

## 1 PETER 5:6-11

### RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”<sup>1</sup>

**C**ivilised nations have drafted rules to guide their conduct, even in war. In the aftermath of World War II, the first three treaties dictating conduct during war, previously drafted in 1864, 1906 and 1929, were updated. Nations bound themselves to abide by these protocols of war and further agreed to a set of rules for humanitarian treatment of prisoners of war, for treatment of the wounded and for handling civilian non-combatants. These rules are commonly known as the Geneva Conventions of War. Modern wars, often referred to as limited engagements, tend to disregard these conventions, though groups and nations warring against western powers demand that their own people be treated in accordance with these protocols.

We Christians are engaged in a protracted war with the ruler of this world. Those dark powers aligned with the evil one are merciless and without pity. They disregard all pleas from the wounded or those caught up in the war. However, we who are identified with the King of kings and the Lord of lords are bound by His Word to conduct ourselves according to the rules of engagement that He has given us. It will be to our benefit to know His will and to ensure that we do His will. These, then, are the rules of engagement given by the Son of God.

**CONTEXT** —Believers are engaged in a conflict; this is not a brief conflict—it began before the fall of our first parents and has continued unabated since that time. A powerful angel, once known as Day Star [see **ISAIAH 14:12**], rebelled against the True and Living God. Because of His beauty, he grew proud and determined in his heart to displace the Lord God from His eternal throne [see **ISAIAH 14:13, 14**]. He was cast out of heaven and to the earth [see **EZEKIEL 28:12-19**]; here, he was instrumental in deceiving our first mother and plunging the world into its present condition of sin and ruin. He is set in opposition to God and to all who seek to serve the Lord God of Heaven and earth. He is the enemy of the soul, slandering the saints before the Most High [cf. **JOB 1:6-12; 2:1-7**]. For the moment, he functions as “the ruler of this world” [**JOHN 12:31**] and “the god of this world” [**2 CORINTHIANS 4:4**], though his destiny is destruction when he shall at last be cast into the lake of fire [**REVELATION 20:9, 10**]. The American President may fight wars on a timetable; but this is a war that must be fought until victory is achieved.

We do believers no favour when we fail to inform them that because they are born from above, they will be thrust into battle the remainder of their lives. They did not choose to fight; but they will be forced to fight. Paul warns believers, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” [**EPHESIANS 6:12**].

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible, English Standard Version**, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Moreover, this fight is not conducted with weapons of metal or explosives; rather, “The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” [2 CORINTHIANS 10:4, 5].

If we are Christians, we are compelled to fight. Though we may attempt to absent ourselves from the battle, if we are children of the Living God, we cannot excuse ourselves from the conflict. The battle will come to us; we cannot flee from it. Consequently, the rules of engagement that Peter delivers are directed to each believer, none are excluded. I understand very well that Peter has been addressing the elders in the first four verses of this chapter. However, take note to this fifth verse as he transitions to addressing all within the assembly. “You who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’” [1 PETER 5:5].

Underscore the initial phrasing of the final sentence of this verse. “Clothe yourselves, *all of you*, with humility toward one another.” When Peter writes “all of you,” he ensures that none can avoid the application of what he is about to write. The admonitions that follow are for all saints. The plea is for each of us to submit to those who are wise, whom God has appointed to oversee the congregation. Watch their lives; follow their example. Accept their decisions; don’t attempt to second-guess them. Respect their years of experience and honour their seasoned lives.

**BE HUMBLE** — “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.” What Peter has just enjoined, he now emphasises through repetition. Humility is valued—no, necessary—in those who would be great.

On one occasion, after the disciples had been arguing about who was the greatest among them, Jesus responded with what must have been a startling statement. Assuredly this statement is foreign to the conduct and experience of much of modern Christendom! The Master taught us, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all” [MARK 9:35]. It was a teaching that would be repeated soon after. “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” [MARK 10:42-45].

In the midst of battle, it is distressingly easy to gain an inflated opinion of one’s abilities. The wicked one is a master at seizing the advantage over the saint that dares forget the maxim, “The battle is the Lord’s” [1 SAMUEL 17:47; see 2 CHRONICLES 20:15]. We must engage the enemy, struggling as though the Faith depends upon our success in the conflict, yet, always conscious that victory belongs to the Master.

To our modern minds, Peter’s words sound quaint, passé and even antiquated. We have been trained, even within the congregation of the Lord, to value as desirable the independent mind or the entrepreneurial spirit. God, however, esteems the humble soul that does not struggle to promote herself; rather, she accepts that it is God’s business to promote her.

