

The Second Story – God's View: Grace
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Physical harm, lies, deceit, empty promises, disloyalty. Often in the news we hear about the injustices committed against individuals, groups, and countries. Also, we hear about abuse and mistreatment in conversations with members of our family, friends or neighbors. Our own memories also can include stories of unpleasant interpersonal relationships. Often, many primarily respond just the same way others treat them, viewing events like those previously mentioned as opportunities to retaliate, to repay evil with evil, and insult with insult. How should we as Christ followers respond? While there is a lot of instruction and many examples in the Scriptures, we will just look at two stories.

The first story (*I Samuel 18-19*) is of a man who acted with an extreme focus on self revealed through anger, bitterness, jealousy, wrath, vengeance, and hate. King Saul. When David came to the palace after defeating Goliath, he was faithful in service and initially Saul promoted him. However, Saul was very angry and treated David with bitterness and jealousy. The next day, on two occasions, Saul attacked David with a spear, hoping to pin him to the wall. While Saul appeared to further promote David, he was actually acting out of fear and seeking to build his own kingdom at the expense of others. Saul promised his oldest daughter, Merab, to David in marriage if David would risk his own life to an even greater degree in the battles. Saul thought David would die in battle and then Saul himself would not have to kill him. David served in the battles, but when the time came for the hand of Merab to be given to him, Saul gave her to another man. Saul later promised the hand of Michal, his other daughter, requiring David to risk his life even more, with the hope that David would lose his life in the process. Saul constantly acted as David's enemy. Saul gave orders to David's best friend, Jonathan, and to all his servants to kill David. David had to flee for his life and went into hiding.

How did David respond in all these events? What was God's evaluation of David's actions and reactions? If you were David, how would you respond when Saul used his position of authority for his own benefit at your expense, treated you with anger, tried to hurt you, attempted to kill you, instigated others to hurt and kill you, dealt with you with lies, trickery, and empty promises, and treated you as his enemy continuously? When David responded according to God's plan, how did God deal with him and with Saul?

The second story; *II Samuel 9* tells of how King David treated one of Saul's descendants. As king, he had the resources to execute justice or even vengeance. Had he done so, the story could have been very different. Rather than focusing on self or on the sinful things that Saul had done to him, David purposely positioned himself to be an instrument of God's kindness. He sought out Saul's grandson, Mephibosheth, to "show the (unfailing, unsought, unlimited) mercy and kindness of God" (*II Samuel 9:3*, Amp.). David restored to Mephibosheth the land that belonged to his grandfather Saul, and Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons. The story illustrates David's demonstration of love, kindness, compassion, mercy, and grace.

How should we respond to life's trials? Note God's view in the following words: By our love one for another all men will know we are Christ followers (*John 13:35*); Vengeance is Mine, says the Lord, I will repay (*Hebrews 10:30*); "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." (*Matthew 6:14*); "Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" (*Matthew 18:33*). By way of application to your present circumstances and interpersonal relationships, consider your response to the opportunities God provides for you to show His love in purposeful and practical ways. Just say, "Yes" to God!