

Unhindered: Fighting the Battle

10.07.2022

Tough week...

Last Sunday...

Prayer

My message today is weird

It's just weird

Those of you that know me aren't surprised by that at all

But I wanna warn *even* you

It's really weird

Like, I've got this absurdly long introduction

Then there's a difficult theological question in the middle

And we don't have time to talk about that

And then there's this really cool Bible trivia thing

And we don't have time to talk about it either

But you'll want to think about it later

And large parts of the message

You'll be wondering where in the world I'm goin'

Several of the guys heard

A chunk of this message at the men's retreat

But that just means

They're even more excited

Right guys?

Well *I'm* excited to do this message

I'm excited because I believe that the destination

We're going to

Has so much potential

The route to get there is weird

But the destination has so much potential

To change the way you see your life

The way you see your marriage

The way you see your kids

The way you see your church

I believe this message will change the way you pray

Change the way you see temptation

It'll change the way you view your job & your money & your schedule

It can change the way you view your legacy

And I don't think I'm overselling

I'm going to summarize a story

Because if I don't go fast

We'd be here all day

It's a story from David's life

You can read it later

In more detail

In 1 Chronicles 21 & 2 Samuel 21-24

I'll give you the timeline from 2 Samuel

2 Samuel 21 – Ishbi-benob threatened David

The Bible appears to say

That Ishbi-benob was one of Goliath's 4 brothers

Read it for yourself later

2 Samuel 21:22 - These four were descendants of Rapha in Gath, and they fell at the hands of David and his men.

Some believe that this was why David carried 5 smooth stones to go take on Goliath

“If I have to, I’ll whip him and all four of his giant brothers”

That was either extraordinary faith

Or an overdose on testosterone

So Abishai rushes in and kills Ishbi-benob

Rescues David

And then proceeds to tell David that he just can’t go out again

He’s just too old

That’s chapter 21

Then – in chapter 22 – David writes and sings this elaborate song of praise to God

He has them write *this* about him:

2 Samuel 23:1 (NLT) - These are the last words of David: “David, the son of Jesse, speaks—David, the man who was raised up so high, David, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, David, the sweet psalmist of Israel.

The “sweet psalmist of Israel”

The old NIV

Said he was Israel's singer of songs.

Can you imagine if someone declared themselves

To be “the sweet psalmist of America”

Or “America’s singer of songs”

How full of yourself would you have to be

To do that?!?

That’s chapter 22

Then – in chapter 23 – he has a scribe write down his “last words”

He’s kind of like Sanford & Son

“Elizabeth – this is the big one”

So David is getting to the end of his life

And he has this series of grand exits

The last battle of chapter 21

The last song of chapter 22

The “last words” of chapter 23

Then, later in chapter 23

he begins to list his “Thirty might men”

2 Samuel 23:24 says “Among the Thirty were: Asahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan...”

And it lists them

And then, at the end of the list, it ends with

“and Uriah the Hittite. There were thirty-seven in all.” (2 Samuel 23:39)

David’s “Thirty Mighty Men” actually had 37 men in it

This was not a named list that everyone talks about

In fact, in 1 Chronicles 11

David’s “Thirty mighty men” has 47 guys in it

What’s going on here?

David was consumed with his legacy

David’s a man in the last years of his life

And he is consumed with how everyone is going to remember him

And he’s filled with pride

And God’s about had enough

You know how when your kids are cranky

And you get to that point

Where you say, “I’ve about had enough”

God’s at that point with David

And into that vulnerability

Enters Satan

Satan can't read our minds

But he looks for vulnerability

1 Chronicles 21:1-2 - Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel. So, David said to Joab and the commanders of the troops, "Go and count the Israelites from Beersheba to Dan. Then report back to me so that I may know how many there are."

David had grown more & more narcissistic

And I believe that God was patiently trying to nudge him back in the right direction

But the census

The census to show how "great a military commander David was"

After all the times that God had blessed him in spite of his weakness

The census was the last straw

1 Chronicles 21:7 - This command was also evil in the sight of God; so He punished Israel.

So, God does an unusual thing

I'm not aware of any other time where this happens

He lets David choose his own punishment

2 Samuel 24:13b - "Shall there come on you three years of famine in your land? Or three months of fleeing from your enemies while they pursue you? Or three days of plague in your land?"

