

1 Samuel 20

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Date: 03 May 2013

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- [0 : 00] But again, that's 1 Samuel chapter 20, beginning on page 230 of your few Bibles. Then David fled from Nioth and Ramah and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? What is my guilt?
- And what is my sin before your father that he seeks my life? And he said to him, Far from it. You shall not die. Behold, my father does nothing, either great or small, without disclosing it to me.
- And why should my father hide this from me? Is it not so? Or it is not so. But David vowed again, saying, Your father knows well that I have found favor in your eyes.
- And he thinks, Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved. But truly, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is still but a step between me and death.
- Then Jonathan said to David, Whatever you say, I will do for you. David said to Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit at table with the king.
- [1 : 08] But let me go, that I may hide myself in the field till the third day at evening. If your father misses me at all, then say, David earnestly asked, Leave of me to run to Bethlehem, his city, for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the clan.
- If he says good, it will be well with your servant. But if he is angry, then know that harm is determined by him. Therefore, deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the Lord with you.
- But if there is guilt in me, kill me yourself, for why should you bring me to your father? And Jonathan said, Far be it from you. If I knew that it was determined by my father that harm should come to you, would I not tell you?
- Then David said to Jonathan, Who will tell me if your father answers you roughly? And Jonathan said to David, Come, let us go out into the field. So they both went out into the field.
- And Jonathan said to David, The Lord, the God of Israel, be witness. When I have sounded out my father about this time tomorrow, or the third day, behold, if he is well disposed towards David, shall I not then send and disclose it to you?
- [2 : 23] But should it please my father to do you harm, the Lord do so to Jonathan, and more also if I do not disclose it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety.
- May the Lord be with you, as he has been with my father. If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the Lord, that I may not die. And do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever, when the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.
- And Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, May the Lord take vengeance on David's enemies. And Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him, for he loved him as he loved his own soul.
- Then Jonathan said to him, Tomorrow is the new moon, and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty. On the third day, go down quickly to the place where you hid yourself when the matter was in hand, and remain beside the stone heap.

And I will shoot three arrows on the side of it, as though I shot at a mark. And behold, I will send the boy, saying, Go, find the arrows. If I say to the boy, Look, the arrows are on this side of you, take them.

[3 : 34] Then you are to come, for, as the Lord lives, it is safe for you, and there is no danger. But if I say to the youth, Look, the arrows are beyond you, then go, for the Lord has sent you away.

And as for the matter of which I have spoken, behold, the Lord is between you and me forever. So David hid himself in the field, and when the new moon came, the king sat down to eat food.

The king sat on his seat, as at other times, on the opposite by the wall. Jonathan sat opposite, and Abner sat by Saul's side, but David, David's place, was empty.

Yet Saul did not say anything that day, for he thought, Something has happened to him. He is not clean. Surely he is not clean. But on the second day, the day after the new moon, David's place was empty, and Saul said to Jonathan, his son, Why has not the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?

Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem. He said, Let me go, for our clan holds a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to be there.

[4 : 44] So now, if I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away and see my brother. For this reason, he has not come to the king's table. Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said to him, You son of a perverse and rebellious woman, Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?

For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established. Therefore send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die. Then Jonathan answered Saul, his father, Why should he be put to death?

What has he done? But Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him. So Jonathan knew that his father was determined to put David to death. And Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger, and ate no food the second day of the month.

For he was grieved for David, because his father had disgraced him. In the morning, Jonathan went out into the field to the appointment with David, and with a little boy.

And he said to his boy, Run and find the arrows that I shoot. As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. And when the boy came to the place of the arrow that Jonathan had shot, Jonathan called after the boy and said, Is not the arrow beyond you?

[6 : 05] And Jonathan called after the boy, Hurry, be quick, do not stay. So Jonathan's boy gathered up the arrows and came to his master. But the boy knew nothing. Only Jonathan and David knew the matter.

And Jonathan gave his weapons to his boy and said to him, Go and carry them to the city. And as soon as the boy had gone, David rose from beside the stone heap and fell on his face to the ground and bowed three times.

And they kissed one another and wept with one another, David weeping the most. Then Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord shall be between me and you and between my offspring and your offspring forever.

