

Bible Devotions: Lock Stock & Barrel
Devotional Reading for Outdoorsmen
(Old Testament)

Genesis 37:20, 31-33

A Bear's Worst Nightmare

"Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"

So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?" And he recognized it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without a doubt Joseph is torn to pieces."

Have you ever considered what animal was most feared in Biblical days? Or what animal was the most dreaded? Little critters like bees and snakes were annoying enough. But bigger beasts were something else. Sticks and stones were the only immediate defenses against them. There were no conveniences like dangerous game guns or pepper spray.

Several predators roamed the countryside in Joseph's day: lions, leopards, cheetahs, wolves, and bears. The big cats were greatly feared and certainly caused their fair share of problems. Wolves were probably not much of a threat to people. But bears... well, that's another story.

During the days of writing this devotion, I saw a nature show about troublesome bears. A game warden showed the remains of a lamb that had been killed and eaten by a grizzly. It looked as if the little sheep had been devoured from the inside out, leaving nothing but a clean skin. Although bloodied a bit, the fleece could have easily been turned into usable leather.

The bruins of Biblical days were most likely Syrian brown bears (*Ursus arctos syriacus*), declining numbers of which inhabit remote parts of Syria, Pakistan, and Italy today. The Syrian brown bear is smaller than the big brownies of North America but they are still of greater strength than many other large predators. In fact, cats are most deadly when using their teeth. Bears do the most damage with their forearms and paws (not to mention their jaws, which hold a fair amount of teeth!).

The factor that makes bears so greatly feared, however, is their unpredictable nature. Joseph's brothers, being outdoorsmen, were aware of this fact. Combine that with premeditated malice and a blood-soaked, intact garment, we can deduce that Jacob's first thought was the worst thought: a bear had killed and eaten his son, ripping Joseph out of his tunic, leaving nothing but the skin or in this case, a coat. Much like that little lamb mentioned above.

Just like outdoorsmen enter a wilderness of unknown challenges, Christians venture into their own little parts of the world not knowing the pitfalls that lie ahead. Our Heavenly Father is very much concerned for our welfare. God doesn't want to be left holding the empty shell of a man because the wild beasts of this world devoured him from the inside out. For that reason, He clothes the ones He loves with a coat of ONE color: a robe washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

This robe sustains us when life turns ugly: the low bank account fund, the sick child, a family crisis, the difficulties of the workplace – all those wild beasts of life that we wrestle with everyday. This robe cannot be stripped from those who confess JESUS IS LORD. It is a robe invincible, exclusively tailored by the risen Son of God.

He is the Lamb of God, victorious over the bears of the world. He is the Lamb who has declawed, defanged, and defeated every power and principality that stood in the way of His cross, of His grave, and of His resurrection.

He is a bear's worst nightmare.

Bible Devotions: Hook Line & Sinker (study guide)

Genesis 37:20, 31-33
A Bear's Worst Nightmare

HOOK

1. Why do you think bears seem to garner such great admiration?

2. How do you wash blood from your clothes? From your hands?

3. Describe how you understand the big cats kill their prey. Describe how bears kill their prey.

LINE

Our Lord is very much concerned for our welfare. He doesn't want to be left holding the empty shell of a man because the wild beasts of this world devoured him from the inside out. For that reason, He clothes the ones He loves with a coat of ONE color: a robe washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

This robe sustains us when life turns ugly: the low bank account fund, the sick child, a family crisis, the difficulties of the workplace – all those wild beasts of life that we wrestle with everyday. This robe cannot be stripped from those who confess JESUS IS LORD. It is a robe invincible, exclusively tailored by the risen Son of God.

He is the Lamb of God, victorious over the bears of the world. He is the Lamb who has declawed, defanged, and defeated every power and principality that stood in the way of His cross, of His grave, and of His resurrection.

In your view, what is the meaning of "a robe washed white in the blood of the Lamb?"

When was the last time you faced a difficult struggle? How did you manage it? How did you allow Jesus to help you through it? What will you do the next time?

SINKER

Take a few minutes to write your thoughts on this devotional. Reflect on your own experiences.

Key words: bears robe Lamb of God
