

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Watch For The Adversary

by Dan Trygg

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you,⁷ casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.⁸ Be clear-minded and alert. Your adversary, the devil (slanderer), walks-about as a roaring lion (is) seeking to devour.⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers and sisters throughout the world are 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 dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

1 Peter 5:6-11

“But He gives more grace. Therefore it says, ‘God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’⁷ Submit yourselves... to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.” James 4:6-8

This passage is all about God’s superintending care for us, even though we go through trials and sufferings brought on by the enemy. This passage is clear. **We are in a war.** Another truth is even more important: **God is in charge.** Even in the midst of the spiritual conflicts and the earthly trials we face, God has the dominion over all of it. **The message of this entire book has been to maintain our faith in the midst of difficulties, knowing that God will be honored by our positive attitude and good behavior.** To “humble ourselves under God’s hand” is to yield our lives to Him, accepting the wisdom and timing of what He allows. His promise is that if we defer to Him, He will lift us up at the proper time. We have seen that **these tests come from our own sinful flesh** (1:14; 2:1,8,11; 3:9-12; 4:1-4,15), **from the rejection and harassment of other people** (2:12,15; 3:9,14,16,17; 4:4,14,16), and **from incompetent, abusive or sinful authority figures in our lives** (2:13-18; 3:1-7; 5:5,6). **Here, in chapter five, Peter adds another source of stress and trial: spiritual warfare.** We need to be watchful, because **we have an enemy, an adversary, someone who is set against us** and is looking for an opportunity to hurt us bad, if he can. **What do we know of this enemy?**

1.) He is here called “your adversary” (*antidikos*- occurs 4 times in NT). **The word means “opponent”, especially an “opponent at law”.** This is *not* the word normally used for an enemy, one who is hostile toward us (*echthros* – 32 times in NT). This is a specialized word, a *carefully chosen* word, describing someone who is arguing a legal case against us (cf. Matt. 5:25; Lk. 12:58; 18:3; 1 Pet. 5:8). He is a strategist, a master at trying to get us to say or do something that would incriminate us, something that he could use to his advantage. In Revelation 12:10, he is called the “accuser of the brethren, who accuses them before our God day and night.” Much like the scene described in Job 1 and 2, there is a courtroom before the throne of God, where Satan and his minions are attempting to secure legal rights and permission to attack us. There are courtroom rules and procedures which must be followed, and Satan and his legal team labor to find avenues where legal protection against us may be compromised, or where an argument can be made to allow him an opportunity to move against us. Moreover, we learn from Job that even if we have done nothing wrong to create a legal attack, there are other reasons why God may allow some kind of test to come upon us.

2.) He is called the “devil” (*diabolos* – 35 total times in NT, 31 times of Satan), **which means “slanderer, malicious gossip”** (cf. 1 Tim. 3:11; 2 Tim 3:3; Tit. 2:3). Although you can bet Satan has a crack staff of investigators, trying to dig up the “dirt” against you, he is not at all above stretching the truth, twisting things or using outright falsehoods in his verbal attacks. It is important to realize that it is not only against God that he attempts to pull this manipulative trickery, but he works this kind of “spin game” *in our own minds and in the minds of others.* He tries to use what we might perceive to be negative self-talk to discourage and demotivate us. He also will attempt to stir up arguments and controversies with other people. He loves to exploit misunderstanding and miscommunication to his advantage. If he can get us arguing and fighting *with each other*, we will not notice what *he* is doing, ...and *he will keep us from thinking of God*, ...the One who can bring light into the darkness and order into a place of confusion.

3.) From Genesis 3:1 (cf. Rev. 12:9), **we know that he is very crafty**, more crafty than other beings. He is shrewd. He waits for the proper moment (e.g., Lk. 4:13), and is adept at being sneaky. Therefore, we must be all the more watchful. He is the master manipulator and deceiver, ...the ultimate con man. He will shake your hand with one hand, while picking your pocket with the other. He will appear to be your friend, but he has plans to steal from you, ruin you and kill you, if he can, ...all the while keeping the smile on his face. He will tell you to relax, put up your feet, and have more to eat, ...all the while sending for the hit man and butcher to come and kill you and cook you for dinner. If he can get you to relax and be unsuspecting, he has gained a *huge* advantage.

4.) Jesus told us in John 8:44 that the devil is the father of lies. To lie is consistent with his nature, and he is the father of liars. It important to recognize that *he will work through others.* People who appear to be upright and

good can be manipulated and massaged by him to where they begin to lie and become entangled in a web of deception. They can begin to become like him, and can easily deceive and manipulate others. Be on the alert, his offspring are out there, people who have been reared and trained by him. And he and his minions are out there. Have *nothing to do* with deception and lies, because that is the beginning of a slippery slope leading to disaster.

