

JONATHAN'S WONDERFUL FRIENDSHIP

1 Samuel 18:1-20:42

Key Verse: 20:42a

“Jonathan said to David, ‘Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the Lord, saying, “The Lord is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.”’”

Saul was a handsome man, a head taller than all other men. He was obedient to his father. When Samuel had implied that he would make Saul king of Israel, Saul said that he was the least man from the least clan of all the clans of Benjamin. (9:21) When Samuel went to Mizpah to anoint Saul as king before the people of Israel, he hid himself among the baggage. He acted as if he were a truly humble man. Saul was an ideal man to be king of Israel. But his human quality was not enough to lead God's people. When Samuel made him king, the Spirit of God came upon him in power. (10:9; 11:6) Then, with the Spirit of God he drafted people from all over Israel and made them as one man. With the Spirit of God Saul rescued the city of Jabesh from the hand of Nahash the Ammonite. As soon as Saul seized the power as king, he became proud and foolish; he did not fear God; he ignored the words of God. When the Philistines besieged Israel, his people became apprehensive of calamities, and most of them were looking for hiding places. When Saul saw that their situation was critical, for the sake of fortune-seeking, like shamanistic people, he offered up the burnt offering, violating the priestly office. Then Samuel came and delivered the message of God

that the Lord had abandoned him as king and sought out a man after his own heart, for Saul had not kept the Lord's command. (13:13,14) God gave him a second chance, to completely destroy the Amalekites, in the hope of restoring his position. But he did not obey him. (15:1-35) What happened when Saul was rejected by God? The Spirit of the Lord departed from him, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him. (16:14)

This passage deals with Saul's tragic life tormented by evil spirits, and how God began to train David and mold him as a man of obedience to God's will. Most of all, we learn about Jonathan's wonderful friendship with David.

I. David was loved by all his people

Chapters 18 and 19 mainly deal with King Saul's jealousy of David, and his attempt to kill him. On the contrary, all the people of Israel loved David. Their love for David reached from top to bottom. Let's see how Prince Jonathan loved David. 18:1 says, "After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself." Jonathan could have felt a sense of rivalry when David defeated Goliath the Philistine champion. But Jonathan did not have any bad human feelings toward David. As soon as he saw David, he became one in spirit with him. He fell in love with David. He liked David not only with glad emotions, but also from the fountain of his soul. Jonathan wanted to keep this friendship everlastingly. So Jonathan made a covenant of friendship with David, because he loved him as himself. (18:3)

Many people say, "I love you." But in practice they don't share the burden together or give anything as the expression of love. But Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt. (18:4) Through this act of love, Jonathan virtually

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gave his position as prince to David. Jonathan's love for David reminds us of Jesus' words in John 15: 13, which says, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." There are many people who do not know how to make friends due to their selfishness. But Jonathan gave everything in order to make friends with David.

Not only Prince Jonathan, but also Princess Michal, the younger daughter of King Saul, fell in love with David. From time to time we see many a woman fall in love with a man. We wonder how a woman falls in love with a man at a glance. But we learn that women have an instinctive insight to see the integrity of a man.

In everything he did David had great success, because the Lord was with him. When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns. (18:14-16) The boy David became a national hero and the focus of love of his people. How did he become such a great man, even though he was nothing but a boy?

First, David had faith in God. In chapter 17 we learn that all the people of Israel were harassed by Goliath the Philistine champion when he challenged them to come out and fight. None of the Israelites dared to challenge Goliath; all of them trembled in fear, not because they had no soldiers, but because they had no faith. But the boy David came to the front lines of the battlefield on an errand from his father to see if his brothers were well, and he found the situation, that no one was willing to challenge Goliath. So he volunteered to fight Goliath in a duel. King Saul wondered what this boy could do to Goliath. Then David said to Saul, "Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord

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who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." (17:36,37a) David thought he would rather die than see Goliath defy the armies of the living God. David believed in God, that God would rescue him from the hand of Goliath as he had delivered him from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear. When the boy David confronted Goliath in a duel, Goliath looked down on him, saying, "You are a mere boy with a stick." Then David said, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied." (17:45) The people of Israel loved David because of his courageous faith.

Second, the Spirit of God was with David. 16:13 says, "So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah." The boy David could not be such a courageous man of faith with his own strength. But when the Spirit of God came upon him in power, the power of God enabled him to overcome his fear and confront the ferocious Goliath. Generally, people like a handsome man or a beautiful girl. Most women like a man of spirit more than a rich and old man. We must know that an indomitable spirit comes from God. (2Ti1:7) The people of Israel loved David because he was a man of spirit.

II. Saul's jealousy of David (18:1-19:24)

At first, King Saul was moved by David's heroic feats. So he gave him a high rank in the army and the privilege of eating at the king's table. But one event on the road made King Saul angry. When the soldiers were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of

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Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes. At the sight, King Saul was happy. But the women sang a refrain, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." This refrain galled King Saul. From that time on, Saul kept a jealous eye on David. (18:9) When King Saul became jealous because of women, an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon him. Saul lost control of himself. The women's praise of David drove him crazy. So, once at the dining room of the palace Saul hurled the spear in his hand toward David to pin him to the wall, not just once, but twice.

