

## Lesson 18: Defeat my enemies II

Memory Verse: Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

In our last lesson we looked at some of the passages in Psalms where the writer asks God to do terrible things to his [her?] enemy. We learned that David would never do these things himself since he had learned not to avenge himself with his own hands. In this lesson we look at a different way to understand these vindictive-sounding passages.

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.

Now these things happened to them as examples, to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. (1 Corinthians 10:1-10)

Why did God let his people be taken as slaves in Egypt? Because he wanted them to have a deliverance experience. This would give them a history that matched his plan for saving humans. Since Adam and Eve fell for Satan's lies in the garden, all humans have been trapped in fear and selfishness. We cannot deliver ourselves, and God cannot deliver us without our permission.

Israel's journey to Canaan, the promised land, became a metaphor for the journey of each individual human from a life of slavery to sin to a life filled with the joy of service. And what they did in displacing the Canaanites from the land was a metaphor for what we go through as we put away old ways of thinking and learn to live in the freedom Christ offers.

Here's how God wanted to do that for them:

"See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him. If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you. My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites and I will wipe them out. Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces. Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water, I will take away sickness from among you, and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span.

"I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I

will make your enemies turn their backs and run. I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive out the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land. (Exodus 23:20-30)

In all of that, you see nothing about the Israelites doing any fighting. So why did they have to do so much fighting to take over the land? Because that's how they wanted to do it. Also notice that the angel God would send would not forgive any rebellion. When the people got to the border of the promised land and sent spies in to check it out, the people forgot that God had promised to drive the people out of the land for them and acted as if they would have to fight themselves. They refused to go into the land, thus rebelling against the angel and against God.

So while God helped them in their battles, he did not go ahead of them and drive the people out because that's not what the people of Israel chose to do. And the idolatrous practices of these peoples would be a snare to Israel from the time they entered the land until the Babylonians took them away by force some thousand years later.

Which is why David was a man of blood, for it was his job to complete the task of driving out these people groups. Recall that he made the city of the Jebusites, Jerusalem, his capital after he defeated the people who lived there. God didn't let David build a permanent temple because of his years of fighting.

So now you can see that David's enemies were symbols of the fear and selfishness that are the enemies of those who follow Christ. And you can then read what David and other writers asked God to do to their enemies and use that language to ask God to deal with the fearful and survival-focused emotions and instincts that cause us to treat our fellow humans so terribly.

In the memory verse for this lesson Peter calls Satan an enemy. Remember that God has already defeated Satan, so we don't need to be afraid of him. But if it should seem that he's getting the upper hand, that he's winning and we're losing, we can turn to God in the language of these Psalms and ask for God's victory over Satan to be made real in our lives.

Your hand will lay hold on all your enemies;  
your right hand will seize your foes.  
At the time of your appearing  
you will make them like a fiery furnace  
In his wrath the LORD will swallow them up,  
and his fire will consume them. (Psalm 21:8,9)

Possible thought papers:

1. Rewrite Psalm 28 taking out the symbols of David's enemies and be explicit about the enemies that stand between you and Jesus.
2. Discuss how foolish it was for the Israelites to want to use war to defeat the people in the promised land. Then use that as a metaphor for ways many people try to deal with sin.
3. Write a skit in which Satan is defeated in the way specified in James 4:7.