5.) He prowls about, looking for someone to devour. He is *incessantly* looking for the unsuspecting, the preoccupied and unaware. When we are too caught up in our own stuff, distracted by entertainment and the multitude of inane things which the world offers, we can easily be led into a trap (Jas. 1:13-16), and be swallowed up before we know what overtook us. Satan is an opportunist. He does not generally attack us with a frontal assault. We would get our hackles up and resist. No, he wants to catch us unawares. The element of surprise is a well-known battle strategy, and Satan is a master at using it. Note that he is “prowling about”, or literally, “he walks about”. He and his forces are on patrol. They move back and forth, monitoring peoples’ lives, seeing who would be easy prey.

6.) He is described as being like a roaring lion. Lions will attempt to sneak up on their prey. There are a number of passages that describe roaring lions in the Bible (Psa. 104:21; Jer. 2:14,15; Ezk. 22:25; and Amos 3:4). They do not roar until *after* they have caught their prey. Amos 3:4 says as much, “Does a lion roar in the forest when it has no prey? Does a young lion growl from its lair unless it has captured something?” Ezekiel 22:25 indicates that they roar when they are *tearing* the prey they have captured. What is the point of saying that the enemy is like a roaring lion, seeking to devour? **The lion’s roar is like a boast in the kill.** It announces to the world that he has captured his victim. Is not Satan quick to do that? Does he not delight to spread word of our failures? **He likes to publicize our defeat, and intends to slander the name of Christ, if he can.** He viciously tears at our lives and reputation, hoping to destroy us.

7.) Satan is dangerous, and even deadly. He does have real power to hurt us, but only within God’s permission. When you read Job 1 and 2, you get an appreciation of the kinds of things the enemy can do. He can incite people against us, has power to cause natural disasters, and can afflict us with sickness. It is quite clear, however, that **he can only do what God allows him to.**

8.) We can learn to detect his activity, if we are watchful. The Bible tells us to be alert, stay awake, be watchful. Why? Because the enemy loves to lure us into a false sense of safety so he can deftly ensnare us in some trap. He is going to attempt to sneak up on us, to catch us unawares. In the gospels, Jesus told His disciples to “Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation” (Matt. 26:41). Note the importance of prayer, ...spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and this includes recognizing the activity of the enemy. We need God’s help for this.

9.) We can and must resist the enemy. To resist is to “stand against”. The key to coming out well is that we *have to stand firm in the Lord*. No matter how it *looks or feels*, God will bring us through in victory, *if we stand in His strength*, not our own, ...*if we cling to the truth of His Word*, not our own judgment. James 4:7,8 tells us that *if we repent of our sin, submit to God and draw near to Him, then He will draw near to us*, and we can effectively resist the devil and cause him to flee. Note that this involves a definite commitment of heart to obey God. This is not just some ritualistic prayer, but a solid purposing of the heart. God will honor and protect those who honor Him. In Ephesians 6:13, Paul admonishes us to “put on the full armor of God in order that we might be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything to stand firm.” None of these passages advocate for attempting to attack the enemy, nor to mock or belittle him. Those can be dangerous provocations, if we arrogantly step out in ways that the Spirit is not leading us to (2 Pet 2:9-11; Jude 1:8-10). **Our place is to stand firm in the truth.**

10.) God is able to take the worst things that Satan can throw at us, and work them together for good in our lives (Rom. 8:28). In the end, we can be confident that if we trust in the Lord, He will use trials, tests, persecutions and spiritual opposition to strengthen us (cf. Rom. 5:3-5; Jas. 1:2-4). He can even restore what the enemy may take from us (Joel 2:25; Job 42:10-13). God will bring us victory in the end.

In closing, let me remind you that we have an adversary who is on the hunt, relentlessly watching how he can neutralize us and bring us down. **Do not think you can escape this. He is already at work in your life. Do you see where he is operating?** Are you aware of his schemes? Remember, cover and camouflage give him the element of surprise. He does not want you to know what he is doing. **Be watchful, be alert, ...draw near to God and resist him, strongly standing in faith.** These tests are only seasonal and temporary. As Peter indicated throughout the book, there is suffering we will face, but God remains in control. **Satan wants us to fall, or to be compromised, so that he can speak negatively about Jesus and Christians, in general. God wants us to maintain integrity and do good, so that there will be nothing that the enemy can use against us.** In the end, God will use these experiences of testing to equip us, establish us, strengthen us and firmly ground us. Peter ends this letter exhorting us to stand firm in the grace of God, greet one another warmly, and abide in the peace that is in Christ.