who are sick or injured or those who are distracted. And as I understand it, the "roar" helps to sort things out a little bit. The "roar" puts the fear out there. As the lion roars, he is watching very carefully to see how the herd reacts. It helps the lion to focus in on those who may be weaker than the others. Sometimes a lion will even do a little jogging near a herd. And there again, the lion is scoping out those who are weak or slow, he is looking for an animal that maybe has a little limp or something, and once he figures that out (once he decides on a target), he may actually run past those who are strong to go get an animal on the other side of the herd who is weak. Deep down, Satan is a coward, Satan is opportunistic, and he will hunt us down at our weakest moment—perhaps when we have been away from the assembly for a while, perhaps when we have been too tired or too distracted to pray, or maybe right as we give in to a smaller temptation. Satan is looking for weakness.

And it is interesting to me that Peter says Satan's goal is to **"devour."** This is not a gentle word for quietly eating a meal, but it is a word referring to gulping something down, to swallow something completely and violently. It describes something that a teenager might do at the dinner table. The Devil is not interested in nibbling on us, Satan is not interested in using a knife and fork and a napkin and the fancy place setting, but he wants to gulp us down. Satan's goal, then, is to destroy us completely.

You might remember what happened back in **Genesis 4**. Right after God had rejected Cain's sacrifice and had accepted Abel's, God said to Cain, **"If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."** Unfortunately, Cain did not listen to God's warning, Cain did not take that warning

seriously, and in the very next verse, we are told that Cain murdered his own brother—the first murder in the history of the world. Satan’s strategy is revealed again in **Job 1**. Satan approaches God, and God asks Satan where he has come from, and Satan says, **“From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.”** In other words, Satan is always out there, continually looking for someone to devour.

Satan is our adversary, Satan is our accuser, and Satan is out to destroy us in any way possible. We are being hunted by a powerful enemy. As we think about that, we need to consider a question. If we knew that we were being hunted down and pursued by the most sinister and wicked person on the face of the earth—if we knew that someone on the FBI’s 10 Most Wanted list was out there looking to hurt us specifically, how would we react to that information? If I knew that I was being actively stalked by a dangerous person, how would that information change my life?

## **II. This brings us back to 1 Peter 5:8, because Peter not only describes who Satan is, but he also tells us HOW WE NEED TO REACT. »PPT»**

You know, just the fact that we are told what to do tells us that Satan is an enemy who can be resisted. He is an enemy who can be defeated. Earlier, I had mentioned the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted list. As I was doing the research for this morning’s lesson, I discovered that the list started as the result of a discussion over a card game between J. Edgar Hoover and the man who was the head of an international news organization. They started talking, and the news man convinced Mr. Hoover to start publishing the list of the Ten Most Wanted. The list was made public in March 1950. Since 1950, there have been a total of 490 names on the list. But what I found encouraging is that of those 490 people, 459 have been captured or located! So, as dangerous as the Ten Most Wanted may be, they are not invincible. They all have a weakness, and that is certainly also true of Satan. He can be defeated. And so as the apostle Peter gives us some advice based on his own personal experience, we see two key attitudes in **verse 8**.

### **A. First of all, we are told to “BE OF SOBER SPIRIT.” »PPT»**

The word itself refers to abstaining from wine. It refers to not being under the influence of something. It refers to being controlled and balanced in our thinking. It refers to sound moral judgment. It refers to being disciplined. It is the opposite of panic. It involves keeping calm in a stressful situation. It refers to not being given over to extravagance or indulgence. If we are over-indulging ourselves in anything—food, or sleep, or expensive clothing, or power, or possessions, or anything—then our minds get dull and we get distracted from the danger. We are being stalked by a wild animal. Satan is out there prowling. He is looking for someone to devour. And if we lose our sobriety, we are like that big fat lazy zebra who zones out and just grazes himself off into the sunset. He has put himself in some serious danger.

