

Satan: The Roaring Lion

1 Peter 5:8

October 25, 2015
Steve DeWitt

If you go to the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, you will come across an intriguing display of two trophy lions. They don't have big manes and they are not particularly big by lion standards. However, for a period of time in Africa in 1898, they terrorized a construction camp with a historically terrifying killing spree. These lions had developed an appetite for human flesh. It is estimated they killed and devoured up to 135 people before being shot and killed.



They are known as *the Man-eaters of Tsavo*. Notorious killers. The story of these lions was made into a movie in the '90s entitled, *The Ghost and the Darkness*. You can check them out on your next visit to the Field Museum.

Imagine what life was like in those tents after say, 25 people had been eaten. It's dark. No glow of city lights. What are the people in those tents doing? They probably weren't sleeping. They were on high alert. *What was that? Did you hear something? Did you see a shadow?* If they had a weapon, they had it ready lest they become the next victim of the Man-eaters of Tsavo.

What do you do when you there is possibly an intruder in your home? You hear a sound in the night? *What was that?* You listen. You may sic the German Shepherd on them or you get in touch with your friends Smith and Wesson. When an enemy is close, we go on high alert.

My dear church, there is an enemy, a lion, lurking nearby. He never sleeps. He has us under constant surveillance. He knows us better than we know ourselves. His intelligence is far, far greater than ours. He is very powerful. He has a huge and powerful army. He hates us in

a way that makes the malice of ISIS look tame. He, or one of his associates, is lurking nearby. Their presence is no doubt right here in this room right now.

I am, of course, talking about our great enemy Satan. Did anyone roll their eyes when I said that? We live in a day where to suggest a spiritual being whose sole purpose is to destroy God and his people drums up the memory of the SNL church lady and her derision of SAAAATAN. If our secular world denies the existence of God, then it giggles at the existence of the devil. They see and fear no lion in the jungle.

It's not just the secular world; it is sadly true among professing Christians as well. According to a Barna study in 2011, half of those who identified themselves as Christians said Satan is a symbol, not a real person.¹ I'd say the lion has camouflaged himself quite well.

Then you read the Bible. And you read the accounts of Jesus' ministry, and over and over again Jesus is confronting unclean spirits, demons, and even Satan himself. It is so prevalent and persistent in Jesus' story that you cannot deny the existence of Satan without denying the existence of Jesus. Their stories are intertwined.

We are saving 1 Peter 5:7 for our Week of Prayer in a few weeks. The next two we will let Peter help us explore Satan and spiritual warfare. I'm convinced most of us, myself included, don't give much thought to the spiritual war at all. I hope our little miniseries will equip us to understand the war we are in, our real enemy, and how to fight against him.

"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." (1 Peter 5:8-9 ESV)

You will notice four things we are to do. *Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Resist Him. Know others are suffering too.* These four spiritual actions are motivated by a spiritual reality seen in the second sentence in verse 8, *"Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour."*

The four strategies to fight are all motivated by the terrifying reality of the devil and his destructive intent against us. So let's begin with who this lurking enemy is and then let that terror motivate us to do something about it.

Who is Satan?

Satan is the personal name for the angelic being that is the lord and leader of the demons. Satan literally means "adversary." I think there is a play on words in verse 8 when Peter says, *"your adversary the devil."* Your *Satan*, the devil. Jesus calls him by this personal name Satan at least twice—in the wilderness temptation and identifying who was speaking through Peter saying, *"Get behind me, Satan!"* (Mark 8:33) This was not always his name, for reasons we will get into later.

¹ "Barna Study of Religious Change Since 1991 Shows Significant Changes by Faith Group," Barna.com, Research Releases in Faith & Christianity, August 4, 2011.

Satan is a person

He is not a force or spiritual influence of evil. I know *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* is coming out and the series popularity causes some to see biblical categories through the lens of George Lucas' Buddhist worldview. Peter is much better than George. Evil is a reality. Satan is the lord of evil, yet Satan is a person with a mind, and a moral will, and an intellect.

Satan is a created angel

Satan has not always existed. He is not eternal. Satan was created in Genesis 1 along with everything else. God made the angelic world when he made the physical world. God called all of it good. So for a time, all the angels, including Satan, existed in harmony with God and with the physical universe. There is a hierarchy of power and authority in the angelic world, and God made Satan more beautiful and more powerful than any other angel.

