

## JONATHAN'S LOVE AND SAUL'S JEALOUSY

1 Samuel 18:1-19:24

Key Verse: 18:1

*After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself*

In this passage, Jonathan shows what it means to love another person as a friend in God. He becomes one in spirit with David. He is united with David because of their shared faith in God. On the other hand, King Saul shows how a person can be mentally deranged if he is consumed with jealousy. We learn how dangerous a man can become when God withdraws his hand of protection from him.

### I. JONATHAN'S LOVE FOR DAVID (18:1-4)

Look at verse 1. *After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself.* After David defeated Goliath and reported to King Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David and he loved him as himself. Who was Jonathan? He was the oldest son of King Saul. He was the crown prince. He was also a brave warrior on his own right. He valiantly defended the advancing army of the Philistines, saying "Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving whether by many or by few" (14:6). He deserved to be the next king. He was probably popular among the young girls of Israel, even though he might have been married already. Then it happened. The young David singlehandedly defeated the Philistine champion Goliath. David became a sensation overnight. He was a national hero. Everyone was talking about him, especially young girls.



What was Jonathan's reaction to the celebrity status of David? Did he become jealous of David? (This was the reaction of his father (9).) No. Verse 1 says he became one in spirit with David. He loved David as himself.<sup>1</sup> The bond between the two was a

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<sup>1</sup> Some liberal scholars claim that Jonathan and David had a homosexual affair. Oscar Wilde tried to use the example in his sodomy trial of 1895. These people argue that Jonathan and David had such relationship because Jonathan loved David as himself, they kissed each other (20:41) and David said, on hearing the news of Jonathan's death, that his love was ... "more wonderful than that of women" (2Sa 1:26). However, Jonathan's love for David was based on their shared faith in God. Kissing between men was a common way expressing a friendly affection which was a custom at that time as it is today in that part of the world. The Hebrew word used to describe the love between Jonathan and David is *iaeb* (אַהֲבָה). This word is never used in the Bible to describe a homosexual relationship. Most of all, both Jonathan and David were men of God. They knew it was a sin before God. Later, David became the king of the united kingdom of Israel. He had many wives. The Bible says that he committed the serious sin of an adultery that led to a murder, but has no mention of homosexuality.

“sworn friendship ... in the name of the Lord” (20:40). Jonathan and David became one in spirit because of their love for God.

Humanly speaking, it was more natural for Jonathan to treat David as a potential competitor who threatened to take away his future crown. So why and how did Jonathan become one in spirit with David, instead of feeling jealous or envious of him? What triggered the close bond between the two? Their bond began when Jonathan noticed the courage and faith of David in restoring God’s honor among his people and initiated their friendship. Jonathan and David were on the same page in their way of thinking, and more importantly, their faith in God. They shared the same view of the Philistines. Everyone was scared of the enemy. But Jonathan called the Philistines “those uncircumcised fellows” (14:6) and David called Goliath “this uncircumcised Philistine” (17:26). King Saul and his men trembled in fear before the strong enemy, but Jonathan and David saw them as people with no covenant with God. Jonathan also shared the same motive with David to fight the strong enemy. They wanted to restore the honor of God among people. Jonathan believed that the Lord gave the enemy into the hand of Israel (14:12). David told Goliath, “This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and ... the whole world will know that ... the Lord saves” (17:47). Above all, both of them had faith in the almighty God. Jonathan said, “... the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few” (14:6). David said, “... it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s...” (17:47). In summary, Jonathan became one spirit with David to fight the Philistines in the name of God. Their hearts were together. They shared the same faith in God. They shared the same value in God. So Jonathan loved David as himself.

How did Jonathan express his love for David? Look at verse 3. *And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.* The fact that Jonathan loved David as himself is repeated again. Jonathan loved David so much that he made a covenant with David. What does this mean? It means that they made a promise to each other that they would be faithful friends to the end. It was much more than saying, “Hey, bro, I really love you, man.” In fact, his love was much more than words. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it David (4). It was no ordinary robe. It was a royal robe. Not only that, he took off his tunic and gave it David. It was like taking off your cherished, custom-tailored, designer clothes you love, and giving it to someone. But that was not all. Jonathan gave his own sword, his bow and his belt to David. Jonathan had used the same sword to fight the Philistines. These items had sentimental values to him. But he gave them to David, because he loved him. His love was a sacrificial love.

