



The Anglican Parish of Whangaparaoa Peninsula
3 Stanmore Bay Road,
Whangaparaoa, Auckland, N.Z.
www.ststephenswgp.org.nz

Sermon

The Weapons of our Warfare

1 Samuel 24

12th August 2012

Mrs Helen Hardcastle

© 2012

God bless David! He was a brave man. Not only brave, but Godly. He totally relied on God's protection – who else would call out "My father!" to a murderous enemy and prostrate himself humbly in the dust? Anyone else would have stayed upright and had a spear ready to throw or, more likely, would not have let Saul walk out of the cave at all.

I was speaking to someone last week who was having trouble at work. She was being despised and treated badly, people slandering her behind her back. She needed a bit of encouragement, but after that, I wanted to ask her if she was fighting this battle at work on the world's terms with the world's weapons or in the power of God's spirit, with the weapons He provides.

Watch what happened when David did things God's way.

David has been on the run from Saul for ages. We've skipped over Chapter 23 - that is full of his flight from a city to a desert, to another desert and on again, to escape from Saul's murderous pursuit.

Now in chapter 24, informers tell Saul where David has gone. Saul gathers up and marches with 5 times the number of David's men, 3,000 crack troops, into the Desert of En Gedi in order to get rid of David. He has the cream of the Israeli fighting force and David's men are the riff raff of society.

Imagine the scene: David and his men are crouching at the back of a cave and the arch enemy arrives there totally unaware that his quarry is within spitting distance! It seems to David's men a golden opportunity to get rid of this King who is hell-bent on destroying their leader.

But here is a striking contrast: the King, obsessed with getting rid of David and the calm, almost mischievous young man who sneaks up behind the King and cuts off a corner of his garment. But oops! He regrets it straight afterwards. To cut off the corner of Saul's robe falls short of the honour that is due to a King.

Proverbs 15:33 The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honour.

David is still young and is learning the fear of God, self-control and humility that will make him Israel's greatest King. So David calls out to Saul with an assurance that though he has cut off the corner of his robe, he will never harm him. He approaches with humility, aware that he himself is not above reproach.

When you are at odds with someone, do you try to justify yourself and focus on how rude the other person was? Or do you look for the log in your own eye before trying to deal with the speck in the other person's eye? That way of responding is step one for those who are following Jesus. Check your own heart, pray and ask God to show you if there is anything in your **own** attitude that needs attention.

What is particularly important here in 1 Samuel 24 is that David trusts God. His men think he should just grab the opportunity to get rid of ruthless, murderous Saul. But David is confident that he will be the next King of Israel. He has already been chosen by God and anointed. God can be trusted – he doesn't have to grab the throne – God has promised to give it to him. Killing Saul would be like stealing the kingdom when it was going to be given to him anyway.

Now not many of us can look forward to being a crowned head of state. But we all have the opportunity to choose our response to difficult circumstances. We can rule in life, we can be the head and not the tail – depending on our choices. We can't necessarily choose our circumstances, but we can all choose how we will respond to them.

Will we take the easy but wrong way out of trouble? Will we perpetuate our grotty feelings by feeling sorry for ourselves and throwing a pity party? Or will we choose to trust God and use Jesus' brand of countercultural warfare? Turn the other cheek... Pray and bind the spirit behind that personal attack rather than hating and attacking the other person.

We can choose to walk in right relationship with God even when people turn against us.

Walking in right relationship with God includes choosing to believe that He is good and that "in all things, [he] works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."¹ Whatever our circumstances look like.

Following David's example, we can keep our hearts free from bitterness and resentment. David chose to forgive Saul: v11 "My father," he says. "I have not wronged you. My hand will not touch you, even though I had a chance to kill you." Not many people would show honour and forgiveness to a sword-wielding maniac. David chose to see himself how God saw him: not a victim, but a king waiting in the wings for God's timing.

It makes all the difference in the world if we see ourselves the same way that God sees us. How does God see you? Think about it. Notice carefully what springs to mind. If it is negative, is it God's conviction or the Devil's condemnation at work?

I bet God sees you not too differently from the way he sees me. You are someone of whom he is especially fond, who is a worthwhile person, a worthwhile Christian, a person who has things to offer. These are all things I have doubted for years, but God has convinced me they are true of me and I know they are true of you. You are not defined by bad things that have happened to you. You are not defined by insults or cutting words that have been spoken to you. You are not defined by your marks at school or parents' opinion; your personal appearance or your bank balance. You are a chosen and precious child of God if you have believed in Jesus. That's who you are.

