

A War of Words

1Samuel 17:42-47

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 11-21-2010

Introduction – Proverbs 26:4-5

During this past week I engaged in a war of words with at least ten people. If you were watching those conversations you might have questioned whether it is legitimate to even call those conversations a war, since I was very gracious and no one raised their voices. But there was a clash of worldviews expressed in these pleasant dialogues.

One war was a short exchange with a member who was seeking to justify sin. This person was looking at the subject from a secular viewpoint, and just needed a little encouragement to think Biblically. And this person represents many of us who can easily fall into secular thinking without realizing it.

Another war of words was with a friend outside the church who was giving numerous cultural arguments as to why my views that women shouldn't be pastors were outdated. I kept bringing it back to the Bible, and she kept being astonished that I would be willing to buck modern cultural ideas. She too was a professing believer, but it was clear that she had almost entirely adopted cultural thinking on the subject, not Biblical thinking. Actually, that wasn't a pleasant conversation – she was reaming me out. She later apologized, but – not pleasant.

I won't tell you about all my wars because every one of you has probably had similar wars of words with family and friends that reveal where our hearts are at and reveal what worldview we have unwittingly adopted. You have probably had a war of words with a son or a daughter. And how you engaged in that war reveals a lot about you.

Gary and I visited a politician this past week who has suffered greatly over a war of words. The politician's name will not be revealed, but we had gone to encourage him and try to give some perspective. This is a guy who has done a lot of good. And we had a good talk. But the ideas we will be looking at in this sermon came to the surface in this conversation. Though this guy is a professing believer, he said, "When you guys brought God and Scripture up you hurt your cause." I asked him why he thought that. He explained that his colleagues were snickering whenever there was a mention of God or the Bible and encouraged us that we should have only used a

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secular argument instead of quoting the Bible. I pointed out that even though four of my arguments might have been considered secular in contrast to some of my arguments, really all of the arguments in that room were religious. But I understood where this man was coming from. We are faced with constant pressure to conform our words to the wisdom of this world. That is the only thing that we think they will buy into. And before we start looking at the war of words between Goliath and David, I want to set the theological background for what was happening by looking at Proverbs 26:4-5.

Proverbs 26:4 says, **“Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him.”** What is a fool? What is folly? Psalm 15 and Psalm 53 both say that **“the fool has said in his heart that there is no God.”** So folly is arguing or acting as if there is no God. If you agree with the unbeliever that it is legitimate to start from a neutral stance and that anything in life can be properly interpreted apart from God, then you will have no basis for moving him from independence to dependence. Why? Because you are just like him; you are independent in your reasoning. You just happen to be a Christian, but the presuppositions of your war of words are the same as the unbelievers. Why should he move to dependence upon God if you as a believer act as if your mind determines truth? That’s what the proverb means when it says, **“Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him.”** In this passage David does not answer Goliath according to his folly. He doesn’t adopt Goliath’s assumptions, methods, or goals. To argue neutrally is to grant the unbeliever exactly what he wants – independence from God and from His law. You have removed all your armor and dropped your sword in the fight if you do this. And yet Christians answer a fool according to his folly all the time when they argue with their children. Instead of bringing God’s authority and His word to bear on the question, they use the wisdom of the world. One such wisdom is that might makes right – “Do it cause I said so!” Another wisdom of the world is giving multiple warnings; or negotiating, or appealing to pragmatism, or giving time out. Proverbs 26:4 says that we must not reason like the world in our wars of words. **“Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him.”**

But the next verse (Proverbs 26:5) goes on to say, **“Answer a fool according to his folly lest he be wise in his own eyes.”** What’s with that? Is he contradicting himself? No. He is saying that once you have established that the bible is the only legitimate starting point, and that God is your only reference of truth (that’s the previous verse), you can turn around and show

that if the unbeliever continues in his independence, there is no way that he can prove anything with absolute certainty. You are using his own presuppositions to disprove his words. So it is a two-fold methodology. You show your commitment to God and His Word and then you show the inconsistencies of failing to do so.

