

## **The Man-Eating Lion Survival Guide: Being Sober and Knowing the Adversary**

1 Peter 5:8–9: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”

The text chosen for the 2015 PRYP convention is a survival guide. Survival guides give important tips from experts that are designed to help you stay alive in a dangerous environment. The text is a guide that briefly teaches us how to survive in this world where Satan walks about as a lion seeking whom he may devour. This biblical metaphor indicates how important this guide is to our spiritual survival.

Certainly, if taking a safari in the vast savannahs of Africa where lions lurk, you would acquire such a guide and learn how to spot danger, avoid an ambush, and defend yourself. But Satan is a far more dangerous threat. He is the most powerful, persistent, and fearless predator in this creation. Satan is cunning, having developed his craft over millennia, and is an expert at ambush, being invisible to our natural senses. Swift, he prowls the whole earth. Deadly, his den is the pit of hell. And he doesn't merely crush skulls, rip off limbs, and feast on the bodies of his prey. He devours their souls eternally.

Be sober. This is the first tip taught by our man-eating lion survival guide. Sobriety is the skill of remaining calm, clear headed, and keeping your wits about you at all times without panic in the face of danger. Peter, the expert who wrote our survival guide, knew firsthand the fundamental character of sobriety. For, as our survival guide points out, sobriety is subsequently necessary to be vigilant, constantly alert to the danger of Satan, and to resisting his attacks.

Sobriety is a skill that is learned and developed. With regard to survival, it is the skill of knowing your enemy and then knowing how to adapt to that danger. Satan-surviving sobriety is developed by believing and applying the truth of Scripture. That is why our survival guide speaks of being “in the faith,” followed by “knowing.” Knowing Scripture is essential to sort the truth about Satan from fiction. And faith is necessary because Satan is a spiritual creature who is not detectible by physical senses: the spiritual senses of faith must be honed in order to avoid or defend against him.

Sobriety basically consists of what we can call *the four Rs*. The first is believing that Satan is *real*. Although most humans have heard of Satan, mankind is generally oblivious or simply dismiss him as a cartoon figure. Satan would like to keep it that way. The Bible teaches not only that Satan is real, but also that he is a glorious creature of God who is given extraordinary gifts, power, and authority that he

continues to exercise in the earth with unparalleled experience, intelligence, and determination. The glory given to Satan is the glory of angels. Satan is an angel created by God sometime in the first six days. Angels are spirits. And the glory of angels is the power and authority they are given, more than men, to serve as messengers and agents of God in his work with men (Ps. 8:5). This power and authority of angels is considerable, for it encompasses not only the physical realm but also the spiritual, and includes not only the authority to save but also to destroy.

We are mostly familiar with angels as agents of God to save. They are given to protect his saints in all their ways (Psa. 91:11). Thousands upon thousands make up the armies of the living God (Ps. 68:17). Peter urges us to sobriety partly because he knew firsthand the power angels possess. Peter himself was reminded by Jesus that if necessary he could call on 12 legions of angels for his defense (Matt. 26:53). And Peter was personally delivered from prison by an angel who released his chains, led him out past numerous guards, and through an iron gate.

Angels are also agents of God's providence—far more than we realize—with power and authority over such things as the wind (Rev. 7:1). As such, they also serve as agents of God's judgments in the earth. They are agents of doom, as the destruction of Sodom proves. "We will destroy this place," they declared to Lot (Gen. 19:13). Not only did angels carry away dawdling Lot, but they blinded the Sodomites and threw down the fire and brimstone that buried the city. This is but a picture that in the day of the Lord, the entire world will be destroyed by angels pouring out the vials of his wrath (Rev. 14 and 16).

This glory of angels is that of rulers. This is why scripture often associates angels with thrones, dominions, and principalities (Col. 1:16; Rom. 8:38; Eph. 6:12), and why it pictures angels as stars (Job 38:7). Stars, given to rule the night, represent the glorious power and authority given to angels to rule (Gen. 1:16). This angel Satan possesses more dazzling power and authority than any other angel. For good reason he is called Lucifer, the bright and morning star (Isa. 14:12), the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2), and the prince of this world (John 12:31). This power and authority is also indicated by the metaphor of Satan as a lion, which is even commonly regarded as the king of the beasts (Rev. 5:5).

Second, sobriety requires is an attitude of *respect*. The sober survivalist must respect the power and authority Satan possesses even as a fallen angel. Soon after he was created and before the fall of Adam and Eve, Satan kept not his perfect first estate (Jude 1:6), but fell into sin and lured into sin a large share of the angels (2 Pet. 2:4), perhaps a third (Rev. 12:3-4). The threat this posed for Adam and Eve

was implied by their calling to keep the garden. But by the instigation of Satan, they also sinned against God (Rev. 12:9). The sin of Adam, Eve, and reprobate angels was the sin of Satan. His sin was rebellion: discontented with his glorious position, he wanted to be God and be free from God (Isa. 14:12ff). If anything ought to gain our respect, it is the power of this fallen angel to cause even such gloriously perfect creatures to fall into sin. If he is able to do this to perfect angels and humans in paradise, what of us?

