

A CHARACTER STUDY OF
JONATHAN, SON OF KING SAUL

Lesson 2

JONATHAN THE FRIEND OF DAVID

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

I Samuel 20:4

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Gethsemane Baptist Church
Adult Sunday school Class

JONATHAN THE FRIEND OF DAVID

The events of the day had been thrilling. The shepherd boy, David, son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, had challenged and defeated the giant Goliath, champion of the Philistines,. The army of King Saul had watched from a distance as the young warrior of God collected five smooth stones and with one of them felled the great enemy of Israel. He brought the gory trophy of Goliath's severed head to King Saul as proof of God's victory that day.

One member of Saul's army that witnessed the victory that day was the young man, Jonathan. Earlier he had challenged the entire army of the Philistines and had caused their rout and on that day began Israel's rebellion. When he saw the bravery of the "stripling" (I Sam. 18:56) his heart was captured by this newest champion of Israel. Were they not of a kindred spirit? They were within a few years of being the same age. Both Jonathan and David were bold men who were not afraid to challenge a superior enemy. They both had a strong trust in God.

They were confident He would give them victory over the enemies of the Jews. They each maintained a relationship with God which bound their hearts together from the first time they met. *“And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.”* (1 Sam. 18:1) Scripture uses the term “knit” to describe how Jonathan was attracted to David. It is a fairly strong word that means to be bound together. “The soul of Jonathan bound itself (lit. chained itself) . . . to David’s soul. . . . Jonathan made a covenant (i.e. a covenant of friendship) and (i.e. with) David, because he loved him as his own soul. As a sign and pledge of his friendship, Jonathan gave David his clothes and armour.” (K&D. P. 187) David was just a humble shepherd and Jonathan was the crown prince of Israel. He was next in line for the throne of his father, Saul. “The way most people think, Jonathan was the one who had the most to fear from David’s success. Yet he loved David, because what they had in common – a real relationship with the LORD God – was bigger than any difference. . . .

Then Jonathan and David made a covenant: Two men, each on track for the same throne – yet they made a covenant of friendship that would prove stronger than jealousy, than envy, than ambition. Jonathan took off his robe and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt: When Jonathan gave David the robe and his armor, he said by this action, “You will be the next king of Israel. You should be dressed and armed as the crown prince. God’s hand is on you and these rightfully belong to you.” (Guzik.) David’s gallantry on the field of battle caught the attention of King Saul who immediately impressed him into the army. David was a friend of Jonathan. David became a leader in Saul’s army and led the soldiers to many important victories against the Philistines. These acts of bravery should have endeared him to the heart of Saul but instead, Saul became filled with jealousy and feared that David would challenge his place on the throne. (1 Sam. 18:8) From this time forward David’s life would be in danger from King Saul. During this time Jonathan became David’s defender, deliverer, and strengthener.

I. Jonathan defends David to King Saul.

In Chapter 19 of I Samuel, King Saul was convinced that David had to be destroyed. *“And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.”* (I Sam. 19:1) Jonathan realized that his father, the king, was not thinking correctly. His rebellion to God’s plan had caused the king to have mental difficulties. Jonathan advised David to hide while he spoke with Saul on David’s behalf. He wanted to see David and Saul reconciled. He pointed out to Saul that David had not sinned in any way against the king. In fact, He said that, *“he [David] did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?”* (Vs. 19:5) “These words made an impression upon Saul. He swore, ‘As Jehovah liveth, he (David) shall not be put to death;’ whereupon Jonathan reported these words to David, and brought him to Saul so that he was with him again as before. But this

reconciliation, unfortunately, did not last long.” (K&D. P. 194)

II. Jonathan delivers David from King Saul’s anger.

Jonathan’s efforts to reconcile David again to the king were successful for a time. Soon, however, there was another conflict with the Philistines. David went to the fight and his success awakened the jealous rage in the heart of the disturbed King. In a fit of rage, Saul threw a javelin at David. *“And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul’s presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night.”* (Vs. 19:10) This time David is in great fear for his life. He, *“said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?”* (Vs. 20:1) David knew that King Saul was aware of his friendship with Jonathan. He feared that Saul would try to kill him at a time when Jonathan could not stop him. He knew that his situation was very serious. He said to Jonathan, *“truly as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is*

but a step between me and death.” (Vs. 20b)
This is when Jonathan showed his friendship to David. *“Then said Jonathan unto David, whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee” (Vs. 4)* Jonathan goes to great lengths to assure David that their covenant of friendship would be honored and that He would keep David safe from his father. He asks David for a favor in return. *“And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: 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 everyone from the face of the earth.” (VS. 14-15)* He is asking David, when he is king, to remember the kindness that he has shown David and return that kindness to his family. Later, after Jonathan’s death, David kept this promise when he inquired if there were any members of the family of Jonathan that he could show kindness. (II Sam. 9:1-13) The kindness was returned to Jonathan’s lame son, Mephibosheth.

Jonathan promised to find what was in the heart of Saul concerning David. He told David to remain in the field while he went

back to Saul. They made a plan that in three days Jonathan would return and bring a young boy with him to carry his bow and arrows. He would shoot the arrows. If Saul meant David hurt, he would order the boy to look further away for the arrows. If it was safe for David to return, he would call the boy closer to him. So, while David stayed away from the court of Saul waiting, Jonathan made excuses for David. Saul finally noticed David's absents and asked Jonathan for an explanation. When Jonathan made excuses for David, Saul became angry. He ordered him to bring David into him for execution. When Jonathan refused, Saul's anger was directed at Jonathan and he threw the Javelin at him. *"Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame."* (Vs. 34) Jonathan returned the next day to David and gave him the bad news. David could never return to Saul's court. He sent him away with this benediction. *"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 me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed forever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.” (Vs. 42) David would see his friend only one more time.

III. Jonathan strengthens David.

While he fled from Saul, David roamed in the wilderness. At one point he sought help from the priest, Ahimelech. There he and his men found food and weapons. He took the sword of Goliath as his own weapon. When Saul learned of this, in his madness, he sent soldiers to Ahimelech’s camp and murdered 85 priests because they helped David. When David was running from Saul, Jonathan came to him one more time. He went to David for the express purpose of encouraging his friend. There he speaks prophetically. *“And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode*

in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.” (VS.23:16-18)

Jonathan was a true friend. He was more loyal to David than he was to his father the King. That was because he recognized that God’s hand was upon David and had left his father. He defended David, delivered David and strengthened David. God had Jonathan in David’s life to prepare him for the role he would play as the future king of Israel. Friends in the believer’s life are vital. The Lord Jesus was our example as the friend that sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24)

Guzik, David. Enduringword.com

K&D = Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes.
C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch. Vol. III. William B. Eerdmans
Publishing Company. Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1982.

Wycliffe = The Wycliffe Bible Commentary. By Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison. Moody Press, Chicago, Il. 1962

Notes