When I spoke to City Council on the GLBT issue some weeks ago I started by defining the issue as a Biblical issue and saying that they cannot make moral what God calls an abomination. God has spoken to this subject. Like Goliath, I could tell that they didn't buy that. But then I tried to show how on their own presuppositions they were being contradictory. I sought in the second part to answer a fool according to his folly lest he be wise in his own eyes. They claimed that this was an issue of rights, when in reality 1) no right that we have in the bill or rights is being denied these people and 2) they are denying us the rights listed in Articles I and IV of the Bill of Rights. In other words, if this really is about rights, they should vote against the bill. I was answering a man according to his folly lest he be wise in his own eyes. Unfortunately, they don't give you much time to do so, but there is much that can be done in three minutes.

And I hope this little passage on a war of words between David and Goliath will help to crystallize in your minds the difference between a faithful war of words and an unfaithful war of words, whether that war is with your children on why they should clean up their rooms, or whether your war of words is with a politician.

I. The goal of our words

A. Goliath's goal – frame the war within two unacceptable alternatives (vv. 8-9)

Let's look first at the goal of the words found in this chapter. Goliath's goal is clearly stated in verses 8-9.

1 Samuel 17:8 Then he stood and cried out to the armies of Israel, and said to them, "Why have you come out to line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and you the servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me.

1 Samuel 17:9 If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us."

Goliath frames the war within only two alternatives. We call that a false dilemma. And his false dilemma was that Israel had two choices – they could either be slaves of Saul or slaves of the Philistines. He can't think of any options other than that there must be big state. It is either the statism of Saul or it will be the statism of the Philistines, but as far as he is concerned, having a big central state is not an option. Now, neither of those options was acceptable to God, and David was not about to allow Goliath to define the argument. Too many times we allow our opponents to define the debate. Of course, if you had asked various Jews, you might have seen some of the Jews as already having bought into those two options. Many of them were unwilling to buck the tyranny of Saul for quite a few more years. Other Jews might have been tempted to flee, or to negotiate. But it doesn't appear that any of them had the big goals that David had. Goliath's goals were an uncomfortable choice between a rock and a hard place.

B. David's goal – that God's wisdom might be known (v. 46)

The goal of David can be seen in verse 46. Any time you see a “that” or “so that” you know that some goal is going to be described. David said, “**that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.**” David's goal was not safety, comfort, winning a battle for the sake of winning the battle, or any other humanistic goal. His goal was to please God and see God's name lifted up. And if that is not your goal in your war of words, you have lost the battle up front. You have already conceded to humanism. You are answering a man according to his folly. You are fighting on the world's turf. And let me apprise you of something, if you fight on the world's turf and with their methods, you will lose. And you will lose because the world, the flesh, and the devil are experts in that arena, and without God on your side (because He will oppose you too) you don't stand a chance.

And I know people who will respond – “That's ridiculous Phil. If I don't respond on their terms I don't stand a chance.” If we don't use their dirty tactics, we don't stand a chance. If we don't get our share of the pork, our state will suffer. And that response is basically saying, “That's ridiculous Phil. We can't fight with spiritual weapons because Goliath is against us.” Now don't get me wrong – we saw last week that it is OK to use tools such as slings, and stones, and words, but they must be used under God's authority and for God's glory. And too many wars of words that evangelicals engage in, God's name is not even mentioned, and certainly His laws and His methods are not referenced. If they have David's goal, they are certainly hiding it.

David's goal was far bigger than winning one battle. When D. L. Moody was dying, he told his sons, "If God be your partner, make your plans big." Think about that. If God is your partner in business, make big plans. If God is your partner in church, make big plans. If God is your partner in politics, make big plans. Do you have a vision that is bigger than yourself? If not, seek God's face until His call is felt upon your soul. But your methodology reflects the size of your goals.

Our ultimate goal must be the glorify God with every word that we speak in our war of words. Just as an example, people may question why you homeschool. If you are embarrassed by your real reasons for homeschooling, you might just bring up issues the unbelievers can identify with – that the educational standards out there are poor, that they are receiving poor socialization, that Abraham Lincoln homeschooled, etc. And Proverbs 26 says that those can have a place in your apologetic (in fact, that is the second half of the apologetic), but if you argue neutrally from the standpoint of what will be appealing to an unbeliever, your apologetic will not be faithful and it will not be powerful because it has not challenged the root of their objections.

II. The expectation for our words

A. Goliath's expectations – he "disdained" anything that didn't fit what he was used to; his expectation was that human strength would be pitted against human strength (v. 42).

