



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor  
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# 1 SAMUEL 31

1 Samuel Series

[PRAYER] Lord, we see the pictures of devastation on the news and on the web and we are touched in our hearts about the people that are hurting desperately in the Houston area. Lord, we know that in these kinds of tragic situations, it's an opportunity for your redemptive light to shine. We want to pray now for the organizations that are bringing about support and relief, that you would give them the supplies they need and provide them the resources that they need to do that. We especially pray for Christians, that they would have opportunity to share their faith with people and that some who may have been resistant to seeing who you are would now be more open in recognizing their tremendous need for you. Lord, we know we have that need whether things are going well or things are going poorly. But it's often when things are going poorly that we reach out to you. So I ask that you would use the message that's inside the hearts of those Christians down in Houston boldly. Allow them to speak on your behalf. Lord, we ask that you would bless the funds that we're sending down as well to use those in ways that will honor you and bless those people that are in need. Thank you that our President has even called such a day, so we, along with others, lift up you, lift up your name and the needs of these people. In Jesus' name, amen.

Today we're in our last sermon on the book of 1 Samuel. It's an opportunity for us to learn more about what God is doing in our own lives, but we're going to talk today about being a man after God's own heart a little bit more. I want you to understand what that looks like. I want to do that by spending some time in a psalm. I want to look at Psalm 86. I want to read the whole psalm. It's seventeen verses. It's a prayer offered to God by David. This is a psalm that David wrote. He didn't write all of them. He wrote about half of them that we know of. Maybe some of them aren't labeled, so we don't know who wrote them, but we know David wrote this one. It's Psalm 86. It's a psalm to God, a prayer.

Would you stand with me please as we honor God's word and I'll read to you Psalm 86. This is from the New International Version. If you're reading from your own Bible you may have a different version. But you're going to hear the message. Listen to David's heart as he's praying these words.

*Hear me, Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Guard my life, for I am faithful to you; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God; have mercy on me, Lord, for I call to you all day long. Bring joy to your servant, Lord, for I put my trust in you. You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you. Hear my prayer, Lord; listen to my cry for mercy. When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me. Among the gods there is none like you, Lord; no deeds can compare with yours. All the nations you have made will come*

*and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name. For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God. Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.*

*I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead. Arrogant foes are attacking me, O God; ruthless people are trying to kill me—they have no regard for you. But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Turn to me and have mercy on me; show your strength in behalf of your servant; save me, because I serve you just as my mother did. Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.*

Wow. What a testimony of a man after God's own heart. I want that.

You may be seated.

Well today we're on 1 Samuel 31 and when we come to 1 Samuel 31 we come to the last chapter of the book and we see Saul's death. So today is going to be somewhat like a funeral. You may say, "Well that's a real downer." But there's some real benefit to going to a funeral. In fact do you know the Bible says that *it's better to go to the house of mourning (or to a funeral) than to go to a house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart.*

What is *the end of all mankind*? Death. We're all going to die. The living will lay it to heart. In other words those who are living will consider themselves, will consider their lives, they'll have greater perspective on what's going on because they are at this place of mourning where someone has died.

When you experience a funeral, you start thinking about your own life. Don't you? Now maybe some of you young people haven't gone to many funerals, but I want to tell you when you go to a funeral you start thinking. You start thinking things like this: You know those things I get angry about? Those small things that happen all the time that I get angry about? They aren't that big of a deal when you consider life and death kind of situations. You start saying to yourself, "I'm working my tail off. What's really important? I'm putting aside relationships for working? All the time? I need to value relationships as well." So there's this kind of reorientation that goes on inside of our hearts when we go to a funeral. You end up saying, "I'm accumulating stuff. I've got lots of stuff, but what am I building for the kingdom?" We start asking these very important questions when we attend a funeral where we start looking at life and death situations.

