

# Loving the Will of God

## Introduction to the life of David Pt.6: The first rejection of Saul 1 Samuel 13

Summary: The issue between Saul and David is not the nature of the sin but the heart's response to sin. Saul was greatly tested, sinned, and then revealed a heart that was not after God's own heart (didn't love His will). This is seen in that 1) His idea of God's favor was getting what he wanted when he wanted it, 2) He adjusted God's Word to fit his will, and 3) He moved away from truth-telling Samuel and preferred "glory-gone" Ahijah. The punishment (lost of dynasty) was not harsh given the sin because 1) the sin was especially serious because of Saul's heart, and 2) the punishment was not all that severe if Saul still had access to God's presence, which he did. God chose a man after His own heart (who desired and loved what God desires and loves). We become like what we love. Do not let the enemy cause you to respond to your sin in any other way than by seeking hard after closeness with God.

Introduction.....	2
The issue is not the sin but the heart's response to sin .....	2
The Test (vv.1-8).....	2
Jonathan stirs up the Philistines .....	2
Israel in deep trouble .....	3
The sin (vv.9-10).....	3
The heart behind the sin (vv.11-12).....	4
1) Using God to get something else (Seeking God's "favor" as a good luck charm to get what he really wants).....	4
2) Adjusting God's Word to fit his own will (Failure to love God's will as seen by his editing God's Word).....	5
3) Rejecting truth-tellers. (Saul has exchanged Samuel for Ahijah, son of "glory-gone").....	5
The punishment vv.13-14 .....	6
A harsh punishment?.....	7
The purpose of chastisement is to cause you to seek God .....	8
A man after God's own heart v.14b .....	9
The heart of God: seat of His emotions and desires .....	9
We become like what we love.....	11
Conclusion .....	11

**1 Samuel 13:5-14 The Philistines assembled to fight Israel, with three thousand chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Micmash, east of Beth Aven. <sup>6</sup> When the men of Israel saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns. <sup>7</sup> Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear. <sup>8</sup> He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter. <sup>9</sup> So he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings." And Saul offered up the burnt offering. <sup>10</sup> Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him. <sup>11</sup> "What have you done?" asked Samuel. Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash, <sup>12</sup> I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the**

**LORD's favor.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering." <sup>13</sup> "You acted foolishly," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. <sup>14</sup> But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command."**

## **Introduction**

### **The issue is not the sin but the heart's response to sin**

In 1 Samuel 8 the people committed the terrible sin of rejecting God as king and asking for a replacement king. God gave them the kind of man they wanted – Saul. But He had mercy on Israel and did not leave Saul as he was. He changed his heart and made Saul a new man. Chapters 9-12 describe the rise of Saul to the throne, and those chapters are full of hope. The climax is Samuel's speech in chapter 12 that I have been referring to as the "Second Chance" speech. He explains to the people and to Saul that all is not lost. Yes they have committed this horrible sin of rejecting God and asking for a king, but God is now willing to give them another chance. If they and their king are faithful to Him God will still bless them. But if not both they and their king will be swept away.

This points to a principle that is extremely important for understanding this book and for living the Christian life, and the principle is this – the main difference between a godly man and ungodly man, and the main determining factor of whether you enjoy God's favor or suffer His disfavor, is how you respond after you sin. When we sin against God there are bitter consequences, but if we repent and seek hard after God He will restore us, and we can be full of joy in Him even as we suffer the pain of those consequences.

The reason so many people are so baffled and perplexed over why Saul is rejected so harshly by God and why David is so favored, when David committed some sins that were far worse than what Saul did, is because the main issue is not, "How serious are the sins you commit?" as much as "How do you respond after you commit them?" The sins of David and Saul serve as occasions to demonstrate what was in the hearts of those two men. So the thing to compare is not their sins, but their hearts' response to their sins. And when you do that it becomes clear why Saul was rejected and David became the model for godliness in the OT. So this morning we will look at Saul's wrong response, and the months to come we will see David's right response.

## **The Test (vv.1-8)**

So let's pick it up at the beginning of chapter 13. The writer has done a masterful job in building to a climax of hope after the despair of Israel's failure. Things are looking really bright, they have just enjoyed a great victory over their enemies, Samuel has just finished his Second Chance speech, where he laid out the two clear paths..., and so now the reader of the book is asking, "So, which path is Saul going to take? Will Israel and their king follow after God and receive great blessing, or will they turn from Him and get swept away?"

### **Jonathan stirs up the Philistines**

The first thing we see in chapter 13 catches us a little off guard – Saul is sitting on his hands and some new character in the book is attacking the Philistines. Saul won the big victory over the Ammonites by mustering all the men of Israel who could fight – 330,000 (or 330 detachments or units). Now that that is over Saul let's most of them go home, although he does retain a small standing army with less than 1% of those men – from over 300,000 down to 3000. So evidently Saul is not expecting any big conflict anytime soon.

**1 Sam.13:2<sup>1</sup> Saul chose three thousand men from Israel; two thousand were with him at Micmash and in the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah in Benjamin. The rest of the men he sent back to their homes. 3 Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost<sup>2</sup> at Geba, and the Philistines heard about it.**

So Saul is sending soldiers home and Jonathan is attacking the Philistines.

## Israel in deep trouble

The Philistines respond to that with an absolutely overwhelming force.

**4 ...the people were summoned to join Saul at Gilgal. <sup>5</sup> The Philistines assembled to fight Israel, with three thousand chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Micmash, east of Beth Aven.**

So the Philistines take over Saul's base in Micmash, and Saul assembles his army in Gilgal. The roads from the north come through Micmash, so Saul is effectively cut off from all the Israelite people from the north. And when the Israelites see the Philistine force they melt in fear.

**<sup>6</sup> When the men of Israel saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns. <sup>7</sup> ... Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear.**

Now Saul's faith is going to be tested. Somehow this arrangement was set in which Saul was to wait seven days for Samuel to arrive, and during that week the soldiers get so panicked that a mass defection begins. Saul ends up losing most of his little army.

