

Life's Most Subtle Temptation  
1 Sam 24:1-7

The world has seemed to have gone crazy lately. Hate and revenge are sprouting out all over the place here in America and everywhere else. Last weekend's events in Charlottesville are just the latest in a world gone crazy. We are driven by a need for revenge from every quarter of America thinking right now.

One of the biggest fantasies men have is a revenge fantasy. It's part of our psyche, but that doesn't mean we should let it go uncontrolled.

When things went bad at my last ministry, I plotted all kinds of ways to get back at the men who hurt me. I dreamed of exposing them, I planned ways to humiliate them, I thought about ways to show how right I was and how wrong they were. It wasn't one of my best spiritual moments. Luckily for me, God worked on my heart, and I fought off those temptations.

How do we handle this temptation? How can we keep it in check? Hopefully today's lessons will help us sort those questions out.

PRAYER

## I. Hard Facts about Revenge

### A. Othello

1. In the play "Othello" Shakespeare vividly paints what happens when we let the temptation for revenge rule us. Iago is a young officer who hates his general. When the general promotes another officer instead of him, Iago begins a deadly web of lies to bring down Othello. Iago plants a seed of distrust in Othello about his wife having an affair with the officers who was promoted over him. By the time the play ends, Othello has strangled his innocent wife, murdered another man and badly wounds another. When he finds out it was all lies, he takes his own life.
2. A hunger for power and revenge ended in all this misery.
3. Not realistic? Have you picked up a paper or watched the news lately.
4. Helene's family has seen the devastation of revenge first hand, that left 2 young children orphans and deeply traumatized this summer.
5. Revenge has fueled so many school killings and mass murders in recent years.
6. Revenge has kept feuds going in the Middle East for generations and centuries.
7. Revenge has destroyed families, ripped apart innocent lives, and brought unbelievable pain to people.

### B. We soften the word with better phrases

1. Revenge sounds bad, so we come up with phrases that justify our revenge.
2. We call it seeking our rights, or justified retaliation, or getting even, or any other number of phrases to make us look okay in seeking our revenge.
3. We always have mixed emotions when it comes to vigilantes, don't we?
  - a) Part of us knows that we must not go outside the rule of law or we will fall as a society.
  - b) Yet, Part of us looks and says, I can't blame them at all for seeking revenge against someone who has done a terrible crime.

### C. Our revenge should be left to God

1. Listen to Deut 32:35-36 (ESV) — 35 Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.' 36 For the LORD will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants, when he sees that their power is gone and there is none remaining, bond or free.
2. The Hebrew writer reiterates this passage in Heb 10:30
3. We aren't the ones to seek out revenge, vengeance needs to be left in God hands.
4. It's one of hardest lessons we can learn... and one of the most important.

## II. David and Saul

### A. Context

1. Keep that in mind as we look at Where David is in his life.
2. David is now on the run from Saul. He has been driven from the palace, driven from his family and people, and driven from his friend.
3. Saul is using all his resources to hunt David down and kill him.
4. God intervenes by sending Israel's enemies against them and Saul is forced to send most of his army to fight them off.
5. David finds a good hiding place, but Saul is determined to get him.
6. After the raid, he takes 3000 of his best men to find David and deal with him.
7. Saul needs to use the restroom, so he finds a cave and goes in a little way to have some privacy. What he doesn't know is that this cave is filled with David and his men.
8. Can you imagine the surprise to David to see Saul walk right into his cave with no army, no bodyguard, just by himself?
9. Can you imagine the emotions going through him as he watches the man how has made his life miserable, sitting there in a most vulnerable position without a clue who is in the cave with him?

### B. David's Dilemma

1. And the desire for revenge begins to materialize.
2. David's men begin to encourage him to end it all now.

3. Look David, God had delivered Saul into your hands, why else would he be here?
4. David doesn't completely give in to his desire for revenge, but he does sneak up and cut part of Saul's tunic off to let him know how close to death he was. That should put a good scare into him!
5. Almost as quickly as he does it, his conscience kicks in and he realizes this isn't the right course.
6. In the military they drill into the recruits that you salute the rank, not the man. The man may be flawed, but he is still the rank you are required to salute.
7. It's the same with our elected leaders, we may despise all they stand for as a person, but they are still, mayor, governor or president.
8. David realized that no matter what he felt about Saul, Saul was still the king of their nation and God's anointed one for the times being.
9. He lets Saul pass unharmed.

### C. Aftermath

1. After Saul leaves the cave, David confronts him and shows him how close he came to death that day.
2. Then David says something that we all need to take to heart in vs 12 "May the Lord, judge between you and me, and may the Lord avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you."
3. Imagine all the sin and pain we could stop if our souls were that closely focused on God's will instead of our desires.

## III. Tough Principles to Practice

A. Charles Swindoll in his book on David, gives these principles that we need to put into practice

1. Since man is depraved, expect to be mistreated
  - a) We are studying in the Auditorium class about how to love someone you can't stand.
  - b) That book begins with the same premise. Evil is here and you will be the victim of it.
  - c) Sin is here to stay until Jesus returns.

d) It corrupts man from the moment he understands choosing wrong from right.

e) Injustice, bigotry, hatred.

f) It's going to happen; someone will hurt you.

2. Since mistreatment by others is inevitable, we can anticipate our feelings of revenge.

a) This is where Christians really need to be connected to God for strength.

b) We know well we will be hurt, so we need to prepare ourselves emotionally not to act on the feelings of revenge that will come into our lives.

c) We need to make sure we don't give in to our emotions.

d) Brothers and sisters, we need to be preaching this message as strongly as we can in light of the climate we seem to be living in today.

3. Since the temptation towards revenge is predictable, refuse to fight in the flesh.

a) Once you know those feelings are going to arise, you also need to remember to whom you belong.

b) Don't act on the feelings, but turn them over to God.

c) Don't fall to the temptation for revenge.

d) It is human to desire revenge, but God never called us to vengeance; He called us to forgiveness.

e) He calls us to harmony.

f) There is no room for revenge when we live in harmony and forgiveness.

g) God will deal with that other person in the most appropriate way and time.

h) He is the judge, not you or me.

## B. Subtle temptation

1. Revenge is so insidious, because it feels so right.

2. We want to justify our reasons for hurting the one who hurt us.
  - a) Maybe your employer treated you wrongly.
  - b) Maybe your spouse cut you deeply as only those who know our most vulnerable spots can.
  - c) Maybe your parents failed you.
3. They are all good reasons for revenge.

C. Don't give in. Give up.

1. Give up your desire for vengeance to God.
2. Romans 12:18–21 (ESV) — 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
3. You can't control what another does, but you can control what you do.
4. Give it up to God.
5. Let God be the one to deal with the injustice.
6. You will be happier and healthier in the end.