

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, February 13, 2013 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

DAVID... A MAN AFTER GOD'S HEART "Life's Most Subtle Temptation" *1 Samuel 24*

"Sweet is revenge," write Byron. Bacon called it "a kind of wild justice." Although Shakespeare warns his readers in Othello that revenge will "swallow them up," it still continues, strong as ever, even with the ranks of Christianity. It's amazing! We all ought to know that we cannot win by trying to even the score. But revenge, being a deceiver, whispers little lies into our ears and we begin to believe them. The tendency to do that is nothing new... it's as old as Cain, who stood with Abel's blood on his hands... and its subtle temptation reaches into a life as exemplary as David's, the man after God's own heart. There are some facts we must face by looking at his life more closely. These things may help us do deal with this ever so subtle, but deceitful struggle in our own lives.

I. **HARD FACTS TO FACE ABOUT REVENGE**

The problem of revenge rears its ugly head in all arenas of life and may be aroused by *an employer who treats us unfairly... a teacher who refuses to hear us out... a colleague who doesn't respect us and talks down to us... a coach who puts us on the bench... a friend who betrays us and turns enemy... a mate who walks away and spurns our love or maybe mistreats us... a parent who fails us or exercises abuse*. The life circumstances in which revenge can begin to take root in our lives and many and varied.

2 Acceptable Names We Use For Revenge: Revenge is often given at least two "more acceptable" titles or labels all too familiar to us.

1. **"My rights"** – This represents the thinking, "No one has a right to treat someone that way and get away with it," "No one is going to walk all over me. I'm not a doormat, and I refuse to just lie down and take this."

Question: *How are we to handle it when our "rights" have been violated if not to somehow even the score?* Jesus' teaching on the subject is very contrary to man's way of thinking. In the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5:38-42, Jesus gave us some pretty clear instruction on how to react and respond when someone takes advantage of us, ³⁸ "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' ³⁹ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹ If someone forces you to go one mile,

go with him two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”

2. **“Justified retaliation”** – This represents the thinking that may go something like this, “My parents were fighters; it’s in my blood. It’s just in me to know let others take advantage of me.” It also thinks, “I’ve done right... he or she has done me wrong and I am going to get back... I can’t just let him or her get away with this, that would be wrong.”

Question: Is retaliation and revenge by us on a personal level ever justified? James, the half-brother of Jesus, tells us in James 4:12, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, ¹² *“There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy.”* In other words, there is only one person who is “justified” in getting even with another person... only one judge and it’s not you and I. Jesus commands us, again in His Sermon on the Mount, this time in Luke’s account, in Luke 6:37, ³⁷ *“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”* We are to be in the business of “forgiving” not “giving” revenge.” And Paul state it clearly in Romans 12:19, ¹⁹ *“Do not take revenge...”* So the answer is, “NO” retaliation and revenge by us on a personal lever is never justified. **What had God set in place to deal with this problem?** Listen to Paul again in Romans 13:1-5, ¹ *“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. ⁴ For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.”* God has put in place those, whose responsibility it is to mete out justice and protect the innocent. When we are wronged we need to let God handle it, and He will. Our responsibility is to “forgive” for our own conscience sake, because if we harbor bitterness and resentment and refuse to forgive we give those who have wronged us power over us... essentially they hold us captive in our own bitter resentment and unforgiving sprit.

3 Truths On How God Feels About Revenge: (Romans 12:17-21) Paying evil for evil is not ever justifiable. Here is how he says it in Romans 12:17-21, ¹⁷ *“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’ ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”* Paul advises to never take your own revenge... by leave room for God to work. He underscores God’s

prerogative guarded by God's own command as seen in Hebrews 10:30, "³⁰ For we know him who said, 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' and again, 'The Lord will judge his people.'"

1. **We are commanded not to take matters of revenge into our own hands (vv17-19)**
2. **We are reminded that to avenge is God's business not ours (v19)**
3. **We are exhorted to respond to those who wrong us with goodness (vv20-21) –** Again this is consistent with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:38-42, ³⁸ "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' ³⁹ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹ If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."

3 Reasons We Do It: Consider these three words which, when mixed together, result in revenge.

1. **Injury** – When we have been personally hurt and treated unfairly... injured in some way mentally, physically, emotionally, etc. our natural inclination is to strike back in some way... it may even be in frustration in not being able to handle the situation.
2. **Vulnerability** – We may say it like this sometimes, "Just wait, when he or she least expects I will get even... what goes around comes around... their time will come!" What we are really saying is that when they are most "vulnerable" we will strike back!" The one who caused the injury lets down his or her guard and become vulnerable.
3. **Depravity** – Again, when we have been personally hurt and treated unfairly... injured in some way mentally, physically, emotionally, etc. our natural inclination is to strike back. That "natural inclination" is our own human depravity coming into play.