**<sup>8</sup> He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter.**

So here is the test. It's quite a predicament. Saul waited the seven days, but Samuel did not show. So now what? The hope was built up, we are wondering if Saul is going to obey God and enjoy victory or disobey and be swept away, and here is what happens:

## The sin (vv.9-10)

**9 So he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings." And Saul offered up the burnt offering.<sup>3 10</sup> Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him. <sup>11</sup> "What have you done?" asked Samuel.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Verse 1 is obscured in the manuscripts. The NIV says 1 "Saul was *thirty* years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel *forty-two* years ." The Hebrew actually says Saul was one year old when he became king and he reigned 2 years. Evidently the numbers got obscured in an early copy. The Greek translation fills in some numbers that seem to be a conjecture. In Acts 31:21 it says God "gave" Israel Saul for 40 years. One possibility is that in God's eyes Saul was only king for 2 years, but he functioned as king for 40. It's not very likely that Saul was 30 years old here in ch.13, since his son Jonathan is a general in his army.

<sup>2</sup> This term may refer to a person rather than an outpost – a Philistine governor of some sort.

<sup>3</sup> ייעל השלח does not imply that Saul offered the sacrifice with his own hand, i.e., that he performed the priestly function upon this occasion. The co-operation of the priests in performing the duties belonging to them on such an occasion is taken for granted, just as in the case of the sacrifices offered by David and Solomon (2Sa 24:25; 1Ki 3:4; 1Ki 8:63).

Saul disobeyed. He was supposed to wait for Samuel. Whenever Saul has to decide between trusting God and doing what seems best to him he always chooses the latter. It is not that Saul totally disregarded God altogether. He was very committed in a lot of ways. And here he waits the full seven days even though his army is disintegrating right in front of his eyes. So he is committed to do the right thing – up to a point. But once there is a fork in the road where Saul’s idea of wisdom goes this way and God’s Word goes that way, Saul will always choose his own judgment. So the sin has been committed. But that does not tell us very much. We all fall into sins every day. The fact that Saul gave into a sinful impulse in the heat of a very difficult situation does not, by itself, let us know if Saul is a godly man or an ungodly man. The real question is, “How will his heart respond now?” He’s been confronted by Samuel; what’s he going to say? Here is where we see the heart behind the sin, which is the key issue. Three things stand out to me.

## **The heart behind the sin (vv.11-12)**

### **1) Using God to get something else (Seeking God’s “favor” as a good luck charm to get what he really wants)**

Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you (**emphatic**) did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash, 12 I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD’s favor.' So I felt compelled (**lit.** forced myself) to offer the burnt offering."

“I did not want to do it, but I had to.” Saul: “I had to disobey so I could seek the Lord’s favor.” This gives us some insight into Saul’s idea of the Lord’s favor. The first thing that stands out to me with regard to what is in Saul’s heart is the fact that he wants to use God to get something else. For Him the Lord’s favor had nothing to do with a personal encounter with God. It was just the good luck charm you get by performing external religious requirements. For Saul God’s favor meant getting what he wanted to get when he wanted to get it whether it coincided with God’s will or not.

He was not really seeking God Himself – to really know God and experience His presence out of desire for God. He just wanted to use God to get the things he really wanted, like military victory. Sacrifice and religious ritual is much more important to Saul than what is in his heart. (That is typical of people who drift from the Lord. They assume their relationship with God is just fine as long as they are committed to going to church and reading their Bible every day and praying and sharing their faith, and all their religious duties.)

Intimacy with God and nearness to His presence is not their main objective. The bottom line is they do not love God, and so they will work their fingers to the bone serving Him, but they are not really interested in fellowship with Him. If they have a free hour they would much rather carry out some ministry than seek His presence in personal communion. They are like a man who has convinced himself he loves his wife, but he would much rather serve her and do things for her than actually be with her and listen to her. Men like that usually think their problem is simply an inability to express their love the right way. When in reality the problem is a lack of love. They do not desire her, they do not take delight in her, and they do not really enjoy being with her. A lot of people are like that with God – they redefine love to mean merely commitment and self-sacrificial service. But they have no idea what it means to just hunger and thirst for God’s presence just because of how much they love His presence.

That is how Saul was. And one thing that shows us that is the fact that he thinks he can only seek God’s favor through this sacrifice. “Why did you offer the sacrifice without Samuel being there Saul? Why did you do that?” His answer: “Because I had to get the Lord’s favor.” Think about that. Why not

just do what Hannah did and seek the Lord's favor privately? Why didn't Saul just go off by himself somewhere and pour out his heart to God in prayer like Jesus did in the Garden? Why not lay out all his fear and confusion before the Lord, and seek nearness to Him in his heart? No doubt God would have done exactly what He did for Hannah - and grant him great comfort and joy and peace and patience and a willing, obedient satisfied heart. But Saul's idea of God's favor is not personal intimacy. His idea of God's favor is that it is a super-powered good luck charm that will get Saul the things he really wants.

## **2) Adjusting God's Word to fit his own will (Failure to love God's will as seen by his editing God's Word)**

Another thing Saul did here is also typical of people whose hearts are not close to God. He adjusted God's Word to fit his own will. This becomes a habit for Saul. He is forever trying to follow God's Word, and sometimes will go way out of his way to do so. Again – Saul is not a secular man. He will go to great lengths sometimes to obey God's Word. Saul was committed to God. But commitment alone is not enough. In those times when God's Word was in direct conflict with what seemed best to Saul, Saul's judgment wins out, and God's Word got bent and molded to fit what Saul's brain says is best.

People do this all the time. "I know what the Bible says about divorce, but in my situation, my husband is so impossible to live with, or I am so in love with this other person, and I know God wants me to be happy, or whatever the excuse, they end up adjusting God's Word to allow for what they really want. They refuse to believe that they could have greater joy by following God's way in that particular circumstance. I do not know how many times I have seen people with this attitude about church discipline. "I am not going to follow the process of church discipline, because in this case it would cause harm to the church." (Like it is our job to protect the church from the very commands of God!)

