

The Giant of Resentment 1 Kings 2:1-10

I read this week about a man who was bitten by a dog that was later discovered to be rabid. Hospital tests confirmed it: The man had contracted rabies. This was back when there wasn't anything that could be done after rabies set in. There was no cure. So the doctor told the man that he was going to die.

"Sir," he said, "everything possible will be done to make your comfortable, but we can't offer any false hope. My best advice to you is to put your affairs in order as soon as possible."

The man was in shock and then deep depression. But finally, he rallied enough strength to ask the doctor for a pen and paper. Then he began writing furiously.

An hour later, when the doctor returned, the man's pen was still flowing. The doctor said, "Well, it's good to see you've taken my advice. I take it you are working on your will."

"This ain't no will, Doc," said the man. "It's a list of the people I plan on bitin' before I die."

There is something about that story that makes us all go, "That-a-boy! Good for you!" I mean, he got even with them, right? Well, we need to be careful, because I need to warn you that feeling of euphoria which that story conjures up, is one of the major weapons of the devil that attacks our lives. Over the past several months God has revealed something to me. I have found that across the board of our church there are people who harbor resentment toward someone or somebodys. This may be hard to hear for some of us here this morning, because the resentment is so raw and real. Others of you harbor resentment, but it is buried so deep in your soul that it is going to take an act of God to get it out. Still some here today, don't even realize they have an issue with resentment.

This morning I stand here before you to tell you that resentment and anger and unforgiveness will destroy you, and your eternity, unless we allow God to deal with it in our lives. I fear that resentment and bitterness and hatred and unforgiveness are far too active in the lives of the people here this morning than we realize.

Resentment is something we don't like to talk much about as believers. I think that's because we want to believe that Christians never struggle with resentment, however, just the opposite is true, which is also a part of the danger of it. The bible makes that very clear. Enter a man named David. The most frequently mentioned man in the Bible, after Jesus. He's that hero of faith that we read so much about, but the Bible tells us something about David that we need to take notice of today. I have found that of all the destructive emotions to which we are prey, perhaps the most universal is resentment. It's ugly and it attacks all of us. But if you don't conquer resentment, it will conquer you. So how do we do that?

1) In order to conquer resentment we have to **recognize** the condition.

Notice again what David says on his deathbed, *"Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me."* (1 Ki 2:5) David is dying and what is he talking about? Well, he first talks about God and challenges Solomon to stay faithful, and that's great. But he doesn't stop there. He goes on to say, "And don't ever forget what Joab did to me." Think of this: David, one of the big boys of the Bible; he is preparing to meet God, and what is he talking about? A grudge he had dating back many years. This is side of David we would rather not see, and it's a side of ourselves that we would rather not see. Resentment is an ugly deformed giant; and we tend to be blind to it's presence in our lives. That's why the first step in conquering this giant is to recognize it for what it is when it shows up in our lives. So what are the signs that this giant may be attacking our lives? Well, there are many of them, but let me give you a few of the big ones.

a) You keep a **ledger**. The biblical term for resentment literally means to keep a record. It was a bookkeeping term. It had to do with keeping records in a ledger. I have found that a person of resentment always keeps records. They can tell you what happened, when it happened, and who did it! When it comes to your tax records, or your business papers, or your household transactions, recording keeping is highly recommended. But when it comes to the transactions we call relationships, we need to throw away the books. Keeping a record is poison when it comes to husbands and wives, parents and children, friends and coworkers. And if you are keeping that ledger in your mind or in a notebook, you need to know the giant of resentment is breathing down your neck.

b) Another sign that the giant of resentment has shown up is that you **withdraw** from people. Physically or emotionally, you remove yourself. Resentment causes us to withdraw from people, and self-pity usually shows up as well. One sure sign of a resentful person is that of arrogance and a non-teachable spirit.

c) You display **anger**. Psychologists tell us that resentment can manifest itself in unapologetic rage. That can be in the form of cynicism or sarcasm. It can be seen in criticism or slander. In extreme cases, it can manifest itself in acts of cruelty. The resentful are those who have been bitten and channel their energy into snapping at others. Resentment carves deep lines in our hearts; and it adds heaviness to our step. It is not way to live.