The second thing I see in this war of words was the stark contrast between Goliath and David *in their assumptions and in their expectations*. Initially Goliath was totally surprised by what he saw, and then he became offended. But verse 42 shows Goliath's assumptions or expectations of who *should be* coming out against him. It says, "**And when the Philistine looked about** [So he is looking around and trying to figure out who his opponent will be, or if he even has one. "And when the Philistine looked about"] **and saw David, he disdained him; for he was only a youth, ruddy and good-looking.**" I guess that implies that Goliath was not too good-looking. He probably assumed that anyone who might be a real contest with him would have so many scars that he would be ugly as a stick. But in any case, Goliath is expecting to fight a seasoned warrior. He was expecting human strength to be pitted against human strength. He was not expecting a miracle, or that any god would actually intervene. He's religious, but he's never seen his gods intervene. When he sees the weakness of David, he assumes that David is

powerless. And David's Christianity did look powerless. But that is a dangerous assumption that humanists make, and if Christians would once again really have the faith of David, the humanist assumption would be a fatal assumption. They don't know what they are up against. They don't believe that God will intervene. Actually, they will be right if *we ourselves* don't believe that God will intervene. But humanists have a dangerous assumption.

Unfortunately, it is easier for Christians to adopt the assumptions of Goliath than it is for them to adopt the assumptions of David. Christians today think that standing up against Goliath is hopeless, or that using David's religious words are hopeless. We will be more effective if we use secular arguments, or manipulation, or pitting one person against another, or (in some cultures bribes and blackmail). They think that they will be more effective if they learn to fight with Goliath's weapons.

But the expectations we have in our war of words reveals what is going on in the heart. Are we really walking by faith or are we walking by sight? This is true even when your war of words is within your family. Too many arguments between a husband and wife are not operating in the realm of God's authority and power. They are using insult, intimidation, curses, implied blackmail ("You know where you will be sleeping tonight"), and other methods of Goliath. And why do they do it? Because their assumption is that such methods work better than God's methods of servant leadership/loving submission, or overcoming evil with good; operating in the Spirit's authority rather than exercising power, etc. We need to examine our assumptions and expectations and see if our wars of words resemble Goliath or resemble David.

B. David's expectations – that God's victory would be seen (v. 45).

Look at David's expectations. David expects that God's presence is real and His power is real, His promises will prove true, and doing things His way is always worthwhile. Look at verse 45: "**Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.'**" David believes three things were powerfully on his side. First, he believed that God was present and was on his side. Now obviously, Goliath believed in gods as well. But he put more confidence in his own power and might. David did not trust his sling above God. He was trusting God to work through his sling. Walking by faith means that God is part of everything we think, do, and say. If you try to use

secular arguments to get your way, you are automatically ejecting God from your war of words. And God does not fight on behalf of anyone who does that. Jesus said, **“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation [so He is talking about being ashamed of Jesus and His words in the public square], of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels”** (Mark 8:38). Our words reveal whether man is bigger than God or God is bigger than man in our vision.

Secondly, David invoked the name of God. **“I come to you in the name of Yahweh of hosts.”** This is a powerful concept that most Christians are oblivious to. Why do demons not leave unless you command them to leave in the name of Jesus? What is there about His name that gives us power? And for that matter, what does it mean to come in the name of someone? Well, the short answer is that to do something in someone’s name means to do something by someone’s authority or with their authorization. It implies that David represented God and that God was backing David up.

In the New Testament He has called upon us to pray in the name of God the Son, Yeshua, which means, “Yahweh saves.” “Jesus” means “Yahweh saves.” And if you do anything that is not in the name of Jesus, it falls to ground. Our whole identity is tied up in Jesus. When we died on the cross, the law’s full penalty was born by Jesus. But that means that we no longer exist as far as the law is concerned. We are dead people. We can’t get married in our own name, receive an inheritance in our name, or sign a check in our own name. Why? Because we are supposed to be dead. If we try to write checks in our own name on our heavenly bank account, not only will we not have anything in the bank account in our name, the law will come after us. If Phil Kayser is alive and I didn’t die on the cross, then the law is still after me. My only legal hope is to say that Phil Kayser died on the cross and to now write all my spiritual checks in Jesus name (because he has authorized me to do so).