Anytime we find ourselves wanting to edit God's Word, it is because we do not love His will. I think that is at the root of most mishandling of Scripture. Whether it be adding a few billion years to the creation week, or softening some of the rhetoric about hell or repentance, or cutting a step or two out of the church discipline process, or creatively interpreting certain passages to fit my Calvinism or Arminianism, or turning miracle accounts into allegory so the liberals don't laugh at us, or updating God's commands about the roles of men and women in marriage and in the church to fit our advanced culture, or just plain laziness that refuses to do the hard work of learning how to properly study and interpret the Bible resulting in wrong interpretations; any editing of God's Word comes from the same thing – a heart that does not really love the will of God. They like the will of God up until the point where it conflicts with their own human wisdom, then they want to adjust it to fit their own will. Scripture reveals to us the heart of God. It is the perfect statement of His will – what He desires and what He loves. The person who has a heart after God's own heart loves God's will.

But Saul did not love God's will, which is obvious from the way he treated God's Word. In fact, skip a head for a moment to chapter 14.

## **3) Rejecting truth-tellers. (Saul has exchanged Samuel for Ahijah, son of "glory-gone")**

Chapter 14 is about Jonathan's amazing battle up on the pass on the road to Micmash. That is quite a story and we will get to that, but for now I just want to point out a couple verses that at first seem out of place. Verse one gives us the setting – Saul's army is pinned down, and the Philistines have taken a very strategic pass, and Jonathan decides to cross that pass. And you are shocked and amazed and eager to find out how he is going to pull that off and what's going to happen. And the writer tells you what

happened starting in verse four. But in-between verses one and four he lets the suspense build for a moment as he takes a little detour and gives you a little “meanwhile, back at Saul’s camp” comment.

**<sup>2</sup> Saul was staying on the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree in Migron. With him were about six hundred men, <sup>3</sup> among whom was Ahijah, who was wearing an ephod. He was a son of Ichabod's brother Ahitub son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh.**

The liberal commentators say this is completely out of place. Some editor just pasted in here for no apparent reason. Why break up a really exciting story about the exploits and valor of Jonathan with a genealogy of some obscure priest?

But this is not a random remark – it is a very important piece of information in helping us understand what is going on with Saul. It shows a third indication of what was wrong with Saul’s heart. If you have been paying attention to the story thus far in the book, as soon as you read those verses the immediate question in your mind is, “What happened to Samuel?” After that rebuke in chapter 13 suddenly Saul is not interested in Samuel’s counsel anymore. And he has replaced him with Ahijah. The purpose of the genealogy is to point out that Ahijah is part of the rejected line of Eli and a descendent of Ichabod. Ichabod means “the glory has departed.” He got his name when God removed His presence from Israel because of the sins of the corrupt priesthood of Eli’s line.

When Samuel rebuked Saul for his sin, instead of mourning after God and doing all he could to once again find favor with God, Saul just chose an alternate priest. Saul would rather get advice from a cursed descendent of Mr. “glory- gone” than from God’s true prophet Samuel. Saul’s interest was to get military help from God, not to seek the glory of God.

How often do you see that – someone goes from one person to another seeking advice until he finds someone who will say what he wants to hear. We are all prone to this. You want a Bible verse to mean something other than what it says, so you go to commentary after commentary until you can find one that says it means what you want it to mean. You do not want to accept something God has said, and so you go out and find someone with a PhD who says, “That’s just cultural – it does not apply to us” and you accept that as gospel.

When you find yourself running from the people you know are telling the truth, watch out. Something is going very wrong in your heart, and if you do not repent it may soon be too late.

Saul wanted to hear what he wanted to hear, and when Samuel didn’t cooperate he turned to ol’ “glory-gone” – Ahijah. And even his consulting God through Ahijah was clearly not a genuine effort to seek the will of God. In chapter 13 we will see that Saul seeks God’s guidance about whether to go to war, and so Ahijah is right in the middle of the process of inquiring of the LORD, and Saul hears some noises from the Philistine camp and interrupts Ahijah right in the middle of what he is doing and says, “Let’s go into battle.” Saul operates on his own judgment, because he trusts himself more than he trusts God and he loves his own will more than he loves God’s will.

## **The punishment vv.13-14**

So Samuel rebukes Saul in verse 13.

**<sup>13</sup> "You acted foolishly," Samuel said...**

That is a lot stronger than it sounds. He was not just saying Saul was being dumb. The term “foolish” in the Old Testament points just as much to moral deficiency as to mental deficiency. Saul was not just being dumb; he was being sinful and dumb.

... **"You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you ...**

(Sometimes people wonder if the prophets knew they were speaking God's Word at the time they spoke. The answer is yes. Samuel refers to his own words as the command of Yahweh – the same phrase used to describe the Law of Moses.<sup>4</sup>)

...**if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time.**

Some people feel that Saul's kingship was doomed from the start. It was not. The house of Saul could have been blessed just like the house of David was, if he just would have obeyed. Now the punishment comes in verse 14.

## **A harsh punishment?**

**<sup>14</sup> But now your kingdom will not endure**

The liberal commentators say that God is being overly harsh here, given the nature of the sin. My response to that is twofold. First, "How do you know the nature of the sin?" You cannot tell simply from the external action alone how serious a sin is, because sin is a matter of the heart. Stealing a one cent gumball can be an expression of an extremely wicked, godless heart, and committing adultery and murder can be a temporary lapse of a righteous man after God's own heart in a time of spiritual weakness. You cannot tell the seriousness of a the sin from the action itself. We need to keep reading if we want to find out how serious Saul's heart problem is.

In fact, I think that is a big part of why we have chapters 14 and 15, so we can see for ourselves that God's judgment *was* accurate. This was not just a little slip up in an unusual moment of weakness. It was an act that clearly and accurately demonstrated exactly what was reigning in Saul's heart. I will show you what I mean as we go along. But even so far in this chapter (and the opening verses in chapter 14) we have seen three strong indicators of a heart that does not love God's will at all. Instead of desiring the presence of God Himself Saul just wanted to use God to get what he really desired. Instead of loving and honoring and conforming himself to God's Word he wanted to adjust it and edit it and make it fit his own will. And when Samuel told him the truth, suddenly Samuel is replaced by another advisor.

