

“Jonathan, Friend of David”

Wicked men always find wickedness in innocence. Because their own hearts are wicked, they think everyone else is the same. Such wicked men try to taint both David and Jonathan with their own taste for perversion, by saying that Jonathan’s love for David was homosexual. They cannot envisage that men (or women) can have a non-sexual love for each other. As we find out in God’s word, there are many forms of love, each with their own word... but homosexuality is not love – it is just lust.

The love we find here, between Jonathan and David, is that close bond between young men who respect and admire each other, and whose God is the same God. In Jonathan we find the same kind of bravery and courage as is found in David. One might even think his courage was bordering on reckless – like when he ran into the midst of the Philistine camp, accompanied only by one other person! But, his was not a reckless courage – Jonathan relied totally on his God. This is something we rarely see in modern Christians. Do YOU have this courage?

So, Jonathan and David shared the same kind of holy courage and bravery, and this godliness was the basis for their relationship as close friends, a goodness that caused Jonathan to quietly oppose his own father’s violent disposition toward David.

There was, then, nothing suspect in their friendship, only a pure and selfless godly love for each other as brethren. Friendship not rooted in godliness is mere co-existence with good intent! Such friendships often crumble when resistance appears, or if one’s own well-being is threatened... when supposed ‘friendship’ evaporates quickly. A friendship found in God, though, stands the test of time, for it is founded on God and not on men.

In this chapter we see the desire of Saul to murder David, and his veiled threat toward his son, Jonathan, if he did not comply with his wishes. Yet, with the threat of execution hanging over his head, Jonathan bravely saved David’s life, defying Saul and his anger. One does not find such friendship easily, nor is it easily retained!

Verses 1-4

1.

“And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done?”

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What is mine iniquity? And what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?

2.

And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so.

3.

And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death.

4.

Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee.”

David got away from Naioth/Navith ('habitations') near Ramah where the prophets lived in that era, and returned to Saul's own city to find Jonathan. "*What have I done to incur your father's wrath?*" he asked his friend, "*What offence have I committed that is worthy of death?*"

Jonathan, knowing Saul's anger was unjust, promised David that he would not die. He would know first-hand if Saul was about to do harm to David, and if this happened he would immediately tell David. In turn, David gave his oath that Saul was indeed after his life, especially as he knew his own son was his friend, so maybe Saul would keep his plans from his son. David said he was only a small step from death. Jonathan, responding to his friend's desperation, promised he would do whatever David wanted him to do, to save his life.

Verses 5-17

1.

“And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to morrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even.

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2.

If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.

3.

If he say thus, It is well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him.

4.

Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the Lord with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldest thou bring me to thy father?

5.

And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee?

6.

Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? Or what if thy father answer thee roughly?

7.

And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.

8.

And Jonathan said unto David, O Lord God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to morrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there be good toward David, and then send not unto thee, and shew it thee;

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The Lord do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the Lord be with thee, as he hath been with my father.

10.

And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not:

11.

But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth.

12.

So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the Lord even require it at the hand of David's enemies.

13.

And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul."

David already had a plan, but it depended on knowing if Saul was again in his murderous mood. 'Tomorrow is the start of the new lunar month,' he said to Jonathan, 'a time when I ought to be sitting next to your father at table for the meal.' Respecting that Jonathan was a prince, David then asked him to allow him to hide in the field, so that he could avoid going to the meal.

'I will stay here for three days until dusk falls,' he added. 'When you are at the meal, note if Saul misses me. If he does, tell him I had to go to my home in Bethlehem to attend my family's annual sacrifice. If Saul accepts this and says it was a good idea, then I will rest. But, if he becomes angry, I will know he has plans to kill me.'

'Please, Jonathan, I ask you to be kind to me, your servant, for you have made a promise to me

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before God. However, if you think like your father that I deserve to be killed, I would prefer it if you did the deed rather than take me to your father.’ David waited anxiously for Jonathan’s reply.

‘Don’t talk like that,’ said David’s friend, ‘if I learn anything I will let you know.’ David was not easy to convince – he wanted to cover all possibilities. ‘But, who will let me know the outcome? How will I know the answer? What if Saul is angry?’ Jonathan gave his answer: ‘Look, let us walk into the field.’ There he vowed to God that if he did not bring an answer to David on the third day, God should cut him down. He promised that whatever the answer, David would be told and could escape in peace.

Then, both of them swore to each other that they would treat each other kindly in the future, no matter what happened and even when God eventually had made David king. In this way, both men promised to keep the other man’s family safe (a common promise in those days).

As a precaution, Jonathan made David promise again, “because he loved him... as he loved his own soul.” This was the height of human love for a friend, a righteous love that would do no harm. What is interesting about this incident is that both were men of God, yet they entered into intrigue and cunning plots. There would be deliberate deception of Saul by his own son, based on a deception by David. One must ask the question – is this not a lie? If it is, then how could God give a good response to David or Jonathan?

But, we may also ask if a wanton lie is the same as a deception designed to save one’s life? After all, think of the propaganda and counter-propaganda used in wartime, even in our own era... is this activity, used against an enemy, sinful, or not? It is a very interesting question, especially as God seemed to bless David at such times.