That's what's happening here for Saul. For us as we look at Saul's death, we're going to get a glimpse of what's going on in his life. So I'm going to read the passage in 1 Samuel 31. I'm going to read the whole passage and then I'm going to try to guide our thinking in regards to what God might be saying to us as result of this particular passage from God's word.

1 Samuel 31 – *Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell dead on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines were in hot pursuit of Saul and his sons, and*

*they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua. The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically.*

*Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me."*

*But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day.*

*When the Israelites along the valley and those across the Jordan saw that the Israelite army had fled and that Saul and his sons had died, they abandoned their towns and fled. And the Philistines came and occupied them.*

*The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. They cut off his head and stripped off his armor, and they sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news in the temple of their idols and among their people. They put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths and fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan.*

*When the people of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, all their valiant men marched through the night to Beth Shan. They took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth Shan and went to Jabesh, where they burned them. Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.*

Sad ending to Saul's life. What I want to do is use this as an opportunity to compare Saul and David and understand more of what does it mean to be a man after God's own heart. I want us to look a little bit more about this from an experiential level.

This is the thirty-ninth sermon in 1 Samuel. At the very beginning when we're asking the question, "What does it mean to be a person after God's own heart?" I think we may have had some ideas that may have been more academic at that point, but now we've lived through the various stories of Saul's life. We've experienced a lot of the things with David and the things that have gone on in this rather challenging situation over the last thirty-nine weeks.

We looked at David fighting Goliath and we used that experience of David fighting Goliath to remind us about how we can face the challenges of our own lives. We just parked there for several weeks and we just looked at facing our own challenges, our own habits, our own relational challenges, our own pressure or stress that we have. How do we fight those battles? We looked at that as we looked at the whole battle there with Goliath.

We also looked at the friendship between Jonathan and David and what makes real friendship last and how we can be better friends to each other and to others in those relationships that we hold dear and close.

Remember the people of Keilah? This was kind of a vague story. Keilah, where these people were being attacked, and they went to David, “David, would you help us?” David himself was being pursued by Saul. But even though he was under his own pressure and his own challenges, his own to-do list, he had compassion on these people and took personal risk to go out and care of them. And from that story we learned about what it costs when we have compassion. It costs for us to go out and help other people. It costs for us. Whether it’s to give money or time or space or whatever it is, it costs us. But David was that kind of a guy, a man after God’s own heart.

We saw that story about how David was going around the mountain and Saul was following him in hot pursuit, the Bible says. And just as he was getting close to David, Saul received a message from a messenger and that message said the Philistines are attacking. So right in the opportune moment, David and his men were spared because Saul was drawn away and had to go fight the Philistines. We talked then about God’s sovereignty in our lives, how God is interested in the details of our lives. He’s interested in the very specifics of our life situations and He’s interested in working out many things inside of our lives.

We looked at the story about how David was hiding from Saul in the cave, and wouldn’t you know it, Saul uses that cave to go to the bathroom in. So Saul’s all alone and it was opportunity for David to attack him and kill him, but David was a man of conscience and because of that, he didn’t want to do the wrong thing. He wants to do what was right. He did cut off part of Saul’s robe. And when Saul went out, David confronted him and we learn more about this conscience idea. It’s not just a personal thing, but it’s a tool that we can use with other people. Because David said these words to Saul and Saul was conscience-stricken. He says, “*You are a better man than I am.*” They go on and Saul doesn’t attack David (at least he says he’s not going to attack him again).

Remember we looked at Abigail who stopped David, who was so angry to go kill Nabal. We spent four weeks looking at negative controlling emotions and how to address those in our own personal lives. Looking at the advice that Abigail gave, four different pieces of advice that she shared with David that helped him turn around and go back.

We have learned a lot about God. We’ve learned a lot about ourselves, how to handle life situations. We’ve learned really what it means to be a person after God’s own heart by looking at David as an example.