Peter seeks to assure readers that if they will but humble themselves under God’s hand, He is responsible to promote them in His time. Moreover, the humility revealed consists of casting all our cares on Him, knowing that He cares for us. Humbling ourselves under His hand implies that we are prepared to accept whatever He gives—whether discipline or deliverance. Humility before God implies that we allow Him to orchestrate our lives at His tempo, not ours.

The instruction does not conform to the world's advice or expectation. Frankly, it will require discipline—hard discipline—to put Peter's command into practise. To walk in dependence upon the Lord means that one throws himself onto His mercy. It means that we are prepared to serve Him with radical abandon. It means that we see the congregation as the Lord's church, and not as our church. We cast our cares and concerns on Him because we are convinced that He cares for us. We believe that He is in control, and we refuse to wrest from His hand control of our lives or control of our congregation.

**BE SOBER-MINDED** — “Be sober-minded.” Let me rephrase this rule: “Be clear-minded.” Focus! Twice before, Peter has issued this command in this same letter. The verb that is translated into English as “Be sober-minded,” conveys the concept of maintaining self-control while others are being intoxicated. It speaks of taking control of your response to the shifting tide of the conflict.

Let's look at Peter's use of this verb in each of the instances it is found in this letter. First, he calls believers to be spiritually sober because they have assurance of God's grace. Here is how he says it, “Preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” [**1 PETER 1:13**]. Believers are to fix their hope fully on the grace that awaits us at Christ's return. In short, Peter calls believers to think on the return of Christ the Lord.

Many of our fellow saints have begun to live for the moment; it's easy to do so. Here is the great tragedy—it is distressingly easy for any of us to become so caught up in the moment that we neglect the eternal. In an earlier day, saints in the southern United States were wont to caution, “Don't sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the temporary.” They were cautioning that we must not become so focused on the daily grind that we neglect what truly matters. Christ is coming again and we shall be caught up together with all the saints to meet Him in the air.

I've frequently cited the statement that John gives believers in his first missive. “Little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure” [**1 JOHN 2:28-3:3**].

As he cautioned readers concerning the time in which we live, Peter wrote, “The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers” [**1 PETER 4:7**]. Because we are aware of the proximity of Christ's return, we are self-controlled and we maintain a sober spirit because we want our prayers to count. Is it possible that one great reason for a flaccid prayer life is that we are not clear-minded? Is it possible that we who are called by the Name of the Son of God have witnessed our prayers grow debilitated, enervated, sapped of all spiritual vitality because we have lost our focus? It is not only possible—it is probable that this is the case. We need to be encouraged to focus, to be sober-minded.

Rudyard Kipling, considered by many to be the unofficial poet laureate of Great Britain, penned a poem that speaks of what is necessary to manhood. It idealises manliness. Though his words may be unpopular in contemporary society, we would do well to consider what he wrote in light of Peter's admonition to believers engaged in this great conflict.

If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or, being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;  
If you can meet with triumph and disaster  
And treat those two imposters just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
And never breathe a word about your loss;  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on";

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with kings—nor lose the common touch;  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;  
If all men count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run—  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And—which is more—you'll be a Man my son!<sup>2</sup>

We Christians must be sober-minded, as stated in our text, because we may be assured that we will face satanic attack. On several occasions, I've been charged by an agitated grizzly. There are many grizzlies in the mountains about us, and from time-to-time, we who go into the bush will encounter these bears. Whether it is a sow with cubs or perhaps a bear protecting a food source, the animal may well attack. At such times, panic is not likely to ensure a successful outcome for the one attacked; a successful outcome in which no harm is done to either the bear or the person demands that the one attacked remain sober-minded, clear-headed, alert.

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<sup>2</sup> Rudyard Kipling, "If," (The poem first appeared in Kipling's collection, "Rewards and Fairies" in 1909.)  
[http://www.everypoet.com/archive/poetry/Rudyard\\_Kipling/kipling\\_if.htm](http://www.everypoet.com/archive/poetry/Rudyard_Kipling/kipling_if.htm), accessed 25 September 2012

We Christians are like people working in the bush, knowing that Satan, as a wild beast, lurks in the alders. Thus, we must remain clear-minded. As the time nears for the return of the Master, we must be all the more diligent to keep our wits about us. Satan seeks to unnerve us, prompting terror. We, however, must refuse to give in to such terror; we must remain focused, conscious of the harm he can inflict but prepared to resist him when necessary.