So I disagree with those who want to call this a minor sin. Secondly, not only is it impossible to tell from the action alone how serious the sin was, but it is also impossible to say with certainty how severe the penalty really was. For a man after God's own heart this punishment probably is not as harsh as it seems to most of us. God did not exclude Saul from His presence. He did not exclude Saul from knowing Him or enjoying Him or being satisfied in Him. He did not cut Saul off from His great river of delights and His eternal fountain of delightful, satisfying, joy-giving, living water. God did not permanently ban him from experiencing His grace and power and love and mercy and glory and wisdom and self-revelation and refuge and peace and strengthening and providence and guidance and faithfulness and righteousness and justice.

When we sin against God there is a degree to which our access to the experience and enjoyment of those attributes of God are diminished temporarily. But they can be restored if we seek hard after God. A man after God's own heart, after a sin like this, would hear the words about the loss of the kingdom and respond along these lines: "God is taking away the kingdom from me? That means God is

---

<sup>4</sup> See for example, Ex.24:12.

displeased with me! It means I have distanced myself from Him by my sin! Oh God, please, forgive me so I can be near You again! If I cannot serve as king anymore so be it, but please, please restore my closeness to You. I can bear losing the throne; I cannot bear being distanced from You and the experience of Your attributes.” Had Saul been like David he would have mourned the loss of intimacy and fought tooth and nail until he had it back. And there is no doubt in my mind that he could have had it back.

And if that is true – if Saul could have had restored intimacy with God, how is that a harsh penalty? If you still have access to the presence of God and His smile on your life and relational intimacy with Him, and the enjoyment of His attributes; no penalty is really all that harsh (if you really love Him). Now, if you do not really love Him then the possibility of intimacy with Him is not that great of prize. But if you love Him, and He says to you, “I am going to take away X from you, but you will still have access to joy, comfort, strength, fulfillment, and satisfaction of soul,” that is really not very harsh. If God says, “I have rejected you as king” and you respond by saying, “That is painful, but there is nothing I can do about it, so I guess I will just get on with my life” – then you are like Saul (and Eli). But a guy like David would respond by saying, “That is painful, but I can survive that. What I cannot survive is the loss of intimacy with You. *Please* restore that!”

## **The purpose of chastisement is to cause you to seek God**

In Amos four we learn that the purpose of chastisement is to cause us to seek Him. God makes the consequences of sin painful for a reason. The pain of consequences is designed to bring us to seek to restore closeness with Him.

**Amos 4:5-11 This is the LORD's declaration. <sup>6</sup> I gave you absolutely nothing to eat in all your cities, a shortage of food in all your communities, yet you did not return to Me-- the LORD's declaration. <sup>7</sup> I also withheld the rain from you ... yet you did not return to Me-- the LORD's declaration. <sup>9</sup> I struck you with blight and mildew; the locust devoured your many gardens and vineyards, your fig trees and olive trees, yet you did not return to Me-- the LORD's declaration. <sup>10</sup> I sent plagues like those of Egypt; I killed your young men with the sword, along with your captured horses. I caused the stench of your camp to fill your nostrils, yet you did not return to Me-- the LORD's declaration. <sup>11</sup> I overthrew some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a burning stick snatched from a fire, yet you did not return to Me**

The purpose of famine and drought and disease and plagues, and even the death of loved ones is to cause you to seek God. When we are chastised by God the proper response is not to just sit there and take it and then get on with your life. The purpose is to cause you to seek hard after Him.

The best thing that could possibly happen in your life is if you sought earnestly, zealously, passionately, wholeheartedly, fervently after the presence of God. Because if you did that God would allow you into His presence. And so when we just cannot seem to find the motivation to really, fervently seek Him, in His love and mercy He sends painful discipline our way, so that the pain from the discipline will help us have the earnestness that we cannot seem to generate otherwise. And any suffering is worth it if it gives us that earnestness.

So the purpose of the consequences is to help us seek hard after God. And so failing to seek Him even after chastisement is really serious sin, because it exposes a heart that does not love or desire God at all. Do you see why the response is more important than the nature of the sin itself?

Is it a harsh action on God's part to take the kingship away from Saul's line? Certainly it was painful, but it did not have to be total disaster for Saul. The story could have still had a wonderful



ending. If he would have responded like David and sought the Lord with all his heart, he would have lived out his days with great joy in the Lord and great enjoyment of the Lord's blessing and favor.

## **A man after God's own heart v.14b**

And that explains the end of verse 14.

**14 ...the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command.**

### **The heart of God: seat of His emotions and desires**

If you are tired of trivia and thinking about shallow things all the time, I've got just the thing for you. Take 30 minutes or an hour this afternoon and think through the significance of the fact that the Bible says God has a heart. What, exactly, is God's *heart*? Probably 90% of my motive in doing this whole study is to find out how I can become a man after God's own heart. And to do that I need to have some idea of what God's heart actually is. There is a wonderful promise in 1 Kings 9:3, when the construction of the first Temple was complete and they were dedicating it, God said,

**I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.**

So what is God's heart? For one thing it seems to be the seat of His emotions. God is not an impersonal force. He is a person with real emotions. And His heart is the part of Him from which those emotions rise. One example is His pity.

**Jer.15:1 Then the LORD said to me: "Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people.**

He is describing the emotion of compassion and pity, and instead of using those terms He talks about His *heart* going out to them.

**Jer.31:20 Is not Ephraim my dear son? ... Therefore my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him," declares the LORD.**

Another example is God's enthusiasm. God uses the term "heart" to describe the source of His enthusiasm.

**Jer.32:41 I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul.**

Also the emotion of grief or sorrow:

**Jer.48:36 My heart laments for Moab**

Isaiah 63:4 even speaks of anger and vengeance being in the heart of God.

A man or woman after God's own heart, then, is someone who loves what God loves, who desires what God desires, and who feels what God feels.

