

It was one of those moments in war where everything went right. I mean really right. They were deep behind enemy lines, right in the heart of the enemy. In fact they found themselves standing over their main adversary. Without detection they slipped into the enemy camp. They moved about, they talked with each other, and not one soldier stirred. Not one person saw them go in or go out. It seemed like the perfect setup. Even the enemy's sword was right there next to his sleeping body. One move, one plunge, that's all it would take to end this conflict. What brought these enemies to this moment?

Saul was king of Israel at this time; actually the first king of Israel. He was the king the people had called for and God had reluctantly given them. God anointed Saul and elevated him to this position. Except now King Saul was quickly going away from God. He liked being king with the honor and attention that came with. Being a proud man he didn't like any kind of attention going to someone else. So when a brave new warrior came into his army and started winning battles, that didn't sit well with Saul. Jealousy, anger, and pride all swelled in his heart. He started pursuing this warrior, relentlessly going after him. It became an obsession. Catch him and kill him. Saul considered this warrior the enemy.

David was serving at this time. He served the king. He also lived with the knowledge that he was next in line and had been handpicked for the throne. David was the next king of Israel, God had promised him. But until that time he was dedicated to serving the current anointed king, Saul. It had been this way for a number of years. He lovingly served his king, he honored him, and he went into battle for God, for Israel, and for his king. He had no intention of speeding the process to him becoming king. He could see Saul's jealousy, but he didn't consider Saul an enemy.

Here they both were, David standing over Saul with the sword right there and no one protecting the king. **"Abishai said to David, Today God has delivered your enemy into your hands. Now let me pin him to the ground with one thrust of my spear; I won't strike him twice. But David said to Abishai, Don't destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?"** One stroke and his pursuer would be dead. David would be king. Everyone would know it was self-defense, it was war. David's right hand man sensed this was a moment of God's destiny. David would be well within his rights to destroy Saul. The mighty warrior would get his pursuer before his pursuer got him.

The perfect setup, God's promises, the right to self defense, it still wasn't right. David said no. Saul was the Lord's anointed. He had been selected by God and only God could remove him. David knew he would never escape the guilt if he struck Saul down. He would live knowing he ascended to the throne outside of God's timetable. With incredible restraint David took the higher ground, somewhat literally. **"So David took the spear and water jug near Saul's head, and they left. No one saw or knew about it, nor did anyone wake up. They were all sleeping, because the Lord had put them into a deep sleep. Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of the hill some distance away."** David wouldn't fight and he wouldn't strike, but he wanted Saul to know the compassion he showed. Saul saw David as an enemy. David did not. Saul was his pursuer; David didn't have a problem with Saul. Just keep one step ahead of him so he doesn't kill you, that's all David was thinking. David could have pretended Saul wasn't his enemy, then he wouldn't have had to be nice to him or show him compassion.

You figure you get along with everyone. Those you don't you just stay away from. I'm sorry, but you can't live as a Christian without enemies. And I'm not talking just hostile fanatical religions. Anyone who stands against the God you believe in is an enemy. Not always the person pursuing you with deadly weapons. But the person trying to convince you to soften your stance, quiet your confession, or change the Word which you believe, they are enemies. Maybe the person who always puts you down for what you believe at work or school. You and I have enemies. They're against the gospel. The question is how do we treat them? Stay away so we don't have to deal with them? Get hostile ourselves and fight back? Maybe put down their beliefs, comfort ourselves with the knowledge they're going to hell, and maybe even tell them. Those are all sinful excuses. They allow us to feel good for not wanting to love our enemies or show them love.

David left the door open for God to do what he was going to do in his relationship with Saul. It was action prompted by God. David knew God would work things out in the end. Ultimately there was a bigger enemy, a common enemy between Saul and David who was against God too. That was the real enemy. Satan is the bigger enemy of all human beings. Only from birth humans are friends with Satan. Every time we sin we show just how friendly we are with him. God didn't want it that way. So he promised to come after us.

With great love he relentlessly pursued his enemies, friends of Satan, and by his grace made us his children. Natural enemies not tricked, not forced, but won by his Son into being his children. God's unstoppable love poured out in Jesus toward his enemies, us. Jesus cleared away the sin that separates us from God with one destroying stroke. God killed Jesus. It was good news not bad. It was news that lifts burdens. It was news that forgives. Love for enemies won the day. We were the enemies of Jesus and we were won over by his love. Jesus liberated us and freed us to become God's children.

David didn't walk back to town with Saul. **"The Lord delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the Lord's anointed. As surely as I valued your life today, so may the Lord value my life and deliver me from all trouble. So David went on his way, and Saul returned home."** There was peace between David and Saul. David left the door for communication open so God could work on the heart of Saul and bring about reconciliation. God's expectations are the same with our enemies.

The enemies you recognize it can seem easy to try for revenge or to cut ties with them. It would be self defense, protection. These thoughts and actions serve Satan. He wins when we cut short someone's time of grace, their time to hear God's laws, repent, and hear the gospel. Limiting communication artificially limits ways in which God might work to bring them to faith with the Word. Instead remember the common enemy you have with them in Satan.

God won you from Satan's grip with love. God took you from enemies to children by grace in Christ. So by loving actions prompted by Christ you can let your enemy see the error of their actions through love. **"Then Saul said, I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Because you have considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have erred greatly."** Love can bring about repentance, might lead them to ask for forgiveness. A door might open for you to explain where forgiveness truly comes from. You were forgiven in Christ, and now in Christ you forgive them. That's confession of your faith. That's allowing Christ through his Word to work in both your hearts. Forgiveness comes from Christ and you share it freely as it was shared with you.

Love from God defeated our common enemy and gave us the power to fight back. Love allows us to keep from attacking our enemies. Love instead allows us to focus on the strength given to us from Jesus. Only because Satan's been defeated already can we defeat him every time we love our enemies and show them compassion. God works through our love. We take the opportunity to show our enemies love and forgiveness in Christ.

Jesus once said, **"If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?"** Returning good to those who do good to you is commendable, but far from difficult. It's quite easy. **"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven."** To return good for evil is Christ like. Being sons and daughters of the heavenly Father through Christ is the only way we can love our enemies. He loved us while we were enemies to make us his children; we can love our enemies whether they treat us well or harmful. Only in Christ are we freed to love our enemies.