God saying – When you did this... and this... now you've gone too far

You're getting a spankin' – but you get to pick the switch

So, he gives him options:

3 years of famine,

3 months of running from your enemies, or

3-day plague

David chooses the plague saying, "Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for His mercy is great" – 2 Samuel 24:14b

And indeed, it was

David thought, God is so merciful

Maybe if I pick this option

He'll relent

He was

And He did

Scripture says the plague lasted *less than* 3 days

How much less?

We don't know

Was it 1 day?

2 days?

2 days & 23 hours?

We don't know – but it *was* less than 72 hours

But, in that time, “An angel” (*singular*) with “a sword” (*singular*) killed 70,000 people

2 Samuel 24:15-16 - So the Lord sent a plague on Israel from that morning until the end of the time designated, and seventy-thousand of the people from Dan to Beersheba died. When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the Lord relented concerning the disaster and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, “Enough! Withdraw your hand.” The angel of the Lord was then at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

This is the difficult theological question I told you about

So, don't let me lose you here

There are a lot of questions about why God was *THAT* mad

And why a just God would kill 70,000 people

For one man's sin

We don't have time to get to that

So, don't let me lose you

Because what's coming next is really important

When the angel stopped

At Araunah's threshing floor

And David built an altar

To cover his sin

And God relented

Because of David's sacrifice

This was the second important event {"Altar @ Araunah"}

That happened at this site

There were actually 4 events mentioned in Scripture

At this site

This was #2

The first occurred in Genesis 22

Genesis 22:1-2 - Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of *Moriah*. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a *mountain* I will show you."

Now just trust me for a second

I'll show you

But Abraham offers up Isaac as a sacrifice

At the same site

That David offered a sacrifice to end the plague

At Araunah's threshing floor

The place where the angel stopped

All those years later

Are you with me?

Hang on

It gets better

Later – 2 Chronicles 3 tells us

2 Chronicles 3:1 - Then Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David.

So, at that place

Where David *made* a sacrifice

To cover *his* sin

Where Abraham *almost* sacrificed his son

To show his commitment and devotion to God

Jews would make sacrifices for about 1,000 years

To cover *their* sin

And show their commitment and devotion to God

So, Abraham offers a sacrifice here

To show his commitment to God

And David offers a sacrifice here

In the same place

To cover his sin

So, the Jews build a temple here

Where they offer hundreds of years of sacrifices

To cover their sin

And to show their devotion to God

Are you with me?

And a short distance away

On a mountain

In the same region of Moriah

God would later sacrifice *His* Son

To cover *our* sin

And to show His commitment and devotion to us

So, this is a big spot

And it deserves our full attention

But don't get distracted

This is the cool Bible trivia thing

You'll want to think about later

But I gotta keep moving

I want you to focus for just a moment

On the fact that "An angel" (singular) with "a sword" (singular)

Killed 70,000 people

In less than 72 hours

This is not a picture of a disease or a storm or a flood or an earthquake

But "an angel" with "a sword"

That's one person every 3½ seconds

If he took the full 72 hours

And if he doesn't sleep

That's like you or me with ants at a picnic!

That's a very different picture of the power of the unseen world

Than we typically like to consider.

Like this (statue pic)

Or this (baby pic)

Or even this (photo opp pic)

An angel – accurately speaking

Is a powerful, fear-inspiring being

Worthy of great respect

Think of the times in Scripture when people met an angel

What does the angel normally say first thing... “fear not”

How often do *you* start a conversation with “fear not”?

The angels said that because the people they were speaking to were in the process of wetting their pants

When you think of the unseen world

You should NOT think of the little pudgy devil on one shoulder

And the little pudgy angel on the other

It's really more like the hulk

From a Marvel movie (hulk vid – 0:15 seconds)

An angel

Accurately speaking

Is a powerful

Fear-inspiring

Being, worthy of great respect

Check out this next scene – this would make a great Hollywood movie

1 Chronicles shows a little bit more detail

1 Chronicles 21:16a, 20-21 - David looked up and saw the angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth... While Araunah was threshing wheat, he turned and saw the angel; his four sons who were with him hid themselves. Then David approached, and when Araunah looked and saw him, he left the threshing floor and bowed down before David with his face to the ground.

I picture David's delegation arriving from one side

The Angel of the Lord arriving from the other side

Four grown boys hiding themselves

David says I need this threshing floor

Araunah says "Take it – take it all!"

Now let's stop a second

If a single... non-descript... angel is *that* powerful

What does the power of the unseen world look like on a larger scale?