Sober respect for Satan is taught in two places (2 Pet. 2 and Jude). In both, the ungodly speech and disrespect of men toward earthly rulers is condemned by comparing it to the behavior of the archangel Michael, who did not even speak evil or bring railing accusation against Satan when he disputed over the presence of Moses' body in heaven. Ironically, to serve his man-eating purposes, Satan teaches mankind to disrespect his rule—to make cartoons, mock, and joke about the devil. But such an ungodly disposition toward the power of Satan indicates one already is or soon will be devoured and ingested under his dominion. Foolish and typically devilish.

Soberly we ought to have respect for the wide dominion of his power. The place Satan walks to and fro is the whole earth (Job 1:7). When he walks, he does so as prince, with authority not only over a host of mighty angels, but the whole of mankind outside of Christ. Nations, rulers, powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places are under his throne (Eph. 6:12). Have respect for the power by which he manipulates, afflicts, and troubles mankind—even disease and death are in his hands. On a single day in a highly coordinated attack he used Sabeans and Chaldeans and a mighty wind to strip Job of everything he owned. Not only did he kill Job's family, but in an instant afflicted him with a disease designed to create maximum misery without death. Even Jesus, who has ultimate authority over providence, noted that it was Satan who binds people with their diseases (Luke 13:16). Have respect that Satan even has dominion over our own flesh, whereby he tempts us into sin and ceases not to assault us (L.D. 52).

Third, sober respect for Satan includes *recognition* of him as our most persistent and dangerous enemy. The name *Satan* even means "the adversary." Although we have many enemies who attack us, ultimately there is only one, and he remains a real and credible threat to us in this world. The Belgic Confession teaches that Satan, devils, and evil spirits are so depraved that they are the enemies of God and every good thing, who to the utmost of their power, as murderers, watch to ruin, and by their wicked strategies to destroy the church and even members thereof (Art. 12).

Satan seeks to devour because killing is his only purpose with us. He is the original murderer. He

is responsible for the murder of every human being. Those whom he kills and devours, even in hell, are not his friends. He doesn't love God, and he doesn't love his neighbor. Not even a bit. He loves only himself. The main object of his hatred is not the wicked, but every good thing. He walks about seeking saints and churches to devour. And he is persistent: he continually walks the earth. For thousands of years he has battled God. For an entire testament he tried to prevent the Messiah. When he came, he stalked Jesus his entire life. He never ceases to exploit any opportunity to attack the ministers, elders, deacons, teachers, husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, and children of the church.

Recognize Satan as an expert at his craft. Like a lion, he is a master of ambush tactics. He is skilled at spotting vulnerabilities. He will use any character weakness we have, personality trait or gift we are given, and even legitimate needs we have for food, shelter, and companionship to trip us up and devour us. He loves to attack when we are weak from lack of food, money, health or sleep as well as from lack of prayer or attending the means of grace. He is also adept at camouflage. He can infiltrate and manipulate souls. A favorite tactic is to get close disguised as friends or associates. He used the serpent to get to Eve, Eve to get to Adam, and apostles to get to Christ. He can transform himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14) as well as a spouse, minister, or teacher. Satan used Peter to try deterring Christ (Matt. 16:23), viciously attacked Peter to deny Christ, and entered Judas so he betrayed him. Satan even mimics Christ, presenting himself as a savior with your best interests at heart. He knows scripture better than we do, and quotes it. But every word he says is a lie used only to confuse, ensnare, and destroy. He is a liar and father of the lie (John 8:44).

Last, sobriety requires *remembering*. We must remember in order to avoid despair and to maintain hope that we can and will survive in this world with Satan. In spite of his considerable power, authority, and mastery, we must first remember Satan also has limitations and vulnerabilities. Although a powerful spirit, Satan is not God. He does not possess the incommunicable attributes of God. He is not omnipresent or omniscient. Although swift, he can only be one place at one time. Although highly intelligent, he must learn as we do. And all his power and authority are still subject to the power and authority of God. The history of Job proved that.

Second, remember that Satan is neither the original lion, nor the most powerful and supreme lion. That would be Christ, the lion of Judah (Rev. 5:5). He has already defeated Satan. In fact, Satan already knows this. That certainly makes Satan more dangerous because now he is desperate. The inhabitants of earth are warned to beware, for "the devil is come down unto you having great wrath, because he

knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Rev. 12:12). But there is still no need for panic or terror, because among our comforts in life and death is that our faithful Savior Jesus Christ has already delivered us from all the power of the devil (L.D. 1 and 13). Satan is restrained so that without the will of Christ, he cannot hurt us (Belgic Confession 13). So certain is the perseverance of the saints, which God has abundantly revealed in His word, that it is a doctrine that Satan especially abhors (Canons 5.15).

Third, remember Christ gives perseverance and victory over Satan by faith. That Christ has defeated Satan does not imply there is no danger or threat to us, so that we may slumber and need not resist him. You are a member of Christ by faith, so that you may fight against Satan in this life (L.D. 12). To fight against Satan you must live soberly by faith. If we are not constant in watching and prayer, then we are not only liable to be drawn into great and heinous sins by Satan, but sometimes by the righteous permission of God actually fall into them (Canons 5.4). Which is also why, besides remembering our calling to live soberly in watchfulness and prayer, we must also remember that there is a response that always repels Satan: “Yes, I am weak and a sinner, but I belong to Christ, who is responsible for my life, having died for my sins; Go, take it up with him.” Such faith is far more powerful than Satan, because it relies upon Christ, the true Lion whom we fear. Be sober.