And so I want to ask the question, “What does it mean to be a man after God’s own heart?” and hopefully having gone through some that. I know you weren’t all there all of the different times probably that we had those sermons, but you’ve experienced this life of David and you kind of saw what was going on inside of him, which gives you the ability to answer the question a little bit differently than someone who does it just academically.

This week I’ve been grading papers for my class. At the beginning of the class (these are Masters level students) I asked them a question. They didn’t know I was setting them up. I asked them a question and I told them they needed to read the book that Joanne and I had written called *Parenting is Heart Work*. I asked them to write a summary on what does it mean to parent from a

heart perspective? What does that look like? So I always smile when I read their introductory comments from eight weeks ago, as they're giving an academic answer of what it means to parent from a heart-based approach, just taken right out of the Bible and out of our book.

Then they go through the whole experience of working with a parent for eight weeks and seeing all the other parents that are all negotiating and talking about all these parents in the group for eight weeks. They live them and they see miracles take place in the lives of families. Surprising things take place. They can't believe the changes that they see.

One was a nineteen year old (these are parents of these children). There's a nineteen year old represented in the class, an eighteen year old, a two year old, an eight year old. There are all different ages and amazing things take place in the lives of these children. It's like in the feeding of the five thousand it's nice to read about it in the Bible, but if you were there watching the food get multiplied, it would touch you in some very powerful ways. That's what happens in my class.

So I set them all up for this. We go through the whole eight weeks. And then at the end of the class I require they write a five-page paper on what does it mean to parent from a heart-based approach. It is so fun because now when they write this paper it just has all this information that's obviously a result of their experience. They've experienced something over these eight weeks and seen God's great work in a powerful way. One of my students wrote her paper as eleven pages. I mean they go on and on about the things they've learned because now it's experiential.

I hope that's what's happening in this sermon today. That as we look at this, you're going to look at this question, what does it mean to have a heart after God? To be characterized as a person after God's own heart, not just academically, but you'll experience it because you've walked with David, you've seen the mistakes of Saul.

I want to share with you my conclusion first. As I share with you this conclusion, then we'll kind of back it up. But as I ponder what does it mean to be a man after God's own heart, I come to this conclusion. How to be a man after God's own heart? Every person (get this) who gives himself or herself totally to God is a person after God's own heart. See, I'm convinced that if you're a Christian and you're serving the Lord, you are a person after God's own heart. This isn't just a unique place for one person in the Bible who can be this. We are all this kind of a person if we're serving the Lord.

If you've chosen God to be your personal Lord and Savior, you are a man after God's own heart. Why? Because it's not something you do. It's something you are. Oh that has so many theological ramifications that we can't use our behavior to somehow earn ourselves into this role or have this certificate of being a man after God's own heart. It's something that you are. It's something that not just you do. Certainly, it's a thing you do. But it's something deep inside of you that you are. You have this characteristic about you that makes you different than someone else because you are a man or a woman after God's own heart.

Does that mean you're perfect? Definitely not. All we have to do is look at David's life and we see he made some significant mistakes in his life – adultery, murder, just a whole bunch of

things, as even we've seen in 1 Samuel. And we're not even looking at 2 Samuel yet. Lots of things that went on. He made a lot of mistakes.

But here's the difference. The difference between Saul and David isn't their actions, necessarily. They both made what I'm going to call wrong turns in their lives. I want you to understand this because maybe you've made a wrong turn in your life. When you make a wrong turn, it's how you respond to it that's most important. It's not the wrong turns of our lives that destroy us; it's our unwillingness to correct those wrong turns.

I just want to tell you today, if you've made a wrong turn in your life, you can correct it. You can come back because our God is a God of forgiveness. There's a right way to live. Taking the steps toward righteousness and following the Lord and making Him number one in your life is the most important decision that we'll ever make. If you've made a wrong turn, you've made a bad decision, life isn't hopeless. You can turn back and you can follow the Lord in a strategic way.

