

Thankfulness: Attacked by a Lion  
Adapted from *Hero Tales, Volume I*, by Dave and Neta Jackson

*In the course of three extensive trips, David Livingstone explored the country of Africa and opened new areas of the country so other missionaries could follow.*

When I first arrived in South Africa, most missionaries worked along the coast. “There are too many missionaries here! I want to go where people have never heard the Good News before.”

The people in charge of the mission thought I had too many big ideas. One of these ideas was to train African Christians to be missionaries.

“When white men preach, Africans just think we are talking about our odd European ways and customs. But when their own people tell them about Jesus, they see the truth.”

But the mission board didn’t want to support African teachers, so I raised some money myself. When I finally got permission to begin a mission at Mabotsa, two hundred miles into the interior of Africa, I took along an African teacher named Mebalwe.

For three months, I and my friends worked to build the new mission station. But one day, I heard that lions were eating cattle in a nearby village.

“Ordinary lions don’t attack during the day,” the villagers said. “These must be devil lions!” They were afraid to fight them.

“Don’t be afraid.” We stopped working on the new station. “Mebalwe, come with me. If we shoot one, that’ll scare the others off.”

Sure enough, soon after we arrived, a lion boldly broke into one of the cattle pens. I raised my gun and fired both barrels. The lion jerked back and roared. I quickly reloaded.

Mebalwe yelled a warning. I looked up just as the lion sprang. It caught my shoulder in its huge jaws, crushing the bone. Both I and the animal rolled in the dust.

When the lion came to its feet, it shook me like a rag doll. I thought, *I wonder what part of me he will eat first?*

Mebalwe raised his gun, but it misfired. The lion immediately dropped me and attacked the African teacher, burying his teeth in Mebalwe’s leg. When another man tried to spear the lion, it turned and charged him—and then suddenly fell dead as my two bullets finally did their job.

Sure enough, the other lions ran off and didn’t come back. But Mebalwe and I were both badly injured. It was a hard time for the brand-new mission. But I wrote to my father in Scotland, praising and thanking God for saving me from great danger.

Even though I couldn’t work on the building project because of my injuries, I *was* able to watch over the work until it was finished. But I needed more rest. I left Mebalwe at the new mission and traveled back to headquarters, where a young woman named Mary Moffat nursed me back to health. She was the daughter of Robert Moffat, mission director and well-known Bible translator. She admired me because I was a missionary who was not afraid to go where no white person had gone before. And I was impressed by her gentle, steady character. I asked her to marry me, and Mary said yes. Not only that, but she was willing to go back with me to the Mabotsa mission.

I realized that I had a lot to be thankful for—even after being attacked by a lion!

*Thankfulness is seeing God’s goodness even when bad things happen.*