As Christians, then, we need to stay sober if we are to survive being stalked by Satan. This theme is not new to Peter. In **1 Peter 1:13**, Peter said, **“Therefore,**

***prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.***” Peter went on to say (in **1 Peter 4:7**), ***“The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.”*** But what I found interesting while looking at **1 Peter 5:8** is that Peter is not telling us to keep on being sober. But instead, he is telling us to get sober. He is telling us to start being sober. He is saying to us, **“Sober up! Snap out of it!”** Remember, this advice is coming from someone who had been overtaken by Satan. Peter knows from experience that Satan sneaks up on us when we least expect it. Peter, then, is saying, ***“Be of sober spirit.”*** We are not to indulge ourselves in the pleasures of this world. We are not to be groggy in our Christian life, but we are to wake up.

**B. Secondly, Peter also tells us that we are to “BE ON THE ALERT.”**  
**»PPT»**

Other translations might tell us to be ***“watchful,”*** or to be ***“on the lookout,”*** or to be ***“on guard.”*** The idea is that we are to be on the alert for the spiritual pitfalls in life, and we are to take appropriate action so that we do not stumble. We are to keep our eyes open. We are to be aware of what is going on around us.

Maybe you can remember your very first day in middle school, or maybe high school, or maybe your first day on a new job. Most of us were probably ***“on the alert.”*** We were in a new situation, we did not know what to expect, and so our defenses were up. We were wide awake. We were looking around. We were always aware of what was going on around us. We were always looking out for what might happen next. Peter is telling us to have that same attitude with our Christian faith. As we go through life, we are to be aware that Satan is out there, and he is prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. We are to keep our eyes wide open.

Maybe we could compare it to defensive driving—always being aware of what is going on around us—always anticipating what could possibly go wrong. This past week, I was driving on Whitney Way and had a guy just pull right into my lane—no warning, no signal, nothing—he just pulled over as if I were not even there. Thankfully, I was awake, and I was able to avoid an accident. If I had been on the phone, if I had been daydreaming, if I had not been aware, then I might be recovering from an accident right now. Probably all of us have had a similar experience. In a similar way, Peter is telling us to ***“be on the alert.”*** In fact, we are told to be on the alert (we are told to watch out) more than 20 times in the New Testament, and most of those warnings come from Jesus Himself. And so we are to be aware.

Like those zebras out there on the plains, we have no idea when the next attack will come. We have no idea when a friend is going to shove a drink in our hand. We have no idea when a co-worker will proposition us after work. For a teenager, maybe it comes at the moment when your parents ask you, **“Is that the truth?”** Over and over again, we are surprised when Satan pounces out of nowhere, and sometimes we can be caught off guard.



This past summer, our family went camping up on the shores of Lake Superior—right in the middle of bear country. But you know, we were **"on the alert."** There were warnings in the material we found on the Internet. There were warnings posted at the entrance to the campground. And so we took precautions. We stored our food properly. We did not rub ourselves down with peanut butter before going to bed at night! But we were cautious—we were alert. And yet isn't it interesting that we will be aware of the remote possibility of being attacked by a bear while camping, but we sometimes forget the danger of the prowling lion? Peter, therefore, tells us to always **"be on the alert."**

### **Conclusion & Invitation:**

As we come to the end of our study this morning, I am thankful that one of our members has been concerned to the point of requesting a lesson on Satan. We have learned that Satan is our adversary, he is quick to accuse us, and he is prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. We react to the threat by being of sober spirit and by always being on the alert. It is possible that Satan has a hold on someone here this morning. Perhaps Satan has seen a weakness. Perhaps Satan has been scoping you out. Perhaps Satan has seen a gap in your armor. If you feel that you have been losing ground to Satan, we would love to pray about that with you as a congregation. You can write it down on a card from the pews, you can give it to me, and we can pray about that together in just a moment.

Or maybe you realize that the threat is real. Maybe you believe the Scriptures, and maybe you know that you are on the wrong side of this situation. The Bible teaches that those who love God will obey His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome. We get on the Lord's side by turning away from sin, by publicly stating our belief in Jesus as the Son of God, and by allowing ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. This is our response to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. If you have any questions, we would love to study the Bible with you as soon as possible, but if you are ready to obey the gospel right now, you can let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: [church@fourlakescoc.org](mailto:church@fourlakescoc.org)