

A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

“You have done a foolish thing,” 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. But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the Lord’s command.” (1 Sam. 13:213-14)

You know the story:

- God didn’t want his people to have a king, but they wanted one anyhow (1 Sam. 8:6).
- The Lord told Samuel - **“Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected but they have rejected me as their king.” (1 Sam. 8:7)**
- Samuel warned them of the many problems a king would bring upon them (1 Sam. 8:10-18).
- The people refused to listen and wanted to have a king like the “other nations” (1 Sam. 8:19-20).
- Samuel anointed Saul to be king (1 Sam. 10:1).
- Saul mustered 300,000 men of Israel and 30,000 men from Judah and rescued Jabesh Gilead from the Ammonites (1 Sam. 11:1-11).
- The people went to Gilgal and confirmed Saul as their king in the presence of the Lord (1 Sam. 11:14-15).
- Samuel warned the people **“If you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will be swept away.” (1 Sam. 12:25)**

SAUL HAD AN EVIL HEART

- **“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 Mikmash, east of Beth Aven.” (1 Sam. 13:5)**
- **“Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear.” (1 Sam. 13:7)**
- **“He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul’s men began to scatter. So he said, ‘Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings.’ And Saul offered up the burnt offering.” (1 Sam. 13:8-9)**
- **“Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him. “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 Mikmash, 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.”**
- That’s when Samuel announced that Saul’s heart was not right: **“You have done a foolish thing,” 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. But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the Lord’s command.” (1 Sam. 13:213-14)**

- God did not judge Saul because he made a mistake, but because he had an evil heart! This fact is evident when you examine carefully what Saul did throughout his entire life!

GOD LOOKS ON THE HEART

When Samuel went to Bethlehem to anoint one of the sons of Jesse to be the next king, he assumed it would be Abinadab. But the Lord said to Samuel: **“Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7).**

Jesse had seven sons pass before Samuel and each of them was rejected. That’s when they sent for David. He was the youngest son who was busy tending the sheep. Samuel said: **“Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.” (1 Sam. 16:11).** David, as you know, was anointed to be the next king in the presence of his brothers. The Scriptures tell us repeatedly that David was a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; 2 Chron. 20:7; Is. 41:8; Acts 13:22; Ja. 2:27)

On the surface it seems like Saul only made a minor mistake by making a burnt offering to the Lord after waiting seven days for Samuel to show up. It “seems” like Saul wanted to honor God by defeating the Philistines and reluctantly made the offering to keep his men from scattering. God, however, does not see things like man sees them. Not long before Saul had defeated the Amalekites but instead of giving God the glory he set up a monument in his own honor (1 Sam. 15:12) God looked inside of Saul and saw his egotistical heart. God knew that Saul thought more highly of himself than he out to think (Rom. 12:3) God knew he had an evil heart! Therefore God did not reject Saul as king because he made a mistake, but because he had an evil heart. Please note some of the things that Saul did that reveal his evil heart:

- As we have said, when Saul returned from defeating the Amalekites he did not glorify God, but set up a monument in his own honor (1 Sam. 15:12).
- When Saul did not obey God he blamed his men and not himself (1 Sam. 15:15).
- When David killed Goliath Saul became jealous of him and tried to kill David (1 Sam. 18:6-11).
- When Samuel told Saul that God rejected him as king Saul still wanted Samuel to honor him before the elders of his people and before Israel (1 Sam. 15:30).
- Jonathan, Saul’s oldest son, was close friends with David. In stead of trying to be king himself, however, Jonathan accepted the fact that Samuel anointed David to be king in place of his father (1 Sam. 23:17).
- When Jonathan asked why Saul wanted to kill David, Saul hurled a spear at his own son and tried to kill him (1 Sam. 20:33).
- Because of a foolish oath Saul tried again to kill his own son Jonathan (1 Sam. 14:44).
- Fortunately, Jonathan’s fellow soldiers rescued him from the hands of his wicked father (1 Sam. 14:45).
- Saul never accepted the will of God regarding David. Saul wanted his own will not God’s. David remained Saul’s enemy **“for the rest of his days.” (1 Sam. 18:29)**
- David, by contrast, had respect for Saul as God’s anointed. On more than one occasion David had an opportunity to kill Saul, but refused to do so (1 Sam. 24:1-22; 26:1-25).
- There is something intrinsically evil about someone who repeatedly and deliberately seeks his own will instead of the will of God. This is why Satan was cast out of heaven (Is. 14:12-15).