In Old Testament times the spiritual leaders of God's people were called "pastors" (shepherds) just like in the New Testament. And in Jeremiah's time the pastors were not leading the people toward God. And so the people commit horrible sins of idolatry, and God rebukes and then promises to restore them. And here is how He will do it:

**Jer.3:15 Then I will give you pastors after my own heart, who will pastor (feed) you with knowledge and understanding.**

So a pastor after God's own heart is someone who will feed the flock in such a way that they gain true knowledge of God. He leads them into relational closeness and intimacy with God. He feels what God feels, and he loves what God loves, and he hates what God hates, and he desires what God desires, and so anyone he leads moves closer to being like that. A spiritual leader is someone who draws people into closeness with God.

So probably the best summary I can think of at this point for what it means to be a man after God's own heart is simply this – to love God's will. If we take all that is in God's heart – both His desires and His emotions (compassion, pity, anger, enthusiasm, sorrow, love, grief), and we sum it all up in the single word "will" – that is God's heart. And so to be a woman or man after God's own heart means to love God's will. And that is exactly how Scripture summarizes what it means to be a man after God's own heart.

**Acts 13:22 After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do all my will.**

Saul was rejected because he loved his own will more than God's will. David loved God's heart – God's desires – God's will above all. These words are very similar to what God said when He rejected Eli back in chapter two. Remember that? Eli did not really care that much about what was very important to God. His sons profaned the altar and Eli gave them a slap on the wrist – it was not a huge deal to him. And so God rejects the house of Eli and says

**1 Sam.2:35-36 I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and soul.**

So to love the will of God – to love that which is in God's heart and soul – means, to love His Word more than your own wisdom, to love His thoughts more than your own thoughts, to desire what He desires more than the impulses of your flesh, to be grieved by what grieves Him, angered by what angers Him, to have compassion where He has compassion, and to love those He loves.

And who does God the Father love more than anyone or anything? God the Son. And who does the Son love more than anyone? The Father. What delights God more than anything else? His own glory. What is His absolute favorite thing? Putting that glory on display. And so the greatest desire and the greatest delight of the one who has a heart after His own heart will be His glory. And the most powerful motivating force of his life will be to be nearer to the presence of God.

## **We become like what we love**

What you love is really the best measure of godliness. People have trouble understanding why Saul and David were so different because they focus only on a few external actions rather than on what they loved and did not love. True godliness is when you love the right things. And true wickedness is when you love evil things.

**2 Tim.3:1-5 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.**

Amos 5:15 does not say “Do good and avoid doing evil.” It says, “Hate evil, love good.”

**Ps 97:10 Let those who love the LORD hate evil**

**Ps 119:104 I hate every wrong path.**

**1Ti 3:3 An elder in the church must not be one who is a lover of money but one who loves what is good (Tit 1:8)**

**Ro.12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.**

**Ro.7:22 in my inner being I delight in God's law**

Godliness is all about what you love and what you hate. When you love the wrong things, it will result in sinful actions. But if all you do is repent of those actions, and not of the sinful inclinations and loves of your heart, you will return to those sinful actions again and again like a dog eating its own vomit, because you become like what you love.

**Hos.9:10b ...when they came to Baal Peor, they consecrated themselves to that shameful idol and became as vile as the thing they loved.**

If there is a love in your heart for something that is vile, you can try to get yourself to stop committing that sin all you want, but over time you will just become more and more vile; because you become like what you love. And it works the other way too.

**2 Cor.3:18 And we, who with unveiled faces all behold the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory**

As we set our adoring, delighted gaze upon His glory, we are transformed into His glorious likeness.

## **Conclusion**

Do not let the enemy defeat you with your own sin. He has a couple ways of doing that (at least). One way is the way of self-deprecation and self-loathing. He tells you that you are so wicked and so

vile and so undeserving of God's favor that you should not even seek closeness with God for a while after you have sinned. Just go sit in the corner and wallow in self-pity with your back to God. Satan will tell you, "Now is not the time to seek closeness with Him. He is mad at you – you had better just wait until it blows over."

That is one tactic. Another favorite tactic is on the other extreme – not taking the sin seriously enough. You fall into some sin and the enemy will whisper in your ear "This is a matter of your actions only. There is no deep-seated problem in your heart or affections. All this was, was a slip up in your behavior. So go ahead and confess the behavior as sin. And go ahead and take steps to try to guard your behavior in the future. But do not worry about your heart – it is fine. All your commitment to God and your service – that is proof enough of your love. No need to repent of inclinations and loves that are for other things – your problem does not run that deep."

Satan will tell you whatever he needs to tell you to keep you from seeking hard after the presence of God when you sin. Do not listen to him. Do not lose heart when the Lord rebukes you – that rebuke is designed to cause you to seek Him. Do not take lightly your disinclination to seek hard after Him. Lack of desire is a spiritual catastrophe that calls for the most desperate possible measures. Let your prayer be like the prayer of David, the man after God's own heart:

**Ps.51:11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.**

**Benediction: Heb.13:20,21 May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, 21 equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.**

# Devotionals

## The Heart of God

### 1 Samuel 13 Day 1

**1 Samuel 2:35-36** I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and soul. I will firmly establish his house, and he will minister before my anointed one always. <sup>36</sup> Then everyone left in your family line will come and bow down before him for a piece of silver and a crust of bread and plead, "Appoint me to some priestly office so I can have food to eat."'''

**1 Samuel 13:14** The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command."

**1 Kings 9:3** The LORD said to him: "I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.

**Isaiah 63:3-4** "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. <sup>4</sup> For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come.

**Jeremiah 15:1** Then the LORD said to me: "Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Send them away from my presence! Let them go

**Jeremiah 31:20** Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him," declares the LORD.

**Jeremiah 32:40-41** I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me. <sup>41</sup> I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul.

