

KILLING GIANTS SERIES #7
“Killing the Giant of Resentment”
Proverbs 26:23-26, I Samuel 18:6-11, Romans 12:17-21
March 22, 2020

“Some [army] men were stationed in Korea during the Korean War. While there, they hired a local boy to cook and clean for them. Being a bunch of jokester, these guys took advantage of the boy’s seeming naiveté. They’d smear Vaseline on the stove handles so that when he’d turn the stove on in the morning he’d get grease all over his fingers. They’d put little water buckets over the door so that he’d get deluged when he opened the door. They’d even nail his shoes to the floor during the night. Day after day the little fella took the brunt of their practical jokes without saying anything. No blame, no self-pity, no temper tantrums.

“Finally the men felt guilty about what they were doing, so they sat down with the young Korean and said, ‘Look, we know these pranks aren’t funny anymore, and we’re sorry. We’re never gonna take advantage of you again.’

“It seemed too good to be true to the houseboy. ‘No more sticky on stove?’ he asked. ‘Nope.’

“No more water on door?’ ‘No.’

“No more nail shoes to floor?’ ‘Nope, never again.’

“Okay,’ the boy said with a smile, ‘no more spit in soup.’”¹ When things happen to us, when we are powerless to change what is going on around us and to us, Resentment is often our natural instinct. When we resent a person for what they have done to us, or what has happened to them instead of us, the giant Resentment turns us to retaliation and revenge. The boy had no power to stop what was happening to him, but he got revenge toward the others in the best way he knew how. The giant of Resentment is quick to suggest to us to get even and to get back at those who hurt us.

And it’s not hard to see the result of this giant’s influence on our society today. Shootings in schools, in shopping malls, in stores, in businesses and even in homes are a direct result of Resentment’s influence to the perpetrators, those listening to the thoughts of revenge. Lawsuits attacking those who

¹ (Charles Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Ultimate Book of Illustrations*, [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998] pg. 493

have offended the victims demand millions of dollars in restitution for the wrongs that have been done. Gossip on Twitter and Facebook and other social media seeks to destroy a person because of the hurt one has received from them. Wars are started because of offenses of one country against another. Riots in the streets are often because of perceived wrongs done to people. Movies portray retaliation and revenge daily on the TV and in the theatres. The giant of Resentment is alive and well in our world today.

However, Resentment does not bring about any kind of peaceful resolution. Resentment only causes greater hardship, extended hurt, and increased harm to others, often ones who were not even involved in the initial incident. Resentment is like a volcano building pressure great enough to erupt and destroy many people around us. Resentment is the cause of most strife and conflict in our world today.

Charles Swindoll states it like this: “Anger won’t fix itself...like a flat tire or a dirty diaper. I remember reading about an eagle that swooped to the ground one day, catching a weasel in its powerful talons. But when it flew away, its wings [mysteriously] went limp, and it dropped to the ground like a lifeless doll. As it turned out, the weasel had bitten its attacker in midflight, killing the proud eagle as it flew. If we cling to an attitude of anger or jealousy, [harboring resentment and seeking retaliation,] it will, like the weasel, sink its teeth into us when we least expect it.”²

A man at work sees his coworkers promoted and praised all around him while he is kept in the same position, begins to feel cheated. As more and more folks around him are lifted up and fitted into new positions, the anger begins to simmer within him. And if left unchecked, unresolved and left to harbor ill feelings toward the others, Resentment takes over and revenge is the likely result.

We see it in the Old Testament lesson of I Samuel 18:6-11. King Saul, king of Israel, sees David being lifted up by the people as being the greater hero by killing Goliath, and being a man of valor on the battlefield. Saul sees that God is with David, and his anger begins to boil against David. Saul thought he deserved the people’s accolades by being the king of Israel. Saul thought he should be the

² (Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Ultimate Book of Illustrations*, pg. 33)

one receiving honor for leading the army to victory. But it was David who got the glory. It was David who received the praise. *“In their celebration, the women sang, ‘Saul has killed thousands, but David tens of thousands.’ Saul did not like this and he became very angry...”* (I Samuel 18:7-8). And because of his jealousy and suspicion of David, for the rest of his life, Saul devised plans to get rid of David.

The giant Goliath was dead, but the giant Resentment was just beginning his reign. And Saul gives way to Resentment’s influence and throws a spear at David to kill him – not just once but several times. Resentment drives Saul crazy with anger, and it changes the way he looks at David, it changes the way he treats his own family, it changes the way he lives his life, and hundreds of people are impacted because of the giant Resentment’s influence on Saul.

Proverbs 26:24-26 states it well about this giant Resentment. *“A hypocrite hides his hate behind flattering words. They may sound fine, but don’t believe him, because his heart is filled to the brim with hate. He may disguise his hatred, but everyone will see the evil things he does”* (GNT). When we resign ourselves to listen to the snarly words of Resentment, as we give ourselves to believe the lies that he gives to us, we begin devising plans to get even with those who have hurt us or have wronged us or who have advanced above us.

