

The Ruthlessness of Satan

By: Tom M. Roberts

Many do not like to watch “nature shows” on television wherein predators stalk, capture, and disembowel their prey even while they kick, struggle, and scream. The food chain has many links, but from the top down, each devours the other. As one commentator said, “There is neither vengeance nor remorse in the Kalahari.” Eating is simply a matter of survival and those high on the food chain are not angry or embittered at those whom they eat. Hunger motivates the chain, parents must feed their offspring to survive, and so the life and death struggle continues day after day, ageless millennia, from Eden until now.

However timid some may feel about the process, there is a fascination about watching a lion single out a lone animal from a huge herd, stalk it until the prey is within reach of a quick charge, then spring out and, without conscience or guilt, dispatch it ruthlessly. Once the prey is chosen, neither pity from the devourer nor terror from the one to be devoured changes anything. Remorseless, merciless, pitiless, and unforgiving, the hunter takes the game.

There is a lesson in this about Satan that we often fail to appreciate.

Among many of the descriptions of Satan, Peter spoke of him as a lion. We are the prey, and we are warned, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). When Peter uses an analogy to describe our enemy, it is for the very reason that Satan has features like a lion. But the analogy breaks down in that the real lion eats only to live while Satan destroys out of anger, vengeance, resentment, and bitterness. The Devil destroys for the sake of destruction.

The reason for this, the Scripture teaches, is because Satan has been cast down and seeks vengeance. “Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Rev. 12:12). Knowing his doom, Satan seeks to drag us into eternal torment with him. He is a predator, seeking prey.

One of the more chilling things revealed in the Scripture is the statement that Jesus made to Peter just prior to Jesus’ arrest. During the Supper, while the disciples argued about who was greatest, shortly before Peter betrayed Jesus, Jesus turned to him and said, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31). What a terrible thought! Satan knew Simon Peter’s name, his weaknesses, his closeness to Jesus and he wanted to “sift” Peter to see if he could withstand the test. This statement haunts me.

Does Satan know my name? Does he desire to sift me? You? Is Satan lying in wait and stalking us like a predator after prey? Who can deny it? Like the lion, Satan has no remorse nor conscience. There is no pity, no mercy, no fair rules of conduct. He is an “adversary” that is absolutely ruthless.



Do we need to be convinced as to Satan’s ruthlessness? Look at his history among men.

We can only imagine the beauty of the Garden of Eden and the fellowship that existed between God and man. Sin ruined Eden and man’s life has never been the same. Our lives have been corrupted, shameful sin has plagued us and death is our lot. Satan, knowing all this, lied without compassion, and said, “You shalt not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). Did Satan care that we would lose fellowship with God, be exiled from the Garden, and die both physically and spiritually? No, he intended to do exactly what he did, to bring misery and destruction into the lives of mankind.

The broken trail of human error can be traced (due to Satan’s influence) through Abel’s death by the hand of his brother, the increase of sin until God sent the flood upon all the earth, the betrayal of Esau by Jacob, the sale of Joseph by his brothers, the cruel treatment of Israel in Egypt by Pharaohs, the cycle of sin among the Judges, the sins of the kings of Israel through idolatry, Israel’s captivities among the nations, the slaughter of infants at Bethlehem, Jesus’ death on the cross, the martyrdom of the saints, and, even to this present day, the turmoil of sin in society and our personal lives.

Never once has Satan said, "Enough, no more, I am satisfied." Not one time has the Devil wished for the salvation of a single individual. Not once has Satan allowed a sinner to go free out of pity. The torment of the rich man in Hades (Luke 16) did not assuage his appetite for more victims. Eight million Jews sent to their deaths by Hitler did not satiate.

But let's make this personal. Satan has no mercy, he is ruthless. Have you lost a dear relative to death unprepared for eternity? A son? A daughter? Do you know someone under the influence of alcohol or other, stronger drugs? The Devil devours the lost, even if it is your loved one. Are your grandchildren being led astray? Only the Devil rejoices, but he does rejoice. He has "asked to have them." He has "asked to have you." His hatred knows no limits.

Look at the havoc among churches by the evil action of Satan. Fellowship is destroyed, friendships are ruined, the cause of Christ is made a "hiss and a byword," and the Devil is happy! Denominations are in the grip of error, sin abounds. While time remains, the work of evil continues. I understand that nature has gone awry due to the curse of sin on the earth. The prey being taken by the predator is the result of Eden's loss. We will never see the Garden again and Satan is loose among us. The worst horror films from Hollywood cannot match the reality of the Demon from Hell that lies in wait for each of us.

Modernism says that the fear of Satan described above is paranoia, mental sickness, and schizophrenia. That, dear friend, would be a relief. But Satan is real, altogether, and very much at work on planet Earth. It is only in Christ that we have any hope of winning this battle. Each of us has felt the power of Satan each time we sin. We all have been "wretched" as Paul was, under the curse of sin (Rom. 7:24), wondering "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" This "roaring lion" has claimed us all as victims (Rom. 3:23). But Paul rejoiced in victory: "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 25).

By God's grace and man's obedient faith (Eph. 2:8-9), by the remedial power of the blood of Christ, Satan can be, and has been, conquered. All our life we have feared the Devil because of sin and death. Jesus changed all that by coming in the flesh, enduring temptation, overcoming sin and death, and setting us free. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14-15).

The hapless gazelle has little chance against the prowling lion, but we have Jesus on our side. When he warned Peter about Satan "desiring to have you," Jesus also said, "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail, and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren" (v. 32).

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