

Portrait of a Grace-Dispensing Friend

David & Saul Pt.13
David & Jonathan Pt.1
1 Samuel 20:1-34

Summary: David risked his life to come back to Gibeah just so Jonathan could walk through this trial with him in an understanding way. A good friend walks with you through suffering, cares more about serving you than arguing with you, is an advocate for you, steps in to broker reconciliation, is completely trustworthy, points you to the sovereignty of God, associates himself with you, is not selfish because he measures what he should have by God's will, cares more about your reputation than his own safety, and is more hurt by what hurts you than what hurts him. Find a person to befriend in this way.

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1 Samuel 20:1 Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, "What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying to take my life?" ² "Never!" Jonathan replied. "You are not going to die! Look, my father doesn't do anything, great or small, without confiding in me. Why would he hide this from me? It's not so!" ³ But David took an oath and 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." ⁴ Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you." ⁵ So David said, "Look, tomorrow is the New Moon festival, and I am supposed to dine with the king; but let me go and hide in the field until the evening of the day after tomorrow. ⁶ If your father misses me at all, tell him, 'David earnestly asked my permission to hurry to Bethlehem, his hometown, because an annual sacrifice is being made there for his whole clan.' ⁷ If he says, 'Very well,' then your servant is safe. But if he loses his temper, you can be sure that he is determined to harm me. ⁸ 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?" ⁹ "Never!" Jonathan said. "If I had the least inkling that my father was determined to harm you, wouldn't I tell you?" ¹⁰ David asked, "Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?" ¹¹ "Come," Jonathan said, "let's go out into the field." So they went there together. ¹² 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? ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ But show me unflinching kindness like that of the LORD as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, ¹⁵ 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." ¹⁶ So Jonathan made

a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD call David's enemies to account."¹⁷ And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.¹⁸ Then Jonathan said to David: "Tomorrow is the New Moon festival. You will be missed, because your seat will be empty."¹⁹ The day after tomorrow, toward evening, go to the place where you hid when this trouble began, and wait by the stone Ezel.²⁰ I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I were shooting at a target.²¹ Then I will send a boy and say, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I say to him, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them here,' then come, because, as surely as the LORD lives, you are safe; there is no danger.²² But if I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,' then you must go, because the LORD has sent you away.²³ And about the matter you and I discussed-- remember, the LORD is witness between you and me forever."²⁴ So David hid in the field, and when the New Moon festival came, the king sat down to eat.²⁵ He sat in his customary place by the wall, opposite Jonathan, and Abner sat next to Saul, but David's place was empty.²⁶ Saul said nothing that day, for he thought, "Something must have happened to David to make him ceremonially unclean-- surely he is unclean."²⁷ But the next day, the second day of the month, David's place was empty again. Then Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why hasn't the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?"²⁸ Jonathan answered, "David earnestly asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem."²⁹ He said, 'Let me go, because our family is observing a sacrifice in the town and my brother has ordered me to be there. If I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away to see my brothers.' That is why he has not come to the king's table."³⁰ 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?"³¹ 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!"³² "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Jonathan asked his father.³³ But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David.³⁴ Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the month he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of David.

Introduction

Background

We left off last time in the middle of a very dramatic scene. David was running for his life, and Saul was hot on his trail, and just when Saul caught up to him God intervened in a supernatural way.¹

Things had been wonderful between David and Saul for a long time. Jonathan had brokered a reconciliation, Saul welcomed David back into the palace, and David was back in his old position in Saul's court. Then one day David was playing his harp and out of nowhere that look of rage came over Saul, and a split-second later David sees the razor-sharp point of Saul's spear coming straight at him. By God's grace David happens to jerk the right direction and it just misses him. With a surge of adrenaline David is out the door, down the street and around the corner before Saul could send anyone after him. David doesn't stop running until he's finally convinced he is safe. He crouches down in his hiding place and his mind is buzzing: "What on earth happened? I thought things were fine – what did I do?" He racks his brain, thinking of every word he said, every reaction of Saul, everything that went on between them that day- "what could it possibly be?" "I know I hit a few bad notes while I was

¹ In 19:23 the Hebrew phrase is RUACH ELOHIM (רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים). Sometimes that phrase means "a spirit from God" and other times it means "The Spirit of God." In the Q&A last week we talked about how it's not an easy call, in my judgment, whether this is talking about a good kind of prophecy from the Holy Spirit or a bad kind from an evil spirit. And it may be that there is some level of ambiguity that the writer wanted to leave in place. Was Saul changed again? Did the experience humble him? Did he learn a lesson? Those questions remain unanswered as we begin ch.20.

playing, but that's never gotten him upset in the past." David is mystified. Finally it starts getting late and he heads home. That evening he tells his wife Michal (Saul's daughter) about what happened and she says, "David, it's not over. There are men outside our house right now with orders to take you in the morning."