We need to know

In Revelation 5, John said he looked:

Revelation 5:11a - Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand.

This is figurative language, for sure

But it's painting a picture of multitudes of Heavenly beings

I think it is fair to assume that the real number

Is at least as big as the number that he used

10,000 x 10,000 is 100 million angels

Each of which is powerful enough to kill 70,000 humans in less than 3 days

Like ants at a picnic

Like hulk in a Marvel movie

Now look at these verses:

Revelation 12:7-9 - Then war broke out in Heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan,

who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

So, Satan rebelled

He wanted to be God

And there were some angels that also thought it would be a good idea to have him be God

So they left also.

Does the Bible tell us how many?

It does

Revelation 12:4a – (The dragon’s) tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth.

So, if there are 100 million angels at the end of time

And 1/3 of the angels rebelled earlier and became demonic

That means that initially there were at least 150 million angels

And that means that now there are at least 50 million fallen angels

Actively working against us here on earth

Each of which would have the power

If God permitted them

To kill 70,000 people in less than 3 days

...

And because our enemy is literally hell-bent on destroying us

If God took His hands off the planet

And allowed Satan and his demons free reign

They could destroy everyone on earth in just over 8 minutes

Let me say that again...

Look how John describes our situation:

Revelation 12:12b - Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.

John wrote these words near the end of the 1st century

If Satan was filled with fury

Because he knew his time was short then

How must he feel now?

And the only thing stopping him

Is the power of Almighty God

While we should be very respectful and aware of their power

But we should not worry

And we should not be overly fearful

Look what we see in Jesus' ministry:

Luke 10:17-18 (NLT) - When the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to Him, "Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!" "Yes," He told them, "I saw Satan fall from Heaven like lightning!"

Listen friends

Satan is powerful

But this is not a spiritual tug of war

Satan rebelled

And then God expelled him with a snap

Like lightning – gone!

In Matthew 8

Jesus drives thousands of demons into a herd of pigs

With only a word

Snap - gone

James 4:7-8a (NLT) - So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you.

On our own

We are no match for the power of our enemy

But humbled before God

Satan will flee from our presence

He's stronger than us along

But he's not nearly as strong as us with God

But let's be honest

Too many of us

Are not humbling ourselves before God

Too many of us

Are not calling out to God in prayer

Jesus – who knows the power of our enemy better than we do

Jesus said apart from Me you can do nothing {Show John 15:5}

But too many of us are saying

I don't know

I can do quite a bit

And we're getting picked off left & right

Pastors resigning in disgrace

People leaving their spouses

Passively disconnected from their kids

Too often overwhelmed by the lure of alcohol & porn

Hiding in shame because we feel weak

We are weak

On our own

We are weak

On our own

We're just a stick

Look – He told us

We're just a stick on our own

Apart from Him we can do nothing

But as powerful as our opposition is

God is stronger

God has 2 angels with Him

For everyone 1 that rebelled

And Jesus can order 1000's of demons around

With just a simple word

So, you don't need to be afraid

You just need to be really devoted

To getting connected to God

This is week 5 in our series

Called Unhindered

And the title of today's message

Is "Fighting the Battle"

Because our enemy is not currently fighting us

With witchdoctors

Or hordes of savage armies

But our enemy is coming at us

In today's broken culture

And too often

He's winning

Against victims

Who don't even know they're at war

Two of his best weapons

Which we'll be discussing in our groups this week

Are complacency

And avoidance

Complacency and avoidance

One of the clearest symptoms

That we live in a broken world

One of the clearest expressions

Of the wounds of war

Is the mental health challenges

That many of us have faced these days

We have to face it head on

We have to pray and worship and seek health

Like our lives depend on it

Because our lives depend on it

Our families need us to fight for them

Our schools need us to fight for them

Our churches need us to fight for them

Our kids and grandkids need us to fight for them

We are at war

But our battle is not against flesh & blood

2 Corinthians 10:3b-5 (NirV) - I don't fight my battles the way the people of the world do. The weapons I fight with are not the weapons the world uses. In fact, it is just the opposite. My weapons have the power of God to destroy the camps of the enemy. I destroy every claim and every reason that keeps people from knowing God. I keep every thought under control in order to make it obey Christ.

Fight your battle

But do not fear

Fight your battle

But do not despair

Do not give up

Do not step down

Fight your battle

By not allowing *anything*

No claim

No reason

To keep you from knowing God more fully
Keep every thought under control
In order to make it obey Christ.