

A TRUE FRIENDSHIP IN THE LORD

1 Samuel 20:1-42

Key Verse: 20:42

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.” Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.

This morning, let us talk about friendship—a true friendship in the Lord. All of us have friends in our lives. Life without a friend would be like taking a long trip without a companion. Life would be much more difficult to live. At our Wednesday fellowship meeting last week where we discussed friendships, I was happy to know that Chris and C.J. consider me as their friend in the Lord. I was also happy to hear that Msn. Deborah called me her BFF.

True friends are there for us in times of good and bad, especially when we go through some difficult times. So there is a saying, “A friend in need is a friend indeed.” The meaning of this maxim varies (“indeed” vs. “in deed”), but I take it to mean that you find out who your true friend is during a time of trials. This is what David discovered in this passage. Jonathan shows that a true friend is one who is there in times of need. King Saul tries to kill David. Jonathan, his son and the crown prince, takes the side of his friend David, not his father, the king. From Jonathan, we learn the nature of a true friendship in the Lord. We may have hundreds of Facebook or Twitter friends today. But may God help us to have true friends in the Lord!

I. I’LL DO ANYTHING FOR YOU (1-23)

As we learned from the previous chapter, David had gone to Samuel in Ramah seeking help from the servant of God. But King Saul did not leave him alone. He sent three different teams of military police, one after another, to arrest David. Finally, he went to Ramah himself to capture David. Each time, however, God intervened. God let the men prophesy in Samuel’s presence. They wanted to curse David, but ended up speaking favorably for him (19:18-24). Nevertheless, there was no doubt in David’s mind that Saul was after his life. He knew that there was only a step between him and death (3), because the king had all the intentions of killing him and he had the means and power to do so. So David fled from Ramah and went to Jonathan. He didn’t go home to his parents. He went to Jonathan. This was not an easy decision. He was going to the son of the murderous king. But he did so, because he knew Jonathan. A friend in need is a friend indeed. David knew that Jonathan was a true friend to him. He knew Jonathan loved him dearly. Still, there is a saying that blood is thicker than water. What if Jonathan did not believe him or listen to him?



In fact, Jonathan was skeptical when David told him that his father was trying to kill him. He told David that his father wouldn't do anything big or small without first confiding in him (2). Jonathan thought that his father would never do such a thing. How could David convince Jonathan? He must have felt pain in his stomach telling the truth to Jonathan. He had to take an oath before Jonathan. He said, *"Your father knows very well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said to himself, 'Jonathan must not know this or he will be grieved.' Yet as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death"* (3). David told Jonathan that the danger for his life was not imagined but real. It's just that Saul was hiding his intentions from his son, knowing well that Jonathan and David were good friends.

What was Jonathan's response? Look at verse 4. *Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you."* Wow. Jonathan was willing to do anything for his friend. People sometimes say, "I'll do anything for you." However, this is often a promise they cannot keep. Situations change; friendships change. But Jonathan's pledge was not a lip service. He really meant it. As we will learn, he put his life on the line to keep his words.

So what kind of help did David ask Jonathan? What did David ask him to do? He asked Jonathan to find out the true intentions of King Saul. David knew what the king wanted to do, but he wanted to give him the benefit of doubt one more time. After all, Saul was his father-in-law. This was his plan. David would purposely miss a scheduled dinner with the king for the New Moon festival. His seat would be conspicuously empty. If the king would lose his temper over his absence, it would be a sure sign that he was determined to harm David (5-7). David appealed to Jonathan by reminding him of their covenant before the Lord. He said to Jonathan, *"As for you, show kindness to your servant, for you have brought him into a covenant with you before the LORD. If I am guilty, then kill me yourself! Why hand me over to your father?"* (8). How did Jonathan respond to David's plea? Look at verse 9. *"Never!" Jonathan said. "If I had the least inkling that my father was determined to harm you, wouldn't I tell you?"* Jonathan was more than willing to help his friend. He promised to find out what was on his father's mind.



David was assured, but there was one practical matter on his mind about the plan. He asked Jonathan, *"Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?"* (10) This question triggered a passionate response from Jonathan and a reaffirmation of their covenant before God. Jonathan took David out into the field to have a heart-to-heart talk with him. He spoke to David what really was on his heart.

Look at verses 12-16. *Then Jonathan said to David: "By the LORD, the God of Israel, I will surely sound out my father by this time the day after tomorrow! If he is favorably disposed toward you, will I not send you word and let you know? But if my father is inclined to harm you, may the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I*

do not let you know and send you away safely. 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 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."

The point of Jonathan's speech was that he would protect David from his father. He also appealed to David to show him and his family unfailing kindness. His short speech included the name of the Lord a total of 7 times (12-16). Everything he said to David was before God. It was a reminder that their friendship was founded on their shared faith in God and love for God. Their friendship was a true friendship in the Lord. Finally, Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself (17).