David spends much of the night agonizing in prayer and writing Psalm 59. Then Michal lets him down out of a window and he runs off into the night. He travels through the pitch dark until he gets to Ramah, where Samuel is. Samuel has words of comfort and encouragement from the Lord and David is glad he came. Saul gathers intelligence fast, and has no problem tracking David down, so when morning comes so does a detachment of Saul's troops to get David, and then another detachment, and then Saul himself. David escapes again, and you will never guess where he goes this time. Home to Bethlehem? No. Out to the far reaches of the kingdom? 100 miles north up to the area of Dan? No. Philistine territory where Saul would be afraid to come? No, not this time. The caves in the hill country? Nope. Down to Egypt? No. David goes back to Gibeah – where Saul's palace was! Why there? There is an APB out for him there. Everybody knows his face, and if anyone sees him he will be captured. The entire Israelite military is searching for him, and Gibeah is their headquarters. If Saul found him so quickly when he snuck off at night to Ramah he will for sure be able to find him in Gibeah. What reason could David possibly have to go there? Look again at v.1.

1 Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan

David went to the worst, most dangerous place he could possibly go, because he needed his friend Jonathan.

The purpose of ch.20

As I studied this chapter this week my biggest question, as always, was, "What is the purpose of ch.20?" Why is it in the Bible? From the standpoint of the story of David it seems utterly useless. The whole chapter is a big test to find out whether Saul is trying to kill David but David already knew Saul was trying to kill him, so what is the point of ch.20?

The point is to show us the friendship between David and Jonathan. Everything in the chapter focuses on that. One of the things we are to learn from the life of David is how to walk through the pain and dangers and trials and injustices and loneliness of life. What does it look like for a godly man to navigate through the dark valleys of life? Here we see that one of the things a godly man does is lean heavily on a good friend. He draws upon those unique reserves of grace from God that come only through the love of a Jonathan-type friend.

Two perspectives

One thing that stands out in this chapter is that David and Jonathan are on very different tracks in their thinking. David wants to talk about the issue of his life being in danger and Jonathan wants to talk about the future when David is reigning on his throne. There is a lot we can learn from Jonathan seeking grace from God from David, but I am going to save that for next time. For today let's take a look at this chapter from David's perspective. My aim today is for us to learn about the grace David receives from God through Jonathan.

And lest you tune out here and think this sermon is not all that important because it is just about friendship – and it is not really about God, it is about God. *The one and only reason why friendships are important is because they are a means God has ordained to dispense certain kinds of grace that are not available any other way.* The heart and soul of what this chapter teaches is in v.14 where Jonathan asks David to show him the love of God. Literally he says, "**But show me the love of Yahweh as long as I live.**" The NIV translates the phrase "love of Yahweh" as "unfailing kindness like that of the LORD."

That is a possible translation, but in my judgment they are over-interpreting the phrase a bit. I do not think it is talking merely about love that is similar to God's love. It is talking about God's actual love.

Jonathan and David loved each other with the very love of God. What we see in this chapter is way more than tips on being a good friend. What we see is the very love of God flowing through a man to another man.

So if you care about fellowship with God you should care about this chapter. If you love God, and if you desire grace from Him, and if you delight in His goodness, you will strongly desire the kinds of friends who are conduits of His goodness and grace. You will also strongly desire to be that kind of friend to someone else so God's grace can flow through you in a powerful way. So today's sermon is all about loving God and desiring His grace.

Portrait of a Jonathan

Walks with you through the valley of suffering

There are nine traits of a Jonathan-type friend that I want to point out this morning. The first is that a Jonathan-type friend will walk with you through the valley of suffering. One thing that really startled me this week as I studied this chapter is the fact that David risked his life to come to Gibeah just so he could have a friend understand what he was going through. Everything David does in this chapter is designed to bring Jonathan to the point of understanding what is happening. David already knows exactly what is happening at the end of ch.19. The whole ordeal of this chapter is so that Jonathan will know. One of the needs the Lord has built into our souls is the need for someone to know what we are going through – and to care.

Godly friendship starts with the way you listen. As we will see in a minute, at first Jonathan does not think the threat is really any big deal. He thinks it is an imaginary threat, but he actually ends up risking his own life to protect David from it. You see, what mattered to Jonathan was not how small or big the threat actually was. What mattered to Jonathan was how big the threat seemed to David. If it is a big deal in David's heart, then it is a big deal; period. Jonathan was not one of those people who refused to show sympathy and compassion because he thinks your fear is irrational and there is nothing to be afraid of. If you are afraid, that's all that matters to Jonathan.

So the first thing we learn about friendship from Jonathan is to put yourself inside the skin of your friend. What is it like for him? Husbands, instead of talking to your wife about how irrational her fear is, take some time to put yourself in her skin and think, "What is it like for her right now?"

One of the most delightful things about being a child of God is the fact that He cares about what is upsetting to you, and He listens intently to you. Remember "L" in our promise bookmark?

