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**"DO GOOD TO THEM THAT HATE YOU"
- 1 SAMUEL 26:17-25. - AUGUST 30. -**

Golden Text: – "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you." – Luke 6:27.

FOR seven years David was forced to be an exile from his home and nominally to fill the role of an outlaw. King Saul, troubled with evil spirits, was at times practically insane, and no doubt pursued David from place to place during those seven years as a relaxation, as some men take pleasure in hunting wild game. It is in this light that David himself in the Psalm presents the matter of his escape. A large band of discontented people gathered to David as their leader, mostly victims of Saul's persecution. These numbered 400 at least (1 Sam. 22:2) and later on 600. (1 Sam. 25:13,27.) David's own parents and brothers were amongst those persecuted, probably on David's account; also the prophet Gad, and the high-priest Abiathar, a son of the high-priest Abimelech (1 Sam. 22:22,23), also his nephew Abishai, subsequently a great general. (1 Sam. 26:6.) It is also noted that in the company were eleven mighty men of valor of the tribe of Gad (1 Chron. 12:8-14), and twenty-three Benjamite warriors who could shoot their arrows with both hands equally well. – 1 Chron. 12:1-7.

Professor Wright suggests that under the circumstances then prevailing, to be an outlaw was creditable. He says: "To be an outlaw at such a time was not to be on the side of disorder; it was the beginning of a justifiable revolution. The dissatisfied men who gathered around David in the cave of Adullam were the true patriots of the time....This is evident from his message to Nabal, in which he claims that he had performed all the duties of a government in protecting Nabal from the incursions of the

bordering tribes; so that the tribute he asked was not more than just taxation of established authority."

There are many caves in that limestone region. The one credited as the Cave of Adullam has several apartments and space for a small army; it is located not far from the place where David encountered Goliath. Associated with its name are three items of considerable interest. One of these, told in 1 Chronicles 11:15-19, gives us a little picture of the fidelity of David's followers and of David's own unselfishness, which lay no doubt at the foundation of the love which his followers bore him. It was at a time when the Philistines were making an invasion and when David and his followers could not be on Saul's side, yet would not be against him. The Philistine camp lay between the cave and the spring of fine water at Bethlehem, David's home town. Thirsty, David had remarked longingly on the fineness of the Bethlehem spring. With devotion to their leader three of David's chief men ventured through the lines of the Philistine camp and brought him some of the coveted water. On receiving it David's heart was full of gratitude to God for such appreciation and love from his followers; yet considering the price it had cost them and the dangers they had risked, he felt himself unworthy, and tendered the water as a thank-offering to the Lord and as an expression to his followers of his highest appreciation of their kindness. Of this the poet says, –

"And all the host looked and wondered, and those noble three,
The mightiest of the thirty, felt their souls
Knit closer to King David and to God."

The second item of interest referred to was the taking of David's aged parents from Adullam on a long journey over the rocky hills and around the furthest end of the Dead Sea and up the mountains of Moab to a place of safety with the king of Moab. – 1 Sam. 22:3,4.

The third item of interest referred to was the sparing of the life of King Saul at this cave. – 1 Sam. 24.

DAVID TESTED – SAUL SPARED

The lesson of today concerns the second sparing of Saul's life by David. The King had come out against David [R4225 : page 250] and his band with a large army corps. After the manner of that day the camp had been set with the king's tent in the center, as indicated by the king's spear standing at his doorway. Possibly, however, at that time no tents were used in that country, where there would be no danger of rain and where it is customary for travelers even to wrap themselves in their outer garments and lie down to sleep at any convenient place. David with his scouts was familiar with the entire country and everything that happened; and one of the chiefs of his band suggested to him a daring plot for the overthrow of the enemy, for the rescue of the country from the rule of a partially demented sovereign, and for the rectification of his own wrongs and those of the company of faithful men with him. The proposer of the plan, provided David's consent could be obtained, was to steal into King Saul's camp while his soldiers were sleeping after the fatigue of the journey, and kill King Saul in his tent, and thus end all their difficulties which centered in him. The plan was one that would be considered proper by nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand soldiers, yet it did not appeal to David.

Taking the proper view of the situation David considered King Saul the divine appointee for the place and position he occupied although the anointing oil had come upon himself as Saul's successor. He properly reasoned that when the Lord's due time should come for his accession to the throne, the Lord could and would bring it about in his own way; and that it would be sin on his part to connive at the king's death on any ground. Not only would he not kill Saul, but he would not sanction another's doing

it, not even by a half-hearted protest. On the contrary he would act as Saul's protector, so that the author of the bold scheme might have no opportunity for its execution. David went with him to carry out a different project; namely to bring away from the camp something that would prove to the king that he had been entirely within David's power, and that at heart David had no desire for Saul's injury, but the contrary.