2) First you recognize the condition of resentment, then you **reveal** the causes of resentment.

David is giving his dying words to his son, and he says, **“Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me.”** And then in vs. 8 he says, **“And remember, you have with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, who called down bitter curses on me the day I went to Mahanaim.”** (1 Ki 2:8) What was it that caused David to become so bitter? Let me try to describe how resentment develops even in the life of a believer.

a) It is started with an **offense** of the **past**. This guy Joab that David talks about had disobeyed David's orders and killed two of David's commanders. Shimei on the other hand had insulted David. Resentment begins with past offenses - real or perceived.

b) It is nurtured with a **grudge** of **anger**. Resentment is anger multiplied by time. When we don't deal with our anger and let God remove it from our lives, it grows. As we nurture that anger, it becomes a grudge. It takes on a life of it's own.

c) It is spread into a **root** of **bitterness**. If anger is the first cousin of resentment, then bitterness is its parent. Bitterness is like a weed in your yard. First it takes root, and then it takes over!

d) If that offense that was nurtured into a grudge and then blossomed into bitterness isn't dealt with, it is exploded into a **cancer** of **resentment**. Archibald Hart, a Christian psychologist called resentment the cancer of all emotions. Like cancer, first it takes hold, and then it takes charge! *If you remember the summer Olympics in Athens much, I am sure that you have remember about the flap the Russian gymnast Svetlana Khorkina raised after she received the silver medal in the Women's All Around Gymnastics final.*

She bitterly told reporters that she should have received the gold medal. She claimed that the judging was fixed. The fact that she had fallen off of the uneven bars had nothing to do with it, of course. It had to be that the judges had fixed the results.

Resentment is not rational. However, the consequences are real, and the consequences of resentment are destructive.

3) Not only must you recognize the condition of resentment and reveal the cause of resentment, you must also **remember** the consequences of resentment.

I want you to notice the consequences this resentment had in David's life.

a) First of all, it **poisoned** his perspective. Notice vs. 8: *"And remember, you have with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, who called down bitter curses on me."* (1 Ki 2:8) David is dying and all he can see is these past offenses. Resentment has a way of chaining our perspective to the past. That's all we can think about. That's all we can see, and it has a way of distorting our perspective. I have found that resentment isn't interested in facts, only feelings. So, it distorts things and blinds us to reality. I have also found that resentment grows out of a selective version of our own past: so that we do not recognize our own mistakes or the extent to which one's own decisions and conduct have been responsible for one's unhappiness. People would rather see themselves as victims rather than as authors of their own misery. I say all that to say, that resentment poisons your perspective.

b) It **damaged** his relationships. Notice 1 Kings 2:5, *"Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me."* (1 Ki 2:5) Do you know who Joab was? He is best known for the fact that he was the commander of David's armies, but he was also David's nephew. He was the son of David's sister, Zeruiah. This was his own family. Blood may be thicker than water, but it is not thicker than resentment. Resentment has a way of damaging your relationships.

c) Not only that, but it **infected** his friends. 1 Kings 2:6 records where David told his son Solomon concerning Joab, *"Do not let his gray head go down to the grave in peace."* (1 Ki 2:6) And then in vs. 9 David gives Solomon the same instructions about this other man named Shimei, *"Bring his gray head down to the grave in blood."* (1 Ki 2:9) What I want you to see here is that it was bad enough that David's resentment had become a cancer infecting his own soul, but now that cancer was spreading to his son. Resentment pollutes not just the resentful person, but also those who come into contact with that person.

- Your bitterness against your ex spouse, for example, can infect your kids.
- Your resentment towards your boss can poison your coworkers.
- Your animosity against your enemy can spread amongst your friends.