Psalm 10:17 You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you strengthen their hearts, and you listen attentively.

This is a wonderful attribute of God, and in many cases (not always, but sometimes) it comes to us from heaven through the heart of a good friend – and no other way. So delighting in a good friend who really listens can be an expression of your delight in God Himself, and enjoying a good friend who really listens can be a profound act of fellowship with God.

Is more concerned about serving than about being proved right

Picture David sneaking into Gibeah, making sure no one sees him. Then he shadows Jonathan for a few hours until he finally gets a chance to catch him at a moment when no one is around. Jonathan is taking a shortcut through a quiet part of town, and suddenly he is startled by a voice behind him. The lightening-fast reaction of grabbing his sword turns quickly into a warm embrace when he turns and sees it is his best friend David. But right away he can tell something is wrong. David is peppering him with questions.

1 ... "What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying to take my life?"² "Never!" Jonathan replied. "You are not going to die! Look, my father doesn't do anything, great or small, without confiding in me. Why would he hide this from me? It's not so!"

At this point Jonathan has no idea what has gone on the past two days. All he knows is Saul was out of town last night, and he does not believe the trial even exists and he had good reason to be sure of himself. Jonathan was closer to Saul than anyone. Even when Saul was doing terrible things he had always confided in Jonathan so Jonathan is absolutely sure David must be mistaken.

David, on the other hand, has very strong reasons to believe he is right (since he personally experienced four attempts on his life over the past two days). What should you do when you have a disagreement and you are both absolutely sure you are right? Both of these men have a wonderfully loving response. David listens to Jonathan's argument (that he and Saul are especially close). David does not argue with that. Instead he presents a scenario in which Saul withholds the information from Jonathan *because* of how close they are.

³ But David took an oath and 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."

Now look at Jonathan's response.

⁴ Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you."

He still is not convinced, but he can see that right now serving his friend is way more important than arguing with him. Sometimes a debate is necessary, but any time we start to argue we need to constantly be on the lookout for a moment when we can say, "How can I serve you?" Jonathan cared more about what was bothering David – real or imagined, than about convincing David that it was imagined. That is a mark of genuine love. Irrational fears are just as scary as rational ones, so whether the danger is real or imagined, if I care about you, I am going to care about the fact that you think it is real.

⁵ So David said, "Look, tomorrow is the New Moon festival, and I am supposed to dine with the king; but let me go and hide in the field until the evening of the day after tomorrow. ⁶ If your father misses me [at all],² tell him, 'David earnestly asked my permission to hurry to Bethlehem, his hometown, because an annual sacrifice is being made there for his whole clan.' ⁷ If he says, 'Very well,' then your servant is safe. But if he loses his temper, you can be sure that he is determined to harm me."

David has no intention of going back to Bethlehem. His plan is to stay right there in the field, and David asks Jonathan to pass this false story on to Saul.

Now, as we will see in a moment from Saul's reaction, it is not that big a deal for David to miss the dinner. His missing the dinner is not the trigger that he expects will make Saul angry. The thing David expects will make Saul angry is discovering that Jonathan has helped David.

² A more natural way to translate the Hebrew here would be, "If your father really misses me a lot." The words "at all" are not in the Hebrew. The translators put that in there because the term "misses" is emphatic. When the ancient Hebrews wanted to really stress something they would repeat the verb. Literally, it's "If to miss he will miss me." That construction (miss in order to miss) most naturally means "to really miss," although "to miss at all" is a possible translation.

⁷ If he says, 'Very well,' (lit. "it is good") then your servant is safe.

– Under normal circumstances this is what would be expected that Saul would hear about the sacrifice and say, "It's a good thing. I'm glad you told him he could go."

...But if he loses his temper, you can be sure that he is determined to harm me.

Now remember, none of this is for David – he knows full well Saul is trying to kill him. It is for Jonathan. David needs his friend to know what's going on. This is an incredibly horrible crisis in his life, and he needs someone to walk with him through it. God is like that, and one of the most blessed ways to experience that attribute of God is to receive it from a good friend, and while you are receiving it realizing that it is coming from God Himself.

Is an advocate for you

It is not just that David wants sympathy. I think that is definitely part of it, but beyond that he also needs an advocate. What David really wants is justice. Another great thing about having a good friend is you have someone who will speak up for you. When your relationship with someone has broken down so totally that you cannot even talk to that person, you want to have an advocate who will fight for justice for you, and who can help bring about reconciliation between you and the other person. The reason David risked his life to come back to Gibeah was because he wanted Jonathan to affirm he was innocent and to be on his side. He knew he could count on Jonathan to be fair with him.

⁸ 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?"

If he had done something wrong Jonathan would tell him what it was, and if not, Jonathan would fight for him – even if it meant opposing his own father.

