

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity, October 28, 2012**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)  
Hymns: 444, 144:1-2, 413, 517, 53  
Lessons: Job 1:1-22, Ephesians 6:10-20, Matthew 4:1-11  
Sermon Text: 1 Peter 5:8-14.  
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

If you were hiking in the wilds of central Africa, the native habitat of the African lions, you would certainly be on your guard against wild lions.

Or suppose you are walking through a zoo – any zoo. Suddenly you hear a warning “the lion escaped from his cage and is running loose!” What would you do? You would probably run and find a safe place. You would probably leave the zoo as quickly as you could.

These situations are like the picture Peter gives us to warn us:

**“BE SELF-CONTROLLED AND ALERT.**  
**YOUR ENEMY THE DEVIL PROWLs AROUND LIKE A ROARING LION**  
**LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO DEVOUR”**

1. ***“Resist him, standing firm in the faith.”***
2. ***You are not alone in this fight – God and fellow believers are with you.***
3. ***“To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.”***

You wonder why your life is often a struggle? Do you wonder why your problems don’t just evaporate even though you go to church and pray? Do you groan because of the care-lessness, lovelessness or recklessness of people? Do you wonder why you still find certain sins so fascinating even when you have been burned by them before? Well, says Peter, wake up and realize what you’re up against in your life: you have a fearsome enemy who is seeking to destroy you every day. The book of Revelation pictures him as a dragon. This evil worldwide powerful spirit is committed to dragging you off to hell too. What a dreadful thought!

God is not the only one interested in the believer. God wants only good for his children but the reason there is persecution and struggle is that there is a devil who wants to destroy those who are committed to God. This is not some cartoony devil. This is not just a figment of the imagination of Hollywood movie makers. This is a real evil spirit.

Be clear-headed! Be alert! The King James Version is good when it says: ***“Be sober, be vigilant.”*** Your adversary, your enemy, your opponent the devil is on the prowl.

Christians must be clear minded, clear-headed and alert, especially as the end of time approaches. Twice before Peter has used the warning that Christians must be sober, clear-minded and alert. Alertness in a military context refers to a soldier on watch as opposed to mental and spiritual sleepiness that prevents one from recognizing and meeting an attack. And we are fighting a battle against spiritual forces of evil. The word Devil is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word Satan which means adversary. Devil also means slanderer. Remember that the devil is a liar and the father of lies. The devil IS a roaring lion, he is not just “like” a roaring lion, and as such we must be constantly on our guard against his attacks, his sneaking up on us, his silent springing upon us. Lion is an excellent picture. The danger facing us is eternal damnation, and Satan wants to devour us.

The devil is actively seeking the destruction of the believer. Paul writes to Timothy speaking of him as snaring or trapping Christians. In Psalm 22 we read of the Messiah in his suffering: ***"Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me."*** (Psalm 22:13) When a lion is on the prowl is no time to sleep.

While yielding to God's almighty hand in our lives, we should stand firm against the attacks and blows of Satan: Be sober, be vigilant; your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion, is walking about, seeking whom he may devour. Fight against him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are happening to your Christian brotherhood in the world.

That must be the attitude of mind for Christians at all times, to keep a clear mind, to be on the lookout against dangers and enemies all the time, never to slacken in vigilance for so much as a moment. For the most powerful enemy, the most mighty adversary is the devil, the one who was the liar and murderer from the beginning. Just as the roaring of the lion is intended to terrorize and intimidate the animals as he goes forth to seek his prey, making them cower before him in cringing helplessness, in the same way the devil makes use of similar schemes. By the enmity and the threats of the children of the world he tries to reduce the Christians to a state of helpless terror, when they will be unable to resist his attack and will become a prey to him and will end up with only eternal damnation. He does not easily attack an entire congregation, but he singles out individuals. And it is the culmination of his joy if he succeeds in drawing some poor soul down into his kingdom of darkness.

There is only one successful way for Christians to save their souls at such a time, namely, by offering unyielding resistance, by being firm in the faith. Faith clings to Christ and to His Word, knowing that a single word taken from God's eternal truth is sufficient to rob Satan of all his power. And in this resistance another thought will serve to strengthen the believers, namely, that the very same kind of sufferings is being accomplished in the case of the entire brotherhood, the entire Christian Church in the world. This world is the devil's stomping-ground. Here he exercises his power. So we can expect that he will try with all his might to regain control also of our souls. The understanding that other believers are in the same condition, that all the other children of God in the world are suffering and battling in the same way as we are, will serve to comfort and to strengthen us.