But I want to compare Saul. He's the one mentioned in 1 Samuel 31. He's the one who dies in the passage. A guy who started out really well, a lot of potential in his life, a lot of good things. He was the kind of guy that got good grades. He was the guy that everybody liked. He was handsome. Good things about Saul that I'm sure that people enjoyed and were attracted to. He's the guy that you would say would be rather successful in life. But he had some internal challenges that were a problem for him. He made several wrong turns in his life.

For example, one of the wrong turns that he made is he wasn't patient with God's plan. Samuel told Saul, "Saul, I want you to wait till I come. One week I'll be there." But you see, Saul was this guy who had his own ideas and he saw the battle forming and he saw the strategy in place. He had it in his mind what he thought needed to happen. He was going to go in and do this and his window of opportunity was moving away. So he didn't wait the seven days that he was supposed to wait. He was impatient with God's timing, so he went in and he did the wrong thing. He went and offered the sacrifice himself and then he went and did his thing.

I would suggest that the difference between Saul and David, one of them, is that Saul trusted in human ability and David trusted in God. You even see this, not only in this story when Saul says, "I'm going to go in and I'm going to fight the battle, even though God hasn't given me the okay," kind of trusting in his own strategy. But we see it in the fighting of Goliath. Saul says, "Here, put on my armor." David's walking around with this armor and he realizes he can't fight in this armor because that isn't him. He goes down to the battle in the valley and he meets off with Goliath and he says to Goliath, "You fight with a sword and shield, but I fight in the name of the Lord God Almighty." See, he is the kind of guy who trusted in the Lord. He's the guy who was different. He wasn't just relying on human strategies. I really appreciate that about David. Saul made a mistake. He was impatient about his willingness to trust the Lord.

I think we do that in our own lives. Don't we? Sometimes we get impatient and "I'm going to take control of this myself" and we start yelling at somebody. Or we have our way of solving the problem and we don't allow God to work. God wants to work in situations. We don't want to make the same mistake that Saul made by being impatient with God's plan.



Another mistake that Saul made that ties into this same point is that he only obeyed the Lord partially. God said, “I want you to go in at one point, kill all of those Amalekites, destroy all of their animals, annihilate them all.” Well Samuel goes to check on him and see how he did and Samuel says, “What is this bleating of sheep that I hear in my ears?” Saul says, “Oh yes. I brought those sheep back so that we can make sacrifices out of them and give them to God.” But God had given him specific instructions about what to do. But he had his own ideas. He had his human ability that he valued more than God’s will and what God wanted for him. He didn’t love the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. He had his own ability or his own ideas of how to solve the problem.

That’s when Samuel made that famous statement – God loves *obedience more than sacrifice*. Obedience more than sacrifice. That’s pretty significant. God loves obedience. It’s not about human ability. David was a guy who loved the Lord and trusted in Him.

The second point I want to bring out has to do with another detour in Saul’s life and that is that he treated people badly, especially God’s people badly. He killed the priests, seventy-nine of them, because he felt like he was betrayed. He also was attacking and continually trying to capture David and destroy him. I would suggest that that detour is because of something going on inside of Saul’s heart and that is that he lived by fear, but David lived by faith.

Now I want to suggest that David also was afraid sometimes because he was in some very challenging situations. But there’s this ability to live by this faith in the midst of fears that’s so strategic. David had that ability. I would suggest we want that too in our lives. What are some areas where you might be afraid? Afraid of what other people will think about you. Afraid of something going on, so you take control. If we allow fears to dictate our actions, then we’re going to find ourselves in bad situations. David was a man after God’s own heart, David focused on the Lord, and God was able to use David in some pretty strong and powerful ways.

Another detour or wrong turn that Saul made was that he put up a monument to himself. Samuel actually goes to his hometown and says, “I’m looking for Saul. Where is he?” Oh he’s gone over to Carmel to build a monument to himself.