Jesus is our Advocate who stands between us and the wrath of God and He is also our Advocate on earth. He steps in when relationships are broken and moves the hearts of those who are hard against us, and very often He chooses to do that through Jonathan-type friends.

God had brought reconciliation between David and Saul through Jonathan once before.

19:1 Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David. But Jonathan was very fond of David ² and warned him, "My father Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. Be on your guard tomorrow morning; go into hiding and stay there. ³ I will go out and stand with my father in the field where you are. I'll speak to him about you and will tell you what I find out."

⁴ Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly. ⁵ He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine. 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?"

It's really a wonderful thing to have a friend who isn't afraid to speak up for you. V.4 says **Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul**. A good friend will not only refuse to participate when people are gossiping about you, but they speak well of you. They have strong, persuasive arguments why you should be honored and loved. That's what a true friend will do.

Not only does Jonathan speak well of David but he also soundly rebukes his father. Jonathan honored his father and showed him respect. He refers to him in v.4 as "the king" and to David as Saul's servant, but at the same time, when a rebuke was in order Jonathan was very firm. He even commanded Saul to change course.

4 ...Let not the king do wrong to his servant David

Then he makes a compelling argument for liking David.

...he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly. ⁵ He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine. The LORD won a great victory for all Israel, and you saw it and were glad.

Then he warns Saul that what he has planned is wrong and would be a serious injustice.

Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason?

To his credit, this time Saul listened to Jonathan. This is one of those rare moments when we can learn from Saul's example in a positive way. We must always be willing to listen to reason, and to take all reproofs and good advice, even from those below us. As parents we need to admit that sometimes our kids are right, and we need to listen to them.

⁶ Saul listened to Jonathan and took this oath: "As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be put to death."

Saul swears on the life of God.

OK, now turn back to ch.20. All that was just to show you that Jonathan was a peacemaker. He brought healing to that broken relationship. That was God's doing, and it was done through the love of a good friend.

Is completely trustworthy

Now that reconciliation has disintegrated and David is back for Jonathan's help once again, Jonathan begins by reassuring David of his commitment to him. This is another mark of a grace-dispensing friend.

When someone's world is turned upside-down like David's has here, they do not know what to think. They do not know who they can trust; they do not know who is going to be on their side. They are afraid and confused and their heart is usually in turmoil. So the first thing Jonathan does is reassure him.

⁸ ... If I am guilty, then kill me yourself! Why hand me over to your father?"

⁹ "Never!"³ Jonathan said.

This is the second time Jonathan has responded that way. That was his initial response back in v.2, and he says it again now. I think Jonathan liked that word because he knew what it was like for someone to say that in his defense. Remember back in ch.14 when Saul swore to God that he was going to kill Jonathan for eating the honey? At the last minute, as Saul went to kill Jonathan, the soldiers mutinied and told Saul, "Never!" That little word saved Jonathan's life, so he uses it twice in this chapter. Something is threatening his buddy's life and Jonathan says, "Never!"

9 ..."If I had the least inkling that my father was determined to harm you, wouldn't I tell you?"

Jonathan does everything he can to set David's mind at ease with respect to what he is going to do. David may worry about Saul or Saul's court or this danger or that danger, but one thing David

³ The Hebrew phrase literally means "Far be it!"

absolutely does not need to worry about is Jonathan. Jonathan will be loyal to him. Of all the worries your friends have, make sure you are not one of them. When it comes to the question of whether you are going to be loyal, and stick up for them, and be there when they need you, and pray for them, and make time for them, they have absolutely nothing to worry about.

In v.10 David gets back to the plan and says, "So when you go to the feast and tell the made-up story to Saul, if Saul blows his top, then what? How are you going to let me know? Jonathan doesn't answer right away.

¹¹ "Come," Jonathan said, "let's go out into the field." So they went there together.

This adds a little suspense to the story. Those are the same words Cain said to Abel in Gn.4:8. So the two men walk out into the field.

¹² 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? ¹³ 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.

Before answering the question Jonathan uses the most strident, strong language to assure David that he will do as David wishes. He calls down upon himself the most severe curse from God if he reneges. He's doing everything he can to reassure his friend.

One attribute of God that enables us to enjoy all His other attributes is His faithfulness. Anyone who loves God really loves the experience of God's faithfulness, and one of the sweetest ways to experience the faithfulness of God is to experience it coming through a faithful, reliable, trustworthy friend.

Points you to the sovereignty of God

Then Jonathan brings up the matter that is on his mind (we will save that for next time), but for now, skip down to v.18.

¹⁸ Then Jonathan said to David: "Tomorrow is the New Moon festival. You will be missed, because your seat will be empty. ¹⁹ The day after tomorrow, toward evening, go to the place where you hid when this trouble began

He is talking about the place where David was hiding back in ch.19 when Jonathan worked out the reconciliation between David and Saul.

