

1 Peter 5:8-10

8 *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers 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.*

ὤκου!

Did I startle you with my roar? Maybe at least for these few moments your alertness has been raised to another level – anticipating – watching for whether I might break out in something like that again.

Build on that. Even ratchet up the intensity! What if, instead of me, you had a real lion letting that ὤκου! loose nearby you? Obviously the appropriate response to a lion's roar is to be keen-eyed, focused and alert. That is a measured, healthy reaction to the danger .

Peter clues us in on something: our enemy, the devil, is roaring at us - opposing us on every turn.

Peter recorded God's choice words for His people sometime in the mid-60's A.D. Persecution of Christians was on the rise throughout the Roman Empire, but the worst was yet to come. Already they were enduring insult, trials, suffering, and pain because of the name of Christ. They bore the family name "Christian," *His* name, and that met with attack.

We can relate. Not to the point of death (though brothers and sisters in Christ in much of the world are enduring threat to body and life), but we are often scrutinized, disparagingly labeled and snubbed to the "fringe" of society. You can relate to the pressure our Christian family members of the 1st century must have felt: the pressure to question God's wisdom, even the temptation to give up on him altogether - or to hide your identity in Christ, maybe compromising just enough to fit in better.

The devil agitates our world with his roaring.

What happens when we're not focused on God's truth & His promises? What's been your history when you've gotten distracted from His Word? Here's where the crucial importance of God's loving call hits home: to be clear-minded, self-controlled and alert! See the emptiness of chasing after the promises of the world. See the futility of trying to handle things yourself. As soon as we allow flow of God's spiritual encouragement to us to be cut, we are weakened (sometimes without even realizing it).

And here stalks Satan: a lion hunting his prey.

He looks for the distracted, the weak in the pack. He tries to cut us off and isolate us. He lets out a roar. He roars to intimidate us and to try to immobilize us, so we are disorientated - so we may be led to question: "Has God forgotten about me?"

Has God forgotten about me? I suppose if the devil got us to rip vs.8 out of its context – one of his oldest and favorite tricks, by the way – we might be tempted to think that. With just the description in vs.8 to go on, sounds like it's you (on the one side) – and it's the devil (on the other side), and he is attacking, accusing, roaring, prowling here & there to achieve his ultimate goal of swallowing down prey.

That's a lot of action packed in there.

But the action doesn't end there. If that was it, you & I – and everyone in the world - *would* have ended up lion's prey. For we began life far from God, hell-bent & hostile to the One who made us – self-focused & self-seeking.

But who quietly entered into the world for us? Who faced down our enemy and knocked the teeth out of his bite for us? *The God of all grace!* That's who.

“All grace”! Say “Amen” to that. It's certainly true.

Go on and look to vs.10. Here is the God of all grace in action! *“He called you”* – and me – *“into his eternal glory in Christ Jesus.”* He led you to see what he – in all grace – had planned and carried out long before you were even born.

God the Son was clothed in flesh for us. Every humble step he took in this world was grace. So was every action, every miracle, every word: *“Everyone who looks to me,”* he said, *“who believes in me, will have eternal life – I will raise him up at the last day”* (John 6:40). Grace held him where nothing else in all the world could force him to go: the cross. Grace moved the Father to tip the cup, filled with our suffering, to His Son to drink. Grace led Jesus to swallow down every last drop of the wrath & punishment for *our* sin.

The God of all grace called you – and he called me. He gave us the gift of faith in Jesus. In him we have the forgiveness of sins... the riches of God's grace lavished on us (Eph.1:7). Those who cling to the Promise of God have life eternal – eternal glory – because of His grace.

“Stand fast in it,” Peter urges in vs.12.

For Peter knew what was lurking in the sinful shadows of this life. In vs.9, Peter writes: *“Stand against the devil – immoveable when it comes to the faith!”*

But how? God gives us strength for the conflict in which we are engaged. The faith He has given you is your shield. The truth He has given you is your sword. He equips you to take your stand against your enemies. He gives you the vital encouragements: remain clear-minded and alert. He imparts that spiritual sharpness, clarity and awareness to us, as we hear His Word. He trains us here.

God is not only our trainer. He is our healer. When we get battle worn or wounded in the fight, He is our strength to get back on our feet. Listen: vs.10b ...*“He will heal & restore you, make your stance steady & unyielding, strengthen, and entrench you.”*

In the strength that God has given you, then, stand strong against the devil. Be stubborn in the faith!

For you will face the devil's roaring attacks day-after-day. First, remember – he will try to distract and isolate you. Then, cornered, he will try to intimidate you, to keep you from opening your mouth about your faith.

- Kids: he roars at you from your text books with very academic sounding words, but they credit your existence to chance and evolution. “Who are you,” the devil roars, “to challenge the word of geologists, biologists & astrophysicists who are at the top of their scientific disciplines?”
- He roars through those who mock the Christian faith: “Where is this 2nd coming of Christ you talk so much about: when the world is supposed to end, and you Christians are all supposed to be saved?”
- Sometimes his roar might sound more like an ongoing “white noise” surrounding you. Attitudes inundate our culture, like: “it’s ok to throw God’s name around carelessly in conversation” - you know: ‘My god’ this, and ‘oh, my god’ that – “but don’t you dare talk seriously to me about your intolerant Christian God.”

Through the hatred and the scorn of the world, the devil will try to terrify you and to immobilize you with the threat of embarrassment or the loss of the “cool” status for kids - loss of respect for adults. Sometimes he will succeed in severing your friendships, or dividing your families. He will attempt to isolate you through the pain and the loss you feel for daring to fight him at all.

The truth is: the Lion’s roar is ongoing, and so is his desire to have you as his own!

I’m no longer, though, speaking of the devil on the prowl. Now I’m directing your eyes to Jesus. Yes, Jesus! God gives us the comfort of knowing of another lion: Jesus! He is “*the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.*” That is His name given in Revelation 5:5, where we are also told: “*Do not weep! He has triumphed!*”

He has you - holds you - as his own. No one can snatch you out of his hand (John 10:28) – his *mighty* hand (1 Peter 5:6). Just be careful you never walk away from him, wandering from faith in him.

In Revelation 10:3 we hear him give “*a loud shout like the roar of a lion,*” and we see him robed in his splendor. In his might He plants one foot on the sea and one foot on the land. He is our defending Lion, the pride and the protection of his people. He holds his Word open to us – everything that is good for us to know, and necessary for us to be strengthened in our stand against the devil is recorded here, the Bible.

He gives us His Word to roar back at Satan... and it’s his power unloaded when we do just that.

Kids, do you want to let out a roar with me? Listen first. I want you to do it like this: ὠϞυ. Ready? ... ὠϞυ! You know what you just did? You roared like a lion, and you actually also spoke a tiny bit of the Greek language. You see, the root of the word “roar” used in 1 Peter 5:8 is: ὠϞυ! It’s maybe just a little

different sounding than our word. But the Greek people did the same thing we do in English. We make our English word “roar!” sound like what it means. ὤρῳ!

Now that was fun. But the Word that God gives us to roar with in our battle against the devil is right here [holding up Bible]. So when the devil comes roaring his temptations, roar back: Jesus is my Savior. Roar: I am baptized – God has made me his own child. Roar: I don’t want to listen to your lies. Roar: I want to listen to my God’s truth.

And then pick up your Bible, and read it, and treasure its message. *“And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ... will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”* “To him be the power forever and ever. Amen!”