- When the Lord did not answer Saul by dreams, Urim, or the prophets he turned to a witch for help (1 Sam. 6-24). David would never do such a thing!
- These are just a few of the many things Saul did that demonstrates he had a wicked heart.
- Jesus said: **“What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.” (Mk. 7:20-23)**
- Saul had a wicked heart and God knew it. That’s why he was rejected as king!

GLORYING IN APPEARANCES

The Scriptures are clear that David had the right kind of “heart” and Saul didn’t. Studying the contrast between these two men is therefore important. The difference between Saul and David helps us to understand who will be saved and those who will be lost.

As you know, it is appointed unto every man once to die and after that the Judgment (Heb. 9:27). Paul explained: **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.” (2 Cor. 5:10-12 KJV)**

Please note:

- We will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.
- We will all give an account for what we have done in the body whether good or bad.
- Remember! What we have done in the body is determined by our heart (Mk. 7:20-23).
- Knowing the terror of the Lord Paul sought to persuade men to prepare for judgment.
- Paul knew that our hearts are manifest to God and hopefully also to the conscience of others.
- Paul’s enemies gloried in appearance and not in heart!
- Saul also gloried in how he appeared to men.
- Paul’s appearance was weak but his relationship with God was strong (2 Cor. 10:10).
- Paul did not care how he appeared to men and wrote: **“We are not trying to please men but God who tests our hearts.” (1 Thess. 2:4)**

This difference between Paul and his enemies helps us to understand a major difference between Saul and David. Saul was concerned about “appearances” and David was not. Paul put his priorities succinctly: **“If I were still trying to please men I would not be a servant of Christ.” (Gal. 1:10)**

Jesus warned that **“Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Lk. 18:14)**

Sadly it seems like Saul was more interested in pleasing men than in pleasing God!

- That's why he set up a monument in Carmel in his own honor (1 Sam. 15:12).
- In his battle with the Amalekites he disobeyed God because he said he was afraid of the people (1 Sam. 15:24).
- As we have said, when Samuel told Saul that the Lord had rejected him as the king over Israel Saul replied: **"I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people."** (1 Sam. 15:30)
- When David killed Goliath Saul was jealous and angry and said: **"They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?" And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David** (1 Sam. 18:8-9)
- Saul tried to have David killed by requiring that he kill 100 Philistines in order to marry his daughter (1 Sam. 18:25).
- Saul tried to kill David himself but failed (1 Sam. 19:9-10).
- Then Saul sent men to David's house to kill him (1 Sam. 19:11).
- Saul killed 85 priests who wore the linen ephod because he thought they had helped David (1 Sam. 22:18).
- Saul set out with 3,000 chosen men to kill David (1 Sam. 24:2). When Saul went into a cave to relieve himself, however, David was in the cave and had a chance to kill him. Instead, David merely cut off the corner of Saul's robe and refused to raise his hand against the Lord's anointed (1 Sam. 24:4-7).
- When David showed Saul the piece of his robe Saul admitted: **"I know you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands."** (1 Sam. 24:20)
- Even though Saul knew that God would make David the King of Israel he still kept trying to kill him. Some time later **"The Ziphites went to Saul at Gibeah and said, 'Is not David hiding on the hill of Hakilah which faces Jesimon?' So Saul went down to the Desert of Ziph, with his three thousand chosen men of Israel, to search there for David."** (1 Sam. 26:1-2).
- On that occasion David and Abishai went into Saul's army by night. The Lord had put them into a deep sleep so David was able to take Saul's spear and water jug without being discovered. Then David went to the top of a hill some distance away and awakened Saul and his army. David returned Saul's spear and water jug but still refused to lift his hand against the Lord's anointed (1 Sam. 26:7-25).
- There is much more evidence in the Bible that David was a man after God's own heart, but this should be sufficient. The fact that Saul constantly put his own will before the will of God is proof that he had a wicked heart!
- While Saul gloried in appearances, David did not! For example, when David brought the ark of the covenant from the house of Obed Edom **"David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the Lord with all his might."** (2 Sam. 6:14)
- David's wife, Michal, who was Saul's daughter, was not happy with David's "appearance". She rebuked him for appearing in public without wearing his royal robes. **"When David returned home to**

bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, “How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, going around half-naked in full view of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!” David said to Michal, “It was before the Lord, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the Lord’s people Israel—I will celebrate before the Lord. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor.” (2 Sam. 6:20-22)