**Jeremiah 48:35-36** In Moab I will put an end to those who make offerings on the high places and burn incense to their gods," declares the LORD. <sup>36</sup> "So my heart laments for Moab like a flute; it laments like a flute for the men of Kir Hareseth. The wealth they acquired is gone

It is a fascinating thing to think about the fact that God has a heart. In the prophets the heart of God seems to refer to the seat of His affections, desires, and emotions. It is the part of God that laments (Jer.48:36), that is enthusiastic (Jer.32:41), that has compassion (Jer.15:1, 31:20). In 1 Ki.9:3 God promised that His eyes and heart would always be at the Temple. The meaning seems to be that the Temple would be a place God would always watch over and love, and that it would be the place to go if you wanted to be looked upon and loved by God. In 1 Sam.2, in contrast to the wicked sons of Eli, God announces that He will raise up a priest who will do what is in God's heart and soul. That is, a priest who would do the things that God loves and desires.

So what does it mean that David was a man after God's own heart? Does that phrase mainly point to the fact that David was the kind of man God really desired? Or does it mean

that David's desires and affections and emotions and intentions were like God's? I believe it is the latter (since the contrast is with Saul, who had just disobeyed God).

*Good morning dear Father in heaven,*

*How beautiful is Your heart! It is beautiful because what You love is perfect goodness. There is no difference between what You desire most and what is best. Your affections, above all, are for Your own glory, which is the grandest and most marvelous, most beautiful, most righteous and holy reality there is.*

*Dear God, I want to be a man after Your own heart. I want my heart to love Your glory above all. I want to hate what is evil and not be drawn to it. I want righteousness to delight my heart and cause me to rejoice. Oh Lord how I want to annihilate everything within me that is bared by that which is awesome, or that is unmoved by the holy, or that is enticed by wickedness as though there were something good in it. I want to utterly destroy every trace of every affection that is different from Your affections, placing distance between You and me and putting me at odds with You. I don't like it when those I love have deep love for what I hate, and my affections aren't even holy like Yours. How much more grievous must it be for Your own children; Your own Bride to love that which You hate, and to be indifferent toward that which You enthusiastically love.*

*How can I conform my heart to Yours, dear God? Where is that path that will lead me closer to Your heart? What can I do to sanctify my affections? Show me this week, I pray. Oh God please, open Your servant's eyes to the beauty and attractiveness of Your affections that mine may gravitate toward Yours. Whenever I see any good or any evil, let me be reminded of how Your great heart feels about them, and how that very fact displays Your perfect goodness. Let me become aware enough of that that my soul will enjoy the experience of knowing a God with such affections. Help me take delight in Your heart that my heart might begin to be conformed to it. Teach me, when my heart doesn't respond to something as godly affections ought to respond, to grieve that just as desperately as if I had committed some act of horrible immorality. And when my affections do match closely to Yours let that generate deep and exuberant joy in being close to You!*

**Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy:** Beautiful, perfect affections

**Promise to trust:** If my eyes are opened to see His heart it will delight mine.

**What will result if I experience this attribute today:** Gladness and joy, refreshment, like water to a tree, A greater abiding presence of Christ in the heart, , Fear of God, awe and reverence, Desire to obey

## **The Fall of Saul**

### **1 Samuel 13 Day 2**

<sup>2</sup> Saul was staying on the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree in Migron. With him were about six hundred men, <sup>3</sup> among whom was Ahijah, who was wearing an ephod. He was a son of Ichabod's brother Ahitub son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh.

Instead of consulting Samuel Saul now has Ahijah with him. Ahijah is part of the rejected line of Eli and a descendent of Ichabod ("glory has departed"). When Samuel rebuked

Saul for his sin, instead of mourning after God and doing all he could to once again find favor with God, Saul just chose an alternate priest. He would rather get advice from “glory-gone” than from God’s true prophet Samuel. Saul’s interest was to get help from God, not to seek the glory of God.

And even when he sought the counsel of Ahijah, Saul would only listen inasmuch as Ahijah’s counsel fit what matched up with Saul’s inclinations and human wisdom. The fact that Saul was seeking help from God but not God becomes clear in vv.16-20.

**<sup>16</sup> Saul's lookouts at Gibeah in Benjamin saw the army melting away in all directions. <sup>17</sup> Then Saul said to the men who were with him, "Mustering the forces and see who has left us." When they did, it was Jonathan and his armor-bearer who were not there. <sup>18</sup> Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God." (At that time it was with the Israelites.) <sup>19</sup> While Saul was talking to the priest, the tumult in the Philistine camp increased more and more. So Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand." <sup>20</sup> Then Saul and all his men assembled and went to the battle.**

He wants to hear what God has to say if God will hurry and say it before Saul feels it’s time to make a move. But if circumstances press him he will cut the process off and go off to do what he thinks is best from the perspective of his own human wisdom.

*Good morning dear Father,*

*Forgive me for how much I am like Saul. I go through the motions of having my devotions, and I pray for blessings in my life and deliverance from suffering or protection from danger, and yet so often there is so little earnestness in seeking You. I say, “Lord, speak to me! Open my eyes to Your glory! Let me experience Your presence” and then look at my watch, realize my devotion time is over and I get on with my day. I claim that I want to be near You, but when I seek after You and You do not answer immediately, I’m so prone to do what Saul did and just give up.*

*Forgive Your servant, dear Lord, for reverting to something else when I don’t like the results of seeking after You. Saul turned to “glory-gone.” I also tend to turn to the non-glorious when seeking Your glory turns hard. I turn to those things which have no power to satisfy my soul. They don’t have beauty like You have, or power like You have, or wisdom like You have, or love like You have, or patience like You have, or majestic glory like You have. When I revert to my work, or entertainment, or just mindless, lazy “prayer” that pays no real attention to You – I exchange Samuel for Ahijah. I trade Your glory for Ichabod. When You were far from David, his only response was to desperately seek after You. Instead of saying, “Well, I guess I’ll just give up and go on with my day” he cried out to You with begging and pleading: “How long, Oh LORD, will You be far from me?” He would not take no for an answer when it came to seeking closeness with You. And if it meant banging on the door for hours and days and months, he would do it.*