At our group study meeting on Friday, Msn. Pauline reminded us that loving is giving. It may sound a cliché, but it is the truth. When we really love someone, we want to give something to him or her, even the most cherished thing we have. Jonathan’s love reminds us of God’s love for us. John 3:16 says that God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son to us. He didn’t give us some things out of his surplus storage to express his love for us. No. He gave his most cherished possession to us. He gave us his one and only Son!

Jonathan's friendship with David was very different from the common friendships we see in our society. Some people boast about having hundreds of friends on Facebook or thousands of followers on Twitter. But many of these friendships are based on selfish motives. They are conditional. Their friendships quickly disappear when their friends have nothing to offer to them. When the prodigal son's money was gone, so were all his friends. They left him alone in a foreign land and he had to take a job as a pig-feeder and yearn for the food that the pigs were eating. But Jonathan's friendship with David lasted to the end. It was based on their shared faith in God and their sacrificial love for each other.

Last week, I attended the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration of Msn. Grace K. Park in Washington. Many people, young and old, testified how she touched their lives through her life of giving. Everyone there received something from her at some time. She didn't give because she had much. In fact, the family was in debt for a long time, because she gave so much to others. All of us at the party considered her our friend. I certainly consider her more than a coworker or an in-law. She is a dear friend. Her life of giving shows how much she appreciates the love of God. I pray that we may develop deep friendships among our fellowship members based on the love of God, like the friendship between Jonathan and David.

## II. SAUL'S MURDEROUS JEALOUSY (18:5-30)

Look at verse 5. *Whatever Saul sent him to do, David did it so successfully that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the people, and Saul's officers as well.* After his victory against Goliath, David was drafted by the king to be a soldier in his army (2). David didn't have a chance to go home and change his clothes. But he didn't complain. He was faithful. Whatever the king asked him to do, he did it so successfully that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased everyone, including Saul's officers.

The problem began when they returned from the battlefield. The news of David's victory against Goliath had given the Israelites a reason to celebrate. The women came out from all the towns to welcome the returning army with singing and dancing, with joyful songs (6). They brought their musical instruments like tambourines and lutes. Someone had composed a song that included the lyrics, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands" (7). The song was based on the truth. But Saul was mad because the women gave more credit to the young soldier than the king. From that time on, Saul kept a jealous eye on David (9). Jealousy is a desire to possess something that does not belong to us. We often become jealous of someone who has a lot of money, good job, fame or good looks. We tend to have this desire when we fail to acknowledge God's sovereignty.



This is a sin before God.<sup>2</sup> And if we do not control this desire, it can lead to other, more serious sins. When Cain was consumed with jealousy toward his brother, he did not listen to God's words of counsel. He went out and committed the first murder in human history. This happened to King Saul. When he let his feeling of jealousy dominate his heart, God allowed the evil spirit to come upon him one day. He was prophesying, which probably meant babbling or raving some incoherent sayings (unlike when he prophesied after the Spirit of God came upon him in power (10:10)), while David was playing harp for him.

What does it mean an evil spirit from God came upon him forcefully? When Saul became proud before God and deliberately disobeyed God's word, the Spirit of God departed from him and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him (16:14).<sup>3</sup> The NIV footnote says the evil spirit could mean a troubling or injurious spirit. It might have been a feeling of depression. Saul knew that God had left him (12). Without God to protect him, he was a slave of his own demons and desires. Jesus teaches us that "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first" (Lk 11:24-26). When the Spirit of God left him, an evil spirit came to occupy Saul. He became an unstable person. So what did he do? Suddenly, while David was playing the harp for him, Saul hurled his spear at David, intending to pin him to the wall (10-11). He did it twice. Both times, however, David was alert and able to dodge the spear.

Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with David (12). So he sent David away from him and gave him command over a thousand men, and David led the troops in their campaigns. In everything he did he had great success, because the LORD was with him (13-14). When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him. But everyone loved David. David was successful because God was with him. Look at verse 14. *In everything he did he had great success, because the LORD was with him.* This reminds us of Joseph in Genesis. Joseph prospered because God was with him, even as he went through so much trouble. The fact that God was with him tells us that Joseph was with God. He maintained his faith through thick and thin. He never wavered in his faith. Likewise, God was with David and he was successful.

But King Saul would not leave him alone. He really wanted to have David killed. The evil scheme he came up with for this was to have the Philistines do the dirty work.

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<sup>2</sup> Some people say that since jealousy is a sin and God said "I am a jealous God," it makes God a sinner. They say this because they don't know the heart of God. God said "I am a jealous God" several times, because his heart was broken when his people turned their backs to him and worshiped idols. It was the righteous jealousy which is different the selfish jealousy.