NOTE: *When these three come together (injury, vulnerability, and depravity) we have the making of an act of revenge.*

II. A CASE STUDY IN REVENGE (1 Samuel 24:1-23)

From a human perspective, David's life was made miserable by Saul. He was in the cave of Adullam because Saul was in hot pursuit of his life. David's life was reduced to that of a fugitive.

The Situation (vv.1-2) – "After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, 'David is in the Desert of En Gedi.' ² So Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats."

David had become surrounded by a band of men faithful to him as their captain. The number of this group soon rose from 400 to 600 men. As David had trained them, they had become like a maverick band of guerillas. David had developed clout. He and his men were camped in the wilderness of Engedi and were perfectly camouflaged by the terrain. Saul heard of his whereabouts upon returning from pursuing the Philistines, and was compelled to go out and hunt David down.

The Temptation (vv.3-7) – ³ *He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave.* ⁴ *The men said, ‘This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, ‘I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.’* Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul’s robe. ⁵ *Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe.* ⁶ *He said to his men, ‘The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD’s anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD.’* ⁷ *With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.”* David and his men shifted their location to a different cave. Saul, in pursuit of David, stopped and entered a cave, apparently “to relieve himself” as verse 3 says. David and his company were sitting in the darkness of the same cave, and Saul was vulnerable. Although he didn’t realize it, all eyes were on him. The one who had brought injury to David was suddenly unprotected... to the point that David could have taken advantage of him.

4 Warnings In The Midst of the Temptation to Revenge:

- 1. Beware of those around you who encourage you toward revenge (v.4)** – ⁴ *“The men said, ‘This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, ‘I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.’”...* The mavericks accompanying David said to him essentially, “Ha, Ha, look what God has done for you! He has put your enemy right in your hand. He must want you to take your revenge on him.” In other words, “Here is your chance to get even... to get him!” Beware of those around you who press you toward your opportunity to get even or to get revenge. **Application:** We may even be tempted to think that these are our “real friends” and buy into the idea that when we are injured we find out who our “real friends” are. They truly be friends who are there to give us comfort and support, like in David’s case, but they are not being a “real friend” if they press you toward revenge. That is never the right answer and will eventually lead you to do worse than was done to you. God listen to the advice of those who press you toward revenge.
- 2. Beware of your own natural tendency to gain an upper hand (v.4b)** **In other words beware of letting the natural man direct your actions rather than the Spiritual man* – ⁴ *“...Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul’s robe.”* David’s response to the situation was natural, and it was directed by the natural man... not the spiritual man... came from the flesh and not the Spirit. David came up on Saul’s blind spot and “secretly” cut off a corner of Saul’s robe. He could have killed the man who had made his life miserable, but he didn’t. Instead, he began to play games with Saul. Now, before you are tempted to laugh and as if to say, “Well, Saul deserved that! David could have killed him and didn’t! He did a good thing!” Looking at this passage initially you might be tempted to think that what David did was noble, but read it again carefully in context, and as we will see in a moment, what David did was wrong. It wasn’t the right thing to do and David knew it, although he was very much reflecting human natures response of letting our enemies and those who have hurt or injured us know that we have the upper hand... that we have something on them and that we can get back at them any time we want. **Application:** Here we deal with a second area of temptation in dealing with those how have wronged us or injured us and that is our need to gain a psychological advantage over

our enemies. “Well, isn’t that fairly innocent, Bro. Buddy? Isn’t that just a way that I can learn to handle the adversity of dealing with my enemies... somehow letting them know that I am the bigger person and that they didn’t get the best of me!” Sounds good, just like in David’s story, but remember that Christians are to traffic in the arena of forgiveness and not in the area of vengeance. And not just an exterior type of forgiveness that says, “I forgive you,” but also an internal type of forgiveness that really does. We are to exhibit an attitude of grace and mercy just like we ourselves have been shown such great grace, mercy and forgiveness... and even toward our enemies and those who have wronged us. The Apostle Paul said it like this in Ephesians 4:32, ³² *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*” The wise writer of Proverbs said in Proverbs 24:17-18, ¹⁷ *Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice,* ¹⁸ *or the LORD will see and disapprove and turn his wrath away from him.*” And in Proverbs 25:21-22, ²¹ *If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.* ²² *In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you.*” As Jesus said in Matthew 6:14-15 says, ¹⁴ *For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.* ¹⁵ *But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*” Beware of the temptation to react in the flesh rather than in the Spirit!