*Father, nearness to You is so sweet, Your grace so satisfying, that it would be better to bang on the door my whole life long and dying on Your doorstep than to give up and revert to any other source of joy or comfort. Thank You, dear God, that You are like that, and that You have given Your servant access into Your presence (even if it is hard access). Thank You that in Your great wisdom You have made it as hard as it is. If it were easy surely I would begin to take it for granted, or get puffed up over my great spirituality, or write it off as just a good mood or something other than Your presence. If nearness to You came easily, I would probably mistake the blessings of that nearness as coming from other sources. But when You make it such that I have to fight and strain and struggle with all that is in me with the focused,*

*intentional goal of nearness to You, it protects me from the deadly mistake of thinking the joy has any other source.*

*Help me today, dear Father, to take delight in the fact that I know a God whose presence is so wonderful that it is worth any effort to find. You are so good that a harsh rebuke from Your mouth is better than the affirmation of 1000 Ahijahs. Lord, teach me to seek You with all that I am.*

**Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy:** Grace that is so wonderful it is worth any effort to find

**Promise to trust:** He will give me that grace if I seek Him earnestly

**What will result if I experience this attribute today:** Gladness and joy, Greater love and desire for God (and all those He loves), A greater abiding presence of Christ in the heart

## **The Fall of Saul**

### **1 Samuel 13 Day 3**

When Saul's heart was changed and he was obedient to the LORD and sought to honor Him, God was with him in all that he did. His battle strategies turned out to be wise, and worked well, as did his dealings with his own people. He was marked by patience (plowing his fields and quietly waiting until just the right time to make his move to take leadership), mercy (when the people wanted to execute some treasonous men Saul said, "No one will be put to death today, for the LORD has given us a great victory"), and wisdom (all his strategies and policies worked well).

But after a time of drifting from God, he developed a habit of adjusting God's Word to fit what he saw as best. God rebuked him and punished him for this, and Saul did not respond by seeking to be restored to intimacy with God. As Saul distanced himself further and further from the heart of God he loses all that was good about him when God changed his heart. In ch.13-15 the sins that stand out most are in the very areas where his goodness most stood out before. He is marked by impatience (failing to wait for Samuel to arrive as commanded, and on another occasion actually interrupting the work of the priest in seeking God's guidance because he felt it was time to move), lack of mercy (inexplicably binding the army under a fasting oath during a battle, and being eager to execute his son for inadvertent violation of a ridiculous oath), and foolishness (establishing policies that were destructive and demoralizing, and turning an incredible victory and rout of the Philistines into a draw).

*Good morning, dear Lord God,*

*Your nearness gives health to the heart and mind. As distance between Saul and You increased both his ability to be righteous and his ability to think clearly and wisely disintegrated. As one moves away from You life, health, vitality, and sound mind are turned to madness, weakness, distemper, and death. There is a spiritual entropy that is accelerated exponentially as the heart decelerates in its desire for and seeking after You. Wholeness, well-being, and sanity itself dissolve.*

*What an amazing attribute all that points to, dear God! If all that is true then wholeness, well-being, and sanity increase as nearness to You is increased. As the heart accelerates in desire for and seeking after You the spiritual entropy is reversed. Madness, weakness,*



*distemper, and death give way to life, health, vitality and sound mind as there is more movement toward You, and Your wonderful attributes are integrated together into righteousness within a human heart! Oh the blessedness of the one who draws near to You!*

*Dear Father, whenever I see any goodness or godly affections or righteousness or wisdom or soundness of mind in myself or anyone else, let me be reminded that those are the effect of Your nearness just as an object being hot is the result of the nearness of some heat source. And wherever I experience foolishness, sin, folly, and ungodliness; let that remind me of the disintegrating effect of any movement away from fellowship with You. You are the Glory of Israel, and the only sanity is delight in You.*

**Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy:** God whose nearness reverses spiritual entropy

**Promise to trust:** He will give me soundness of mind and spirit as I draw near to Him

**What will result if I experience this attribute today:** Soundness of mind and spirit

## **The Fall of Saul**

### **1 Samuel 13-15 Day 4**

**1 Samuel 15:21-23** The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal." <sup>22</sup> But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. <sup>23</sup> For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you h  
**Psalm 40:6-17** Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have opened; burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. <sup>7</sup> Then I said, "Here I am, I have come-- it is written about me in the scroll. <sup>8</sup> I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." <sup>9</sup> I proclaim righteousness in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips, as you know, O LORD. <sup>10</sup> I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation. I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly. <sup>11</sup> Do not withhold your mercy from me, O LORD; may your love and your truth always protect me. <sup>12</sup> For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me.

These two passages show a stark, night and day contrast between the responses of two men after they had sinned. Saul had sinned by disobeying God's command to destroy all the animals. Instead he kept the best of them, offering some as a sacrifice. David's sins, more numerous than the hairs on his head, had overtaken him, clouded his vision, and put him on the verge of a heart attack.

Saul tried to justify his disobedience by the fact that he offered God a cut of what his disobedience gained for him. His attitude was, "Sure I disobeyed, but God should be happy – I gave Him what He wants." Saul felt his sins could easily be made up for even if he did not forsake them. Samuel corrected him by pointing out that what God wants is obedience, not empty religious ritual.

What a contrast with the man after God's own heart who understood this (Ps.40:6) and who realized what it is God really desires: open ears (v.6), his whole self (v.7), desire in the

heart that matches God's desire (v.8), and delight in His righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, love, truth, and mercy (v.9-11).