In the New Testament we are commanded to pray in His name (John 16:26), gather in His name (Matt 18:20), cast out demons in His name (Mark 9:38), work miracles in His name (Mark 9:39) and preach remission of sins in His name (Luke 24:47). We are justified in His name (1Cor. 6:11), plead with people in His name (1Cor. 1:10), give a cup of cold water in His name (Matt 10:42), trust in His name (Matt 12:21) and receive a little child in His name (Matt 18:5). In fact, Colossians 3:17 says, “And *whatever* you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” When we come to our Goliath’s in Christ’s name, it

means that we self-consciously see ourselves as seated together with Christ in the heavenlies; we represent Him, and act on His behalf.

The third thing that David believed in was the presence of numerous invisible angels. That verse speaks of the “**LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel.**” David knows that God is not only raising up an army of humans, but God is already the commander of heavenly hosts. And even though Goliath looked big, if Goliath got one glimpse of the majestic angels that were camped around David, he would fall flat on his face in fear, even without a rock in his head. But how many times do Christians think of the hosts of angels that are on our side? Almost never. And you know what? Without faith, those angels are frustrated. If you want to get a tiny glimpse of the relationship between what angels can and cannot do and our faith and our prayers, read the first few verses of Revelation 8 or read Daniel chapters 9-11. Revelation 8 shows that angelic regiments of soldiers are hindered from doing anything as long as the church is silent. But as soon as the prayers of the church go up in faith, the trumpets begin to sound, and angelic regiment after regiment is unleashed for battle. Our power is unseen, and so we tend not to use those powers. But we have enormous power at our disposal if we will use the means of grace.

Now Goliath is still going to mock you when you do that, but he will be no match for a church that actually is willing to use God’s weapons. My kids use an analogy of a gun. You’ve got a Gospel gun in your hand, and your attacker laughs at you and says, “I don’t believe in guns.” You don’t say, “Oh, OK,” and put down your gun simply because he doesn’t believe in it. You pull the trigger and make him a believer. Right? And that’s the way it is with the weapons of our warfare. You pull the trigger by *using* God’s Word, invoking His name, and calling upon His angels. We need to have the assumptions and expectations of David. Too many evangelicals are “practical Deists.”

III. The offense revealed in our words

A. Goliath was offended by the weakness of David’s weapons (v. 43)

The third thing that I see as quite a contrast in this war of words was what Goliath and David each got offended over. They are quite different things. Verse 43 shows that Goliath is personally offended. “**So the Philistine said to David, ‘Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?’**” He is insulted that he even has to fight with David. “Am I a dog?” You can see his offense in those words.

B. David was offended by Goliath's defiance of God (v. 45)

But notice that David does not take personal offense to Goliath's mocking, cursing, and hatred. The last phrase of verse 45 that I read earlier says, "**I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.**" David's anger is a righteous anger because it is God-centered. He is consumed with grief that God's name is being trampled in the mud. That's why it bothered him that his brothers and others weren't doing anything about this.

Too many times in our war of words we find that we are offended because our pride has been hurt, or we have not gotten our way, or we can't convince the other person with our words. It is a self-centered offense. And that too is something that needs to be repented of. We need to ask God to give us such a passion that His will would be done, that we would gladly take the insults and hatred of the world, if God would be glorified. It is only then, that our prayers for victory are prayers that *should* be answered. If we have humanistic reasons for why we want our prayers to be answered, we aren't really praying according to God's will, in His name, or praying for His glory, or representing His interests in our prayers. Examine the nature of your offense in your war of words. It too will reveal a lot about your heart.

IV. The religion revealed in our words

A. Goliath cursed David by his gods (v. 43), but showed that his trust was really secular – with what eye could see (vv. 8-9; 42-43); All false religion is fundamentally humanistic.

The fourth thing that I see in this war of words is that it revealed the true nature of their respective religions. Goliath had a religion. We know that because verse 43 says, "**And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.**" But the Philistine's real trust was in himself. In verses 8-9 all Goliath can think about is how good and how strong he is. He promises to prevail. We see the same humanistic arrogance in verse 44: "**And the Philistine said to David, 'Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field.'**" His religion was man-centered.

