

*KINDNESS
FOR THE
SAKE OF
LOVE*

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DEDICATION

We dedicate these pages to those that are willing to be guided by the Word of God to live their lives in a practical way.

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PRESENTATION

The value of this work is not so much in having regrouped historical thoughts as it is to applying to the practical life of the believer what can be drawn from the instruction of the Word of God.

In this, I would say that **Pastor Domenico Barbera** is masterful and in all his works, he has manifested this “characteristic”.

KINDNESS FOR THE SAKE OF LOVE

This expression invites me to consider God’s love toward us, since He first showed kindness to us having sent His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, on this earth **to free us from our sin and therefore give us eternal life.**

Jesus Christ, not only came for this purpose, but during His earthly ministry He showed kindness to all those that turned to Him, out of the love that He had for their souls.

It is true that this is not the central subject of this book, but it is a thread that is evident throughout.

Here are two men to compare; one is dominated by consuming hatred while the other is pervaded by love. In the end, love will be victorious and it will still manifest itself long after the one that personified hatred will have been buried.

We are talking about Saul and David. David manifested his love through **Mephiboseth**, the only survivor of the house of Saul, to whom, because of his love for **Jonathan**, David showed kindness by inviting him to his table and treating him like a “king’s son”.

This book encourages every reader (particularly believers) to do good, to defeat evil with kindness, because this is the will of God (Romans 12:21; 1 Peter 2:15).

Nino Tirelli

Former priest of the Roman Catholic church and editor of this entire volume.

INTRODUCTION

The theme of this book, “**Kindness For The Sake of Love**”, has been inspired by the words: “*Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?*” (2 Samuel 9:1).

David's words represent a pact in favour of the house of Saul, born in the mind of the king and communicated to others.

That this initiative was sincere and was meant to be realized is confirmed by the fact that when Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, was before him, David did not delay to tell him: “*Don't be afraid, for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table.*” (2 Samuel 9:7).

What David did in giving back to Mephibosheth the lands that belonged to Saul, his grandfather, and making him dine at his table like one of the king's sons (verse 11), was not only wonderful from a human perspective considering the physical disability that Mephibosheth had, being crippled in both feet (verse 13), but it was also very meaningful from a spiritual point of view considering the evil that the house of Saul had caused David.

In the course of developing our theme, we will review the many Bible passages that speak about Saul and David. This, naturally, to understand the attitude and behaviour

of Saul towards David and vice versa, of David towards Saul.

We will also take every opportunity that presents itself in our journey of exploration and meditation (coherent with a balanced exegesis of the Biblical text) to make those spiritual reflections that will allow us to evaluate the behaviour of the two protagonists, Saul and David, under the aspect of life and in particular of Christian doctrine.

Obviously, we will do this comparing everything with the instruction of the New Testament in particular.

The Bible text that we will use will be the New International Version (NIV)¹ and when we believe opportune to refer to other translations, we will not fail to clearly identify them.

The greatest heartfelt wish that we can formulate for those that will hold this our work in their hands is that each will be able to draw the greatest possible profit for their spiritual life and that it would serve also to encourage them deeper into the subject.

Heartfelt thanks go to my beloved brother Nino Tirelli for his meticulous revision of the present work.

Domenico Barbera

Niagara Falls, January 2006

¹ Translator's Note: The Bible text used in the original Italian version is the Nuova Riveduta

PART ONE

Chapter 1

SAUL'S CHARACTERISTICS

The purpose of this first chapter is to define the main characteristics of Saul before he became king of Israel and during the entire time of his reign.

We will mainly focus our attention on these without neglecting the necessary deeper study that we will do based on the Biblical texts that we will investigate in order to frame them all according to a Christian perspective. Thus, we can judge if what he did; if his behaviour towards David in particular, can be applied in practical life with gentle approval or if instead it must be

rejected, because it is not consistent with the Christian spirit and instruction.

With this perspective in mind and pursuing this purpose, the person in question, i.e. Saul, will be able to suggest to us whether to appreciate the path that he took or rather to condemn it.

Statistical Data

The name of Saul, son of Kish, is mentioned 411 times in the Bible, subdivided as follows: 370 times in the first and second books of Samuel, 34 times in 1 Chronicles, once in Isaiah, once in the book of the Acts of the Apostles and 5 times in the Psalms.

