

UNCOMMON LOVE

In this lesson, I want to use the life of David to consider uncommon love! I am talking about the kind of love we seldom give thought to or see demonstrated or believe is possible. But it is the agape love we know God manifested toward the world through Jesus and His sacrificial death on cross. It is the same kind of love that Jesus expected of His disciples when he laid out before them His profound standard of Christian love in His Sermon on the Mount.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Matthew 5:43-45)

When the topic of love came up within the Jewish culture over the centuries, the rule of the day was be nice to the people who are nice to you and get even with the people who are not nice to you. In fact, the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day had the nerve to say this teaching represents the heart and character of the living God, when in fact this viewpoint was only the simple reflection of the sinful heart of man—you hit me and I will hit you back twice as hard!

So when Jesus said this is not the way God wants His people to live, He was saying something profound! He was saying that God’s standard of love is profound because it reflects His own perfect personhood of a God Who is both holy and merciful. Jesus was saying forget everything you have heard. This is what God has always intended for His people. **Love your enemies!**

And therein lies one of the greatest challenges—equally one of the greatest opportunities—for Christian life imaginable. Who else on earth is going to do life this way? In our minds, maybe this raises a more perplexing question. HOW can anyone—including me—do love this way?

We love, because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

We are told that the key to loving our enemies is to be loved by God, and then to love them by seeing them as God sees them: people in need of His grace. In similar fashion, we are going to see that this was the source of David’s uncommon love toward Saul. The only way we can begin to consider loving our enemies is when we are prepared to think the way David thought. Now that I am cultivating a heart for God, I can commit myself to loving my enemies. I will start by relating to them as God relates to them. And that most certainly is what David did. We never heard him speak of Saul as “that crazy king,” “the royal airhead,” or “the maniac monarch.” Instead, David honored Saul at all costs. Every time he was confronted with Saul, he referred to him as “the Lord’s anointed.”

So how do you see your enemies—the people who have attacked you, have perhaps hurt you or done so to someone you love, family or friends? How do you see them? Do we see those hurtful people through the critical human eyes of hatred and revenge, or do we see them through the compassionate divine eyes of holiness and mercy? But we think how can anyone practically do that? How can I NOT see them through their actions toward me? The only answer that makes any practical sense is by doing what King David did – by devoting ourselves to becoming a person after God’s own heart.

Because David was able to say deep in His heart, “I love the Lord,” he also had the capacity and the incentive to love his enemy, Saul. He learned to see Saul not as a man would see him, but as the Lord saw him. So how does the Lord look at that person who abused you? The Lord looks at that person as a very precious, though fallen, part of His creation. He looks at that person as being one who can eventually be transformed into the image of Christ. God sees the one who has misused you, as a possible adornment for heaven—someone who could be to the praise of His glory for all eternity before watching, wondering myriads of angels!

This is the key to loving our enemies. David had learned to look at his enemy not as human beings look at their enemies, but as God looks at them. But before we can look at people as God looks at them, we need to have our attitude toward God Himself in correct perspective. Or to put it more simply, we will only begin to love our enemies when we truly love the Lord. David at times was humanly inconsistent in his life, just like us. But the one thing about his life that was clear was that David loved the Lord beyond all else! As David loved God with his heart, he allowed the Holy Spirit to give him discernment about God's character. God revealed Himself to David's heart. God's mercy was implanted on the walls of David's mind and David knew in his heart that he was in just as great need of God's mercy as Saul was.

Jesus told His followers that God the Father sends rain to wicked and the righteous. In other words, neither people's character nor their conduct change His character and conduct. God remains holy and merciful toward people whether or not they curse Him or bless Him, worship Him or rebel against Him! God remains the perfect Father of holiness and love. Jesus said if we really do love Him, we should be seeking to be like Him. So how does that flesh out in human life? Well, consider seven practical ways David loved Saul.

Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and so also did all the men who were with him. They mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan and for the people of the Lord and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. (2 Samuel 1:11-12)

David's uncommon love sorrowed over Saul's downfall! Something in David deeply and genuinely regretted Saul's downfall. You know, there is something about human nature that when we have been knocked down by an enemy, we love to see that enemy fall. We think at last they got what was coming to them! But God's uncommon love is not about to do that. For His love, as 1 Corinthians 13 tells us, does not rejoice in iniquity. Most of that is demonstrated in a song that David wrote at Saul's death. When David learned that his friend Jonathan and old enemy Saul were both killed by the Philistines, he responded with a psalm of mourning.

Your beauty, O Israel, is slain on your high places! How have the mighty fallen! "Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice. The daughters of the uncircumcised will exult." (2 Samuel 1:19-20)

David's uncommon love covered Saul's shame! He didn't want to broadcast the news about Saul, lest all rejoice in Saul's failure and demise. This reflects his sadness over Saul's death.

"O mountains of Gilboa. Let not dew or rain be on you nor fields of offerings; for there the shield of the mighty was defiled. The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil. From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty the bow of Jonathan did not turn back and the sword of Saul did not return empty." (2 Samuel 1:21-22)

David's uncommon love honored Saul's strength! David is saying whatever you want to think about Saul, he was a superb warrior—always was! David found a strength he could give credit to and did, instead of finding a weakness and magnifying it!

"Saul and Jonathan, beloved and pleasant in their life and in their death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles. They were stronger than lions." (2 Samuel 1:23)

David's uncommon love accepted Saul's faults! Honestly Saul was not always pleasant. He had major emotional issues and problems. But David decided to draw a veil over those weaknesses and to forgo the criticism he could have offered because it simply was not necessary.

"O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you luxuriously in scarlet, who put ornaments of gold on your apparel." (2 Samuel 1:24)

David's uncommon love revered Saul's accomplishments! David asked the people to remember with gratitude the things about Saul that they could remember with gratitude.

Then the men of Judah came and there anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, "It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul." David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said to them, "May you be blessed of the Lord because you have shown this kindness to Saul your lord and have buried him. Now may the Lord show lovingkindness and truth to you; and I also will show this goodness to you, because you have done this thing." (2 Samuel 2:4-6)

David's uncommon love respected Saul's dignity! After Saul was killed on the battlefield, the Philistines mutilated his body by beheading it and nailing up on their city wall to shame his memory! The people of Jabesh-Gilead (whom Saul helped years before) were appalled and outraged. When they heard the news, they came by night at considerable risk, took down his body and gave Saul a decent burial. They reflected a sense of honor toward their fallen king. So when David heard about it, he sent them that note of appreciation!

These actions on David's part toward Saul give us a portrait of the uncommon love that God calls us to live out in our own lives. So let's pause to ask ourselves... who is that person who has hurt or caused us harm? What will be our reaction? Will we grasp the opportunity to offer uniquely Christian uncommon love, or will we allow the consensus of opinion to speak to our hearts and drag us down to similar behavior? Don't miss out on the incredible possibility of loving your enemy. Say no to harboring criticism, maximizing others' faults, and minimizing their strengths. Live Christianly before God and our fellow man and be amazed by the power of uncommon love!

Point to Ponder: Love your enemies! And therein lies one of the greatest challenges—equally one of the greatest opportunities—for Christian life imaginable. Who else on earth is going to do life this way? In our minds, maybe this raises a more perplexing question. HOW can anyone—including me—do love this way?

Question to Answer: Which of these traits of uncommon love do you feel you do best? Worst?

Thanks for your intercession in this vital ministry!
Pastor Dave