■ Truly - “The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

GOD CAN GIVE YOU A NEW HEART

As Jesus said: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.” (Mk. 7:20-23)

Wicked king Saul was like the Jews who crucified Jesus. Jesus, the son of David, was also God’s anointed and they wanted to kill him just like Saul wanted to kill David. The problem with both was their heart. Jesus said: “These people honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me.” (Is. 29:13; Matt. 15:8)

The “Good News” is that God can give you a new heart. Centuries before Jesus was born in Bethlehem Ezekiel predicted: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” (Ez. 36:26-27)

Our old heart is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). That’s why we need a new heart! A man without a good heart cannot live a godly life any more than a caterpillar can fly. God, however, can transform the caterpillar into a butterfly, and God can also give us a new heart. It is both easy and natural for a butterfly to fly. So also when God gives us a new heart we become a “new creation”. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor. 5:17) In Christ our old nature is gone and everything is new!

On December 3, 1967, 53-year-old Louis Washkansky received the first human heart transplant at Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town, South Africa. Washkansky, a South African grocer, was dying from chronic heart disease. He received the transplant from Denise Darvall, a 25-year-old woman who was fatally injured in a car accident. The surgeon was Dr. Christiaan Barnard. The surgery was extremely complicated and difficult and Washkansky died after only 18 days. The second patient to receive a heart transplant was Philip Blaiberg. He received his new heart on January 2, 1968 and lived for 18 months. Today those who receive a heart transplant live an average of 9.16 years.

Receiving a new heart from God is much easier! For “If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (Rom. 10:9-10). Even more exciting to realize that when you receive a new heart from God you can live forever!

The hard part of receiving a new heart from God involves death to your old way of life. Confessing Jesus Christ as “Lord” requires surrendering your own will and taking up a cross. Jesus

said: **“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”** (Lk. 9:23) Paul said it like this: **“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.”** (Gal. 2:20)

THE EXAMPLE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

The conversion of the Apostle Paul is significant for it proves that nobody is too sinful to be saved. Paul explained to Timothy: **“Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.”** (1 Tim. 1:15-16)

- The Apostle Paul was originally known as Saul of Tarsus. When Stephen was stoned to death Saul of Tarsus was there, giving approval to his death (Acts 8:1).
- Further - **“Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison”** (Acts 8:3).
- As you know, Saul became a Christian and wrote more inspired books of the Bible than anyone else. On his first missionary journey his name was changed from “Saul” to “Paul” (Acts 13:9). His remarkable conversion helped to inspire this “trustworthy saying” that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”. Our text, therefore, refers to him as Paul.
- Paul explained his conversion to Christ to King Agrippa in this way: **“I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord’s people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.”** (Acts 26:9-11)
- Paul continued: **“On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ “Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ “‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’”** (Acts 26:12-18)
- **“So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds. That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise**

from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.” (Acts 26:19-23)

■ Festus, the governor, was listening to Paul preach to Agrippa. “At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.” (Acts 26:24)

■ “I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable. The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.” (Acts 26:25-27)

■ “Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” (Acts 26:28)

■ “Paul replied, ‘Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.’” (Acts 26:29)

■ Agrippa was almost convinced to be a Christian. Sadly, we have no evidence that he ever received Christ as Lord. To be almost saved is to be lost!

PAUL’S NEW HEART

Before receiving Christ as Lord Paul’s heart was “deceitful above all things and beyond cure” (Jer. 17:9).

When he was “born again” he became a “new creation” and received a new heart (2 Cor. 5:17).

His “new heart” was constantly filled with “unceasing anguish” so that others might also be saved.

Please consider: **“I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen. (Rom. 9:1-5)**

When you receive Jesus Christ as Lord you will also receive a “new heart” and a “new spirit”. Here is God’s promise: **“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” (Ez. 36:26-27)**

PLEASE DO NOT SAY NO TO GOD’S GIFT OF SALVATION!