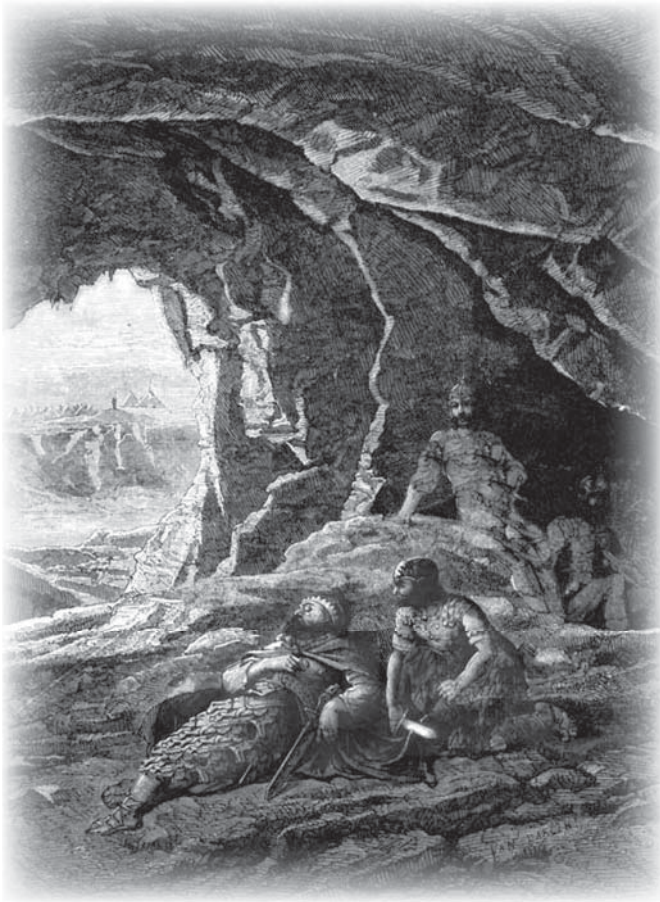


But Mine Eye Spared Thee

Mike Atnip



Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed. 1 Sa. 24:10

Should there be but one verse in the Bible to unveil to us the heart of God towards His most beloved creation, this one would suffice. Perhaps one may complain that this particular verse is not direct speech from God, and therefore does not qualify for such an honor. To me, the very circumstances under which these words were uttered adds to, rather than diminishes, their power. Most of us know the story, so I will only highlight the peaks.

A man, an Old Testament man under the Law of Moses (and not New Testament grace), is being pursued by his enemy. David, hiding in the caves and mountains, has every human reason to put to death his master. Not one fault can actually be found in the servant, save for the fact that he has delivered the whole kingdom from the oppression of the Philistines—if this be a fault. Probably still ringing in the ears of David are the echoes of a javelin gouging into the wall near his head, the which was the intended target. He has served, and has received hatred. He has played his harp, and almost died. And instead of rebelling, he only flees away, not wishing to cause any more problems.

Then comes the golden opportunity. Whispering in his ears are the voices of his dearest and most respected allies, “Here’s your chance!” Most assuredly his own nature arises at the prime moment to remind him that by rights, genuine Old Testament rights, he can hate his enemy. Perhaps in a bit of passion he starts forward, intending to finish with this running business once for all. But when the knife is drawn, and Saul still sleeps, he only cuts the “skirt of his robe.”

Saul awakes, oblivious to all, and takes up his task of hunting down David once again. He has not far to go—David calls to him shortly, holding up the telltale piece of garment as proof of his love to the unlovable. And the words, although not recorded as such, were probably bathed in tears and emotions that only a hunted man can know. “Some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee.”

Compassion

If any one particular fruit of a genuine Holy Ghost regeneration stands head and shoulders above the rest, it is compassion. Zeal can be worked up in the flesh, and has various sources. The ability to communicate truths to others is an ability that some have as a natural gift: eloquent orators are not necessarily born of God. Singing and shouting the praises of Zion does not need a spiritual renovation for them to be brought into action: a little music on the emotional side can create the right atmosphere. People can pray loud without God, the Eternal Life. Missionaries can sail for Timbuktu, prompted by the desire for an adventurous episode. But compassion—pure, unadulterated compassion—cannot be worked up by the natural man. Oh, he may occasionally feel a puff of sympathy for a few hours, maybe even a day or two, after an emotionally-charged speech by some charity organization. But the day-in-day-out, weeping compassion cannot be procured by anything less than the life-giving blood of a perfect sacrifice.

The compassion of God

Another one of my favorite stories in the Bible is found in 2 Kings 21 and 2 Chronicles 33. First, we will highlight Manasseh’s sins ... just a few for now. Graven images (even

in the house of the Lord itself), enchantments, abominations above all the Amorites did, passing his son through the fire, and shedding innocent blood ... to name a few. Of the last sin mentioned, Jewish tradition has it that part of this blood was none other than that of the prophet Isaiah—literally sawn asunder by this murderous king.