... wait by the stone Ezel. ²⁰ I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I were shooting at a target. ²¹ Then I will send a boy and say, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I say to him, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them here,' then come, because, as surely as the LORD lives, you are safe; there is no danger.

I am guessing they wanted to do this secretly, just in case someone is around at the time. If word got back to Saul that David was in the field the whole time and the story about a sacrifice in Bethlehem was false, that would not be good.

²² But if I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,' then you must go, because the LORD has sent you away.

Think about what Jonathan is saying. If some murderous lunatic is trying to kill you that means the Lord has sent you away. Jonathan is quite a theologian. For Jonathan there are only two

possibilities – it is OK to stay or *the Lord* has sent you away. When you are in David’s shoes it is so easy to fall into thinking about circumstances from the human point of view.

When people are sinning against you the natural reaction is to focus only on what those sinful people are doing, but Jonathan points David to what God is doing, which is bigger and more significant than what sinful Saul may or may not be doing. One of your most important roles as a friend is to help your friend see the hand of God in the hard things in life, and one of the reasons you need a Jonathan in your life is so you can have someone help you see the hand of God in everything that happens. A good friend points you to the hand of God in everything that happens.

Associates himself with you no matter what the cost

Now the curtain goes down and the scene switches to Saul’s palace.

²⁴ So David hid in the field, and when the New Moon festival came, the king sat down to eat. ²⁵ He sat in his customary place by the wall, opposite Jonathan, and Abner sat next to Saul, but David's place was empty.

It certainly does have the sound of an eye-witness account, doesn’t it?

26 Saul said nothing that day, for he thought, "Something must have happened to David to make him ceremonially unclean-- surely he is unclean."⁴

Again, it is no big deal for David not to be there.⁵ The question is how will Saul respond when he finds out Jonathan spoke to David and gave him permission to leave town?

²⁷ But the next day, the second day of the month, David's place was empty again.

The second day was not a holy day, so now Saul knows it was not an uncleanness issue.

Then Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why hasn't the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?" ²⁸ Jonathan answered, "David earnestly asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem. ²⁹ He said, 'Let me go, because our family is observing a sacrifice in the town and my brother has ordered me to be there. If I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away to see my brothers.' That is why he has not come to the king's table."

This is very similar to the story God told Samuel to tell Saul when Samuel’s life was in danger. He said, “Tell Saul the reason you are going to Bethlehem is to offer a special sacrifice.” It was a sacrifice that was not required in the law. Here David gives the same story, so now both David and Jonathan have joined the crowd of people who have deceived Saul to keep him from murdering. We titled the first part of ch.18 “Everybody loves David.” Maybe this part could be “Everybody lies to Saul.” The characters so far who have given either a falsehood or half-truth to Saul include David, Saul’s son Jonathan, Saul’s daughter Michal, God’s prophet Samuel, and God Himself.

When you rebel against God there are lots of consequences, and one of them can be this:

⁴ There were a lot of non-sinful things that could make a person ceremonially unclean, and Saul knew David loved God’s Law, which required that you not participate in a holy day celebration if you are ritually unclean. Why doesn’t it occur to Saul that David is absent because he is trying to avoid being killed? One possibility is something happened in the prophesying incident with Samuel that made it appear as though David was safe again. Another possibility is that it was such a small thing for David to be absent that Saul thought nothing of it.

⁵ It is such a non-event that Saul thinks of uncleanness as the probable reason before he thinks of David staying away to protect his life as a possible reason.

Everybody starts deceiving you. To the faithful God is faithful ... but to the crooked He shows Himself PATAL (lit. "twisted"). It is one of the ways God deals harshly with those who are unfaithful to Him.

OK, so how is Saul going to react? Was David right or was Jonathan right?

³⁰ Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse and rebellious woman!"

David was right. We have a phrase that is very similar to this one Saul uses. I am not going to say it because language like that comes out of the mouths of people like Saul. The insult is directed to Jonathan, but it is an incredibly degrading thing to say about his own wife as well. This is the ugliness of sinful anger – you lose control of your tongue and the wickedness of your heart is exposed.

30 ...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?

You see that is the real heart of the issue – Jonathan siding with David. Saul is supposedly worried about Jonathan shaming his mother – after Saul just got done calling her a perverse and rebellious woman. Jonathan is enduring all this because of his love for David. He is not going to make a secret out of the fact that he is on David's side – even if that means bringing a whole lot of pain down on his head when he is around David's enemy. A good friend sticks up for you when you are being ridiculed, and if that means being ridiculed yourself, it does not matter. Heb.2:11 says Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brothers. Something deep down inside us loves having someone who is respected pull us alongside Him and be unashamed to be associated with us. God promises us that, and one way we experience it from Him is through a faithful friend.

Is not selfish because he measures what he should have by God's will

Saul then tries to appeal to Jonathan's pride and selfishness.

³¹ As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established.

