

What the Bible says about Satan as Predator

Proverbs 6:20-21

This begins a long section of instruction regarding adultery and harlotry. The first warning is to protect one's heart—not one's body—from her because the body follows the heart's lusts. Since Babylon, the Great Whore, is our spiritual temptation, this is a veiled admonition to steer clear of Babylon. Verse 26 reveals her predatory nature; she preys upon the precious lives of her victims as a cat preys on birds. Satan, the father of Babylon and its ways, "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

1 Peter 5:8

The great deceiver, more often than not, works under the cover of darkness. As a skilled and experienced hunter, he patiently stalks his prey, invisible to them (invisible is about as camouflaged as one can get!). His night vision is acute, his senses much sharper than ours. He sees us when we do not even know he is there!

Even now, he is stalking us.

Lifted in their pride, he and his demons had the gall to hunt God's throne, but they were soundly routed (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:16-17; Luke 10:18). Now, as our adversaries, they hunt God's people, trying to pick off the weak, the ailing, and those who have grown weary and dropped back from the herd. He is always looking for a way to maneuver us into a position by ourselves where he can leap out of nowhere to maul us. Once he attacks, he causes great pain—but he does not go immediately for the kill. He pins us down and wounds us first. Even while in his grasp, though, we can call out for help. "The LORD is near to all who call upon him, . . . He also hears their cry and saves them" (Psalm 145:18-19, RSV).

Stalked by Satan

1 Peter 5:8

Christ is also symbolized as a lion, but not as a lion seeking to devour. Lion for Christ is used in the sense of "controlled, majestic power," but for Satan, it is the symbol for one who is ruthless, stealthy, powerfully aggressive, bent on defending its turf, and destruction, often working from ambush. There are many similarities with the attributes of the "serpent."

A pride of lions will stalk and attack animals that are larger than they are—including wildebeest and water buffalo weighing thousands of pounds. It is a beautiful, deadly sight to watch lions working together as a team to bring a water buffalo down.

When lions attack, they do so through multiple attacks from every side. Eventually, one lion gets a grip on the throat of the water buffalo and kills it by strangulation. It is a slow and painful death. The water buffalo goes down, and the lions begin eating it before it is dead.

Satan is a lion, roaring, looking for, and stalking whom he may devour. Male lions will even eat the young of their pride to establish their dominance. It does not matter that they are related. If they are hungry, and a little kitten is around . . . one bite and it is gone.

The Spiritual Mark of the Beast

1 Peter 5:8-11

This rebellion at the end of the Millennium is often overlooked in the joy of considering Christ's wonderful rule. Satan's influence is so powerful he can influence millions of people to follow him seemingly overnight. Having drawn away from a third of the angels from God (Revelation 12:4; Isaiah 14:12-14) and overcome Adam and Eve, he has wielded almost total control over man.

His present power will be greatly magnified very shortly when he is cast down to earth to begin the Great Tribulation. He would deceive the very elect if it were possible (Matthew 24:24). It is no wonder Peter instructs us to be sober, to be vigilant, to resist Satan in faith that Christ might establish us in the end!

Holy Days: Feast of Tabernacles

1 Peter 5:8-9

This verse indicates that there is little room for carelessness. We are being called upon to be thoroughly self-controlled and to be alert. Why? Because Satan aims to undermine our confidence, to sow discord, and to get us to stop believing and revert to carnality. These are the directions in which he will try to push us.

Notice Peter writes, "Whom he may devour." "May" indicates permission is given. He can devour us spiritually, but it does not have to happen. Putting the advice in verse 8 into more common language, instead of saying, "Be sober," we might say, "Keep cool," "Keep your head screwed on right," "Don't lose your presence of mind," "Try to keep calm about this," "Don't be fearful," or "Don't lose your temper."

He also says to "Be vigilant," which means "to watch." This same phraseology is used about prayer. It is part of our responsibility to pray that we do not enter into temptation. It is part of being vigilant.

All of these things—the roaring lion, the resisting, the afflictions, suffering, persecution, perfection, and strength—are related as parts of operations that fulfill God's purpose for us. We have to begin by understanding that Satan—despite his incredible intelligence, cleverness, and power—is still yet an unwitting dupe in God's hand to bring about His purpose. God is far more powerful than Satan. As great as is Satan's power over us, God's is far greater over Satan.

1 Peter 5:8

The animal kingdom teaches us that predators like lions usually look for and attack the animals that are alone and have wandered away from the flock. Such strays are in an exposed position because they lack the protection afforded by the large numbers of others of like kind. Our adversary likes nothing better than pouncing on sheep who try to "go it alone."

We do not have to be so vulnerable! The protection of the flock is available. Our place and our protection are found in worshipping and fellowshiping with the people of God in "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3:15).

1 Peter 5:8-9

Satan is a formidable enemy, to be sure, but in a personal sense, he is not as directly dangerous to us as the world or our human nature. The chances of his confronting us individually are small in comparison to the influences of our ever-present hearts and the world in which we conduct our lives. Certainly, as our Adversary, he "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8), but unlike God, he is not omniscient. While he can be only at one place at one time, he has many assistants.