Pass on now to 2 Chronicles 33. Here we find God Himself hearing the supplication of this most wicked man. He is returned to his kingdom, and even begins to make some national reforms. This is compassion on the part of God. Pure, unadulterated compassion.



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Can you imagine seeing Isaiah the prophet sawn asunder? The gentle, kind Isaiah that had so many beautiful things to say to God's people, encouraging them to hang on in faith until the promised Messiah should come? Maybe it is because I love the writings of Isaiah so much that this picture affects me so—Isaiah being cut in two with a huge saw! And then, God allows the murderer to return to his throne! Compassion? Yes, compassion!

The compassion of Jesus

Perhaps we can allow God such great compassion: He is God, and not man. But what about the God-man that came and walked among us?

Before entering the temple to cleanse it from the thieves and liars making merchandise of things spiritual, we find Him with tears running down His tired cheeks. He has preached, and not been heeded. He has been mocked and interrogated with intentions to make Him be the fool. He returns to the city to finally cleanse the temple one more time, but with weeping. Someone has aptly said of this moment, "He who has not wept, should not whip." Jesus had

all authority to wield the whip, His tears being the evidence of a caring heart.

We find Him telling an adulteress, caught in the very act, that he does not condemn her. He has every right to, in human eyes. Adultery is a grave offense, especially in the eyes of one who has never, ever done anything of the sort. And then, when some hypocritical religious men crucify him for having such compassion on their own people, what does He say with his parting breath? "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

The compassion of Stephen

Well, we may say, "God the Father, and Jesus the Son are God. What about us humans?" We will briefly consider Stephen, a man, and a young man at that. He followed the example left by his Master, dying for no reason at the hands of jealous hypocrites. And his last words? "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

And David, once more

This brings us back to David again. David is the ultimate example of God-given compassion. God is God and has power unknown to us humans. Jesus was God and man. Stephen was pure man, but a New Testament regenerated man, with the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within. But David? This is an example of nothing less than pure compassion, doubtlessly a gift from God, and a blazing example to all of us who now do have the opportunity to partake of the divine nature.

The divine nature

As was mentioned above, compassion, like that of the examples given above, is a fruit of a truly regenerated heart. For a man to live and practice true compassion, something has to be changed inside of him. David, although living under the law, had a more-than-usual relationship with God. Had he been a common, run-of-the-mill Jew of his day, the story would be different. Nonetheless, the story of compassion needs to be the story of the new covenant. Now, let me rephrase that last sentence to the reality: the story of compassion is the story of the new covenant.

With the coming of the Holy Ghost comes compassion. This is because this is the very nature of the Spirit of God. While boldness, zeal, and singing are also fruits, compassion overpasses them all. You might as well tell a fish not to swim as to tell a truly Holy Ghost regenerated person not to have compassion. The problem seems to be that today we accept something less than the "real McCoy" for a "born-again experience," and then make excuses for the subnormal Christianity that is produced. God help us!

On raising children

Many good books have been written on the subject of child training. However, most that I have read neglect a very important point: if you want to win your children to Christ, the most powerful thing you can do is be a compassionate father or mother. Let your children see the tears falling while you pray for the lost. Let them see you swallow the lump in your throat when you hear of another Catholic priest caught in fornication—they know that dad hurts inside. Let them see and hear dad pray with a burden for the neighbors that mock—never letting a nasty word slip out. If a man is filled with compassion, the children will know it; and he can fail in other areas of child training, but will still leave an irremovable stamp on their hearts ... Dad walked with God!



On discipline and compassion

Discipline is a necessary part of child training and church administration. Firm discipline! Let the book of Proverbs be true forever! Any home, or church, without firm discipline will have more problems than are necessary. But, mix this strong discipline with Holy Ghost compassion and you have

a constructive atomic bomb! Look at Jesus entering Jerusalem. What went through the disciples' minds while He cleansed the temple, knowing that shortly beforehand the man with the whip had wept over the city?

For some reason, prophets have the reputation of being finger-pointing, red-hot rebukers of injustice. The reason behind this probably lies in the fact that many self-appointed prophets are just that. We tend to make God in our own image, rather than letting Him transform ours. Let

anyone who thinks prophets are scathing rebukers of iniquity consider Jeremiah once more. His writings are composed mostly of denunciations against the iniquities of an idolatrous, adulterous nation with its face willfully turned against the God who had delivered them. But, look a little closer. In about every chapter or two, we find the message that God is still waiting for them to return, yea, He is pleading for them to do so! And Jeremiah? "... my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." Je. 13:17 There was a reason Jeremiah is known as "The Weeping Prophet"!

The man walking in the flesh can see the faults of the great apostasy in which we are surrounded. I believe a blind man could see them. It does not take a prophet to see the rank errors that now fill most churches. But it does take a

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true, anointed prophet to denounce them while the tears of compassion roll down his cheeks. Did Jeremiah say, "I shall tell your sins abroad," or "I shall weep in secret places"? Did he say, "I told you it was coming, and you deserve it," or did his heart pang within him at the sight of rebel Jews with chains headed for captivity? These were stubborn, backslidden, rebellious Jews that had rejected the word of God! And he wept tears of compassion.

