

FINDING OUR PLACE IN HIS HEART

I Samuel 13: 13, 14, Acts 13: 22 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson -- Youth Snow Camp

This Sunday morning, we are embarking on uncharted waters in this final Snow Camp message. We are going to attempt to explore how we as God's children, who have found our place in God's hopes, in His hands and in His home, can find our place in His heart. The reason I say these are uncharted waters is because the Scripture is not filled with references about the heart of God. There are tons of verses about our hearts being right, but not lots of verses about God's heart. There are many hints however, and hints that are strong enough that hymn writers have written about God's heart. Cleland B. McAfee in 1903 wrote an awesome hymn called "Near To The Heart Of God." That's the place I want to be, and it's the place I am praying each of you want to go and be at home, in His heart, or near to His heart. The words of the hymn are: There is a place of quiet rest, Near to the heart of God; A place where sin cannot molest, Near to the heart of God. Refrain: O Jesus, blest Redeemer, Sent from the heart of God; Hold us, who wait before Thee, Near to the heart of God. There is a place of comfort sweet, Near to the heart of God; A place where we our Savior meet, Near to the heart of God. There is a place of full release, Near to the heart of God; A place where all is joy and peace, Near to the heart of God."

Please don't be deceived into believing God's heart is the same as the heart of a made up God. Millions of Christians in the last 20 years have been hoodwinked into believing that the Muslim god, Allah is the same as God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, three persons. Just comparing our majestic God to Allah in the Quran tells us tons about the heart of God. Allah, according to the Quran is not a father, has no son, and is not a triune being, but is a single, unknowable entity. Allah destroys infidels and sinners, rather than dying to save sinners. Allah has compassion only on the righteous, so that's no one Allah loves, for Romans 3: 10 tells us, "There is none righteous, no not one." Allah does not give grace but only rewards good deeds. Allah has no plan to redeem the lost. That Allah should ever become a man to die for the sins of the world would be heresy to a Muslim. The God of the Bible is love. For Allah, this fact is not a possibility in his character. Allah could have never said, Genesis 1: 26, "Let Us make man in our image." In the Hausa translation of the Bible in northern Nigeria, there is a grave error that they have translated God as the same as Allah. This horrible mistake is found in Arabic translations of the Bible. They have totally redefined and grievously confused the heart of God. Let me say more about Allah, as Muslims are spreading across America. Allah is no mere linguistic designation for God. Dios is God in

Spanish and Dieu is God in French. Allah is the name of an ancient pagan idol adopted as the god of Islam. Allah is not the generic Arabic word for God, but the name of a particular god among many false gods. Allah is the chief god among the approximately 360 idols in the Ka'aba in Mecca. In that pagan temple, there is a deity to suit each of the 1000nds of travelers passing through in the trade caravans. Allah is a contraction of Al—llah, the name of the moon god of the local Quraish, Muhammed's tribe. This Al-llah was worshipped with animal and human sacrifices for centuries before Islam was made up. The earliest biographer of Muhammed who began Islam, tells how Muhammed's grandfather was about to sacrifice one of his sons, Abdullah, who later became Muhammed's father, when a sorceress persuaded him to sacrifice a camel instead. Al-llah was worshipped long before Muhammed was born. Thus when Muhammed rejected polytheism—worship in many gods, he took the name of his own tribe's traditional deity, the moon god, as the one god of Islam, his new religion. Allah's symbol is the crescent moon, which Muhammed carried over into Islam. This symbol I have seen often on mosques in India, Turkey, on minarets, shrines and on Arab flags. So, when we speak of finding our place in the heart of God, please know it is not about the one idol god of Islam. If such a false god could have a heart, it would be an empty heart of stone, not the loving heart of the God of the Bible.

This morning we are looking at two passages, an Old Testament passage in I Samuel 13: 13, 14 where the prophet says to King Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." What a moment of truth for king Saul to know God was passing him by and God Almighty, Jehovah, Yahweh, the great I AM had sought out a man after His own heart. Whatever we may say about finding a place in God's heart, we must hear the truth that God's heart is a heart seeking obedience to each of His commands. Then in Acts 13: 21-23, Paul the apostle was preaching in Antioch of Pisidia. Paul quoted the prophet Samuel and he added more as God the Holy Spirit directed him. We read Paul's words, "Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And when God had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, of whom He testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after My heart, who will do all My will.' Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as He

promised.” So we learn another important truth about the heart of God. God’s heart is drawn to anyone who will do all His will.

