

1 Peter 5:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Analysis

This urgent warning against spiritual complacency uses vivid imagery to alert believers to Satan's predatory nature. The dual command "be sober, be vigilant" (nēpsate, grēgorēsate) employs two complementary verbs: nēpsate means to be free from intoxication, mentally alert, self-controlled, while grēgorēsate means to watch, stay awake, remain vigilant. Together they demand both internal self-discipline and external watchfulness. The causal particle "because" (hoti) introduces the reason for vigilance: "your adversary the devil" (ho antidikos hymōn diabolos). The term antidikos is a legal term meaning opponent in a lawsuit, prosecutor, enemy—emphasizing Satan's role as accuser of believers (Revelation 12:10). The simile "as a roaring lion" (hōs leōn ōryomenos) evokes terrifying predatory imagery familiar to ancient audiences. A roaring lion signals hunting mode—the roar paralyzes prey with fear before the attack. The present participle "walketh about" (peripatei) indicates continuous, restless prowling, searching for vulnerable targets. The phrase "seeking whom he may devour" (zētōn tina katapein) reveals Satan's ultimate aim: not mere harassment but complete destruction, swallowing believers whole spiritually and physically.

Historical Context

Peter writes to churches facing Neronian persecution (c. AD 64), when Christian suffering intensified dramatically. Satan's "roaring" manifested in mob violence, legal accusations, family betrayals, and martyrdom. The image of a prowling lion resonated powerfully—Roman arenas regularly featured lions devouring Christians

as public entertainment. Peter himself would soon face martyrdom by crucifixion under Nero (tradition says upside-down, considering himself unworthy to die like Christ). The command to vigilance wasn't paranoia but realistic spiritual warfare instruction for believers whose faith could cost them everything. Early church fathers recognized Satan's strategy: using persecution to induce apostasy through fear, or alternatively, using prosperity to induce complacency through comfort.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. In what specific areas of your life are you spiritually drowsy or unguarded, making you vulnerable to Satan's attacks?
2. How does understanding Satan as a relentless, predatory adversary change your approach to spiritual disciplines like prayer, Scripture reading, and Christian fellowship?

Interlinear Text

Νήψατε	γρηγορήσατε	ὅτι	ὁ	ἀντίδικος	ὑμῶν	διάβολος
Be sober	be vigilant	because	G3588	adversary	your	the devil
G3525	G1127	G3754		G476	G5216	G1228
ὡς	λέων	ὠρυόμενος	περιπατεῖ	ζητῶν	τινα	καταπίη·
as	lion	a roaring	walketh about	seeking	whom	he may devour
G5613	G3023	G5612	G4043	G2212	G5101	G2666

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 6:11 (Evil): Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

James 4:7 (Evil): Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Job 2:2 (Kingdom): And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

Ephesians 4:27 (Evil): Neither give place to the devil.

1 Peter 1:13 (Parallel theme): Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1 Peter 4:7 (Parallel theme): But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

Luke 21:36 (Parallel theme): Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Luke 22:31 (Parallel theme): And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

Titus 2:12 (Parallel theme): Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

Matthew 13:39 (Evil): The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.