Resentment infects whatever it touches - including your soul.

d) Which is another consequence of resentment we need to understand: It **soured** his soul. Hebrews 12:15 puts that rather bluntly when it says, *"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."* (Heb 12:15) Don't fool yourself, by holding on to that past offense, you are poisoning your soul. The tumor of resentment will spread even to your relationship with God.

If you forget everything else I have said about resentment this morning, please remember this: **Resentment is always more harmful to the resenter than to the resented.** Or as that great theologian Buddy Hackett put it: "I've had a few arguments with people, but I never carry a grudge. You know why? While you're carrying a grudge, they're out dancing." Resentment is always more harmful to the resenter than the resented. It can poison your soul. Resentment is a mean giant. When we give a place in our lives, it spreads like cancer, and it can damage our souls.

Breaking bread part of the service!

4) So what can we do about resentment? Is there any way really to conquer it? Yes, and that's the last biblical key I want to share with you this morning: **realize** the cure for resentment.

Notice 1 Kings 2:10 with me, *"Then David rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David."* (1 Ki 2:10) We have no record that David ever dealt with this cancer. Age or years spent as a believer are obviously no guarantee or conquering this giant. As far as we know, David went to the grave with this cancer of resentment. *I heard about a man who lay on his deathbed. He was worried about dying because of the resentment he had harbored against an old enemy. So he sent for the man with whom he had had a disagreement with for years.*

When the man got there, the dying man said, "I want to make things right between us." And the two of them shook hands. But then the man said, "But, remember, if I get well, the old quarrel still stands!"

As far as we know, David never dealt with his resentment; instead he died with that bitterness still infecting his heart. Is there any cure? Is there any way to conquer this giant? Yes, there is and with the time that I have left I want to show you how. Remember that resentment is like cancer. We have had far too many people we know dealing with cancer lately. Do you know how they deal with cancer? Not that I'm an expert, but I have learned that they deal with cancer basically in four ways:

- ☞ They burn it - radiation.
- ☞ They cut it - surgery.
- ☞ They drug it - chemotherapy.
- ☞ They starve it - a new procedure where they cut off the blood supply to the cancer and starve it.

Well, I want to suggest to you that you deal with the cancer of resentment in the same way. In order to conquer this giant:

a) You must **burn** it. Just like radiation therapy with cancer, you have to deal with resentment in your life by burning it. When doctors do radiation therapy, they mark the spot where they are going to zap the cancer with x-rays. They want to pin point the cancer. Well, in the same way, the first step in conquering this giant of resentment is to pin point it in your life. You have to clearly see it for what it is. Interestingly enough, one of the prayers of David we find in the Bible is one that if David had followed it, he would have conquered his resentment. It's found in Ps. 139:23-24. There he prays, *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* (Ps 139:23-24) Search me, O God, and know my heart, that is the first step in conquering resentment is to burn it. Recognize it for what it is in your life - a giant that is killing you. Search me oh God, and know my heart. You know what resentment is doing to me. Help me to face that fact.

b) The second step in conquering cancer or the giant of resentment is that you must **cut** it. They surgically remove the cancer. You cut it out, and the way you do that is by going to the master surgeon. That prayer I mentioned in Ps. 139 goes on to say, Search *me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.* (Ps 139:23) Go to God in prayer. Ask him to take that resentment that has poisoned your heart and mind and soul and cut it out. Prayer is the process by which God excises resentment from our lives. Resentment is like a beach ball in a swimming pool. You can push it down and hold it under, but eventually it's going to pop out somewhere. And unfortunately, resentment can pop out in dangerous ways. Just read the studies of the people who go postal and kill their bosses because they got passed over the promotion, or the kids who kill their classmates because they were teased and made fun of. The only way to deal with a beach ball in the swimming pool is to deflate it. [knife in ball?] And the only way to deal with resentment in your life is to take it to God in prayer and let him surgically remove it from your life.