On Wednesday night, we had four ladies and four men stay at our home after the Moody Symphonic Band Concert. One of the ladies, Hollie Kate Robb stayed up the latest talking with us. She is dating a man named Jonathan Weaver who is a missionary pilot, currently he is in Zambia. Holly sat up a bit longer and told us that she saluted my wife and me because she sensed that we both want to follow God completely and do all His will. We prayed with her, but I was impressed that Hollie was guarding that night the heart of God. Then she told us some stories of how she intentionally sought to always follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit and when she saw others who did the same, she was drawn to them, even as God was drawn to David. For a few moments, I want us to explore this special place in God where He wants us to find our place with Him, not only in His hopes, in His hands, and in His home, but also in His heart.

Chris Tomlin probably introduces this spot in God where David found who he really was. From the ancient record of David’s life, this man who was once a murderer, an adulterer, and a deceiver of his nation, this man who also, unlike king Saul, knew how to truly repent, from this ancient record, Chris Tomlin wrote a song called “Your Heart.” Chris Tomlin wrote the song as if David himself were singing the song to the Lord. The words are: “It never was about the oil dripping from my head I never did dream beyond the pastures I could tend It never was about the praise, not about the street parade I didn't really need a crowd when Goliath fell down. I never meant to woo a king with simple shepherd songs Or hide away inside a cave, safe from danger's arms I never meant to wear a crown, or try to bring armies down It never was about me and who I hoped to be. At the end of the day, I wanna hear people say, ‘My heart looks like Your heart, my heart looks like Your heart When the world looks at me, let them agree That my heart looks like Your heart, my heart looks like Your heart. I never thought I would be much more than Jesse's kin Who would ever dream a king would come from Bethlehem? I know that I've crashed and burned, lives have been overturned But You redeem everything, yeah, even me. At the end of the day, I want to hear people say That my heart looks like Your heart, my heart looks like Your heart When the world looks at me, I pray all they see Is my heart looks like Your heart, my heart looks like Your heart. Five little stones, or a royal robe Shepherd or king doesn't mean a thing Cause at the end of the day...At the end of the day, I wanna hear people say That my heart looks like Your heart, my heart looks like Your heart Unashamed I will dance, in Your name, lift my hands. 'Til my heart looks like Your heart, my

heart looks like Your heart, Like Your heart, like Your heart, 'Til this heart looks like Your heart.” So what is this special place in God where He wants us to find our place with Him, not only in His hopes, in His hands, and in His home, but also in His heart? What is this sweet spot with God, this intimate place where we can, like the apostle John, lay our head on Jesus’ bosom? How do we find our place in His heart, in God’s heart, in Your heart, Lord, so we call ourselves unashamedly, the disciple whom Jesus loves? I want to describe this sweet spot two ways for us in hopes we will run to God’s embrace and find our place there today.

THE SWEET SPOT IN GOD’S HEART IS WHERE WE SURRENDER TO

OBEY HIM. (I.) Remember Samuel the prophet’s words to king Saul about David, “The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.” How many of us as young people and adults today are missing God’s sweet spot, missing the place where God welcomes us like John the beloved to lay on His bosom? But you say, “I like to be at the table with the Lord. I like to be fairly near to Him, but I don’t know if I want to be so close I feel His heart beating. I’ll leave that to others. I want to obey if it’s convenient, if it’s acceptable to my taste, or in my comfort zone. But Pastor, I like having options. I don’t want to be tied down to one way, God’s way. I think He’ll understand that I am a free spirit; that’s just how I am created. He made me a bit of a rebel, so I don’t like the word surrender unless it is convenient.” If that’s you today, thanks for being honest enough to say, “I don’t want to find my place in His heart.”

It isn’t ever wise to claim a place for ourselves that we seldom frequent and that we don’t prefer to be. Now I hate to bring this up, but I am compelled today to tell you, “Don’t be surprised if God tells you something that sounds a lot like this, ‘It’s okay if you disobey. I don’t want to force you to love Me. You are free to walk away and disobey Me if you desire. There is a consequence of your choosing of your own way over Mine and not wanting to obey Me. I have had to select someone else to do the job I intended for you to do. Like King Saul, I can’t keep a king or a prince or a queen or a princess or a close friend or a bride or a servant having a place representing Me, if you don’t want to obey Me. I love you and I will keep wooing you to My arms, but I must help you step down from the place I planned for you. Did you not realize that every Saul will ultimately lose the spot I planned for them if they tamper with obedience and play the field? It is always true that I have a sweet spot for every believer, every follower of Mine, near to my heart, leaning on my bosom. But no one has to be there. And I’ve found that no one who disobeys Me wants to find their place next to my heart unless they like

David, repent. David was a man after My heart, but he walked away, big time, once and committed adultery and murder and deceit. He went through a terrible time of My discipline before he ever decided to come completely clean, but clean he became, because he repented without excuses like King Saul did. When he repented, he knew the way to My sweet spot, and though he was never perfect, he came back forgiven to My arms, to My heart, leaning on My bosom. He died leaning on Me, where he lived the rest of his life with his place in My heart.”