*Dear God, Holy One of Heaven and earth, for the sake of Your great name forgive my iniquity, for it is great. Surely my sins outnumber the hairs on my head, and are ever threatening to overtake, overwhelm and ruin me. My offenses against You are legion, more than the grains of sand on the seashore. That should break me heart, as it did David's, and yet so often I sin, make a quick confession to You, and then go skipping along my merry way instead of rending my heart so that it seems to be failing within me. Dear Lord, teach me to be broken over my sins against You. When I have offended You, keep me from thinking the situation is easily corrected, as though all You required were for me to go through so repentance motions.*

*What You desire is so much deeper. You desire open ears that listen to Your Word – eagerness to hear what You have written and how You are guiding my understanding and application of it today. You desire not a ritual that places an animal on an altar, but rather a total self-giving that places me on the altar – acceptable to You only because Your Son placed Himself on that altar. You desire not just my actions or resolve, but my desire. You want me to love and desire righteousness more than I love and desire sin. Saul cared about gaining his military objectives. David cared about Your character – the topic of Saul's conversation had to do with Saul and his desires. The topic of David's conversation was Your righteousness, Your faithfulness, Your salvation, Your love, Your truth, Your mercy. His career was nothing; He wanted You. And when his sin landed him in the merely pit that was agony for him, He wanted You. He didn't respond to that chastisement by decreasing His seeking after You, but by increasing it.*

*Dear Lord, teach me to do that. So often after failure I don't seek after You. The enemy tells me that You don't want to hear my prayers after I've sinned against You. My flesh tells me it would be a waste of time. My human wisdom tells me I need to let some time pass first. But all of that would be overcome if I just believed that You are the treasure that You are, and that there is nothing else to be sought. There is nowhere else to go but to You. There is nothing else worth doing besides seeking You – whether I've been riding a wave of wonderful victory or have just sinned horribly in the last 10 seconds.*

*It is an amazing thing, dear God, that You desire my heart. What would otherwise be a worthless piece of trash fit only for eternal fire becomes a great treasure simply by Your desiring it. If You want it, dear God, then it is precious to me, because it enables me to do the unimaginable – offer something to You that is pleasing to You. You only require that I delight in delightful things! You set before me things that will do me eternal, immeasurable good – righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, love, truth, mercy – and You simply ask me to love them; to desire them and delight in them. You set before me the most wonderful feast and ask nothing of me but to want to eat, to eat, and to enjoy eating. What unspeakable goodness and kindness and grace!*

*Sacrifice, ritual, and service are all like the utensils at the table – forks, spoons, cups, etc. The handling of those things is a very great thing if it is for the purpose of enjoying the feast. But the handling of forks and spoons, if there is no desire for the food, nor any eating of the food, is worthless. Repair my taste buds and restore my appetite for Your delights dear God.*

**Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy:** The God who sets a feast before me and requires only that I want to eat, that I eat, and that I enjoy eating.

**Promise to trust:** He will satisfy me with the feast if I just desire it enough to eat it.

**What will result if I experience this attribute today:** Gladness and joy, Greater love and desire for God (and all those He loves), refreshment, like water to a tree, Restoration, Fear of God, awe and reverence, Desire to obey

## The Fall of Saul: Unrepentance

### 1 Samuel 13-15 Day 5

1 Sam.13

11 "What have you done?" asked Samuel. Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that **YOU** did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash, <sup>12</sup> I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD's favor.' So I forced myself to offer the burnt offering."

1 Sam.15

13 When Samuel reached him, Saul said, "The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD's instructions."

<sup>14</sup> But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?" <sup>15</sup> Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but we totally destroyed the rest."

<sup>16</sup> "Stop!" Samuel said to Saul. ... <sup>19</sup> Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?"

<sup>20</sup> "But I did obey the LORD," Saul said. "I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. <sup>21</sup> The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal."

Psalm 51:10 **God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.**

Sin had so destroyed David that he had to call in none other than the Creator Himself. He had wreaked such devastation and destruction within himself that only one who can call a Universe into being by a single word is capable of the kind of restoration he needed. The same is true for each one of us, and the sooner we come to realize that, the closer we will to being men and women after God's own heart.

*Redeeming Savior, You who created all things, and who will create a new heavens and new earth, and a new Jerusalem and a new creature – create in me a new heart.* In our natural thinking it doesn't seem like sin does that much damage. It seems like we sin and that's just a slip-up, and we just need to be more careful next time (as if sin were like a mere mistake).

But the truth is, when we sin there is a bomb that detonates inside our soul and the devastation that results – especially the damage done to our affections – is staggering. After the detonation we desire God and His Word less, sin is more attractive to, heaven seems like a distant, irrelevant mirage; righteousness loses its appeal, the world gets big and God gets small in our eyes. The city of our heart becomes so decimated that the only chance of restoration is the Creator Himself.

*Help me remember, dear Lord, the damage I inflict upon myself when I sin. Create a new heart in me right now, dear Lord. I set off multiple bombs in recent days. Create my heart anew this morning. Restore the image of You that I have so marred. Demolish the ruined affections and rebuild godly affections. Tear down fleshly, temporal fear and rebuild fear of You. Remove adulterous loves, and rebuild faithful love for You alone. Wipe away reliance on worthless human wisdom and restore full confidence in Your wisdom alone. Oh blessed exchange! Love for love, wisdom for wisdom, affection for affection, fear for fear – in each case the worthless for the priceless. What an amazing thing that I can even ask for this! For free now less! You are such a rich, wealthy, generous, gracious God!*

*It seems like there is a spiritual law of motion – a heart that is set in motion in a direction away from you tends to keep moving in that direction unless another force acts upon it. Each time I sin it's like an untethered astronaut pushing off from his ship. Unless there is some fixed object he can grab to stop his wayward movement, and against which he can push to begin movement back toward the ship, he will keep moving indefinitely away from the ship. My heart is like that dear God. When I sin I don't just make a mistake that is gone once the action is over. I set myself in motion away from Your presence. When Saul did that he was content to keep moving. He was concerned to avoid some of the discomforts of deep space, but he didn't seem to be concerned with restoring nearness to You. But the man after Your own heart desperately wanted to restore nearness to You. The consequences of his sin smarted, but they were not the main issue for David. If he could have restored intimacy with You those consequences were easily born. Give Your servant a heart like that dear God. Make me so the only consequence that really horrifies me is distance from You.*

*Lord, You have planted within me a desire for a clean, pure heart. Thank You, dear Lord, for putting that desire within me. If I had to live life constantly pursuing a pure heart, but that desire wasn't there, life would be a horrible, losing battle.*

- *Whenever I have a good desire, remind me of the Source of that desire.*

**Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy:** You are the God who creates inner purity after I sin

**Promise to trust:** You will create a new heart and restore purity within me

**What will result if I experience this attribute today:** Gladness and joy, Restoration, A sense of being attended to and cared for, Renewal and transformation, Desire to obey