

Saul and David

Our constant effort as Christians should be to try to make our hearts what God really wants them to be. Christianity is a thing of the heart, not a legalistic system which we must obey to the fullest extent. God showed very plainly that a system of laws simply did not create the kind of people that he wanted. We must realize that we cannot earn a place in heaven by keeping the law, but must strive to blend our hearts with God's, and make his will ours. Our striving to keep the law will only ensure us of a greater appreciation for the things of heaven once we get there. In pursuit of a study of "hearts" it is good to study the lives of some of God's servants who had totally opposite attitudes, and illustrate a tremendous contrast of the heart. The first of these contrasts is of Saul and David.

Most of us know that David is spoken in the Bible as "a man after my own heart." This is indeed probably the highest recommendation that God has ever given one of his servants. Here was a man who did not miss the point that God was trying to make. Here was a man whose heart was aligned with God's. This is reflected in his actions and the beautiful words of the Psalms. But perhaps one of the most compelling ideas in this study of the heart has to do with David's attitudes towards his enemies. David had a tremendous love for God's will that expressed itself in the way that he treated his enemies. David gives us a glimpse of the way we should be.

Let us examine David's dealings with King Saul. We find that Saul became extremely jealous after David had killed Goliath, for David became very popular with the people. Saul seems to forget that he had the same chance to be a hero that David did. Saul's hatred developed to the point that he tried to put David into situations where he would surely be killed, and then finally tried to kill him himself with his spear. David finally had to leave the country. But Saul decided that he must go and search him out to destroy him. We read in 1 Samuel 25:1-12 that Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men. Saul came to a cave along the way, and he went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave. The men told him that it was providence, and that God meant for him to kill Saul. David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe. Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having even done this. Saul left the cave and went on his way. David went out of the cave and called out to him, showing that he had chosen not to take advantage of an opportunity to kill him. Saul recognizes this grace by repenting and going home.

Saul was not satisfied, and again wanted to kill David. Saul went down to the Desert of Ziph with his three thousand chosen men of Israel to search for David. David and Abishai went to the army by night where Saul was lying asleep inside the camp with his spear stuck in the ground near his head. Abishai wanted to kill Saul, but David said to him, "Who can lay a hand on the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?" So they took the Saul's spear and water jug and left. Then David called to Saul and showed him again how he could have killed him but did not. Once again Saul promised to leave David and not bother him again. This time his promise comes true; not long after this the Philistines killed Saul on Mount Gilboa.

It is true that David spared Saul out of respect for God's law concerning the anointed. It is also true that in spite of the numerous times Saul tried to kill him, and the other sufferings that he made him go through, David still loved Saul. Otherwise, why would David punish the Amalekite who claimed to have killed Saul? And why would David lament so over his death as we read in the first chapter of 2 Samuel? It is only through a remarkable attitude of the heart, one that is close to God's that caused him to love his enemies in spite of it all. David shows the same attitude towards Absalom, his rebellious son, while in contrast Saul ranted and raved at Jonathan when Jonathan submitted to David. But such was the heart of David, because that heart was very much like God's.