As can be seen, the greatest number of occurrences are found in the two books of Samuel. The etymological meaning is *asked (God) for*.

Saul's Characteristics

1) Saul's Youth and attractiveness

The first characteristic that the Bible text provides us of Saul (beyond specifying that he was a Benjamite), is that he was *an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites—a head taller than any of the others* (1 Samuel 9:2).

Saul's youth, attractiveness and stature were purely his physical characteristics, but they say nothing of his strength, bravery, intelligence or kindness; characteristics that have nothing to do with the outer appearance of a person.

In fact, one can be “young” as far as his age and have ideas and tendencies that are indicative of someone with many years on their shoulders or vice versa, be “old” in years and yet have the attitude of a “young person”.

“Beauty” that generally attracts the attention of the eye can also be “vain” (Proverbs 31:30), that is, worthless, particularly from God’s point of view.

That is why the Lord does not consider it the way that man does, but God looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

One’s “stature” is not always synonymous with strength, courage and daring.

We cannot say how old Saul was when his father, Kish, sent him to look for some donkeys that were lost. Some think that he was probably about 35 years old.

But this does not agree with 1 Samuel 13:1 that says that when Saul began to reign, he was 30 years old.

Before Saul came to Samuel, the Lord had revealed to the prophet the arrival of a man coming from the land of Benjamin, to whom he was to communicate a message from God.

About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him leader over my people Israel; he will deliver my people from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked upon my people, for their cry has reached me (1 Samuel 9:16).

After Samuel communicated the divine message to him and anointed him with oil to become king of Israel, before sending him home, he ordered him to go down to Gilgal and to wait for him seven days to then offer burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to the Lord and Samuel would then tell him what he was to do (1 Samuel 10:8).

Summoned to Mizpah

¹⁷ *Samuel summoned the people of Israel to the LORD at Mizpah*

¹⁸ *and said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I brought Israel up out of Egypt, and I*

delivered you from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed you.'

¹⁹ But you have now rejected your God, who saves you out of all your calamities and distresses. And you have said, 'No, set a king over us.' So now present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and clans."

²⁰ When Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen.

²¹ Then he brought forward the tribe of Benjamin, clan by clan, and Matri's clan was chosen. Finally Saul son of Kish was chosen. But when they looked for him, he was not to be found.

²² So they inquired further of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?" And the LORD said, "Yes, he has hidden himself among the baggage."

²³ They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others.

²⁴ Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people." Then the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

²⁵ Samuel explained to the people the regulations of the kingship. He wrote them down on a scroll and deposited it before the LORD. Then Samuel dismissed the people, each to his own home.

²⁶ Saul also went to his home in Gibeah, accompanied by valiant men whose hearts God had touched (1 Samuel 10:17-26).

2) Saul's Apparent Humility

From the time that Saul was informed by Samuel that the Lord had chosen him to reign over the people of Israel, his "hiding himself among the baggage" was not true proof of his "humility", but represented pride disguised as a lamb.

That Saul was not a humble person during the time that he reigned over Israel was demonstrated by many incidents that are reported in the Scriptures.

From the many texts that can be quoted, we have chosen one from 1 Samuel 13:5-14.

⁵ *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.*

⁶ *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.*

⁷ *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.*

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

⁹ *So he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings." And Saul offered up the burnt offering.*

¹⁰ *Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him.*

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,*

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 to offer the burnt offering."*

¹³ *"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.*

¹⁴ *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."*

3) Saul Assumes the Role of Priest

The above text is clear enough. If Saul had been humble, he would have behaved differently in that situation.

By assuming the role of priest by offering a sacrifice to God, Saul demonstrated all his pride and, at the same time, he did not realize (because he had been blinded) that he was transgressing a divine command.

The justification that he gave, saying that the men were scattering and that the Philistines were assembling to come down against him, was not consistent with the divine command that he had received.

If he had obeyed (disobedience is usually guided and set in motion by pride), his reign would have been established forever.

But since Saul did not appreciate the importance of knowing his place and that he should not have involved himself in what had not been assigned to him according to the word that God had given him, his insubordination prevented the continuation of his reign.

4) Saul's Disobedience

When the Lord later ordered him to go destroy the Amalekites and spare nothing, in his stubbornness to do things his own way and not exactly as God had commanded, Saul once again demonstrated all his pride, especially when he placed the responsibility of not having exactly executed the commandment of the Lord on others.