3. **Beware of not listening to the inner prompting of right and wrong (v.5) **these are the inner prompting that come from the Lord through our conscience and the Holy Spirit –*** ⁵ *“Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe.”* God used David’s conscience to tell him that what he had done in cutting off a piece of King Saul’s robe, was wrong and unacceptable. The Bible says that David was “conscience-stricken.” The New King James says that “David’s heart troubled him.” As a believer and man after God’s own heart, God brought conviction and an inner stirring to David’s heart, and fortunately David remained sensitive to those inner promptings. **Application:** There is always a temptation to quiet and ignore those inner prompting, particularly when we have been wronged, injured or hurt and we are mad. We may act irrationally without listening to that still small voice inside that is really there to direct and lead us. Don’t act in haste. Learn to listen for that inner prompting. Listen to Hebrews 3:7-8 and 12-13, ⁷ *“So, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you hear his voice,’* ⁸ *do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert’ ...* ¹² *See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.* ¹³ *But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”*
4. **Beware of failing to confess and repent when your heart begins to drift toward vengeance (vv.6-7) –** ⁶ *“He said to his men, ‘The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD’s anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD.’* ⁷ *With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.”* David first gave recognition to a principle here: If a man is God’s anointed... good or bad... he is not to be touched. He realized that he had no business doing what he did to Saul because he was King and God had anointed him as such. Second, he defended this righteous principle before his men, who had to be “rebuked” or as one translation says it

“persuaded” (NKJV “restrained”, KJV “stayed”, NAS “persuaded”). The Hebrews word translated in the NIV as “rebuked” means “tore apart.” So verse 7 would read, *“With these words David ‘tore apart’ his men and did not allow them to attack Saul...”* In other words, David got pretty stern with his men in teaching them right from wrong here. Implied here in the context of verses 5-7 is that David was pretty “torn up” about what he had done (indicating a repentant attitude), so torn up in fact that he taught his men the principle and lead them toward this being “torn up” over their sin. This is an interesting principle that David learned here. **Application:** Go to Psalm 51 with me (Psalm 51) Of course recognize that this Psalm is David’s prayer of confession for forgiveness after his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah (we will be back here in our study), but I want you to notice what David says in verses 12-17 (Psalm 51:12-17), *“¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. ¹⁴ Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. ¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. ¹⁶ You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”* This Psalm reflect a man broken and contrite over his sin and his desire from his mistake to help others know right from wrong in order that they too might be torn up over their sin and find forgiveness. There is always a temptation when we have been wronged to harden our heart toward our own culpability (blame, fault, responsibility) by not repenting and confessing our own evil desire to get even.

The Conversation (vv.8-22) – David pursued Saul... not to kill him, but to talk. As he talked with Saul, his conversation was an outworking of the principles just described and how they work.

David to Saul: (vv.8-15) David endeavored to prove both his integrity and innocence. Note the movement...

- **Verse 8 – David shows Saul respect**
- **Verse 9 – David indicates that Saul was acting on misinformation**
- **Verse 10 – David give verbal proof of his innocence**
- **Verse 11 – David presents Saul with tangible proof by showing him the fabric he cut from his robe**
- **Verse 12 – David suggests they allow the Lord to judge between them**

Saul to David: (vv.16-22) Saul, having been convinced, was made surprisingly tender. Again note the movement...

- **Verse 16 – Saul recognizes that it was David to whom he had listened, and he weeps**
- **Verse 17 – Saul recognizes David’s righteousness**
- **Verse 18 – Saul accepts David’s words**
- **Verse 19 – Saul wishes the Lord’s reward upon David**
- **Verse 20 – Saul acknowledges David’s future on the throne of Israel**
- **Verse 21 – Saul requests protection for his descendants**

- Verse 22 – They depart

Observation: David choose to do what was right in the eyes of God, not men, and his life experience lends support to the principle later declared by wise son, Solomon in Proverbs 16:7, “*When a man’s ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.*”

III. TOUGH PRINCIPLES TO PRACTICE IN DEALING WITH REVENGE

Each of these presupposes a condition and then requires an aggressive attitude or action.

3 Tough Principles In Dealing With the Problem of Revenge:

1. Since we live in a fallen world ... expect that you will be mistreated.
2. Since mistreatment is inevitable... anticipate that you will encounter feeling of revenge
3. Since revenge is predictable... refuse to fight in the flesh, forgive and trust it to the Lord.

Dear God,

I acknowledge this moment that Jesus Christ took my sins when He didn’t deserve them. I confess to you that I am resentful of _____ (name) _____. Even though Jesus died for me and my sins, I am holding against _____ (name) _____ the treatment he/she is giving to me. Please forgive me. I ask You to free me from this bondage and to keep me from it for the rest of my life. I clam God’s power through Jesus Christ my Lord. In His Name, _____ (your signature) _____