And he rose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thanks. Thanks.

Well, good afternoon. It is good to be here, and especially nice to be back from vacation. Had a wonderful couple of weekends in Wisconsin, but this is where I want to be, right here with you.

- [7 : 21] And you know, it could be worse. I know it's warm and hot, but it could be cold and dark. So just think of that. I'd much rather have it warm and light.
- Well, I like the title of our summer series, Following the King. I like it because it carries a double meaning.
- I don't know if you recognized it. On the one hand, if we put the emphasis on the king, our summer readings in 1 Samuel embed us into the life story of David, the ancient king of Israel.
- And in that light then, two weeks ago, we saw with our attention on David, his selection. As the eventual ruler that would replace Saul, we followed the king.
- And last week, you looked at the salvation that David brings, his great victory over Goliath. We've been following the king, the anointed one, who would rule, and the active one, who would rescue.
- [8 : 43] On the other hand, if you put the emphasis not on the word the king, but on the word following, well, the vantage of the summer can change. The emphasis isn't necessarily have to fall on David.
- Rather, what it meant for people in David's day to follow him as king. we're reading about those who are learning to follow the king.
- In other words, we should be curious in these narratives about the other characters. The stories written at times where they take the lead.
- These lesser persons in the greater narrative should capture your and my attention. And in fact, I've come to believe this chapter especially.
- Jonathan, I think, is the central character. Not David. David doesn't play well in the chapter by and large.
- [9 : 51] He opens in outright afraidness for his life. He moves to even being a bit distrustful of Jonathan.
- There comes a season of three days where he's sleeping beside a stone heap. And at the end, the anointed one, the one that we see as the precursor to Jesus himself, is weeping uncontrollably to where unlike the Gospels where Jesus looks at his followers and says, go in peace.
- Jonathan's the one who turns to David and says, hey look, you've been bawling your eyes out. The narrator will record this as your tears more than mine.
- But I, Jonathan, say to you, the anointed, go in peace. David's not even in all the scenes of the chapter.
- Jonathan is in each one. And in each one, Jonathan is in command. I wonder, is it permissible to read the story in this way?
- [11 : 14] To think of Jonathan perhaps as a great example of someone who is learning how to follow the king.
- Jonathan, a forerunner perhaps of sorts for you, for me, on what it might mean even in our Christian understanding to follow Jesus.
- Let's look at it through that lens today. Let me point out three characteristics from the life of Jonathan that might help you in relationship to your own faith walk with Jesus.
- First, notice Jonathan's admiration for David. The whole first 11 verses are almost pregnant with mature admiration for David.
- Look at verse 4. Jonathan said to David, whatever you say, I will do for you. That's the voice of loyalty. Take a look at verse 11.

[12 : 27] Jonathan said to David, come, let us go out into the field. He is moving in a sense of intimacy and acquaintance with him. Or verse 9, he says that if my father was doing something, would I not tell you.

Jonathan had a certain admiration for David. Now this should come as no surprise by chapter 20. He's one of the most commendable people presented on all the pages of scripture.

In fact, when Jonathan first appears in the Bible, he appears a full grown man. No birth narratives to announce his arrival, the kind of which we get with Samson or Jacob or others.

No childhood stories to walk you through like you get with Samuel. No, when you meet Jonathan in the Bible, he is ready-made mature.

He's an accomplished warrior with oversight already of a thousand. Take a look back a portion of the Jonathan narrative that we haven't seen. Chapter 13, verses 1 and 2, where he first appears on the pages of scripture.

[13 : 44] Saul lived for one year and then became king, and when he had reigned for two over Israel, Saul chose 3,000 men of Israel. 2,000 were with Saul at Mishmash in the hill country of Bethel, and 1,000 were with Jonathan in Gebeah of Benjamin.

Jonathan, the eldest of at least three sons. Jonathan, walking on to the pages of scripture as an accomplished warrior.

This one with great admiration for David. I've come to think that admiration for another often rises out of an affinity with the other.

Have you noticed how Jonathan came onto the pages of scripture? If you go back and read the narratives this week, he works a great victory nearly single-handedly before he's ever met David.