**STAY ALERT** — “Be watchful.” Because we are at war, there can be no dereliction of duty. Throughout the New Testament are multiplied admonitions to be alert. Jesus cautioned His disciples to watch. “Watch therefore [for the Master’s return], for you know neither the day nor the hour” [MATTHEW 25:13; see also MATTHEW 26:41]. It is an admonition Paul issued on several occasions. “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong” [1 CORINTHIANS 16:13]. You may also recall Paul writing, “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving” [COLOSSIANS 4:2]. This was also the warning that Paul delivered to the Ephesian elders when they met him at Miletus. “Be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears” [ACTS 20:31]. One of the final benedictions of the Word refers to those who remain awake. “Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed” [REVELATION 16:15]! The Bible assumes we are at war and that we must always be alert.

The word Peter chooses is meant to be strong. We would not be out of line to translate it, “Wake up!”<sup>3</sup> While the same root word is used in all the references just mentioned, Peter employs ingressive, programmatic form in order to emphasise the need for a new course of action. In light of proximity to the return of the Master and because of the furious rage of the adversary, Peter’s concern is that believers do not permit themselves to be lulled into drowsing. This is no time to let one’s guard down; the consequences of permitting yourself just a little bit of rest can be disastrous.

Satan slinks about, padding softly and then pouncing to rend and destroy the unwary soul; thus, the child of God must remain alert. The devil’s one purpose is to destroy us, discrediting the testimony about our Great Commander. He roars, attempting to frighten us, hoping that in doing so we will be stampeded. If we maintain our wits, remaining sober-minded and alert, then we may anticipate that He will seek to injure us, removing us from the fight. Our testimony, our hope, our holiness and even our earthly lives may well be at stake in this battle.

Many saints—men and women of valour—have fallen in battle, wounded and rendered ineffective because they were distracted for a moment, allowing the enemy to rush in on them. The names of many of these saints ring in my ears even to this day, and their faces haunt my memory. Let me tell you about one of those quality men— a powerful servant of the Lord God. John had built a large church in an unlikely location. Coming from long distances and even crossing international borders, more people attended church each Sunday than lived in the town.

It started as a momentary flirtation—a younger woman serving as janitor for the church began to pay attention to him, and he was flattered. Surely, a little harmless flirtation wouldn’t hurt, or so he thought. However, what seems an innocuous indiscretion has a way of giving advantage to the evil one. The flirtation grew into something physical, and the heady intoxication of stolen waters drove him onward. Often, John would enter the pulpit on a Sunday morning to discover a note conveying a salacious, lascivious message meant for his eyes only. He would preach, but his mind was wandering to stolen waters. It couldn’t last; it never does. Either he would need to repent and confess his sin, or he would be exposed. Exposure it was.

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<sup>3</sup> See J. Ramsey Michaels, **Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter**, vol. 49 (Word, Inc., Dallas, TX 1998) 297

His wife and several of his deacons caught him and the young janitor in flagrante delicto. She was a married woman with little children; he was a married man with college-age children. He was removed as pastor. His marriage was in tatters; her marriage was ruined beyond repair. His reputation was devastated in that community, as was hers; the good name of the church took a decided hit. Even friends who had supported him for many years would no longer speak with him; and she began a series of transient relationships with numerous paramours. Fortunately for John, his wife was prepared to work to restore their marriage; and a few very close friends were willing to hold him accountable, encouraging him in his Christian walk.

I'm pleased to say that John and his wife were able to repair their marriage. He no longer pastors, nor should he. He does, however, attend a good church that is aware of his fallen, broken nature. He is able to assist in the church he and his wife now attend, though he will not ever be allowed to preach or assume pastoral duties, a situation reflecting the biblical position. The evil one took advantage of his inattention; but John provided the opportunity because he had ceased being watchful. Thus, he bore responsibility for giving Satan an advantage.

Here is the great tragedy, what happened to this choice saint of God can happen to me, and it can happen to you, if we fail to maintain a watch. Not every failure will be a sexual transgression—it may be an ethical error, a small lie that wouldn't hurt anyone or even acting out the covetous desire of our fallen heart. Not every indiscretion will result in immediate failure; but every indiscretion opens us to satanic assault and weakens our will to stand firm. When indiscretion does happen, deal with it immediately. It has been well stated that we must keep short accounts with God. God's truth still comforts the saint, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" [1 JOHN 1:9].

Surely, this is the cautionary warning underlying Paul's testimony to the Corinthians. "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" [1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27].