Resentment encourages retaliation and revenge. *“Allowed to fester through neglect, the toxic-fumes of hatred foam into a boil within the steam-room of the soul. Pressure mounts to a maddening magnitude. By then it’s only a matter of time. The damage is always tragic: a battered child; a runaway; a crime of passion; a bad record; ugly, caustic words; a domestic disharmony; loss of a job; a ruined testimony.”*³ It happens to steel workers, to teachers, to athletes, to political rivals, to presidential nominees, to husbands and wives, to teenagers and the elderly, to best friends and enemies, and even to pastors and Christian musicians. Resentment looks beyond our station in life and craftily entices us to take revenge on those who do us wrong. And unfortunately, it affects our lives in ways that causes fallout among all those around us.

³ (Charles Swindoll, *Killing Giants: Pulling Thorns*, [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994] pg. 49)

So how can we defeat this bully of a giant called Resentment? How can we become free from his deadly influence? What can we do to kill the impulse to avenge the wrongs we have endured? Let me begin to help you with this illustration.

“A couple went for marriage counseling. Both the man and the woman carried a list with them. The man had taken a sheet of paper, drawn a line down the middle, and proceeded to write all the good things about his wife down on one side of the paper and all of the bad things down the other side. The woman had done the same thing. They pointed out to the counselor that they just couldn’t stay married because of the lists they had compiled. Both the man and the woman had a much longer list of negatives than positives for their spouse. Having tried everything from vacations to marriage retreats, the couple had come to this counselor as the last resort before going to get a divorce.

“The counselor glanced over the lists noting some serious things and some not-so-serious things. To their shock, he tore the lists up right in front of them, pulled over his trash can, and threw in the lists. The man exclaimed, ‘What are you doing? Do you know how long it took us to make those lists?’ The counselor explained that the couple’s lists were useless because they examined the couple’s problem from the wrong end. He said, ‘You are pursuing a rule book when you should be pursuing a relationship.’ God meant for life to be lived by relationship, not by rules.”⁴ Resentment always looks at the negatives and overlooks the positives.

So the way to kill Resentment, isn’t complicated, it’s just painful. And this is where the New Testament lesson of Romans 12:17-21 comes into play. Listen to these words: *“If someone has done you wrong, do not repay him with a wrong. Try to do what everyone considers to be good. Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody. Never take revenge, my friends, but instead let God’s anger do it. For the scripture says, ‘I will take revenge, I will pay back, says the Lord’ (Proverbs 25:21-22). Instead, as the scripture says, ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for by doing this you will make him burn with shame.’ Do not let evil defeat you;*

⁴ (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago: Moody Publications, 2009] #753, pg. 245-246)

instead, conquer evil with good.”

Paul starts right out by bringing Resentment out into the open. Yes, there will be times when we are hurt by someone else. But does that make it right for us to seek revenge? Does it do us any good to hold onto resentment and seek ways to destroy the other person? No. It only brings destruction to us. Why not repay the one who has done wrong to you with something good? Seeking revenge will only burn us up from the inside out. But if we become honest with ourselves and see the danger that Resentment can cause us, we can begin to combat this giant and seek to build the relationship with the other rather than build up walls between us. So **HONESTY IS REQUIRED** in order to identify the influence of Resentment in our lives.

Think of it this way. What would have happened if Jesus had sought out revenge against those who whipped Him, spat at Him, mashed a thorny crown on His head, cried out for His crucifixion, and put him on the cross? Being the Son of God, He had all power and authority to say one word and the whole lot of them would have been smoke and ash.

Yet Jesus didn't seek revenge, but in love, sought out what was best for even those who sought His death. He looked at what they needed the most – Salvation. And there was no way for Jesus to establish Salvation for the people of the world without Him taking the worst of mankind, and enduring the pain of our abuse and scorn, and taking all our sin upon Himself, so that He could pay the penalty of that wickedness and sin. Instead of wiping us all out and starting over again, Jesus established a way for us to find forgiveness. He loved the “enemy” and then paved the way for their Salvation.

That's the example Paul is inviting us to take when confronted by the giant Resentment. Not retaliation, but selflessly giving love instead of hate. Look at that person and try to find out what their greatest need is, and then set out to meet that need so that their anger and hurt might abate. Who knows but that you might make a friend in that very situation rather than maintaining an enemy?

But **THIS TAKES HUMILITY**. It involves us confessing to God our desire to get even with the ones who have hurt us. It involves us taking the time to give up on our pride, thinking we deserve better, and allowing God to use us, even as we are, to touch the lives of those around us. God puts us

into situations that we might initially think is just horrible, but as we look at the difference we can make by showing love to the other, we can begin to see why we might be there in that spot.

The one who is overlooked for promotion might be the best one to operate that particular machine, or fulfill that place, or accomplish that task. It would be great for the boss to acknowledge the gifts and skills of that particular person, but it requires us to humble ourselves and look beyond our hurt to see what else could be taking place. Maybe no one else can do the things we can do, and if we are promoted to a higher level, that valuable position might be given to one who doesn't do it well, and the whole company suffers. Humility gets our eyes off of ourselves to see the greater good and look for ways to make things even better for the whole company.

