

1 Peter 4:17-18; 5:6-9

If you were traveling and came to an inn for the night where everyone in the place was a violent criminal, and you had no choice but to stay there, how much sleep would you get? This is our situation here on earth. Not that everyone is a criminal. But the devil is. A “*roaring lion*” St. Peter calls him. Just as we would not sleep, but would be watchful and arm ourselves, were we to be placed with violent criminals for the night, so we must be “*sober-minded; be watchful,*” writes St. Peter, for every day that we live here on earth we are dwelling in the devil’s realm.

“*Your adversary,*” writes St. Peter, “*the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*” You want the truth, don’t you? He prowls around you, seeking to devour you. A lion in the wild will approach his victim first on one side, then on the other, from the back and from the front. He prowls around his victim looking for a weakness. And there he will attack.

We all have a place, even many places, where we are weak and vulnerable. If we do not think that we do, then that over-confidence is a great weakness in itself. The devil knows exactly where you are weak. He has been studying you and me all our life. He is stronger and more cunning than us. No wonder St. Paul writes, “*Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*” And perhaps even more alarming to us are these words of our text, “*If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?*” Scarcely saved? Us...the righteous? The believers? This is what St. Peter says here. The righteous man can scarcely be saved. He escapes by a hair.

These words are not given for the purpose of causing us to doubt and worry. “*Cast your anxieties on (God),*” says our text, “*because He cares for you.*” Do not be anxious and afraid. But do be watchful. Do not fall into spiritual sleep but be constantly armed with the Word of God in your ears and in your heart. For then, the devil has no power over you.

Let’s go back to the time of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham’s nephew, Lot, lived in Sodom with his family. He truly was dwelling in that inn where everyone in the place was a violent offender. God was about to destroy the entire place, and He sent two angels to bring Lot out before it was destroyed. Lot was a *righteous man*, writes St. Peter, but he also writes that the righteous *is scarcely saved*. This story easily demonstrates this truth. The angels warned Lot to leave Sodom, but he hesitated, he delayed, he resisted. Time was of the essence and still Lot would not leave the city. And so the angels literally seized Lot by the hand and dragged him and his family out of Sodom. Righteous Lot was scarcely saved. He continued to resist the urging of the angels. Had they not pulled him away from Sodom, this righteous man would have perished with all the ungodly in the city.

Are you and I like Lot in this? More than we realize or care to admit. Our world is like Sodom. Not only do we live among the ungodly, the entire place will be destroyed. “*Resist (the devil),*” urges God’s angel, St. Peter. Yet we, like Lot, are more prone to resist God’s messenger.

Lot’s home was in Sodom and so it was hard for him to leave. Our home is here. We do not like the evil we see in our world, but we have become accustomed to it. And so we have the sinful

tendency to resist God's urging. We hesitate. We sleep. We do not arm ourselves with the Word of God. Even though we are dwelling in the devil's realm, we fail to take him seriously. Just how do we expect to be saved?

Lot was saved not because of him but because Abraham was praying for him. Abraham pleaded with God, and afterwards the two angels came to save Lot from perishing.

Our Gospel text in John 17 is Jesus' prayer for you. "*I have manifested Your name,*" He prays to His Father, "*to the people whom You gave Me out of the world...I am praying for them...Holy Father, keep them in Your name.*"

"*The prayer of a righteous man has great power,*" writes St. James. He also writes, "*The implanted Word (of God) is able to save your souls.*" Jesus is the true Righteous man. His prayer for you is powerful. And He prays that you are kept in the name placed upon you in your baptism where the living Word was implanted in you.

Following Jesus' prayer for you, He went to the cross to die for you. Unlike us, He did not resist. He let the ungodly of the world pierce His hands and feet with nails because these same hands are now able to seize you in love and pull you out of Sodom.

God's angels refused to give up on Lot. They put up with his delay tactics until they finally dragged him to safety. Jesus does more than put up with us. He forgives us. His pierced hands are proof of this. Jesus suffered and died for all of you, and so each and every one of you He forgives. He has seized you this very day to pull you here to His Father's house. The lion roars, but Jesus' words of forgiveness and life for you silence his roars. The lion prowls, but Jesus keeps you safe. Where you are weak, He is strong for you.

Respect the roaring lion, but do not fear him. "*Be sober-minded; be watchful...resist the devil,*" but stop resisting the urgent love of God for you. You will not save yourself just as Lot could not. Your Savior is Jesus. He prayed and is still praying for you. He died for you. And He lives for you. He is the implanted Word in you *which is able to save your soul.* Amen.