In execution of this plan David accompanied Abishai quietly, speedily, into Saul's camp. First they took Saul's spear from before his tent; then entering the tent they found near the king's couch a cruse or bottle of drinking water, which they took. The two then went to a hillside opposite Saul's camp and shouted to awaken the soldiers and Saul. David upbraided Saul's captain-general for his carelessness in not properly protecting the king, telling how he had invaded the camp and had taken the king's spear and drinking pitcher, not, however, revealing his identity. Soon the entire camp was awake, and it was the king himself who recognized David's voice and also the facts related – that his spear and cruse were gone. These David offered to return through a messenger, explaining that he had taken them merely to prove that he had no ill will to the king, no wish to do him injury. David did not attribute Saul's enmity to his own evil passions and selfishness, but very politely suggested that if it were of the Lord it might well cease with an offering to the Lord; but if the king were following the counsel of men these must be wicked men, for the effect of their counsel was to alienate a fellow-Israelite not only from his home and land, but also from his God and his religion, by driving him from amongst his people to the heathen. He assured the king that if his blood must be shed he preferred that his death should be in the land of Israel, and that this alone was his reason for not leaving his native land. But he suggested that for the king to be pursuing him as an enemy and thinking of himself and his associates as foes to the empire, was as ridiculous as to think of a hunting expedition against a partridge as being war.

King Saul was honest enough to admit that he was in the wrong, and said, "I have sinned. Return, my son, David; for I will no more do thee harm because my life was precious in thine eyes this day. Behold, I have played the fool and have erred exceedingly."

"DELIVER ME OUT OF ALL TRIBULATION"

David's reply to the king is very noteworthy, and shows us that the center of the man's character and the guidance of his conduct was his reverence for the Lord, his faith. He said, "The Lord shall render to every man [according to] his righteousness and his faithfulness....It was the Lord that delivered thee into mine hand today and I did not put forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed. And behold, as thy life was precious today in mine eyes, so let my life be precious in the eyes of the Lord and let him deliver me out of all tribulation." (Vs. 23,24.) How wonderful this expression! In it there is no appeal to Saul for mercy, no expression of dependence upon him, but an appeal to the Lord, an expression of absolute confidence in the willingness and ability of the Lord to deliver him. Moreover, David seems to have learned a lesson which many dear Christian people have not learned, even though possessed of education and advantages in the school of Christ which David never enjoyed. David's course and language show that he understood that portion of the Lord's prayer which says, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" – have mercy upon us as we have mercy upon others. This is the essence of David's statement, As I have shown mercy to you, King Saul, so may the Lord show mercy to me.

"Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David. Thou shalt both do great things and shalt surely prevail. So David went on his way and Saul returned to his place." But although invited to return, David realized that the word and the heart of Saul were unreliable. It is a lesson that we all need to note, that a

wicked heart is an unreliable thing, though for the moment it may seem contrite, gentle and loving. This would not mean that we never again could have confidence in any one who had done evil to us or injury, or had done us harm; but it does mean that while not rendering evil for evil, bitterness for bitterness, malice for malice, slander for slander, we should nevertheless [R4226 : page 250] use wisdom and not entrust ourselves too fully to the power of such until we should receive not merely reassuring words but practical evidence of a change of heart; that the leaven of malice had been purged out.

OTHER LESSONS FOR THE NEW CREATION

David won a great victory over Goliath; but this lesson records a still greater victory over himself. As a natural man, not begotten again of the holy Spirit, he certainly exhibited wonderful self-control. We cannot say that it was his love for Saul that spared the king's life; rather it was his love for the Lord, his respect for divine authority. We can see that unless his devotion to the Lord had been very strong indeed the temptation would have swept him before it. To the average man eight reasons would appeal for a contrary course for killing his enemy. (1) It was legitimate warfare, as between the king and his army and David and [R4226 : page 251] his handful. In any army today such a surprise would be considered entirely justifiable. (2) His own self-preservation seemed to demand the king's death; and such preservation is recognized generally by the world as the first law of nature. (3) His desire to escape from his wandering life and to live quietly and peaceably as one of God's chosen nation, appealed strongly for action. (4) The fact of his anointing to be king and Saul's successor, and the prospect of soon coming to the throne would be a powerful reason with many. (5) Revenge for the things he had suffered from Saul would no doubt suggest itself. (6) His patriotism – his love for his country and his nation, and his appreciation of the fact that Saul was rapidly becoming unfit to be

king – was another reason for Saul's death. (7) An opportunity for accomplishing the deed thus coming to his hand might have been construed as of divine providence; and a wicked heart and guilty conscience would have so decided. (8) The interests of all of his followers, amongst them those who had risked their lives for his comfort and defence, demanded that the king should be slain; and furthermore doubtless many of them would be unable to comprehend David's motives in sparing the king's life. To such his course would appear foolish almost to madness in letting escape such an opportunity. Thus he might alienate from himself his associates in tribulation.