When Saul was possessed by an evil spirit, he was very fearful. He was afraid of David because he realized that the Lord was with David. (18:15) So Saul promised David that he would give his older daughter to him in marriage on the condition that he would serve him bravely, fighting the Philistines once more. This was Saul's plot to kill David by the hand of the Philistines. (18:17) Being persuaded to become the king's son-in-law, David and his men went out and killed two hundred Philistines. He brought their foreskins and presented the full number to the king so that he might become the king's son-in-law. But Saul had given his older daughter to someone else.

Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David. But Jonathan was very fond of David. (19:1) At this, Jonathan informed David that his father was going to kill him. At the same time, Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly. He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine. The Lord won a great victory for all Israel, and you saw it and were glad. Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason?" (19:4,5) After

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listening to Jonathan, Saul promised that he would not kill David. But Saul was totally out of control of himself. An evil spirit from the Lord came upon Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand. While David was playing the harp, Saul tried to pin him to the wall with his spear, but David eluded him as Saul drove the spear into the wall. That night David made good his escape. (19:9,10) Saul sent his men to kill David while he was sleeping. But Michal, David's wife, rescued him.

When David had fled and made his escape, he went to Samuel the servant of God first and told him all that Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went to Naioth and stayed there. Word came to Saul: "David is in Naioth at Ramah"; so he sent men to capture him. But when they saw a group of prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing there as their leader, the Spirit of God came upon Saul's men and they also prophesied. Saul sent a second group and a third group to Naioth to kill David, but they all got high and began to prophesy. Finally Saul himself went to Naioth at Ramah. But the Spirit of God came even upon him, and he got so high that he stripped his robes and began to prophesy before Samuel. Saul was not able to destroy David as long as the Spirit of God was with David.

Saul was no more a king; he was a demon-possessed man; he was a slave of evil-doing. Once he was anointed by God as king of Israel. He was blessed by God more than he had expected. But he did not remember the grace of God. When he gained power, he became proud and disobeyed God. As a result, the Spirit of God left him, and an evil spirit came upon him forcefully. Then King Saul could not maintain his kingship. He became like a woman, enslaved by a jealousy demon. To become proud or disobedient to God is not a light matter; it is a

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serious matter to mankind.

III. Jonathan keeps his covenant of friendship (20:1-42)

David was a man of faith and a loyal subject to King Saul, and a hero of his people. As he was faithful to God and loyal to his king, his sorrow to be hated by the king was unbearable to him as a young man. But he did not plot a coup d'etat, riding on his popularity. He first went to Samuel for counseling. Next, David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan to plead with him to save his life from the hands of the king, based on his innocence. To the young man David, life was not easy; he was in a storm of the sea.

On Jonathan's part, David's crisis was beyond his help. He was the crown prince. In history, many ambitious men killed their own brothers and even their fathers to occupy the throne of king. Jonathan was also a human being. So he must have been greatly troubled when David came to him for help. What did Jonathan do with David? Look at 20:4. "Jonathan said to David, 'Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you.'" David requested that Jonathan see if the king were determined to harm him or not. In response to his request, Jonathan promised that he would let him know. They arranged a place where Jonathan could let him know the result. Jonathan was a crown prince, but in his heart he knew that David would be the next king. Still, Jonathan had no idea to destroy David. Rather, he provided the way for David to run for his life. In addition to this, Jonathan blessed David to be the next king, saying as follows: "May the Lord be with you as he has been with my father. But show me unfailing kindness like that of the Lord as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family--not even when the Lord has cut off every one of

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David's enemies from the face of the earth." So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the Lord call David's enemies to account." And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself. (13b-17) What a beautiful friendship! It was possible because they both loved God in the first place of their hearts. It was possible for God to establish a theocratic kingdom in Israel through David because of Jonathan's love for God and for his friend.

King Saul found out that David was missing from the king's table. Jonathan defended David by saying he gave him permission. But Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you? As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send and bring him to me, for he must die!" (30,31) Then Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David. It was costly for Jonathan to keep the covenant of friendship. But in reality it was the expression of Jonathan's faith, more than a covenant of friendship.

Jonathan left the feast table grieving, and went out to give David the prearranged signal. The signal, "the arrows are on this side of you," meant, "you are safe." "Look, the arrows are beyond you," meant, "you must run for your life." What was the signal David received? "The arrows are beyond you." It meant David had to run for his life as a political criminal. After sending the errand boy back, Jonathan went to David. David bowed down before Jonathan three times to pay him homage. But it was not to human Jonathan, but to the God of Jonathan. Then they kissed each other and wept together, but David wept the most. They

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parted with tears, but their bond of friendship was consolidated even more; their friendship in God for ever and ever remains in the hearts of faithful friends in God through the ages.

In this lecture we learn that when we disobey God, we are not free. We become slaves of evil spirits like King Saul. On the other hand, those who love God can have victorious lives like David and Jonathan. Especially, we learn from Jonathan that we must make friends with a man of God.