

- Set aside some time to spend with other Christians discussing what you mean by spiritual warfare. Talk about this together and study scriptures together so that God can lead you to what you need to learn.

Final Prayer

If I have been tired and sorrowful this day, my Lord, please accept my apologies for becoming wrapped up in my own feelings and failing to see the bigger picture, coloured by Your gracious love. Save me from my problems, and help me trust in Your guidance and providence. Thank You, Lord; AMEN

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are the one who saves us when we are in the midst of difficult situations. Stay close to us, we pray, so that when we do not know what to do or fail to understand what is required of us, then we need not panic because we can call on You for help and guidance. In Your love, You have been our inspiration and director, and we praise You for all You have done for us. Thank You, Lord Jesus, AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Crime

Pray today for those who are employed to fight crime and operate the systems of justice designed to protect people. Pray for God's protection and strength for all who deal with crime.

On-going prayers

- Give thanks for friendship
- Pray for Zimbabwe and ask God to bring it just government
- Pray about world tensions concerning Georgia and Russia

Meditation

Think again; think about the people who you see,
The people who you meet and those who pass you by.
There is no one whose mind and heart,
Whose body, soul, spirit and feelings
Are not precious to the heart of God.

So think again; think about the person that you are,
You, who've grown within your chosen life's experiences.
There is no part of you, your past or present,
Precious memories or future's promise,
Which is not precious to the heart of God.

So think again; think about the family of God you know,
Those who love the Lord, who claim and worship Him.
There is no worker in the Kingdom less than you
Or greater or better or worse than you
For Jesus holds us precious in the heart of God.

So think again, and reckon this: who are you, or who am I
To think about ourselves more grandly or more poorly than we ought?
For Christ our Saviour knows the truth of every soul;
We stand the same before the heart of God.

Bible Study - 1 Samuel 30:17-25

¹⁷ David attacked the Amalekites from twilight until the evening of the next day. Not one of them escaped, except four hundred young men who mounted camels and fled. ¹⁸ David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and he rescued his two wives. ¹⁹ Nothing was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken; David brought back

everything.²⁰ He also captured all the flocks and herds that were driven ahead of the other cattle; people said, 'This is David's spoil.'

²¹ Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow, and who had been left at the Wadi Besor. They went out to meet David and the people who were with him; and when David drew near to them he saluted them. ²² Then all the corrupt and worthless fellows among the men who had gone with David said, 'Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except that each man may take his wife and children, and leave.'

²³ But David said, 'My brothers, You will not do this with what the LORD has given us; he has kept us safe and handed over to us the raiding party that attacked us. ²⁴ Who would listen to you in this matter? For the share of the one who goes down into the battle shall be the same as the one who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike.'

²⁵ From that day forward he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel; it continues to the present day.

Review

Our passage of scripture follows on directly from yesterday's reading, as David's army followed the Amalekites, leaving behind two hundred men at the Wadi Besor who were too tired. They quickly found their prey, and David took the advantage by surprising the Amalekites and they were routed. The army were delighted to both catch their enemy and discover that their families and everything taken by the Amalekites was still untouched and safe, including the cattle and herds (30:18,19). This recovery was the prime reason for the action and the end of the battle is described at the beginning of our passage (30:17), but the significance of the story lies in what happened next, and it was all to do with rights to the spoils of war.

David had saved the families of all his men, but along with them there was great deal of spoil be shared out. In those days, the victorious soldiers had the right to take everything they found; tents, money, clothes, cooking implements, and any other valuables, including ornaments and tradable goods. The sharing out of such spoil was generally a 'free for all', and those who had influence and exercised sharpest practice would get the most; it was not a noble affair. In this case, however, two things happened which led to the establishment of an important principle concerning spoil for Israelite armies in the future.

To begin with and in honour of their leader, the army pronounced that the flocks and herds captured over and above their own animals belonged to David. This was a generous offer, and an indication that David's authority was unchallenged after previous doubts (30:6). David then had to address a difficult situation caused by the split in his army before the battle (30:9). The victorious troops made their way home towards Ziklag and came to the Wadi Besor. There, they found the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to maintain the pace in the race to find the Amalekites. As they came out to greet David, He greeted them and saluted them (30:21), because he had saved their families as well as those who had those of the men who had fought.

However, this was too much for some of those who had risked life and limb in the battle, and they made it clear to David that they expected exclusive rights to spoil. Those who had stayed behind would get nothing, except the safe return of their families. One can imagine the tense situation, with the spokesperson for the army insisted upon their rights and telling the two hundred who had stayed behind to 'take their families and leave' (30:22). The

threat of a split in the army was a serious matter, and David had to act fast. He did so directly and simply. He bravely rebuked those who had spoken and stated the established principle of war for Israel, which was that the spoils of war belonged to God who had given victory (30:23). Then he confronted the rebellious faction and asserted his authority as leader, questioning whether other Judeans would take kindly to their attitude (30:24). He made it clear that all this was a matter of principle and would be handled in a godly manner, and proceeded to set out a principle; those who went into battle and those who 'stayed by the baggage' (for whatever reason) would share the spoils of the battle alike.

It is difficult to underestimate the significance of this move. As a general guideline, an army that worked in the future on this principle would no longer lack those who did the menial jobs, for they would 'have their share' as well as the foot soldiers. This paved the way for better deployment of resources and discipline in the armies of Israel. In addition, if you think about how this principle might work, you realise that the spoils would have to be collected in a disciplined fashion; not squandered on the field or taken by the fittest, leaving aside those who suffered injuries, for example.

Not all of us appreciate the military aspects of what happened in the Old Testament, but what happened then was not the same as now. We are in a privileged position today if we can choose a peaceful life, and we should be prepared to try and understand the experience of those whose lives were lived under the constant threat of war and aggression, for whom fighting was a fact of life. Much of what they experienced, however, gives us clues to what we now call 'spiritual warfare'; the fight with evil which we all experience in different ways today. Bearing this in mind, there are simple messages for us from today's reading. Firstly, the spiritual benefits of battles won against evil belong to the Lord; and secondly, they are shared by all God's people, without privilege; all God's people benefit. In the light of this, David's call for unity amongst his troops sounds like Jesus' call for unity amongst His followers (John 17). It is not a small point!

Questions (for use in groups)

1. Why are stories about war in the Old Testament difficult to read, and how can we learn from them?
2. The men who stayed behind did so because they were exhausted. Why should they share the spoils of war?
3. What can we learn about spiritual warfare from this passage of scripture?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

I find it fascinating to see how David managed the situation which developed in this story. His first action was to assert God's authority before his own, and then control the situation from there. 'All things belong to the Lord' was the position from which he started to sort out the divisive situation developing before him. It is this ability which marks out David and from which we can learn if we aspire to leadership amongst God's people.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *There are some things which require us to fight hard, even if we do not have wars to fight. At the very least, we have to fight hard to make the voice of the Gospel heard in today's world. Few are prepared to listen to its call, particularly in a secular society. Pray about the battles you feel you must fight for the Gospel.*