Satan rebelled against God

His rebellion is described in a few passages:

*"You were an anointed guardian cherub.
I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God;
in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.
You were blameless in your ways
from the day you were created,
till unrighteousness was found in you.
In the abundance of your trade
you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned;
so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God,
and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub,
from the midst of the stones of fire.
Your heart was proud because of your beauty;
you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.
I cast you to the ground."* (Ezekiel 28:14-17)

Isaiah 14:12-15 also describes this including that Satan thought to himself, *"I will make myself like the Most High [God]."* (Isaiah 14:14)

*"[Satan] awoke in the first moment of his existence in the full-orbed beauty and power of his exalted position, surrounded by all the magnificence which God gave him.... He saw himself as above all the hosts in power, wisdom, and beauty. Only at the throne of God itself did he see more than he himself possessed."*² (D.G. Barnhouse)

There's an old saying that the hardest instrument to play is second fiddle. Before there was Brutus to Julius Caesar or Absalom to David or Judas to Jesus, there was Satan to God. The beauty and power God gave Satan led him to have a high view of himself and caused him to look up to the glory of God with jealousy. How he thought there was room in the Trinity for one more or how he tried to accomplish this rebellion is unknown. What we do know is that God judged Satan's rebellion by casting him out of heaven to earth. And along with him a

² Donald Grey Barnhouse, *The Invisible War: The Panorama of the Continuing Conflict Between Good and Evil*, p.26.

mighty host of angels who followed Satan. If one passage is to be taken literally, a third of all angels followed Satan (Revelation 12:3-9). The demons of a feather had flocked together and they all were judged and condemned. From that point on, these fallen angels were called demons. Our world is their home for now. Their malice toward God and his glory is raging and absolute.

Jesus described this moment with, *"And he said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.'" (Luke 10:18)* So somewhere between Genesis 1 (creation) and Genesis 3 (Satan tempts Adam and Eve), Satan's rebellion against God occurred.

Satan is the enemy of God, his purposes, and his people

"For 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)

There is the physical world we see and the spiritual world we cannot see. It's like when you go snorkeling. When you look under water, it seems like you're suddenly in a different world. Satan exists in the spiritual world, but he wields power and influence in the physical world. Satan is called the *"ruler of this world"* (John 12:31) and the *"god of this world"* (2 Corinthians 4:4). He retains his great power and intellect, only now it is completely twisted toward evil purposes. Make no mistake, Satan is completely evil. There is no benevolence or kindness in him. There is no goodness in him at all.

Here is where Satan's sinful state is different from ours. We retain God's image; fallen sinners can do good things and love even though these good things don't merit saving grace. Satan and his demons have no vestige of goodness or beauty in them. There is no love. No mercy. They are filled with pride, hate, bitterness, and murder. Their every thought and intent is the destruction of God's glory and God's people and how they can tempt, influence, corrupt, compromise, divide, discourage, defame, or destroy anything intended to bring God glory. They are parasites. They don't make anything beautiful or good. They corrupt the beautiful and the good and they twist them toward their evil purposes.

The most glorious thing God is doing in this world is redeeming sinners from darkness and the ownership of the devil and bringing them into his own kingdom of light.

- *"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery."* (Hebrews 2:14-15)
- *"In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."* (2 Corinthians 4:4)

Christian, Satan hates you. He hates that his claim over us has been taken away. He hates that we will enjoy God and glory forever and hell is his forever. But it really isn't about us. We are simply means to his ultimate goal which is to destroy God and defame his glory.

The Nazis and ISIS are good examples. Who did the Nazis really hate? The Jews. I believe this was because of their genetic connection to the promises of God and the Satanic influence over Hitler and his leaders. Satan still hates the Jews. The Nazis, under occult influence, sought to exterminate them.

The world has watched with horror as ISIS has raped and murdered Christians. They have blown up works of art and buildings of historical significance. Anything or anybody that gets in their way, they just kill and destroy. They have no apparent conscience or concern whatsoever as long as they can accomplish their goal.

Satan is like ISIS only much, much worse. The Bible calls him a lawless murderer and a liar. He is far more powerful and far more hateful than any of us begin to imagine.