Chapter 14 would describe it for you. And the first act of valor in the scriptures concerning Jonathan elevates him above all other of the soldiers and it elevates him above his own father.

[15 : 11] Because while Saul was hiding from the Philistines and his army, Jonathan comes up out in the open, is called up by the Philistines and with only his armor bearer goes and slays twenty men in the spatial range of an acre.

A manslaughter, although greatly outnumbered, and only when Saul saw that victory did he bring himself out and fight.

The key, of course, came in chapter 14 and in verse 6, and this gets you to the very heart of Jonathan as a warrior. Jonathan said to the young man who carried his army, come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised.

It may be that the Lord will work for us, for nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few. That's his heart. I'm in, I'm up, I'm moving.

All this before he meets David. what a man he would be. Is it any surprise then that we see an affinity with David, who comes while Saul and the armies are inactive, and comes and asks, who is this Philistine who defies the armies of the living God, who takes five stones and his sling, and single handedly routes the army.

[16 : 58] No wonder if you take a look over at the end of chapter 17, when these two first meet, their hearts are drawn together. Look at chapter 17 verse 57.

And as soon as David returned from striking down the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. There he is. There's David with the head of the Philistine in his hand.

And Saul said to him, whose son are you, young man? And David answered, I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite. And as soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, quote, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David.

And Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Why? Because with David there was an affinity of one who trusted in the Lord.

When he met David, he met someone who was like him. Someone that honored the name of God and would do anything for him.

[18 : 07] And from that grows this great admiration. Now, it's no secret that Christianity from the apostolic preaching forward connects Jesus to David and David to Jesus by way of type.

Let's consider connecting John to those who would follow. consider your own admiration for Jesus today.

Is there anything in the life of Jesus that captures your attention? Or are you disinterested with him completely?

Is there anything in the life of Jesus that captivates your soul? Have you took it upon yourself yet to read the gospels on your own?

And is there anything in the ministry of Jesus that should command your respect? Is there one thing which would lead you by way of cause admiration for him?

[19 : 41] Remember, Jesus is the one who hated all evil, whether it be of the religious sort or the rebellious sort.

Jesus is the one who on his own did battle on behalf of a weakened people who could not or would not stand and fight for themselves.

Jesus is the one who came alone and stood alone. Jesus is the one who does a complete work of rescue in the world, reuniting fallen men and women to God by faith through his work on the cross.

do you have an admiration for Jesus the way Jonathan had an admiration for David?

Put differently, is your loyalty fixed? Let's look at another characteristic of Jonathan.

[20 : 51] Not his admiration for David, but his affection toward David. It was hinted at there in 18.1, it says Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

But even our own chapter, chapter 20, divides in the middle and at the end with great detailed language concerning the affection Jonathan had toward David.

Look at verse 17 of our own text. After that plan, it says Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

And then when you actually get to the end of our narrative at chapter 20, verse 41, when they are departing, you see that Jonathan said to David, go in peace because we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying the Lord shall be between me and you and between your offspring and my offspring forever.

And if you look at verse 41, they had fallen to the ground, David weeping the most, and they kissed one another, and wept with one another. That is affection.

[22 : 06] The word love and the indication of a kiss. Now, as an aside, it is ludicrous, although books are published on this even from our own neighborhood, to insinuate that the love that David and Jonathan shared with one another had anything sexual about it.

I see that as a complete rereading of the biblical narrative through the lens of those today with an agenda. There's a moment after Jonathan dies in 2 Samuel 1 where David will say of him that his love, surpassed the love of women, which I think is to be taken in the sense that it was of a different order, a different kind.

In other words, it's actually contrasting his relationship with Jonathan, not comparing it along the lines of sexual union. Secondly, Jonathan's not the only one in the scriptures that quote, fall in love with David.

Saul does first, it says in chapter 16 that Saul himself loved David. In chapter 18, when you read the narrative in its complete sense, it's Israel and Judah who themselves, all the people are called upon in the sense of loving David.

If you read further, it's Saul's daughter, Michal, who loves David. what should really be taken from this kind of language where you have someone who says, that guy, he is a soul mate to me, to the fact where they wept together and he kissed them as they departed, isn't anything sexual, but the genuine love is graced with godly affection.