Surely a weaker man, or a man with less reverence for the Lord and less faith in him, would have yielded under the pressure of such inducements. The fact that David did not yield testifies loudly as respects his character, his principles.

How is it with us who have had advanced lessons in the school of Christ, and who have the advantage of being begotten of the holy Spirit, and ability therefore to comprehend the deeper things as respects the divine character and will? Would we have been similarly faithful and generous? But surely the Lord would expect still more of us than of David; surely, therefore, we should expect much more of ourselves, who are of the "house of sons" and have much advantage every way over the "house of servants." Has not our Redeemer, our Master, our Teacher, instructed us and given us a new commandment saying, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you"? Again in the words of our Golden Text we are instructed, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you." How are we exhibiting our appreciation of the lessons, of the instructions we have received? How do we daily put in practice this law of love for God – for his instructions, for the brethren, for our enemies?

NO MURDERER IN THE KINGDOM

It may be said that no such test as David had could come to us today as Christians; but that if it did, surely no Christian, no saint, would be a murderer. We reply that it must not be forgotten that we under the new dispensation are under the same law, but with a higher definition or explanation; as for instance the Master's words, when he said, "He that looketh upon a woman to desire her hath committed adultery already in his heart;" and again, "He that is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of the judgment." "He that hateth his brother is a murderer." (Matt. 5:22,28; 1 John 3:15.) Taking this higher definition of the divine law and its operation in our minds, we can readily see that opportunities may offer to every one of us very similar to this which came to David, opportunities to render evil for evil, railing for railing; opportunities to assassinate our neighbor, our brother – to kill his influence, his reputation, etc.

How are we meeting these tests? Are we gaining victories over self, as did David, or are we being overcome by the wicked one? If the latter course is ours, we are thus proving ourselves not members of the David or Beloved class, but establishing a relationship with the Adversary as being to some extent partakers of his spirit, his disposition, and manifesting this to some extent in wrong doing, murdering our brother. Our Lord indeed seems to imply that in the end of this age there will be special trials coming upon his people along these lines. He declares that brother shall deliver up brother to death, and parents shall deliver up children; and that his faithful ones under such conditions may become hated of all men. To what extent are we conniving with or cooperating with the enemy in such matters? To what extent are we like David of old, so reverent toward the Lord that we dare not touch, harm one of the members of the anointed, nor even an enemy who seeks our life, who does us injury and who says all manner of evil against us falsely, as Saul did against David?

A certain part of the temptation which comes to the Lord's people is well illustrated in this testing of David; viz., the opportunity to favor another's doing an evil work which we ourselves would not wish to do. How easy it would have been for David to say to Abishai, Proceed to do according to your judgment, I will hold aloof; but will say to you privately that I believe you will be doing a noble work for our nation; and it will even be to the king's interest, because he is an enemy even to himself and might the better die. Let us note how different a course David pursued; and let us judge that any other course would have been displeasing to the heavenly Father and would have meant David's failure in the test.

Similarly with us. Not only are we ourselves not to do unrighteousness, not to speak evil, not to think evil, not to do evil toward friend or foe; but we are to be so heartily in sympathy with this procedure that if another proposes to do an evil in our interest, we would be so in sympathy with the divine will and the law of brotherly love that we would oppose the act with all our energy.

During those seven years of trial David was being disciplined for the kingship. It was a school of adversity, of persecution and testing, in which he learned valuable lessons. Many of his most interesting psalms are credited to this epoch; as for instance, the thirty-fourth and fifty-seventh. Similarly the Lord's anointed of this Gospel Church are now in the wilderness of discipline pursued by our opponents; and with us this is the time to learn valuable lessons preparatory to occupying our kingly position; and this is the time in which our hearts may be drawn out toward the Lord in praise, and thanksgiving, in homage, as was David's. The difference in every respect is in our favor. His were typical and earthly things, ours are the antitypical, the heavenly things, the realities of priceless worth. What manner of persons ought we to be! How thoroughly we should learn these lessons! How great

is the prize, the Kingdom we hope to attain! "If we know these things, happy are we if we do them." – John 13:17.