And it is my contention that every religion in the world is a man-centered religion except for the true religion of Christianity. So there is a real sense in which every false religion is humanistic. False religions *start* with man. (Actually, some compromised brands of Christianity start there too, don't they?) They *start* with man's efforts, and his partial goodness, and what man deserves. In total contrast true Christianity portrays man as being

dead in his sins and unable to come to God. True Christianity starts with God's plans for us in eternity past, a past redemption that guarantees the salvation of the elect, the Holy Spirit's regeneration and bringing of us to life. We call that monergism. Only one person is working in bringing us to new life. And only after God regenerates us by bringing a new birth do we have the faith to seek Him and find the next step of salvation, which is justification. And even once we are saved, it is not a situation of a 50-50 cooperation between God and us. We work out what God works in. Philippians 2:12-13 tells us:

Philippians 2:12 work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

Philippians 2:13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

It is 100% God's grace enabling us to be 100% involved. It is sola gratia, solo Christo, and sole deo Gloria – grace alone, Christ alone, and to the glory of God alone. The false religion of Goliath was what made sense to his mind; what could be trusted with his eyes and faculties; and he expected his gods to be manipulated by his loyalty and efforts.

B. David spoke of the true God and showed that his trust was really a kingdom trust – in what eye could not see (v. 46)

But David says in verse 46,

1Samuel 17:46 This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, [So David is involved; he is not a robot, but the victory is attributed to God because it is God alone who can enable him to have the victory. “This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand.”] and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

There it is – it is grace alone that strengthens David, and once David gets the victory, he attributes it the glory of God alone. So this is yet another test that we can apply to our wars of words. Do our words testify that our trust is in ourselves, or that our trust is in God? When you feel pride rising in your heart at how good you are with your words, you know that you are starting to go astray. Even Christians can have a religion of humanism if they are not careful. Many people won't do the right thing because “they don't feel like it,” which makes our feelings our highest authority. Or others will excuse their sin by saying, “everyone does it,” which makes other people's actions the highest authority. Or they will say, “but science has proved.” I think you get the point. Our words often reveal the true nature of

our religion – is it humanism or Christianity? I would have to say that the war of words for many Christians is humanism, and they are embarrassed by the law of God.

V. The confidence revealed in our words

A. Goliath was confident in his ability; Philistia suddenly lost confidence when their ability was not enough (vv. 8-9, 44)

The last contrast I see in this war of words was the contrast between the confidence of Goliath and the confidence of David. In verses 8-9 Goliath is quite confident in his own strength. The same confidence is expressed in verse 44 – “**Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!**” Here’s the point - we see from the subsequent verses that his confidence was ill founded. And we too need not be intimidated just because evolutionists are confident that we are idiots, or because liberals think that original intent interpretation of the constitution is stupid. Confidence means nothing if it is not grounded well.

B. David was confident too – but it was a confidence in God’s purposes, power, and methods, not in the tools that we use (vv. 37,47)

David is no less confident, but his confidence is in God’s revelation, purposes, power, and methods, not in the tools that he was going to use. His confidence arose from the inspired and inerrant word that he had been given earlier. In verse 37 he said, “**The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.**” In verses 45-47 David absolutely exudes confidence. He says,

1Samuel 17:45 ¶ Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

1Samuel 17:46 This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

1Samuel 17:47 Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD’S, and He will give you into our hands.”

We saw last week that this was not presumption. David was basing his confidence in the revelation God had already given. And we too can have confidence in the laws, promises, and theology of Scripture. But frequently

we don't allow those laws, promises, or doctrines to grip us and to govern our wars of words.

Conclusion

And so this sermon is a challenge to rethink what our words reveal about us. Do our words reveal a goal that is self-serving or a goal that is worthy of God? Do they reveal a confidence in the power of God's grace and the surety of His purposes? When we take offense in our war of words, is it a righteous indignation or an indignation that springs from pride? What kind of religion do they reveal? And do they betray a confidence in man or show forth a confidence in God? I can always tell when my confidence is in God. I relax about the results. When my confidence is in my own words, I get stressed when people aren't convinced. Let's make a commitment this morning to first of all be willing to war with words, but secondly to make sure that we allow God's Spirit to sanctify us and make our word wars honor Him and conform to the Scripture. Amen.

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