We are far more likely to be confronted by one of his demon assistants than the Adversary himself, which is bad enough. However, he and his demons have constructed attitudes, institutions, systems, and entertainments into the course of this world, which they effectively use against us, even when they are absent from the scene. Most of their evil influence comes from the system.

We need to remember, though, that God has put a wall of protection around us, so demons can go only so far in their attempts to corrupt us and destroy our loyalty to God and His truth (Job 1:6-10). Their major responsibility before God at this time appears to be to provide tests for us to meet and overcome, in the same way, God used Satan to test Job and to tempt Christ (Matthew 4; Luke 4). In this respect, they play a large role in helping us to recognize evil.

God gives us advice regarding them in I Peter 5:8-9: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world." In essence, His advice is, "Be self-controlled, be alert, and resist him!" Peter's first term, "be sober," urges us not to let fear of him fluster us to the point that we cannot think clearly. The second term, "be vigilant," charges us to be fully awake, to set ourselves in a state of watchfulness and readiness. The third term, "resist him," is a command not to turn and run but to stand firm.

This instruction lets us know that Satan is not all-powerful. With the protections God provides, including His continuous presence and alert regard for His children, Satan can be beaten. The same Jesus who has already defeated Satan is on His throne, overseeing our well-being. His protection is not something we flaunt but is the power we can rely on.

James 4:7 adds additional advice: "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." Again, the charge is to resist, but it is directly coupled with submission to God. Submission is the voluntary act of placing oneself under the authority of another to show respect and give obedience. If we submit to God, Satan will flee.

Ephesians 6:11 parallels the other two instructions. "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." "Stand against" is yet another way of saying "resist him." "Stand" in Greek indicates that one must hold fast a critical position as an army must do in warfare. However, it is not a passive term, describing something like an unmoving brick wall, but an aggressive, attacking term. In other words, we are to hold the ground we have already gained by going forward.

How, then, do we resist? How do we hold our ground by going on the offensive? We must return in thought to I Peter 5:9, where the first phrase is better translated as, "Resist him, standing firm

[or solid] in the faith." Putting this into military terms, a soldier would be likely commanded, "Do not surrender! Do not give up any ground! Do not back down! Move forward with all you've got! Reinforcements are right behind you."

We have the God-backed promise that Satan will flee! Who can resist God's will? The keywords here are "standing firm" and "faith." "Standing firm" or "solid" is used in the sense of "unmovable." When linked with faith in practical terms, it means we are sure or immovably convicted in the face of a strong test.

Overall, the apostles' instruction suggests that what we experience vis-à-vis Satan is common to this way of life. Their advice does not say that he will flee immediately, but flee he will. As used here, "faith" can be understood as either a personal trust in God or confidence in Christian doctrine, as either one fits the context. Ultimately, if we use our relationship with God properly, the confidence in Christian doctrine becomes trust in God Himself.

2 Peter 1:19-21

It is from verse 20 in particular that we derive the principle that the Bible interprets itself. This means that somewhere within the pages of Scripture, the timing, the location, the characters, and the symbols employed in symbolic texts like parables and prophecies are explained or defined. It is our job to search them out.

When we add the following three vital verses to our understanding of this principle, however, we end up with a very significant corollary:

» For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob. (Malachi 3:6)

» Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8)

» Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (James 1:17)

Each of these verses proclaims God as constant, consistent, unchanging. It is this quality of God—that He is faithful to what He is—that allows us to trust Him. We can have confidence in God and His Word because He never changes! Could we rely upon a double-minded God (see James 1:6-8)? Could we have faith in a Being who constantly blew hot and cold? Never! With our God, though, we need not fear inconsistency.

Thus, if God is constant and His Word interprets itself, the corollary principle is that the Bible's interpretation of its symbols is consistent. This must be true! If the Bible gave us two contradictory interpretations of a symbol, how could we ever feel confident that we understood its meaning? This corollary underscores II Peter 1:19, where the apostle informs us that "the prophetic word [is] more sure" than even eyewitness accounts! We can have confidence in our understanding of the prophecies and parables if the symbols we interpret match what we understand in other areas of Scripture. Otherwise, we could never be sure!

This means that every symbol from Genesis to Revelation is consistent in its interpretation. If a rose means something in one part of the Bible, it will mean the same elsewhere, though the

context may modify it slightly. If God is consistent, His Word—His revelation of Himself to us—must also, therefore, be consistent.

This conclusion may raise some questions. How can that be? How can, for instance, a lion represent Satan in I Peter 5:8 and Jesus Christ in Revelation 5:5? Is that not contradictory? Not at all! Our understanding is correct, but the meaning we give to the symbol is wrong. We have defined it too narrowly.

A study of the symbol of the lion brings out several characteristics the Bible emphasizes: It represents strength, predatory ferocity, majesty, and leadership. The lion is the symbol of a ruler, a king, and often a very fierce and powerful one. These are the general meanings of the symbol based on a lion's traits. They help us to comprehend what God wants us to focus on in the context. Thus, a lion can represent both Satan and Jesus because they both have a lion's characteristics.