

This Witchcraft-Like Sin Has Devoured Too Many Ambitious Christians

Manipulation is like witchcraft. We manipulate to get what we want, when we don't trust God. David had two opportunities to take matters in his own hands. Two times the demonized King Saul was delivered into his hands. Once, at En Gedi—incidentally, one of the beautiful places in Israel (and yes, we go there on our tour) and then later at the Desert of Ziph.

In the first event, David and his men were in a cave, when Saul went in to relieve himself. "Then David arose and secretly cut off the corner of Saul's robe" (1 Sam. 24:4b). David could have reasoned, *Samuel already anointed me to be king. Saul knows this.* Jonathan, in the previous chapter, already told David:

"You will be king over Israel, and I will be next to you. Saul my father knows this" (1 Sam. 23:17)

His men urged him to kill Saul, saying,

"This is the day of which the Lord said to you, 'I am giving your enemy into your hand'" (1 Sam. 24:4).

Bear, Lion, Giant, Saul

But David had learned, long before, that God was big enough to fight his battles. Long before he killed the giant with one blow, he had defeated the bear and the lion while protecting his sheep. With Goliath, he rejected Saul's armor and chose to rely on the arm of the Lord. Listen to David's zeal as he confronts the giant:

Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a shield, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have reviled. This day will the Lord deliver you into my hand. And I will strike you down and cut off your head. Then I will give the corpses of the Philistine camp this day to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the earth so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And then all this assembly will know that it is not by sword and spear that the Lord saves. For the battle belongs to the Lord, and He will give you into our hands” (1 Sam. 17:45-47).

“But Ron, in all those cases, David *did* kill his attackers.” This was different. David had a massive conflict of interest. In the other incidents, he was protecting others. In this case, David would benefit from killing Saul—he would most likely become king. He did not want to become the ruler through his own actions.

In the other case in chapter 26, David says to Abishai:

“Do not destroy him. For who can stretch out his hand against the Lord’s anointed and remain unpunished?” David said, “As the Lord lives, the Lord will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord’s anointed, but now please take the spear that is at his head and the jug of water, and let us go” (1 Sam. 26:9-11).

Promotion Comes from Heaven

This is a lesson for all of us. I have seen people seek to manipulate their way into positions of power. God will not bless that. For years, when I have felt God calling me to something, I would simply pray: *If this is your will, you can open the door.* I would quote Psalm 75:6-7 (TLV): “For exaltation comes not from the east nor from the west, nor even

from the desert. For God is the Judge: He lowers one and lifts up another.”

I’ve come to learn that “the hand of the Lord, it is mighty” (Josh. 4:24, MEV) and that nothing can stop God’s will other than my own disobedience. I can rest, knowing the promotion comes from Him and not from man.

A Test

When I first became an associate pastor 1994, another leader came on staff at the same time. He had his heart set on being the next senior leader. And for some reason, he was convinced that I was his competition. He would go out of his way to seek to publicly embarrass me. Others felt the contempt he had for me.

Finally, I had enough. I was going to confront him. I had my speech planned out. “What, are you two?” was going to be part of it. I would put him in his place! But before I unloaded on him, I sought council from a mentor.

“You could do that, if you want,” he told me. “Or you could take the high road and begin to pray and fast for him.” Not what I wanted to hear. But it was the right advice.

As I humbled myself and began to pray for this man, he was removed from the equation. Many years later, he came back to the congregation and asked for forgiveness, and our relationship was restored. My point is that God fights our battle. I did not need to confront him. I needed to focus on God. Yes, there are times for speaking the truth in love, but only after we have made sure that we have God’s heart for the person we are confronting.

Pray and Wait for God

This is a lesson that I have kept with me for 25 years. If God has called me to something, He will open the door. When I felt that I was to go to Africa and preach in 2008, I began to

daily ask God to open a door. Within a month Daniel Kolenda, a former student, invited me to attend a Reinhard Bonnke campaign in Nigeria. On my last day, a pastor invited me back to preach. A year later, I led a group of 18 Israelis to Nigeria, where we preached the gospel with signs and wonders.

On the other hand, in 1987, the Lord spoke to me that he was going to give me a Honda Accord. My father, who refused, at the time, to help me because of my faith in Yeshua, came home with a Honda Accord that he bought for my sister. *I knew that was my car.* My sister didn't like it, and he was going to return it (he was friends with the salesman). At that point I should have kept my mouth shut and watched God work. Instead, I offered to take the car. He said no—adamantly. But then changed his mind and gave me the car. But it would have been a much better testimony if I had just trusted God to do what He said.

So, if God was able to take David—who was being chased by Saul for roughly a decade and had to constantly be on the run or Saul would kill him—and preserve him and make him king for 40 years, surely He can fulfill the call on your life. Just don't manipulate to get position. Rather, position yourself in prayer and wait on the Lord. {eo}

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This article originally appeared at .