I would suggest that there’s a main difference between a man after God’s own heart and a person who builds monuments, or a Saul and a David. That’s the third point that I want to suggest. Saul loved his life and David loved not his life, but God. I think we can love life. But it’s a matter of what do we love most. Do we love God so much, so much that we’re willing to build a monument for Him? Or is it all about building monuments for ourselves? There are a lot of people today who are trying to make their stamp on the world for themselves. I would suggest that if we are a man or woman after God’s own heart, we’re making a stamp for the Lord. What are you doing in your life that’s impressing on your children or living your life in front of your parents or blessing other people in your workplace or your neighborhood in a way that’s lifting up God and drawing attention to Him in your life?

Well these three points lead to three different principles I want to suggest that we can embrace that will help us to be most effective in our desire to be men and women after God’s own heart.

So you might consider these three points. One – we need to trust in God. Two – we need to live by faith and not fear. And three – we need to love God more than our own lives.

I would suggest that's what a Christian is. So as I got to this part of the study instead of looking at all the list of things I need to do and don't, I'm asking the question, what can God do in my own heart? See, if I give myself to the Lord fully then God is going to do a work inside of me that's going to turn me into this person that is a man or a woman after God's own heart. That's what God wants. He wants us to be that kind of a person that puts him first in the way that we live. It's not about earning something. It's not about being perfect in order to earn your award so that you can wear it on your chest. God doesn't give out T-shirts that say "I'm a Christian" that just go on the outside. God wants to do something much deeper inside of our lives.

Saul and David both made significant errors, mistakes, they took wrong turns. The difference was they knew how to respond to them. There was something that happened inside of them that made them more pliable, more sensitive to God. That word sensitivity is such a meaningful word when it comes to the Lord. It seems to me that the man after God's own heart is someone who is connected with God regularly. As we're faced with the challenges of our lives, you just look at David and his challenges. They're just like ours – feeling disappointment, feeling a lot of stress, pressure, betrayal from some people, disaster, what's going to happen here, making mistakes and feeling guilty about them. David finds himself in all of those places, but he keeps coming back to the Lord.

See when Saul found himself in sin, what did he do? He didn't want to be found out. That was his greatest fear. I don't want to be found out. But what was David's? He doesn't want the presence of God to leave him. That's what he says in Psalm 51 – *Do not take your presence from me*. That was his greatest goal. It's such a sensitivity to God. I need you in everything that I do.

In the New Testament God calls this lordship. We call on God as Lord. He is the Lord of our life. Not just our Savior. Savior because He saves us from sin, but it makes us want to give Him our life so that He can be our Lord. We're sensitive to the daily interactions of what God wants to do. He wants to do that deeper work inside of us and He leads us in this powerful way. So let's think of that together as a church. What might God want us to do? Let's think about it individually. How does God want to draw you closer? Because this week you are a man after God's own heart or a woman after God's own heart, which means that you're going to live a life that measures up to that. Your sensitivity to the Lord and what He wants to do is going to be right there in the midst of it and God will do great things in your heart and then through you as a result.

1 Samuel has been a great study. It's a study about men and women that are real. They struggle with the real things that we struggle with and we learn a tremendous amount from them. That's why God has given us His word so that we can learn from it and apply it to our lives. I trust that God will use it in some significant ways. Maybe you missed some sermons. They're all online. You can go there and listen to them and God may use that to trigger some valuable things inside of your heart, as He has mine.

Let's stand together and let's pray.



[PRAYER] Father, we come before you as needy people, as that verse says in David's prayer in Psalm 86:1. We're *poor and needy*, and we need you and we want you to reign in our lives. So Lord, I ask that you would touch us in a deeper way. That you would reveal to use specific ways that we can follow you. I pray for those regrets that people might be experiencing in their hearts, those wrong turns that they may have taken that you would provide healing and even ministry out of them because of what you want to do. Teach us how to respond to those wrong turns most effectively and to make you the Lord of our lives. We submit to you, we ask you to forgive us of our sins. Be honored in our lives today. In Jesus' name, amen.