Verses 18-23

1.

“Then Jonathan said to David, To morrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.

2.

And when thou hast stayed three days, then thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place

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where thou didst hide thyself when the business was in hand, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel.

3.

And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark.

4.

And, behold, I will send a lad, saying, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for there is peace to thee, and no hurt; as the Lord liveth.

5.

But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee; go thy way: for the Lord hath sent thee away.

6.

And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the Lord be between thee and me for ever.”

Jonathan then repeated David’s concern: it was usual at the start of a new lunar period to sit at the king’s table for a feast. If he was not there, Saul would notice. ‘In three days time, come back here and hide behind the stone Ezel.’ This was a memorial stone set-up between Ramah and Nob.

Jonathan said, ‘I will come and shoot three arrows, but will let them go off to one side as if I had missed the target. I will tell the boy with me to collect the arrows from that side. You will then know that everything is alright. But, if you hear me telling the boy the arrows are beyond him, you will know you had better disappear, for Saul is against you.

Note in the text that Jonathan said it will be the *Lord* who sends David away. How often we

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dismiss an action we feel is forced upon us by 'circumstances', when, all along, it is *God*

Who is directing our paths, though we might think the path is distressing. We are so upset to do anything unfamiliar, we think we are victimized or hard-done-by!

If, said Jonathan, you have to leave, just remember we have promised each other, before God, to remain friends and allies.

Verses 24-29

1.

"So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat.

2.

And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty.

3.

Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean.

4.

And it came to pass on the morrow, which was the second day of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day?

5.

And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem:

6.

And he said, Let me go, I pray for thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there: and now, if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get

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away, I pray thee, and see my bretheren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table."

David hid himself in the field and waited. Meanwhile when the new moon arose, Saul began his feast, sitting with his back to the wall. Jonathan sat near him, and Abner, Saul's cousin and general, sat on one side. It was very obvious David was missing. But, Saul said nothing, thinking to himself that David must be ceremonially unclean, and so was prevented by religious rite from attending the meal.

But, next day, when the meal began, Saul asked Jonathan why David was missing.

Verses 30-34

1.

"Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?"

2.

For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.

3.

And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? What hath he done?"

4.

And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.

5.

So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the

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month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.”

Jonathan gave the excuse decided upon, but Saul was not fooled! He was full of rage and accused his son of taking David's side against the king, using a few well-chosen insults. Saul shouted at his son that so long as David remained alive, his own hereditary kingship would not come about. This did not bother Jonathan, though. Saul then demanded that Jonathan went to get David, to be killed.

Jonathan took courage and asked his father why he wanted David dead. But, Saul was beyond reason and, in a great rage, threw his javelin at his own son. Jonathan then knew his father's anger would never be placated. He got up from the table without eating, himself in a 'great rage' at such calumny. His heart was heavy and his anger was because of Saul's hatred for David, not just because his father had cast a spear at him.

To Jonathan, his father's actions were a shame. Yet, Jonathan used subterfuge and what we would call lies. As pointed out before, God did not appear to condemn this in either Jonathan or David. But, I will draw no conclusions from this, for there is insufficient evidence to do so.

Verses 35-39

1.

“And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him.

2.

And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him.

3.

And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathon cried after the lad, and said, Is not the arrow beyond thee?

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4.

And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master.

5.

But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter."

Next day, Jonathan went to the field, supposedly for target practice, taking a boy with him. He told the boy to run and collect any arrows he fired and, as soon as the boy started running forward Jonathan fired the first arrow, well into the field. Jonathan cried out to the boy, *"Didn't I shoot the arrow too far? Quickly, collect the arrow and bring it back to me!"*

The boy picked up the arrow and went back to his master... and Jonathan's words must have struck David through his heart as much as Saul's javelin ever could. He knew now that his place in court, or even in the land, was untenable. He had to flee for his life.

Verses 40-42

1.

"And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go carry them to the city.

2.

And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded.

3.

And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city."

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Jonathan handed his bow and arrows to the boy and told him to take them back to the palace. As soon as he had gone, David came out from behind the memorial stone. With gratitude and respect, he bowed himself to the ground on hands and knees three times, before the prince. They hugged each other, kissed each other's cheeks with brotherly affection, and wept because they were about to lose their closeness. David, in particular, possibly because he now had nowhere to go, felt this loss the worst.

Jonathan told David to go in peace, and again reminded him of their oath together, before God, to keep each other's families in favour. Then, David walked away to an uncertain future, not knowing where he was to go, and his friend Jonathan slowly made his way back to the city, with heavy heart and troubled thoughts.

Should David have been so sad and uncertain? After all, if God had already given him the future kingship, it meant divine power and help was on David's side. But, David was a mere man, though a brave and able warrior who trusted the Lord. It shows that when we enter an extreme situation, we tend to become anxious and even depressed, when, all along, we should thank God for everything – even if that 'everything' is materially nothing! God sends His children along avenues they might not know, or be aware of; it is our love and duty to follow those avenues, even when we do not know where we are going, or what God has in mind. David came to do this more and more.

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