

## David & Jonathan

### 1 Samuel 20: 1-17

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So far in this August mini-series on David you have seen his confidence in God (Psalm 27) and how that helped him defeat Goliath...

David is a great character for us to look at - and in spite of his flaws we find many wonderful qualities in him. He was a man who (for the most part) lived and worked in the knowledge that the person who mattered most was the Lord God, His Good Shepherd. He learned through many hardships to trust God personally and was secure in the knowledge that he was the apple of God's eye.

Today as we look at David again it is to view his relationship with Saul's son Jonathan and to consider and celebrate the importance of good friendships.

*So long as we are loved by others I should say we are almost indispensable* wrote Robert Louis Stevenson *and no man is useless while he has a friend.*

That is good news, however, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote *The only way to have a friend is to be one.*

In 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel we see that Jonathan first befriended David and the two then became best friends to each other.

Having defeated Goliath we see that everyone loved David - he was the flavour of the moment, even Saul was pleased!

In ch18 we read that Jonathan *became one in spirit with David and loved him as himself.* Furthermore, once David was made part of the royal household, we see Jonathan's acceptance of him and covenant love. *Jonathan made a covenant with David... took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, bow and belt.*

Robert Gordon writes: *It is hard not to find here some recognition already on the part of Jonathan that David and not he, was to be the next ruler of Israel.*

I agree, that something very God-inspired was going on, and yet any friendship that is worth its salt has to be a friendship based on mutual respect and equality... and how can that be if the one is the crown prince and the other a shepherd boy?

The answer lies in the covenant they made and in the honour that Jonathan gave to David. By handing him the princely robes and weapons Jonathan lifts David up and lowers himself... their friendship is on level ground.

In recent years some Bible commentators have sought to suggest that perhaps there is a homosexual relationship being referred to here? Others have pushed to use the example of David & Jonathan to justify gay Christian partnerships...

But though this subject has many sensitivities, there is clearly nothing of that sort going on, to try and claim otherwise does violence to the text. David and Jonathan's friendship was no secret and in a society where homosexuals were stoned to death it would have had to be totally secret were it a gay relationship.

We also read in ch18 of the love that David and Michal have for each other. Michal was one of Jonathan's sisters a royal princess whom David is allowed to marry - a rare love match in an age of political marriages.

As King Saul becomes increasingly jealous and afraid of David and begins to seek to have him killed it is Michal in ch19 as well as Jonathan who goes against her father to help David.

King Saul is trying harder to eliminate David however and realizing that he must not let Jonathan know his plans and so the passage we had read from ch20 tells of an elaborate scheme with bow and arrows to tell David if it is safe to stay or if he should flee!

David ends up having to flee and has to leave his friend and his wife for a while. But we also see more of what their friendship means and what the covenant is all about. In v14 and v15 Jonathan says: *Show me unfailing kindness like that of the Lord as long as I live... and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family.*

In our sex saturated and politically correct culture we often do not know what love really means - especially in friendship.

But the Hebrew word here is *hesed* a wonderful and marvellous word that speaks of the steadfast love, the loving kindness, the faithfulness and the mercy of God.

It is a love that is unmerited, and undeserved - often seen as an Old Testament picture of the New Testament theme of Grace. In the NT we see Jesus showing us *hesed* and teaching about it for e.g. in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

The love that Jonathan & David showed each other then, was a love that held as its pattern the love of God. They sought to be steadfast, kind, faithful and merciful. These qualities are all taken from God's character and His behaviour.

Any friendship with those ingredients is going to be special and we all need friends! Marriages need those ingredients. Brothers and sisters need those ingredients. The Christian Church needs those ingredients!

St Paul wrote to the Church in Ephesus saying: *be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you... be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love (or live a life of love), as Christ loved us, and gave himself up for us...* that is *hesed* in action.

Let me show you how it plays out later in 2 Samuel ch9 after the Philistines have killed Jonathan and Saul has taken his own life and after a struggle David is finally established as King over Israel.

David asks: *Is there anyone left of the house of Saul?*

Many would have asked such a question so that their enemies might be eradicated, but David goes on *is there anyone to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?*

As it happened there was one person, Mephibosheth a son of Jonathan whose feet were crippled. David gave him back all of Saul's family lands and arranged for them to be farmed for him, and he brought Mephibosheth to Jerusalem as part of the royal household to always eat at the King's table.

It is hesed, grace, God's kind of love in action and it is wonderful.

But it is not just for us to admire or to be moved. We are to bring our lives into line with God's love and reach out to others in His way - starting with those closest to us, our family and friends. We can often take those closest to us for granted.

I wonder, for the marrieds, what kind of spouses we are, what kind of love do we show?

I wonder, in both our natural families and in the Church Family, what kind of family life we have? Do we treat our brothers and sisters with God's kind of love?

I wonder, for us all, what kind of friends we are, is God's kind of love seen in us?