

NEITHER GIVE PLACE TO THE DEVIL

(Eph. 4:27)

Football has been described as a game of inches. If you advance the ball enough inches you score a touchdown. Winning teams, of course, do not give “place” to their opponents but fight for every inch of ground. In a similar fashion believers are admonished not to give “place” to the devil. However friendly he may seem on the surface his ultimate goal is to destroy you. If you give him an inch he will try to take a mile. If you relax your vigil and relinquish your space he will exploit that opportunity. Peter describes him as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

The Bible word translated as “place” is “topos”. In the King James Version it is translated 27 times as “place” and 5 times as “room”. Giving the devil place is bad enough, but giving him “room” sounds even more insidious. Before giving room to a roaring lion please consider the following stories. In Jan. 2004 a woman named Anne Hjelle was biking in the hills of Southern California when she was attacked by a 110 lb. mountain lion. A 911 caller said: “We got a lady that is attacked by a mountain lion on her face. Her face is almost gone. She is in bad condition. I need people out.” She lived but has been permanently disfigured.

On Oct. 20, 1999 a zookeeper on the job for less than a month was mauled by a lion at Mesker Park Zoo and Botanic Gardens. 34-year-old Junius E. Sneed IV was attempting to move Benny, a six-year-old African lion, from an indoor lions den to an outdoor enclosure when the animal clawed Sneed on the right arm and drew it inside the cage biting him.

On Jun 24, 2005 a 10 year old boy in Little Falls, Minn. was nearly killed by a lion which escaped from its enclosure. Similar incidents are being reported at an alarming rate across the country by those who keep exotic pets.

On May 15, 2002 a three-year-old girl was mauled by a lioness tied up outside a shop in Romania. The store owner says he was left to look after the nine-month-old animal temporarily for a friend. He has been fined for not preventing the attack and the animal's owner is being investigated by police for assault.

Between 1918 and 1926 a big cat known as the "Leopard of Rudyaprayag" is said to have killed some 125 people. The cat was finally killed by professional game hunter Jim Corbett. Corbett had previously killed another big cat sixteen years earlier known as the "Panar Maneater". It was credited with killing around 400 victims.

Actress Melanie Griffith was clawed in the face by a lion and almost lost an eye during the filming of Roar (1981) Actress Tippi Hendren created the Shambala Preserve for wild animals in California but she too was mauled by a lion who didn't understand or appreciate her kindness. Actress Bo Derek was also mauled by a lion while filming Tarzan the Ape Man in 1981.

These stories, of course, could easily be multiplied. What we have said, however, should be sufficient for rational people to get the picture. If you give “place” or “room” to a lion you are asking for trouble. The damage done by these earthly lions, however, is tame by comparison to the damage done by the devil. What is there about “eternal damnation” that makes you want to “give place” to the devil?

The context of Paul's inspired remarks involves anger. “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil“ (Eph 4:26-27). If there a “place” or “room” in your heart where anger dwells you had better avoid it in the same way you would get rid of a roaring lion. The wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God (Ja. 1:20). Like a vicious animal your anger is waiting for an opportunity to destroy you. That's why we are commanded to put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication (Col 3:8). Paul said it like this to the Ephesians: “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” (Eph 4:31-32)

If you are harboring anger in your heart you are giving place to the devil!