

The Prowling Lion

Here in the comfort of urban America, a prowling lion doesn't mean much. Lions are something for us to watch on the Discovery Channel or argue about on Twitter and Facebook (Cecil the Lion anyone?). We might see some docile king of the zoo sunning in a makeshift habitat. Intellectually, we know they are dangerous, but it is hard to generate a lot of fear with the safety of the glass or bars between us.

Try to imagine living in the brush of Africa, a village without city walls, and you know a pride of lions is in the area. You know that because lately you've found the bloodied remains of half-eaten animals on the outskirts of the fields. A couple of weeks ago, some of the village shepherds barely fended off an attack in the night on one of the flocks. One of the shepherds lies in a hut, barely hanging on to life. Several of the village animals were taken. Last week one of the village's strongest hunters was caught off-guard and mauled to death. Two days ago, one of your neighbors' children snuck away on a dare to prove his manhood and hasn't returned.

What kind of protective measures would you take? Would you let your kids go play in the neighboring field unattended? Would you go for a lone walk on a path at night (or in the day for that matter)? Would you hunt alone? Would you station lookouts around the village around the clock? Would you learn all you could from the village warriors who have survived lion attacks? Or would you just keep living daily life like nothing was going on and it could never happen to you?

"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8, ESV).

Having spent most of my life in the American Bible Belt and being brought up "in church," a prowling lion hasn't meant much. It is something to talk about in a Bible class, perhaps preach a sermon about. I might have a rousing discussion about lions in a small group. Intellectually, I know the lion is dangerous, but it is hard to generate a lot of fear from the safety of my arm chair as I read the word picture on a page.

We must look around. Not a week goes by that I don't hear about a Christian falling to sin. Marriages destroyed because of mounting materialism induced debt. Teens blinded by the cultural cry for the freedom to pursue immorality, same-gender sexual relationships, pre-marital sex, abortion. Jobs lost because of pornography searches caught on company computers. Arrests and jail time because of domestic violence. Divorce because "God wants me to be happy." Churches split because of personality clashes, turf wars, hurt feelings, envy, pride, and arrogance. On and on the list goes.

Yet rarely do we make the connection between the prowling lion and these walking wounded. Perhaps if we could see these spiritual wounds as physical wounds, missing limbs, bleeding gashes, infected bites. Perhaps if we could recognize that our own falls are not mere spiritual accidents but are mauling attacks by the prowling lion.

Trust me, there will be a day when the effects of the lion's attacks will be more real than we care to acknowledge, and as much as we want to hide from them, we will be unable to. But by then it will be too late.

Our adversary prowls around like a roaring lion. What protective measures will we take?