He assumes Jonathan must have the same selfish motives in his heart that he himself has, so he tries to appeal to that. The truth is, Saul himself had already forfeited the establishment of the kingdom both for himself and for Jonathan and the rest of his descendents (13:13-14). Saul had been told that by God's prophet, Samuel, but still thought he could fight it. He was still trying to beat the rod of God's discipline.

But Jonathan has known ever since the Goliath incident that he would bow before David's throne, not the other way around.

The commentators frequently marvel at Jonathan's siding with David and helping him because they say Jonathan has the most to lose. He is next in line for the throne, and so it is remarkable that he would help David. But that is Saul's way of thinking, not Jonathan's. Jonathan knows full well that David is God's choice for king, not him, so he knows the throne is not his to lose. He loses nothing if David becomes king – he only gains (because he is David's friend). When God gives something to someone else instead of to you, if it was never God's plan to give it to you then you have not lost anything when someone else gets it.

The greatest enemy of friendship – in fact, the greatest enemy of love in general, is fear of loss. The more worried I am about losing out on my fair share, the less inclined I am going to be to give to you. If I am worried about not having enough money I will probably not be generous to you. If I am worried about not having enough pleasure in life then I will tend to use you more than give to you, and as soon as I start losing that which my soul says I must have, that is when I stop loving you and start guarding what is mine.

The solution to that is to train my soul to think like Jonathan – whatever God has for me, that is all I need to be happy, and whatever is not part of God’s plan for me, I don’t need. so if someone else gets it instead of me, I have not lost anything. There are some people around you who desperately need a friend like this – a friend who measures loss and gain by what God gives and wills alone- a friend who will never resent them for getting what seemed like should have been theirs, but who will instead genuinely rejoice over them getting it because they love them so deeply.

Cares more about your reputation than about his own personal safety

Saul probably knew, even as the words were coming out of his mouth, that appealing to Jonathan’s pride and selfishness would get him nowhere so he quickly moves on to his next tactic, which is just a brute force order:

31 ...Now send and bring him to me, for he must die!

There’s a direct order from the highest authority in the land and it comes with a healthy dose of intimidation. If you can picture the scene here – big, tall, powerful, intimidating Saul is beside himself with rage, no doubt shouting right in Jonathan’s face but Jonathan isn’t the least bit intimidated.

"³² "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Jonathan asked his father. ³³ But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him.

Jonathan is going to stand up for David’s innocence even if it costs him his life. A second ago Saul was supposedly so concerned about Jonathan’s kingdom being established. Now he is throwing a spear at him.

Jonathan isn’t afraid of the unrestrained wrath of his father. He never has been. There is a big difference between Michal and Jonathan. Yes, Michal had an affection for David and helped him escape.

That was good. But on the other hand, when she had to face Saul she bore false witness against David to save her own skin. She said, “I had to do it because David threatened to kill me.” She wanted to save David’s life, but she did not mind doing a little harm to his reputation to save herself. When Jonathan faces the exact same situation he cares only about protecting David’s reputation even if it costs him his own life! (Which it almost did.) That is the heart of Jesus Christ, and we experience that from him through friends like Jonathan.

Is more hurt by what hurts you than by what hurts him

Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David. ³⁴ Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the month he did not eat...

So far none of that is all that surprising. After having to dodge a spear from his own father Jonathan is outraged, and gets up in furious anger, and on top of that anger he has grief so severe that he goes the whole day without eating. None of that is really that shocking...until you get to the end of v.34:

...because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of *David*.

Can you imagine being yelled at by your father in front of everyone, belittled, mocked, scolded, and then having your father actually attempt to violently kill you, and you go off and the main reason you are sad is because of your father’s shameful treatment of your *friend*? Robert Bergen calls this “one of the purest displays of human loyalty found in the annals of human history.” It is no exaggeration in v.17 when it says **Jonathan ... loved David as he loved himself**. He really, truly did. David experienced the very compassion of the infinite heart of God through his friend Jonathan. So

much so that Jonathan was more upset about his father mistreating David than he was about his father yelling and swearing and attacking him.

Someone in this church really needs a friend like that...including you.

Conclusion: Who does God expect you to befriend?

And if you think you don't – that you do not need any help from anyone- that you are stronger than David and can take care of every problem on your own; first of all, if you think that you're kidding yourself. If David needed a friend to help him in times like that so do you and I. David needed it because David needed God's grace. He craved grace from God in any and every form in which it was available.

Saying we do not need a Jonathan-type friend is saying we do not need the grace from God that comes in that form.

Besides that, even if it were true that you do not need any help from anyone, that does not change the fact that other people need help from you. They need God's grace flowing through you. Even if it were true that you do not need any friends, there are people who need you to help them in times when they have a broken relationship that needs a third party for reconciliation, or someone to go to bat for them when they are being treated unfairly – someone who knows them inside and out; who knows their heart.