**RESIST THE ADVERSARY** — "Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith." If you are one of those deluded souls living under the impression that Satan is not real, you are living in a dream world. If you have been deceived by some liberal church leader who denies the Word of God, you will shortly gain a new name—victim! Satan is not the opposite of God; Satan is a created being—an angel who can do nothing without God's permission. However, he is a fallen angel; and because he is an angel, he is powerful—more powerful than we could ever imagine. He has had millennia to perfect his wiles and his guile. Nevertheless, the Christian needs to know that Satan is not all-powerful; he is restrained by the divine will. God alone may be said to be all-powerful, omnipotent.

Satan knows your depravity, and he knows the depths of your depravity better than you know it. Moreover, you must not imagine that you are able in your own power to stand up to this fallen angel. You must be focused on Christ, confident in His grace and in His power. You are responsible to know the Author of this Faith and His grace so that you can be fully confident in Him. Though he may appear as an angel of light, Satan is prepared to terrify you if he can. Peter's instruction concerning the wicked one mirrors that which James issued. The brother of our Lord has provided these instructions for believers when they encounter the wicked one, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" [JAMES 4:7].

What will you do when you face Satan nose-to-nose? When the wicked one probes the perimeter of your life seeking a weak point, what will you do? When his frightful, terrifying roars are ringing in your ears, how will you respond? Will you panic? Run? Surrender? Such responses must never be considered! Peter instructs us to “resist him, firm in your faith.” Let me say without equivocation, we do not resist Satan with confidence in our power or in our ability; we are to be firm in the Faith of Christ the Lord.

For most modern Christians, the only image they have of lions is usually one drawn from NatGeo Wild, or perhaps from watching a movie such as “The Lion King” or “Madagascar.” Perhaps you have seen a lion in a zoo; but you know that those caged beasts are restrained; they cannot exhibit the raw power their wild cousins use each day for survival. For those early Christians to whom Peter was writing, their image of lions could not have been so idyllic; their image was anything but placid. Some who received Peter’s letter would have witnessed the gory spectacle of the Roman amphitheatre. They had witnessed condemned believers—some undoubtedly friend or family—torn by tooth and claw; they had seen the horrifying image of the blood of these saints dripping from the fangs of lions in the arena. It is in the harsh glare of such a terrifying imagery that Ignatius, Overseer of Antioch, wrote of his impending death.

“I am writing to all the churches and am insisting to everyone that I die for God of my own free will—unless you hinder me. I implore you: do not be ‘unseasonably kind’ to me. Let me be food for the wild beasts, through whom I can reach God. I am God’s wheat, and I am being ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I might prove to be pure bread. (2) Better yet, coax the wild beasts, that they may become my tomb and leave nothing of my body behind, lest I become a burden to someone once I have fallen asleep. Then I will truly be a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world will no longer see my body. Pray to the Lord on my behalf, that through these instruments I might prove to be a sacrifice to God. (3) I do not give you orders like Peter and Paul: they were apostles, I am a convict; they were free, but I am even now still a slave. But if I suffer, I will be a freedman of Jesus Christ, and will rise up free in him. In the meantime, as a prisoner I am learning to desire nothing.”<sup>4</sup>

Ignatius, presiding elder of Antioch, was a student of the Apostle John. He wrote the six letters that constitute his legacy<sup>5</sup> at some point between A.D. 98 and 117. The letters were composed within a very brief time, perhaps a matter of weeks, following his arrested and sentence to death in the arena under the Emperor Trajan. His words in this portion of the letter that I have cited gives us some idea of how Peter’s words would have been understood by his readers. The image of a lion seeking the believer was shockingly real to these early believers.

I encourage you to resist the devil. I do not encourage you to go looking for the devil—he will find you if you are living for the Master! There are quite enough Christian cowboys who imagine God has appointed them to run the devil out of town. Unlike such foolish believers, Jude tells us that the archangel Michael was restrained in the presence of Satan. “When the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you’” [JUDE 9]. I can testify that no one is wise who looks for trouble in the spiritual world; but, when trouble comes, you may be assured that God will care for His own. Your responsibility is to stand firm in your faith, confident in the One in whom you have believed and secure in His grace.

