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OUTLAST YOUR SWORN ENEMY!

Today's Text: 1 Sam. Chaps. 17-29; Acts 23: 12-33

Extracts:

1. **“And Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that Michal, Saul’s daughter loved him. And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David’s enemy continually” [1 Sam. 18: 28-29]**
2. **“And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they have killed Paul. And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy” [Acts 23: 12-13]**

The hyena is a predator [killer] which hardly does its own killing but steals kills from other smaller predators such as cheetahs and leopards. A pack of hyenas can harass a leopard out of its meal by following it until the leopard climbs into a tree. Even from the ground, they will continue to harass the poor leopard and wait until it is forced to drop its kill! When the hyenas get at the kill, they will eat everything, including the bones, leaving no trace or evidence. That is why the hyena is also called a scavenger.¹ A sworn enemy is like that.

A sworn enemy is a person who has made your downfall or destruction his/her lifetime pursuit. He/she is determined or dedicated to hurt you or your interests for as long as you live. When you win one battle, the next one will be harder. When you lose, they will still not stop fighting you! If you think that you do not have such an enemy, you are living dangerously for the chief of them, “your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” [1 Pet. 5: 8]. Your sworn enemy can be family (parents, siblings), friend or colleague (at school, work or business) or even yourself (laziness, greed, lust, pride, alcohol or drug addiction, destructive anger or unforgiving spirit).

In today’s lesson, we shall use the enmity between Saul and David to study the subject and learn how we can outlast our sworn enemies. This is an important matter because if we do not outlast our sworn enemies, they can make us lose God’s blessings and promises.

¹ www.lioncrusher.com/animal.asp?animal=75

1. Saul becomes David's sworn enemy

The nation of Israel had rejected the sons of Samuel (Joel and Abiah) as their judges because they loved money and perverted justice by accepting bribes. Instead, they had asked for a king "to judge us like all the nations" [1 Sam. 8: 1-5]. Although their request did not please God, He acceded to their prayer and got Samuel to anoint Saul of the tribe of Benjamin as the new king [1 Sam., Chaps. 9-12].

Soon after, Saul demonstrated that he was not fit for the exalted position. He disobeyed God in several ways, chief of which were the following:

- Out of impatience and fear, he offered sacrifices to God which only Samuel the priest was qualified to make [1 Sam. 13:5-13]
- In deference to his people but against the word of God, he spared the lives of the king and flock of the Amalekites [1 Sam. 15: 1-24]

God saw Saul's rebellion against Him as "the sin of witchcraft" and his stubbornness "as iniquity and idolatry." Consequently, God determined to strip Saul of the kingship and to give it to a more deserving person [vv. 23-35].

That person turned out to be David, the youngest and adolescent son of Jesse of the tribe of Judah. As soon as Samuel had anointed David, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David *from that day forward*" ... "but the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, *and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him*" [1 Sam. 16: 1-14]. The first demonstration of this new spiritual power was David's defeat and killing of Goliath the giant with a mere sling [1 Sam. 17: 1-51]. As the troops of Israel were returning from that stunning victory, the women danced joyously and sang praises of Saul, the king, and of David, the giant killer. The song went like this: "Saul had slain his *thousands*, and David *his tens of thousands*." The king became very angry and asked, "what can he have more but the kingdom?" So, *Saul eyed David from that day and forward*" [1 Sam. 18: 5-9].

Think of how some people have come to become your sworn enemy. Perhaps you did business with somebody that you thought was a very bosom friend. Instead of now sharing the gains with you, he/she is all over the place maligning you and even scheming to get you into trouble. Or, somebody may perceive that you are the only rival for the next promotion and thinks that his/her best way to get it is to destroy your name, if not your life. Sometimes, you may not have even wronged the person. Your only problem is that you are succeeding where they have failed. You are a threat and you should be eliminated.