In the end, Saul was not only guilty of disobedience to God in that situation, but he preferred the honour of men above that of God (cp. 1 Samuel 15:1-28).

5) Saul's Jealous Hatred of David

⁶ *When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes.*

⁷ *As they danced, they sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."*

⁸ *Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?"*

⁹ *And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David. (1 Samuel 18:6-9).*

6) Saul's Superstition In Consulting With A Medium

⁵ *When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart.*

⁶ *He inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets.*

⁷ *Saul then said to his attendants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her." "There is one in Endor," they said. (1 Samuel 28:5-7).*

We will speak later about Saul's behaviour toward David during his lifetime when we will investigate various Bible passages.

Regarding Saul's reign, it can be said that he was the first king of Israel. He achieved several victories over the enemies of the people of Israel. He came to the aid of Jabesh Gilead and freed them from the Ammonites. He inflicted heavy losses on the Philistines and reigned over Israel for forty years (Acts 13:21).

A REFLECTION ON OBEDIENCE

Obedience to God and His Word is a fundamental point on which we must seriously reflect.

We must not think, as man often does, that the Lord says, “Better a little than nothing at all”, in order to justify the discreet attitude of a person in regard to God and His word.

Such a frame of mind can never lead to a worthy goal, while thinking that the Lord gives His approval.

God is never satisfied with so-called “half measures”. He wants all or nothing.

In the military, there is a norm for matters of obedience that is expressed as follows: the obedience of an inferior before his superiour must be “ready, respectful and absolute”.

If military authorities require such obedience, it is senseless and foolish to think that God, who is far above all earthly powers, would accept anything less than full obedience with maximum respect for His Name and Word.

If a man is not disposed to accept and behave in this way before the Lord, he will always object when God requires anything of him.

The history of Saul, at this point of our reflection, shows us the fatal error that this king committed, believing that he had fulfilled the mission entrusted to him by his God, while, in effect, it was not true at all.

The measure of evaluation as to whether our obedience answers the divine requirement is not on the basis of our appraisal, but on what God demands of us.

Sometimes we think that God does not notice what we do, how we behave, what we say, believing that we can hide from His control and omniscience.

It is truly foolish to think this!

Saul behaved unconscionably and showed little reverence when he told Samuel, ... *“I have carried out the LORD’s instructions”* (1 Samuel 15:13).

Since Saul had defeated the Amalekites from *Havilah to Shur, to the east of Egypt* (v. 7), he believed that the mission that had been entrusted to him was totally fulfilled.

If, however, he had taken into account the precise words that the Lord had spoken to him: *“Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys”* (v. 3) and noting, above all, that he spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites and the *best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs – everything that was good* (v. 9) and if he had a “clear conscience”, he would never have made that statement.

When Samuel challenged him: *“What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?”* (v. 14), Saul blamed the soldiers, saying that in the end those animals were spared to be sacrificed *to the Lord* (v. 15).

In effect, at that moment, Saul forgot his effective “participation”. *“Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle ...”* (v. 9).

Before such persistent, tit for tat answers to Samuel’s words, the prophet could do no less than communicate the words of the Lord to him.

¹⁶ "Stop!" Samuel said to Saul. "Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night."

"Tell me," Saul replied.

¹⁷ Samuel said, "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel."

¹⁸ And he sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; make war on them until you have wiped them out.'

¹⁹ Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?"

²⁰ "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."

²¹ 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."

²² 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."

²³ For rebellion is like the sin of divination and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king." (1 Samuel 15:16-23).

Saul's obedience was incomplete, therefore God did not consider it "valid".

When religious reasons are given to cover or, worse still, to justify our disobedience, that is the most terrible thing that man can do.

There is no valid justification of any nature that can allow or validate an attitude that is not one of full, respectful and absolute obedience to God and His Word. Amen!

Finally, in order to expand the discussion, we suggest reflection and consideration of the following Bible passages.

Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come" (Genesis 17:9).

The LORD your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul (Deuteronomy 26:16).

Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law (Deuteronomy 32:46).

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful (Joshua 1:8).

Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God (Isaiah 50:10)

but I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you (Jeremiah 7:23).

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven (Matthew 7:21).

He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice." (Luke 8:21).

Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29)

And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love. (2 John 6).