Peter calls him a lion. So we come back now to 1 Peter 5:8, "*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*" Now these words very much get our attention. Or they should. This lion is loose in the camp. He is our adversary and Peter highlights three things he is doing: he is prowling, he is roaring, and he is seeking to devour.

Three Things our Enemy is Doing

Prowling

Prowling is about secrecy and blending in. The art of camouflage and deception. You've probably seen video of lions on the prowl. They are slinking low to the ground. They are hiding. They are moving very quietly. They want to blend into the look and sounds around them. They don't want anyone to know they are there. "*And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*" (2 Corinthians 11:14)

Satan is a really good prowling lion. He never draws attention to himself, but he works by subtly tempting and drawing God's people toward unbiblical thinking, counterfeit idols, little compromises in moral behavior, and a thousand other nearly indiscernible activities. He prowls through homes and families and Christian marriages seeking to undermine God's good purposes. He prowls through churches sowing seeds of disunity and distrust among God's people. He prowls anywhere God has intended something good—friendship, government, courts of justice, etc.—all toward the goal of defaming God's glory in the world.

*"Satan casts down none suddenly from the pinnacle of a high profession into the lowest abyss of wickedness, but leads them rather by oblique descents and turnings, lower and lower, until at last they take hold of hell."*³ (William Spurstowe)

He is clever and sneaky. He has studied human behavior for thousands of years. He used Eve to get to Adam. He used Adam to get to God. He is a prowling lion.

Roaring

Why is he roaring? Prowling and roaring don't go together. A lion's roar is an indication of his power and dominance. I remember being in South America visiting my brother when he was a missionary there. We went to a zoo. This zoo was no Lincoln Park Zoo where they have solid walls and barriers. Really big animals and cats were basically behind chicken wire and you could walk right up to them. My dad decided this was a great time to poke some huge cat or leopard that was against the wire. It immediately turned and lashed at my dad and let out a surprisingly loud roar. What was he saying? Don't mess with me.

³ William Spurstowe as quoted by Joel Beeke, *Fighting Satan*, p. 81.

His roar is a sign of his power and dominance. Satan exerts incredible power and authority in this world. Demons are much, much more powerful than we can imagine. Even Michael the archangel did not mess with Satan (Jude 1:9).

Devouring

"Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

The Greek word for devour interestingly means, to eat with one bite. We might say, gulp it down. Devouring describes Satan's passion to destroy us. He doesn't nibble, he devours.

What do you think? Is this someone we should take seriously? Be vigilant for? Do all we can to fight against him? Remember, Peter tells us there are four things we must do. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Resist him. Know others are fighting him as well. How to do that is next week's message.

Our Conquered Enemy

We go all the way back to Genesis 3 and the Fall. God judges Adam, and Eve, and Satan. To Satan he says, *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."* (Genesis 3:15)

This is the first prophetic word about an offspring of the woman who would crush the head of Satan. How do you kill a snake, after all? You crush its head. Jesus is the fulfillment of that prophecy. The Son of God came into this world to accomplish many things, to redeem and to heal. To love and to die. To fulfill the will of his heavenly Father.

But one reason he came was to win! He came to crush the head of the serpent. To kill the lion. He did this on the cross by taking away Satan's ownership over sinners. How? He fulfilled the law that condemned us and if the law cannot condemn us then death cannot hold us. The power of death is Satan's, but he has no claim over those for whom Jesus died. The cross was a mortal wound to Satan. The victory has already been won but like those Japanese soldiers who kept fighting even after the war was over, Satan and his demons continue to wage a real war awaiting final judgment day. Here is Satan's certain fate:

"And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." (Revelation 20:10)

Satan knows that day is coming. When is a lion most dangerous? When he's wounded. He is desperate. He knows his time is short and eternity is torment. So we must be on our guard and realize we are in a war, but we must also realize that Jesus is not a lion tamer; he is a lion killer. He has won the victory already. Satan is defeated. The demons are defeated. Death is defeated. Christ has won and with him, so have we.

Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Permanent Text Edition® (2016).* Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

© 2018 by Steve DeWitt. You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that: (1) you credit the author, (2) any modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include Bethel's website address (www.bethelweb.org) on the copied resource.