David never forgot Jonathan's friendship and love. Later, after Jonathan's death and demise of Saul's family, David searched for and found the surviving son of Jonathan. He brought Mephibosheth to his palace and let him eat from his own royal table (2Sa 9:1-13). David kept his covenant with Jonathan. They were indeed best friends forever. Their friendship lasted forever, because it was founded on their love and faith in God.

After the reaffirmation of their covenant, it was now Jonathan's turn to pay attention to the details of their plan. To ensure David's safety, Jonathan devised a secret sign to convey his findings to him. Jonathan would shoot three arrows in the field where David would be hiding. If he said to his ball boy, "Look, the arrows are on this side of you," then David would be safe. There was no danger. Jonathan continued, *But if I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,' then you must go, because the LORD has sent you away. And about the matter you and I discussed--remember, the LORD is witness between you and me forever"* (22-23).



II. JONATHAN RISKS HIS LIFE TO DEFEND HIS FRIEND (24-34)

So what did Jonathan discover about his father's intentions? Look at verse 24. *So David hid in the field, and when the New Moon festival came, the king sat down to eat. The king noticed David's empty seat, but assumed that something happened to him to make him ceremonially unclean. But when David was absent the second day again, he asked Jonathan, "Why hasn't the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?"* (27). As he promised, Jonathan told the king that David had asked him for permission to go to his hometown for a family matter. What was Saul's reaction? Look at verses 30-31. *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!" Saul was jealous of David because God was with him. Now he was jealous of his own son because Jonathan and David were close friends. "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Jonathan asked his father. But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David (32-33). Jonathan got up from the dinner table in fierce anger. He could not eat because he was deeply grieved at his father's shameful and unreasonable treatment of David (34).

Jonathan put his life in danger to defend his friend David. His friendship reminds us of Jesus' friendship with us. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command" (Jn 15:13-14). What a friend we have in Jesus! He gave his life on the cross to save us. He laid down his life for his friends. May God help each of us to show our friendship to him by doing what he commands us!

III. A SWORN FRIENDSHIP IN THE NAME OF THE LORD (35-42)

In the morning, Jonathan went out to the field to meet with David and to tell him the bad news in a coded message. He shot the arrows and told the boy "Isn't the arrow beyond you?" Then he shouted, "Hurry! Go quickly! Don't stop!" The message was loud and clear. David had to run for his life.

Look at verse 41. *After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side [of the stone] and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together--but David wept the most.* After Jonathan sent away the boy, it was a time for farewell for the two friends. Their parting was like a scene from a Korean drama that makes you cry to watch. David got up from where he was and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together--but David wept the most. 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.'" Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town (41-42).*



What can we learn here about the friendship in the Lord? Friendship in the Lord – Jonathan was a source of strength, comfort and encouragement to David who was in distress. He was David's true friend "indeed" and "in deed." Jonathan put himself in danger when he defended his friend before his father the king. He went out on a limb to help his friend. Most of all, he helped David to find strength in the Lord in times of distress.

Jonathan would have one more opportunity to meet with David and help him. The account is recorded in 1 Samuel 23. David arrived in the Desert of Ziph after having moved around many different places to avoid Saul's agents. Soon, however, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life there. That's when Jonathan went to David and helped him find strength in God. He said to David, "Don't be afraid. My father Saul will not lay a hand on you." Jonathan meant that he would not let it happen. More significantly, he said, "You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this." And the two of them made a covenant before the LORD (1Sa 23:15-18).

Unfortunately, we all know that not all friendships are like that of David and Jonathan. Worldly friendships are usually based on "give and take." If you offend one of your Facebook friends, what will happen? You will be quickly "unfriended" by the person. Not all friendships are true. Joseph in Genesis befriended a political prisoner while he was in a prison, falsely charged with raping Potiphar's foxy wife. The prisoner was the chief cupbearer for Pharaoh. Joseph helped him by interpreting his dream and asked him to mention his case to the king when he would get out of the prison. As Joseph had told him, the cupbearer was restored to his position, but forgot about Joseph (Ge 40). He was not a true friend to Joseph. Judas Iscariot betrayed his fellow disciples after living and breathing with them for three and half years. He betrayed their friendship, not to mention that of the Lord's. There are other examples of false friendships. Perhaps you experienced some in your lives. It is important to remember that the true friendship in the Lord is based on sacrificial love. Remember that the friendship between David and Jonathan began when they shared the same faith and hope in God. Their friendship was founded on their faith and love in God.

We learned from today's passage that Jonathan and David had a sworn friendship in the Lord. It was based on sacrificial love. Jonathan helped David who was in distress, risking his one life and siding with David over his own father. Let us remember that Jesus is our friend who laid down his life for us. May God help us to be faithful friends to Jesus! May God help us to develop friendships among us like that of David and Jonathan!