Peter also gives us specific comfort. Like good soldiers the Christians are not to fear or flee the enemy – the devil and all his soldiers – but to resist him firm in the faith. We read in James 4:7-8: ***"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."*** Our epistle lesson points out that the Christian fights against spiritual powers. We must resist just as Christ did at his three-fold major temptation just after his baptism, as you heard in our gospel lesson. The devil is resisted by being firm in faith. This is remaining firm in one's trust in God.

One thing that will make their commitment firmer is the awareness that believers are not suffering alone. It's not just me but Christian brothers and sisters throughout the world who are suffering such attacks from Satan. Others are suffering much the same as you, and even worse.

***"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. To him be the power for ever and ever."*** Moreover, Peter writes, the God of all grace, the One who called you unto his eternal glory in connection with Christ after having suffered a little while, will himself strengthen you

You have been called to faith in Jesus Christ. This gospel call assures us of God's eternal glory in heaven, after having suffered a little while. This equipping is needed NOW and God provides us with it now. We have his holy Word – everything we need to know until we are sitting at Jesus' feet in heaven. That Word of God is the "one little Word" that can fell the Devil.

The general of the army of believers has not abandoned his troops. The battle itself is only temporary. Suffering is only for a little while. This is not because persecutors will have a change of heart, but that the end of all things is near. No matter what the suffering, believers can always trust in God.

He is a God of all grace, so much grace, that is, so much undeserved love, that he sent his only-begotten son to fight this lion and all his allies so that we might live eternally.

Peter has piled up four closely related terms that fit together by their reinforcing one another emphasizing the good that God is intending for believers and even now is producing in their suffering.

This is four powerful images of what God himself will do. This is how he gives grace to his children and helps them. These verbs are future tense. That is something that God will do. These are not just happy wishes. First, God says he will “**restore**” his believers – meaning to join together, to perfectly unite, to be perfected, to be formed, and is even used of mending the nets of fishermen. Through their suffering God will produce a fully established or confirmed character.

Second he will establish them, meaning to establish, strengthen, and support the idea that God is confirming their faith.

Third God will “**strengthen**” them – providing everything they need to make them strong.

Finally God will “**settle**” them, a term meaning to place on a foundation. These four words are an image of security for a people who cannot be moved no matter what comes against them. This is not four totally separate ideas but they all fit together.

The excitement of this protection prompts Peter to throw in a brief but powerful benediction: “**To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.**” Just thinking about the Lord’s promises of restoration leads Peter to burst into another doxology of praise!

This reminds us of especially good news. The descendent of the woman, prophesied in Eden at the time of mankind’s first sin, has crushed the serpent’s head. His power to accuse is broken, for Christ has forgiven all sins. Satan’s power to control and manipulate is broken, because the spirit of the Lord lives in the believers and shares his strength. This is a great promise – Christ shares with you his power to rebuke Satan, and Satan has to obey you! Remember what James wrote: “**Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**” (James 4:7) One little word can indeed fell him, the word of the gospel, that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. Stand firm in that faith, and remember that as you suffer, it doesn’t necessarily mean there’s something wrong with you. Remember that your brothers and sisters in faith all over the world are suffering too as they wait for Christ to return and create a new heaven and a new earth.

The same God who called you to eternal glory through the gospel will not let your sufferings go on one minute longer than he allows, and he already has his plan of relief ready to go. From God’s point of view, your sufferings last just a little while, for at just the right time our loving father will come with strength and restoration. He will make the hurtful times serve you and the church by making you strong, firm, and steadfast. And you in turn will be a help and a teacher to other people who struggle.

Peter closes his letter with some personal notes. Silas – also called Sylvanus – may have helped Peter by serving as his scribe or by personally delivering the letter to the churches in five provinces of Asia minor.

The reference to the church in Babylon may be a reference to Rome. Babylon was a great enemy of God’s people in the Old Testament, and a place of exile. But God did not abandon them there. He does not abandon his children wherever they are.

Mark, also called John Mark, is the author of the gospel of Mark, and helped Peter at times.

Christians are to greet one another with a token of the love they have in their hearts for one another.

Peter closes with another benediction: “**Peace to all of you who are in Christ.**”

Thus Peter draws his first epistle to a close. We are exhorted to stand fast in Christ against the fiercest of enemies. Now is not the time to give up but rather the time to stand fast in faith and to hold on to what you already have, that is, God’s grace. This is the major purpose toward which the whole letter is directed.

***“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”***