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. John 1:12

You will flourish if you choose to believe that definition of yourself. Messages from other people are often faulty ones. David and Saul both heard wrong messages from other people. David's men told him, "It is obviously God's will for you to kill Saul. Look, God has delivered him into your hands!" Saul's followers whispered into his ear, "Psst! David, the traitor, is in the Desert of En Gedi. You can easily nail him there."

Saul listened to the wrong people and turned against his most loyal servant. David, on the other hand, put a sharp stop to his unruly band of followers. "Shut up, you lot! We are certainly not going to murder the King!" he says.

This prompts us to examine our thought life. How do we discern what messages to listen to? How do we deal with the ones that are leading us down the wrong track?

Well, if you always do what you've always done, you will always get what you've always got. Saul started off really appreciating David, but he followed a consistent line of thinking that allowed this good relationship to be ruined. This is the track Saul went down...

¹ Romans 8:28

1. Firstly **jealousy**, responding to the songs of the women - "Saul has slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands."²
2. Then **fear** that David would take his kingdom and destroy his dynasty.³ This fear took over and drove Saul for the rest of his days. When fear rules us, we can be sure we are not walking in the Spirit, because God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind.⁴
3. Fear made him **listen** to the wrong people. He trusted the informers and gossips greasing up to him instead of trusting David, who was a loyal servant and son-in-law.⁵ Jesus said, "By their fruit will you will know them."⁶ We trust people if the fruit or evidence in their lives is good.
4. And he listened to and **dwelt** on the thoughts in his head which **accused** David.⁷

Some of Saul's obsessive thoughts accusing David of treachery could have been partly due to what we today might call mental illness. However, many of us have a tendency to listen to accusing thoughts.

"Oh, she didn't say hello. She despises me."

"My husband isn't talking to me lately. Maybe he's seeing someone else."

"What a snob! She cut me dead in the supermarket! She must think she's better than me"

"I was not included in that invitation. They don't like me."

Recently, I realized that I was being sucked into believing accusing thoughts about my brother. I was shocked at the realisation. I had known in theory that one of the Biblical names for Satan is "the accuser of the brethren," but I was not realizing that negative thoughts about someone can actually be accusations.

I found myself believing the lies of the enemy instead of trusting someone I knew and loved. Unspoken accusations can masquerade as truth in one's mind. They gnaw away at a relationship and can ruin it completely, without ever having more than a grain of truth in them.

It can happen in a marriage, a friendship, a business partnership, a family. All it takes is a few subtle thoughts fed into your mind. You just need to agree with them and harbour them. The more you rehearse them and nurture them, the bigger they get and the more likely they are to damage the relationship.

Leaving the accusing thoughts there unexamined and not dealt with, is like having a water stain in the ceiling and not fixing the leaky roof. You could end up with the ceiling collapsing.

All it took for me, was to realize that Satan's job description includes accusing people and I decided not to play that game anymore. I would reject the accusing thoughts. I would try and clarify the truth about someone's words and actions before believing the worst. I would try to give the person the benefit of the doubt and ask the question, "Did you mean what I thought you meant?"

Effective spiritual warfare is not just a case of looking up Ephesians chapter 6, though that is foundational, but it is necessary also to become familiar with the way God sees things. We must grapple with the Bible alongside other people who want to obey it. We must invite God into our situation any way we can - say a prayer, sing a hymn - anything that focuses on him and helps us see things from his perspective.

What will be the result of choosing to see things God's way? David was probably absolutely blown away by the result of his speech and actions. Saul, who had been utterly intent on killing him, wept, said he was sorry, said David was better than he and that God would most certainly bless him and make him King of Israel. What a repentant response from a proud, jealous, hard-bitten warrior.

² 1 Sam 18:7

³ 1 Sam 18:12

⁴ 2 Timothy 1:7

⁵ 1 Samuel 24:1

⁶ Matthew 7:15

⁷ 1 Samuel 18:11

The results in your life will be just as good. It may not necessarily be easy to follow God's instructions, but the rewards are out of this world!

So, where are the Godly people in this church who will fight on God's terms and with God's weapons? Who will say "My brother, my friend, my workmate is not the enemy, the powers of darkness are the Enemy. I will pray for the person and fight the Enemy."?

As David did: refusing to hold a pity party; choosing to forgive; refusing to stand in judgement; holding in honour those whom it is right to honour, choosing to see ourselves how God sees us; choosing our response to our circumstances.

Let's make God's word the last word:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things.⁸

All scriptural quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible: New International Version*® ©1972, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Societies. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

⁸ Philippians 4:8