As mentioned above, we often try to make God in our own image. We take our own personality and makeup, and then build a picture of God out of these. Next, we come up with ideas of just how this God would react in certain circumstances. Oh, beware not to make images!

Condemnation

The opposite of compassion is condemnation. This is an attitude that does not feel with the accused or oppressed; for the basic meaning of compassion is "to feel with." Satan is full of this heartless attitude, and is known as "the accuser of the brethren."

How to make sure your children have a hard time relating with others

This is quite a long subtitle, but let me give you a few sure methods on how to bring this about. For breakfast, make sure you nourish your children's hearts with "Boiled Baptist." At dinnertime, pick up the topic and have "Mashed Methodist" and "Sliced Seventh-Day Adventist." Supper can be filled in with "Chopped Church of Christ." Cook the Catholics in your family devotions, making sure you point out how awfully wrong the doctrines of transubstantiation and the worship of the Virgin Mary are. Perhaps you can

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change the tune a bit for the next day's breakfast, noting to the children how lazy the highway department workers are, and how inefficiently they manage their resources. Then, for dinner, point out how the neighbor does not know how to farm real well, and how his fields are unkempt ...

"But wait a minute," you may say, "are not these all truths?" Absolutely so! I know of faults in all of the above groups, organizations, and doctrines, and hope that my little two-year-old boy never becomes entangled in these faults or errors. And, these truths need to be taught to our children. However, if you feed your children a steady diet in the above manner, you can be sure they will probably never be able to help such people; nor relate well with anyone else. And if your children never see one drop of compassion-filled tears fall from your eyes, multiply this failure by seven times.

Yes, there is a time and a place to point out to our children the errors of today's Christianity. That time and place would be the time and place when you can both be on your knees with a tissue box close at hand, to wipe the tears while you intercede. Your child will arise with the necessary knowledge to avoid the pitfalls, and the means to help someone else who has already fallen in.

It has been said that if a child grows up in an atmosphere of condemnation towards others from the parents, he will grow up struggling with feelings of this towards his own heart. I believe this, because I have seen it: a constant, nagging, accusing feeling that one is never good enough. We reap what we sow, and our children reap from what we sow. And as said one prophet, if we sow to the wind, we shall reap the whirlwind. Thankfully the same is true in the positive, sow to the Spirit and you—and your children—shall reap of the same!

And back to David again

We left David telling—and showing—Saul that he had compassion upon him. Saul knew the story. He had not forgotten the javelins. Suppose now that David had tried to kill Saul in the cave. And suppose he somehow messed up, only wounding him, escaping finally out the entrance. After a short run to the other side of the canyon, he turns back to speak to Saul struggling out of the mouth of the cave, bleeding.

"Saul, the Lord judge between me and you; I am innocent. Whom do you pursue, a dead dog?"

I think I can hear Saul's reply. "Yes, David, I am coming after a dead dog, for you will die yet!!" And with a shake of a fist and a curse, the story would continue as before.

But ...

David's eye did spare Saul. And Saul, the demon-oppressed, hate-filled, jealous king broke down ... and wept. He then told David something he probably already knew, but now it was sure:

"I know well that thou shalt be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand."

Would you like to be a king? And have the kingdom of God in your hand to give to your children?

God can make this a reality by a process known as the new birth. In this process, your old nature has to die, and God replaces it with a new nature; His very own. His very Presence then fills your new heart, making all things new. Compassion will flow out, as naturally as water runs downhill.

A miracle? A miracle indeed! Pray for me, the author, that I may receive fresh baptisms of this compassion, being overwhelmed with the Presence of the Creator God; who is the Eternal Life. There is no other way. ~

Compassion defined!

During the 1915 massacre of around a million Armenians by the Turks, a military unit attacked a village, killing all the adults and taking the young women as hostages. An officer raided a home, shot the parents, gave the daughters to his soldiers, but kept the beautiful oldest daughter for himself. After months of captivity, servitude, and abuse, she escaped and slowly rebuilt her life, ultimately completing training as a nurse.

One night while on duty in a Turkish hospital, she recognized the face of a desperately ill patient in intensive care. It was her captor and abuser, the murderer of her parents, the Turkish officer. He was comatose and required constant care if he was to survive. A long and difficult convalescence followed, with the man too ill to be aware of his surroundings.

One day, as he was returning to health, the doctor said to him, "You are a very fortunate man. Had it not been for the devotion of this nurse, you would never have made it; you would certainly be dead."

The officer looked long at the nurse. "I've wanted days to ask you, we have met before, have we not?"

"Yes," she replied, "we have met before."

"Why didn't you kill me when you had the opportunity? Or why didn't you just let me die?"

"Because," the nurse replied, "I am a follower of the One who taught 'love your enemies.'"