c) The third step in conquering cancer or the giant of resentment is that you must **drug** it. In order to treat cancer, what else do they do; Chemotherapy. They drug the cancer to destroy it. Well, there is only one medication that destroys resentment. Are you ready for this? The only way you totally conquer resentment in your life is through forgiveness. Notice how this prayer in Ps. 139 brings us to that point of forgiveness. *See if there is any offensive way in me.* (Ps 139:23-24) You conquer the giant of resentment through forgiveness. You have to forgive the offense. You have to let it go, and the only way we are truly able to do that, is by going back to God for fresh experiences of forgiveness in our own life. Jesus taught us that fact when he told us to pray, *"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."* The biggest issue in conquering the giant of resentment is that you have to let it go. The power to forgive and let go is only discovered at the foot of the cross. So go back to that cross, remember the sins in your life for which Jesus died. Ask God for a fresh touch of his forgiving grace in your life. And then let that wave of forgiveness wash over you and extend to your offender. Forgive and let it go.

d) And then there is one more step to truly conquering this giant of resentment in your life: you must **starve** it. One of the new cancer treatments is that of starving the blood supply to the cancer cells so that they will die off. In the same way, you have to starve off the cancer of resentment in your life, and you do that by daily checking your heart for any resentful feelings or thoughts. Listen one more time to the prayer in Ps. 139: *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* (Ps 139:23-24) See that last line: lead me in the way everlasting? It's a daily journey. You have to check your soul daily, because you never know when that cancer may pop up again. You see, at it's root, resentment arises when I don't get what I think I deserve. I think I deserve to be treated one way and I don't get treated that way. Or I think I deserve not to be treated another way and I do get treated that way. In either case, it boils down to the fact that I don't get what I think I deserve. But listen to me: As a Christian, as a servant of Jesus Christ, I am a slave to God who deserves nothing. Therefore I have nothing to resent. To be a servant is to give over all rights to your life to God. Then there is nothing left for anybody to take away.

Real victory over resentment requires that I daily examine my heart to make sure that I'm still on that path. That I daily examine my heart and recognize that as a servant of Christ, I don't deserve anything. And therefore, I don't have anything for anyone to take away. So any thought, any feeling, any attitude of resentment must be removed from my life if I am to remain on this path with God.

This morning we are going to break some bread together, and I am convinced that some of you here today need to do some honest business with God before you leave. Let's do it now as we pray.

Prayer:

- Honest confession that resentment has been in our lives more than we ever want to admit.
- Time of seeking the fresh grace of forgiveness.
- Commitment to let it go!

- Ask God to heal over the wounds this giant has caused.
- Thanksgiving for His loving promise to do so.

The Giant of Resentment

1 Kings 2:1-10

Sunday October 2, 2011 am

Biblical keys to conquering resentment:

1) _____ the condition of resentment.

"Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me." (1 Ki 2:5)

- a) You keep a _____.
- b) You _____ from people.
- c) You display _____.

2) _____ the causes of resentment.

"Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me." (1 Ki 2:6)

"And remember, you have with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, who called down bitter curses on me the day I went to Mahanaim." (1 Ki 2:8)

- a) It is started with an _____ of the _____.
- b) It is nurtured with a _____ of _____.
- c) It is spread into a _____ of _____.
- d) It is exploded into a _____ of _____.

3) _____ the consequences of resentment.

- a) It _____ your perspective. (1 Ki 2:8)
- b) It _____ your relationships. (1 Ki 2:5)
- c) It _____ your friends. (1 Ki 2:6)
- d) It _____ your soul. (Heb 12:15)

4) _____ the cure of resentment.

Then David rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. (1 Ki 2:10)

- a) You must _____ it. (Ps 139:23-24)
- b) You must _____ it. (Ps 139:23)
- c) You must _____ it. (Ps 139:23-24)
- d) You must _____ it. (Ps 139:23-24)

What will it take for you today?