If you are the one God has chosen to be that friend for some friendless person in this church, and you arrive on Judgment Day without having ever put forth any effort to be a friend to that person, what are you going to say when God requires you to give an account? You are not responsible for everyone in this church, but surely you are responsible for someone. Surely Christ did not organize His Church around you so that you are the only one without family responsibilities, right? So let's see if we can learn from Jonathan as he goes to bat for his friend David. Let's try to learn 1) How we can become a Jonathan for someone in this church, and 2) how we can delight in friendship enough that we will put forth the effort necessary to seek a Jonathan for ourselves.

Next week we'll talk more about how to become this kind of friend. It is not going to be easy. It is going to take up a lot of your time. For most of us it is going to require some major adjustments in the way we budget our time. Most people think, "There's no way I could develop a Jonathan-type friendship. I don't have the time. I'm married – my wife is my friend. I put all my time and energy into my relationship with her."

It is good to be focused on that, but both Jonathan and David were married. Spend some time this week reading what the book of Proverbs teaches about friendship and companions, and you know what you will find – that having friendships like this is a matter of wisdom. It is not an optional luxury for the folks who have lots of spare time. It is a matter of wisdom. If you are wise you will develop friendships like this. If we do not develop these kinds of friendships we are, in that area, fools. There is much more that needs to be said about this, so please be here next week. But for this week, how about if we just spend the next seven days asking the Lord, "Who do You want me to befriend?"

Benediction: 1 Peter 1:22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

Devotionals

David and Jonathan

1 Samuel 20 Day 1

The God who attends and listens to my desires

Psalm 10:17 You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you strengthen their heart, and you listen attentively.

Every desire in your heart makes a noise in heaven. Every time you want something, that wanting is something God hears in heaven. God inclines His gracious, favorable, loving ear to all your desires. This is not to imply that prayer is unnecessary. The fact that God is attending to you does not mean you should fail to attend to Him. But Oh, what a blessed truth that He attends to you when you are in trouble.

Oh Lord, let all the desires You hear from my heart be righteous desires. And let my righteous desires be powerful.

Desire is the heart and soul of prayer. Words are the body. As the body without the soul is dead, so is a prayer not driven by desire. God attends not to the words but the desires, as prayer is not prayer unless animated by desire.

It is especially the desires of the afflicted that God hears. That means the more afflicted you are the more attentive God is to your desires. *Bring me down to the dust, dear Lord, for he who dwells in the dust dwells nearest heaven. The lower I descend the higher my prayers ascend.*

The wording at the end is amazing – God listens *attentively*. He already knows all things, yet right now He is straining His ears to listen to your desires for relief – not to gain information, but just because that is the activity of love.

One of the great joys of life is enjoying these benefits from God. And one of the chief ways God is pleased to give them to us is through godly friends. When a good friend listens to you, and you recognize it as a gesture from heaven through that person, you are having a profound experience of fellowship with God!

Oh Lord, please teach Your servant how not to squander moments of love that I receive from You through friends and family. Protect me from seeing only the friend, as though the love were originating with them, and missing Your presence.

Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy: The God who attends and listens to my needs and who strengthens my heart

Promise to trust: He will listen and strengthen my heart.

What will result if I experience this attribute today: Safety and protection, Peace and calmness, Confidence, courage, and comfort, A sense of being attended to and cared for, Strength

David and Jonathan

1 Samuel 20 Day 2

Psalm 141:4-5 Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds with men who are evildoers; let me not eat of their delicacies. ⁵ Let a righteous man strike me-- it is a kindness; let him rebuke me-- it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it.

The evil things unbelievers love have an appeal. Verse 4 calls them “delicacies.” There is a significant pleasure that comes from them. And so if we set our gaze upon the pleasure of those things it will be a very short time before our hearts become drawn or inclined^[1] toward those things. Having the eye be the leader of the inclinations of the heart is a mark of sin in your life.^[2]

And while at the shallowest level the ways of the world are pleasurable delicacies, in a similar way the right way can be painful. Walking with the wise means getting rebuked and struck when we wander away into folly.

But David says that he prefers being struck by godly men than being pleased by the delicacies of the wicked.

Teach me, dear Lord, to prefer the blows of a godly man to the delicacies of the world. I let my gaze rest on them just for a moment and I'm hooked. My heart bends toward the pleasure they offer, and once that happens there is no escape. Just a little time spent looking at things from their earthly point of view – dreaming about the pleasures of riches, luxury, illicit sex, “freedom” from the restrictions of Your way – just a short time of thinking about that and my heart is won over. And when that happens following You becomes impossible, because my heart is convinced something else is a better source of joy.

Dear God, let my heart not ever be led by my eyes. Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil. When advertisers come on TV or on the Internet and start showing me their images, don't let my heart be won over. Let me instead seek out the wise. Oh Lord, let me see the immensity of the value of the treasure of wise friends who love to talk about You, and let that treasure be so compelling in my heart that I pay whatever price of time and effort is required to befriend those people.

Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy: The God whose river of delights is superior to the delicacies of the world.

Promise to trust: If I prefer His delights to the world's delicacies He will make it worth my while.

What will result if I experience this attribute today: Desire for God through His people.

David and Jonathan

1 Samuel 20 Day 3

^[1] The word translated “drawn” is the same word translated “incline” in **Ps.119:36 Incline my heart toward your testimonies.**

^[2] Job.31:7 ...**If my heart walked after my eyes...then may others eat what I have sown.**

1 Sam.20:1 Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan

David risked his life to go see Jonathan. He needs his friend to know what's going on. This is an incredibly horrible crisis in his life, and he needs someone to walk with him through it.

God is like that. He walks with us through the darkest, most horrible valleys and brings light and joy to them. That is a characteristic of God – His rod and His staff bring comfort to the soul even in the valley of the shadow of death (Ps.23:4). And one of the most blessed ways to experience that attribute of God is to receive it from a good friend, and, while receiving it, realizing that it is coming from God Himself.

Dear Father, in the darkest times of my life – even in those times when it seemed everyone had abandoned me; not everyone had. There were some who stayed by my side and loved me and comforted me and strengthened me even in my worst moments. That was You, dear Lord. It was Your kindness and love being delivered to me personally through Your servants. Oh thank You dear Father! Forgive me for the times when I didn't recognize it as coming from You and focused instead on the human instrument alone. Teach Your servant, dear Father, to receive all the love I receive from people as expressions of Your love.

Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy: The God who brings light to my deepest darkness through His people

Promise to trust: He will walk with me through the valley of the shadow of death

What will result if I experience this attribute today: Hope, joy, love for Him and His people, strength, encouragement, courage

David and Jonathan

1 Samuel 20 Day 4

1 Sam.20:2 "Never!" Jonathan replied. "You are not going to die!"

8 ... Why hand me over to your father?"⁹ "Never!" Jonathan said.

Jonathan does everything he can to reassure his friend. He wants to make it crystal clear that of all the things David has to worry about, Jonathan's faithfulness isn't one of them. David could rely on him completely during this time when nothing else in life seemed reliable.

Such faithfulness in a friendship is a reflection of the faithfulness of God. God's faithfulness is an especially wonderful attribute, as it is the attribute that enables us to enjoy all His other attributes. (If God were loving but not faithful to show His love, we could not count on His love. The same goes for all the rest of His attributes. We can enjoy them only because He has promised them to us, and His faithfulness guarantees the fulfillment of those promises.

Anyone who loves God really loves the experience of God's faithfulness. And one of the sweetest ways to experience the faithfulness of God is to experience it coming through a faithful, reliable, trustworthy friend.

Dear Father, there are so many times when my life is more delightful because of the faithfulness and trustworthiness of people around me. I take it for granted and hardly even think about it. But what a horror my life would be if no one were faithful! Thank You, dear

Lord, for all the goodness I have enjoyed in my life through Your faithfulness expressed to me through the reliability of people. Teach me to become more alert to this grace that I might be aware of Your presence when it happens.

Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy: Faithfulness (expressed through people)

Promise to trust: He will fulfill all of His great and precious promises

What will result if I experience this attribute today: Hope, joy, courage

David and Jonathan

1 Samuel 20 Day 5

²¹ Then I will send a boy and say, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I say to him, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them here,' then come, because, as surely as the LORD lives, you are safe; there is no danger.

²² But if I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,' then you must go, because the LORD has sent you away.

Think about what Jonathan is saying. If some murderous lunatic is trying to kill you, that means the Lord has sent you away. Jonathan is quite a theologian. For Jonathan there are only two possibilities – it's OK to stay or *the Lord* has sent you away. When you're in David's shoes it's so easy to fall into thinking about circumstances from the human point of view. When people are sinning against you the natural reaction is to focus only on what those sinful people are doing. But Jonathan points David to what God is doing, which is bigger and more significant than what sinful Saul may or may not be doing.

One of your most important roles as a friend is to help your friend see the hand of God in the hard things in life. And one of the reasons you need a Jonathan in your life is so you can have someone help you see the hand of God in everything that happens. A good friend points you to the hand of God in everything that happens.

Dear Lord God, no matter where I have to go and no matter what sweetness I have to leave, if I know for sure it is Your leading then it is delightful to me. What a comfort is Your sovereignty! Oh Lord, may I be a man who always points people to Your blessed, beautiful hand. May I not just utter platitudes about You being in control, but teach me how to help people see what is so marvelous and beautiful about Your control. And may I be able to make it seem real to them rather than merely theoretical. Make me such a lover of Your sovereign work that I speak about it all the time.

Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy: Sovereignty

Promise to trust: He will control all things in a way that reflects both His omnipotence and His omni-benevolence.

What will result if I experience this attribute today: Joy! Conversation about God's sovereignty