I have a beloved friend whom I trained for ministry. He has served in five pastorates, and he was faithful, valiant, and strong for the Lord. He had a beautiful wife and three grown children. But he started lying to his wife, seeing a woman in another state, telling her he was single, and he married her, his second wife. He was once an Evangelical Free Church pastor like me. The district superintendent learned the lie my pastor friend I trained and love was telling and living. He learned what was going on, so the District Superintendent, like me, went to the church, waited for this pastor to get up to preach, and then like Samuel, he disclosed the lie of the pastor to his wife and church, and then removed this pastor from the church and walked him out. This pastor lost his ordination, and then he lost two wives for both of them, learning of his lies, divorced him. Like David, this pastor, slowly but surely totally repenting, has found his way back to the heart of God. I know he has found God’s sweet spot, which he may never have known before. But oh, how much he lost by disobeying God. His three grown children want little to do with their Dad. God will yet use my brother, but like King Saul, the price of disobeying is higher than he could ever dream. My brother is still in love with the wife who bore his three children. She cannot make herself trust him. She claims she has forgiven him, but she doesn’t want to go back to him. This true story has a better ending than king Saul who fell on his own sword in battle after going to get advice from the witch of Endor because God rejected him. Saul didn’t disobey once. He lived a life of disobedience, far from the heart of God. Secondly,

THE SWEET SPOT IN GOD’S HEART IS WHERE WE SURRENDER TO DO ALL HIS WILL. (II.) This sweet spot is even deeper in God’s embrace. Paul spoke of this sweet spot that David found in God. In Acts 13: 21-23, we read, “Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And when God had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, of whom He testified and said, ‘I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after My heart, who will do all My will.’” You see, King Saul could somewhat legitimately say to Samuel in I Samuel 15: 13, “Blessed be you to the Lord. I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” Strange thing is, King

Saul was right—partly. He did all that God said, except for a small part of God’s command that he omitted. All he did was reframe God’s command in a way he could obey all of it and blame any omissions on the people he served, justifying himself. When God prompts us to obey Him, sometimes he sends the message through others. This command of God was delivered to Saul from Samuel the prophet. The command was, in I Samuel 15: 1-3, “And Samuel said to Saul, “The LORD sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel; now therefore listen to the words of the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt. Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.”

Are the promptings and commands of the Lord always easy? No! Did God give King Saul a testy command? I believe He did. Did King Saul obey? Yes, up to a point, but he spared many sheep and oxen, beautiful animals and he spared the king, Agag. He didn’t do all God’s will. How must he have thought to almost obey all the will of the Lord? Perhaps Saul said, “I know the intent of the Lord, but I doubt if He knew how wonderful these sheep and oxen are—we need to breed them to our sheep and oxen. It will improve what we have. And as for Agag, it seemed pitiful to kill him; he seemed so helpless with his kingly robe on. We’ll just take him home and think on what to do with him.” Or did Saul say, “I know the intent of the Lord, but I suspect Samuel said a bit more than God wanted because he was zealous and over-spoke the Lord.” Or did Saul say, “I know the intent of the Lord, but I don’t think it is my place as a king to kill a king or my place as a king to kill good animals when my people are going hungry, plus they said we ought to save them for sacrificing to God.” I can’t get into Saul’s mind, but I know what Saul did, he left his sweet spot of being God’s first chosen king of Israel. He lost his place in His heart, in God’s heart, doing all His will. Have some of you pulled a Saul and not done all God’s will, justifying yourself and being able to prove your way was best? Listen in closing to Hillsong’s “Forever Reign.”

“You are good, You are good When there's nothing good in me You are love, You are love On display for all to see You are light, You are light When the darkness closes in; You are hope, You are hope You have covered all my sin. You are peace, You are peace When my fear is crippling You are true, You are true Even in my wandering You are joy, You are joy, You're the reason that I sing. You are life, You are life, In You death has lost it's sting. Oh, I’m running to your arms, I’m running to Your arms The riches of Your love Will always be enough. Nothing compares to Your embrace Light of the world forever reign. You are more, You

are more Than my words will ever say, You are Lord, You are Lord All creation will proclaim You are here, You are here In your presence I'm made whole You are God, You are God, Of all else I'm letting go Oh, I'm running to your arms I'm running to Your arms The riches of Your love Will always be enough Nothing compares to Your embrace Light of the world forever reign. My heart will sing no other name Jesus, Jesus Oh, I'm running to your arms I'm running to Your arms The riches of Your love Will always be enough Nothing compares to Your embrace Light of the world forever reign.” Are you ready, willing and running to your place in His heart? Dear Lord, may it be true. I love you. Let's bow our heads.