The seasoned teacher could look at how they might support and encourage the new teacher or even the student teacher. Rather than becoming threatened by their presence, possibly changing the dynamics of the teaching staff in a way that is different than you had expected, encourage them, support them, and guide them to become the best teacher they can be.

The long-term postal worker might spot a struggling new employee and give them guidance and assistance to help them get the job done faster and more efficiently rather than seeing them as a threat of taking their place. The star player on the basketball team might encourage and guide one of those sitting the bench, helping them to establish their skills better in order to benefit the whole team rather than seeing them as one who could replace them on the starting lineup. The first-chair trumpet player could mentor the one with less ability in order to make the band the best it has ever sounded with all parts sounding great. Humility allows us to fight against Resentment so that we no longer see an enemy, but a friend. The relationship is always best – not making rules to live by but by loving the other.

Defeating the giant Resentment also **INVOLVES BECOMING VULNERABLE**. Being honest about how we feel and humbling ourselves before God so He can lead us to the opportunity to be available for Him, keeps our eyes open so that pride doesn't lead us to fall for Resentment's lies. Being vulnerable before the Lord involves staying teachable so that He can point out ways in which we can improve our lives and become better servants for Him. How can we improve ourselves? How can

we become better at what we do? How can we be more open to the needs and hurts of others? What ways can we begin to reach out to those around us who are struggling with the same feelings we are struggling with?

While Resentment tells us to look at how much we've lost when another is lifted up above us, or things happen to us, or we are "cheated" out of things, being vulnerable to the Lord Jesus enables us to see how much we've been blessed, how we might use those blessings to help another person, and what we might be able to do to bring another to know Jesus' great love for us.

Take for example this situation we are in with the corona virus. We might get sore because we're laid off, or have our hours cut, or find ourselves lacking in some way. God knows what's happening in your life. God has not abandoned you. He is looking for you to trust Him so that He might meet your needs, give you enough to get by on, and just enough to even share with another who have even less. Look at ways that you might contribute to your elderly neighbor who has lost her local support because of the social distancing. See if you can go grocery shopping for her. Ask what you might be able to do to assist them.

And reach out to touch the needs of others rather than getting angry and seeking revenge for the injustice of your situation. Maybe God is giving you a chance to be with your children more. Maybe He is calling you to develop a better relationship with your husband or wife. Maybe there is someone that God is directing you to, to meet their need and make friends with them so that they might come to find the love of Jesus in their life! You couldn't do that while you were so busy at work. You couldn't do any of that while you were so focused on the business of your life. Become vulnerable to allow God to open up your eyes to the benefits of where you are. Don't let Resentment drive you toward revenge.

What we are talking about here is called **RECONCILIATION**. Paul is telling us not to let the hurts and pains of life destroy our relationship with one another. Rather than feeling jipped or broken or beaten up, and holding resentment in our lives that will lead us to retaliation in revenge, we are invited to seek to reconcile with each other so that we might become renewed in the love of Jesus Christ.

Resentment seeks to destroy the other as we look only to our self and our situation. When we do that,

no healing can possibly come to us, only greater and greater resentment. But to reconcile with each other enables us to establish a right relationship and find healing and new life as we love as Jesus loved. Paul tells us, *“Do not let evil defeat you; instead, conquer evil with good”* (Romans 12:21).

It's like the football player who gets his leg broken during a game by making an interception, but is tackled while his foot gets stuck in the mud. The player could hold resentment against the one who tackled him and put him out of the sport and seek revenge for the rest of his life against that player. That injury would always be a constant reminder of what could have been and what never was. But in order for that player to become healed he has to come under the skilled work of a doctor who repairs the broken leg, and allows the man to walk again. The doctor knew how to repair the brokenness of the man's leg by putting a metal plate alongside the bone and attaching the broken pieces to it so that it would grow straight and strong again.

While the accident changed his life, and his career, the doctor brought healing to the man through the skills God had given to him. Honestly understanding the nature of the accident, and giving it up to a possibility of an accident like that taking place in the rough sport of football, the man can resist the giant Resentment's influence in trying to get revenge. In humbling himself to acknowledge the blessing of the doctor's work giving him the ability of walking on a straight leg, this man can give up listening to Resentment inviting him to seek revenge and begin a new life and a different career. And then becoming vulnerable to allow God to work in his life to guide him toward something new, the man can begin his work of bringing people to the knowledge of Jesus' love for them in telling them of how Jesus saves them from the brokenness of this world. Such was the life experience of Pastor Tony Evans. Resentment could have destroyed him, but the love and forgiveness and guidance of the Lord brought about a marvelous work as Tony let God guide and direct his life.

Killing the giant of Resentment is not easy, but it is possible. It will be painful as it demands honesty, humility and vulnerability, but each one of us can defeat and kill this giant Resentment, and find ourselves doing a great work for the Lord our God. It is only possible through the love and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ. May it be so for each one of us, in Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.