<sup>3</sup> In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was given to individuals in order to enable them to serve (Ex 31:3; 35:31). It was an indication that God empowered them to serve. In contrast, the Holy Spirit today dwells permanently in a person who believes Jesus as his Savior (Jn 14:17).

He didn't hesitate to use his own daughters for his evil plan. First, he said to David that he would give his older daughter (Merab) in marriage to him if he fought the Philistines bravely. His ulterior motive was to have David killed in the battle. Saul's plan did not work, only because David refused the offer, saying he didn't deserve to be the king's son-in-law (17-19). Saul did not give up. He found out that his younger daughter Michal was in love with David. Saul told David that this was a second opportunity for him to be his son-in-law. David was still reluctant, saying he was a poor man and little known. But Saul ordered his servants to tell David: *"The king wants no other price for the bride than a hundred Philistine foreskins, to take revenge on his enemies."* Saul's plan was to have David fall by the hands of the Philistines (25). David was pleased to hear this. He and his men went out to kill 100 Philistines. And Saul gave Michal to David in marriage. But this didn't make Saul happy, because his evil plot did not work. *When Saul realized that the LORD was with David and that his daughter Michal loved David, Saul became still more afraid of him, and he remained his enemy the rest of his days (28-29).* God continued to use David, however, to protect his people from their enemy and to prepare him to be their shepherd king. *The Philistine commanders continued to go out to battle, and as often as they did, David met with more success than the rest of Saul's officers, and his name became well known (30).*

### III. JONATHAN DEFENDS HIS FRIEND DAVID (19:1-17)

Look at 19:1. *Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David.* This time, Saul issued a direct order to his son and all the attendants to kill David. Jonathan tried to intervene. He tried to put some sense into his father. He reminded him how David fought the Philistine giant and killed him. He said: *"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?"* What Jonathan said was all true and he gave God the credit for the victory. Saul could not deny that David was innocent. He had no choice but to admit this to his son. So he took an oath not to kill David and Jonathan brought David to Saul (6-7). But Saul's oath would be short-lived.

Let us think about what Jonathan did for David. He defended David before his father who was in an unstable state of mind. It was a risky thing to do. But he spoke the truth. 1 Corinthians 13:6-7 says that "Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." In a vulnerable moment for David, Jonathan was there for him. He was a true friend. He was not selfish. He was protective of his friend.

Look at verse 8. *Once more war broke out, and David went out and fought the Philistines. He struck them with such force that they fled before him.* This should have pleased the king. He should have thanked God and David. But Saul was no longer a man with sound mind. Once again an evil spirit came upon him (9). He was sitting in his house and David was playing the harp. It was *deja vu* all over again. Saul tried to pin David to the wall with his



spear, but David eluded him and made good his escape (10). Still Saul sent a death squad to David's house to watch it and to kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, let David down through a window and helped him to escape (11-17).

#### IV. DAVID SEEKS HELP FROM SAMUEL (19:18-24)

Look at verse 18. *When David had fled and made his escape, he went to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went to Naioth and stayed there.* Where did David go after he escaped from Saul? He went to Samuel at Ramah. He told the servant of God all that Saul had done to him. It is important for us to seek God's help in times of crisis. It is easy for us to go to our worldly friends who can lend their ears and give us words of sympathy. But it is better for us to go to God's servants and prophesy with him. That is what David did.

Saul still found out where David was. So he sent men to capture him. But strange things happened. When Saul's men saw a group of prophets prophesying with Samuel as their leader, the Spirit of God came upon them and they also prophesied (20). When Saul was told about it, he sent more men, and they also prophesied. Saul sent other men a third time, and the same thing happened. Finally, he went to Ramah himself. And guess what? The Spirit of God came even upon him. He stripped off his robes and also prophesied in Samuel's presence (24).

By this time, Samuel was an old man and he was retired from his official position as the chief priest. But he still had his spiritual influence on people around him. Many men of God flocked around him. When David was in need, he went to Samuel, seeking a refuge in him. Saul's men came to him with a murderous plan, but they ended up prophesying. We don't know what they said when all these men prophesied. But I don't think they were saying anything bad about David. It seems that the Spirit of God used them to speak the truth about David and Saul before the great servant of God. In this way, God protected David and showed the king who was really in charge.

From today's passage, we learned that Jonathan did not see David as his potential competitor. He shared with David his faith and value in God. He was one in spirit with David to restore God's honor among his people. On the other hand, Saul became jealous of David and tried to kill him many times. He showed how miserable a man can become when God is not with him. May God help us to be godly friends to each other, like David and Jonathan!