The Bible records several cases but the following are very interesting:

- It was not the fault of Abel that Cain’s offerings were not acceptable to God. Nevertheless, Cain got angry with his brother and killed him [**Gen. 4: 1-8**]
- Abimelech was the firstborn of Jerubbal (Gideon) but his mother was never Gideon’s wife. As soon as Gideon had died, Abimelech hired killers from his mother’s place and killed 70 of his half-brothers. Only the youngest, Jotham, was able to escape [**Judg. 9: 1-5**]
- Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, was credited with turning away the king of Israel from serving the true God and worshipping Baal. Since Elijah the prophet was the rallying point for bringing the people back to true worship, she became his sworn enemy. After the great spiritual battle in which Elijah defeated and killed the 450 prophets of Baal, “Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, so let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.” Elijah had to escape to hide in the wilderness! [**1 Kgs 19: 1-3**]
- For Nehemiah to dare to return from Babylon to “seek the welfare of the children of Israel,” by rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, Sanbalath and Tobiah did everything evil to discourage him and make him fail [**Neh., Chaps. 2-6**].
- Haman the Agagite was next in rank and influence to the Persian king, Ahasuerus, and everybody but the king and queen bowed to him. However, one Jew, Mordecai, by virtue of his religious convictions refused to do so. As a result, Haman determined to hurt not only Mordecai but “to destroy all the Jews that were through out the whole kingdom” [**Esth., Chaps. 3-4**].
- Through Paul’s ministry, the scribes and Pharisees and Gentile fortune-tellers found their status dwindling everyday. Therefore, they became extremely hostile. In one instance, 40 persons took an oath and vowed not to eat or drink anything until they had killed Paul [**Acts 23: 12-33**]

We see from those cases that you do not have to have offended others for them to declare you their sworn enemy. In fact, your success or the desire to live a godly life may be the main reason, for “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” [**2 Tim. 3: 12**]. Therefore, your concern should not be how to avoid or eliminate sworn enemies but how to *outlast* them. How did David outlast Saul? Let us learn a few skills from David’s experience.

2. How David ran for over 13 years!

David became king of Israel at the age of 30 [**2 Sam. 5: 4**]. At the time that he was anointed by Samuel, he was not yet qualified to enter the army, and the recruitment age was 20 [**Num. 1:3; 1 Sam. 16: 11-13; 1 Sam. 17: 12-15**]. Nevertheless, since he was qualified to marry Saul’s daughter soon after killing Goliath, we can safely assume that David was over 12 years old (onset of puberty) and less than 19, or an average of 17, when he was anointed. Therefore, we can also assume that he was on the run for 13 years from Saul’s earth-scotching

efforts to kill him. It was only after Saul's death in battle that the attacks stopped [1 Sam. 31: 1-13]. What made it possible for David to outlast his sworn enemy? Here are the main reasons:

a) *David feared God*

God Himself called David the man after His own heart [1 Sam. 13: 14]. As the writer of most of the **Psalms**, we have enough proof of that. At the time that God saw David that way, he had not yet been anointed king. Therefore, David was a man of God who lived by His word right from his childhood. When Saul asked David how a mere lad like him could fight the giant, Goliath, David said, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out the hand of this Philistine" [1 Sam. 17: 37]. In deed, "the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits" [Dan. 11:32].

b) *David exhibited the fruits of the Holy Spirit*

As soon as Samuel had poured oil on David's head to anoint him king, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David *from that day forward*" [1 Sam. 16: 13]. "From that day forward" means "continually." The Holy Spirit took a permanent abode in David. On his death bed at the age of 70, David said, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue" [2 Sam. 23: 2]. While he confessed his sin over the matter of Bathsheba (that event occurred years after his wilderness experience), he asked God, "Cast me not away from Thy presence, and *take not Thy Holy Spirit from me*" [Ps. 51: 11]. Therefore, David the fugitive was Spirit-filled and God-fearing. So, what fruits of the Holy Spirit did he exhibit during that period? Here are some of them:

- He behaved wisely: Even when the young women pumped up his ego by rating his performance over that of the king, he did not let it get into his head. He knew who he was, a humble and loyal subject. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, "and Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him" [1 Sam. 18: 12]. When the king appointed him captain over a thousand, he ran an open administration and "he went out and came in before the people." So, because "David behaved himself wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him, ... all Israel and Judah loved David" [vv. 13, 14, 16]. When a man's ways please God, even his enemies will be at peace with him [Prov. 16:7].
- He demonstrated *agape* love: We often hear people say that the friend of an enemy is also an enemy. David married Saul's daughter, Michal, and the king's heir, Jonathan, became David's best friend [1 Sam. 18: 1, 27-28]. God used these two children of David's sworn enemy to save him from sure death.

- David ran to Spirit-filled places: At no time did David try to hide in human fortresses while he was within the country of Israel. After escaping from the palace, he first ran to Samuel to hide among the prophets. When the king tried to get him there, Saul himself started to prophesy! [1 Sam. 19: 18-24]. Then, David ran to Nob where Ahimelech the priest lived. As soon as he knew that Doeg, a servant of Saul, who had come to spend some time in the temple, had squealed on him, David ran to hide in the cave Adullam and from there to Mizpeh of Moab “till I know what God will do for me.” There and then, Gad, a prophet, sent word to David not to abide in that hold, “get thee into the land of Judah.” So, he returned to the forest of Hareth [1 Sam., Chaps. 21 and 22].
- David had a forgiving spirit: Twice, David had the chance to kill Saul and each time he spared his life! [1 Sam. 24: 1-22; 1 Sam. 26: 1-25]. On both occasions, Saul came into the woods in pursuit of David and fell asleep. On the second occasion, David took away Saul’s spear and water bottle from his pillow! David said that he was not the one to kill God’s anointed [1 Sam. 26: 9-12].
- David was doing good even in his ordeal: David was captain over 400 people, most of whom were those in distress, debtors, “everyone that was discontented gathered themselves unto him and he became a captain over them” [1 Sam. 22: 1-2]. When the Philistines attacked the people of Keilah, they cried to David and he gave them victory after God had given him clearance to go [1 Sam. 23: 1-12]. He protected the flock of Nabal, Abigail’s drunken husband, even though he became ungrateful to David later [1 Sam. 25: 2-37].

In the end, as a result of David’s trust in God and walking by faith, the following happened:

- Saul blessed David that he had wanted to kill. He confessed to David in tears, “Thou art more righteous than I: *for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil*” and added “Now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand” [1 Sam. 24: 16, 17, 20].
- Not quite long after, Saul and Jonathan were killed in a battle with the Philistines on mount Gilboa [1 Sam. 31: 1-6]. In accordance with the prayer of David’s sworn enemy, David was in deed sworn in as king by the people in succession to Saul, about 13 years after the Lord had anointed him king! He had outlasted his sworn enemy.

3. Conclusion

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us the following important message:

*You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, **Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven [Matt. 5: 43-45]***

That was exactly what David did and he outlasted his sworn enemy, Saul. We know that Paul did a similar thing. Hence he was able to write to the Romans,

*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. **Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good [Rom. 12: 18-21]***

Instructively, Paul was sent to Rome as a prisoner on appeal to Caesar. However, on arrival, they said to him, “we neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, *neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee.*” Thereafter, he stayed in his own hired house for two whole years! [**Acts 28: 21, 30**]. He had outlasted his enemies who had vowed not to eat or drink anything until they had killed Paul.

It is now your turn. No matter how you feel right now, nobody can hurt you or your interest if only you turn everything over to God. He will put a hedge made with the blood of Jesus around you and there is no weapon that your sworn enemy will fire that can reach you. However, there is a condition: *you must behave wisely at all times*. Wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord. Be Spirit-filled and let His fruits radiate in you and in your conduct. Then, your enemies will start blessing you and seeking your favours.

Outlast your sworn enemy. Begin from today, right now!