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<sup>4</sup> Ignatius, “To the Romans,” in Michael William Holmes, **The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations**, Updated ed. (Baker, Grand Rapids, MI 1999) 171

<sup>5</sup> To the Smyrnaeans; To Polycarp; To the Ephesians; To the Magnesians; To the Philadelphians; To the Trallians; and To the Romans

**ENDURE SUFFERING** — “[Know] that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.” When you face the wicked one, know that you are not alone. Indeed, Christ stands with you as surely as he stood with the three Hebrew men cast into the furnace because they refused to bow to the king’s idol [see **DANIEL 3:1-30**]. His promise remains for all who are known by Him, “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” [**MATTHEW 28:20a**]. However, in these words, Peter reminds us that the brotherhood throughout the world is likewise suffering. Because you are a Christian, whether living in Canada, in Iraq, in China, in India or in Russia, you may anticipate opposition and persecution.

It is a lie perpetuated by the evil one himself that if you are a Christian you will never suffer. Jesus warned his disciples that they could anticipate opposition and assault because they were His followers. Listen to a few passages that speak of such antagonism toward the Faith. “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause’” [**JOHN 15:18-25**].

Jesus also warned His followers “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” [**MATTHEW 10:34-39**].

The Master’s warnings were echoed by the Apostles. In one instance, John has warned, “Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you” [**1 JOHN 3:13**]. Paul spoke often of suffering as a believer. “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” [**ROMANS 5:3-5**].

Here is another instance of Paul’s teaching concerning the need to endure suffering. “You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him” [**2 TIMOTHY 2:1-4**].

He continued by cautioning Timothy, “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. The saying is trustworthy, for:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;  
if we endure, we will also reign with him;  
if we deny him, he also will deny us;  
if we are faithless, he remains faithful—

for he cannot deny himself” [2 TIMOTHY 2:8-13].

Let me speak candidly, pointedly—it is increasingly likely that we Christians will experience opposition and yes, even suffering, here in Canada as well as in the United States. This opposition will come because we who know the Master as ruler of life are compelled by this knowledge to stand firm in this Holy Faith. However, the Christian must never permit himself or herself to respond with choler or act with malice toward those who are antagonistic toward the Master or who seek to injure us because of our faith. Our responsibility is to remember the rules of engagement which the Apostle of the Lord has delivered to us.

Always remember that it is the evil one who motivates the animosity we Christians may experience; he is the enemy, not those mere mortals who foolishly perform his will. Believers in the Lord Jesus will accept the admonition of the Apostle, “The Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will” [2 TIMOTHY 2:24-26].

**ANTICIPATE VICTORY** — “After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Did you get that? You will suffer; however, after the suffering and the pain that attends the battle, you will receive God’s promised award—God Himself will restore us. He will confirm us, strengthen us and establish us.

Listen to what Peter wrote as he began this letter. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” [1 PETER 1:3-5]. Fix your attention on that glorious phrase, “a living hope.” “A living hope” is that for which we are born again. We who are believers in the Risen Lord of God now possess “a living hope.”

In this fallen world, it can be distressingly easy to despair and thus lose hope. People often complain that they can see no way out of their situation; they cease trying to be righteous, or they cease trying to preserve their marriage, or they cease seeking after God or they just quit. However, we who are Christians, we who are children of the Heavenly King have been “born again to a living hope.” Practically speaking, this means we live in anticipation of the fulfilment of what has been promised by Him who redeemed us.

Peter speaks of the practical impact of this fact in the lives of those who anticipate victory. “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls” [1 PETER 1:6-9].

The noise of battle is for but a brief while; know that it is preparing us for eternal glory. In the midst of battle, we now enjoy God's grace and calling [see **1 PETER 5:10**]. Though we may grow weary, and though we may question how successful we have been, we are confident that God is in control. Child of God, we serve Him who is too wise to make a mistake and too good to ever permit His child to suffer needlessly.

Paul is correct when he writes, "We do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" [**2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18**].

Paul also encourages each believer in the Risen Son of God with this glorious reminder: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" [**ROMANS 8:18**]. He continues by noting that "the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God" [**ROMANS 8:19**]. There awaits a day when we shall be revealed before all creation as the demonstration of God's grace and glory.

The Master is coming again. His coming will put down rebels and ensure that Satan and his minions will never be free again. More than that, Jesus is coming "to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at among all who have believed" [**2 THESSALONIANS 1:10**]. That day will be the fulfilment to Jesus' prayer of the Father: "All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them" [**JOHN 17:10**].

"To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen" [**1 PETER 5:11**]. Amen, indeed. Our God is on the throne. He is watching over us even as we struggle. The outcome is certain. I read the end of the Book; I know how it ends—and so do you.

"Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

"The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

"He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen" [**REVELATION 22:12-21**].