[24 : 07] It's always that way. Let me put it differently. Love, by nature, is never merely of the mind. Love is not simply an act of the will.

It should spill forth from the heart. Learning to follow the king.

Let me ask you, do you have any affection today for Jesus? Heartfelt affection. is your heart warmed by his word?

I had the most glorious day earlier this morning in conversation with a young man in our congregation on admittance to the Lord's Supper.

We began to talk in their living room concerning the glories of the gospel and what Jesus did and how the work of Jesus actually enables that when the wrath of God comes it passes over us.

[25 : 17] And I said, do you have any impressions about what that might mean to you? And the young man says, my heart is warmed. How about us?

is your heart is your heart warmed toward the work of Christ? Is there an affection for him?

A love of him? The supreme characteristic of the Christian should be a love for Christ and then the spilling over of that love for others.

That's what Jonathan teaches us about being a follower of the king. Have you ever shed a tear of gratitude for his sacrifice?

If not, you haven't contemplated long enough the work of Christ for you. Do you feel?

[26 : 29] I actually said it. I don't know if this is recorded. Do you feel anything for Jesus? We should. We should have an affectionate heart that's warmed toward him.

After all, Jesus is the one who left his eternal throne for you. Jesus is the one who left all of that and took up a basin of servitude for you.

Jesus is the one who died for you. Jesus is the one who today intercedes for you.

Jesus is the one who by the power of his work will hold you in the love of God forever. That is stunning.

Jesus is the one that we should have an affection toward. Jonathan's admiration for David teaches us.

[27 : 43] Jonathan's affection for David teaches us. Finally, Jonathan's allegiance to David teaches us. Notice the emphasis of our chapter 20. The whole emphasis, the whole weight of it, comes from verse 12 through verse 17.

And the emphasis is on the making of a covenant. Take a look back at those verses and skim them even as I'm speaking to you.

What he says in verse 16 or 14 even, he says, look, when it all happens, when God has anointed you and you take your place on the throne rather than me, if I'm still alive, show me the steadfast love of the Lord that I may not die and do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever.

When the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies from David from the face of the earth. And then it says, and Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, may the Lord take vengeance on David's enemies.

And Jonathan made David swear, again, by his love for him. The entire chapter is summed up on this covenant between Jonathan and David.

[29 : 02] Interestingly, their relationship of David and Jonathan is much deeper than friendship. It actually goes to covenant. Take a look back at what happened previously to this incident in chapter 18 and verse 3.

After they met for the very first time, it says Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul. At their first meeting, they made a covenant. Take a look forward in the text to 23 verse 18.

This will happen while Saul is trying to find David, but Jonathan is given access to David in a cave. Chapter 23 and verse 18.

When they were there meeting, when Jonathan had come to him, verse 16, three times in the life and ministry of David and Jonathan, there is a covenant.

There is a covenant when they meet, there is a covenant now in chapter 20, and there is one later in chapter 23. What was the nature of this covenant? I don't think it went so far as to be a covenant like the ancient suzerain king treaties that they would make, or the kind you find in Genesis 15 where there is a slaying of an animal and a pulling of the animal into two and the blood between it and the two people making a covenant walking between the slain animal, reciting the promises and the stipulations as if to say, if I don't keep my oath to you, may this be done to me.

[30 : 45] I don't think it went that far, but it obviously had to deal with Jonathan and David's role. There was a commitment made by Jonathan that he would serve David, not the other way around, although Jonathan was the son of the king.

There was a willingness on Jonathan's part to renounce the throne. Chapter 20, verse 14 certainly indicates that.

When he's speaking with David, he says, if I'm still alive, show the steadfast love of the Lord that I may not die and don't cut me off from your house forever.

He's already relinquished to him the throne. And on David's part, there must have been a promise that he would willingly wait for the activity of God to anoint him as king, rather than take Saul out on his own.

I've often wondered as a result of this, whether this little phrase where David says in verse 8, if there's any guilt in me, kill me yourself, for why should you bring me to your father?

[32 : 00] Any guilt, guilt in what? Guilt in that I have transgressed the covenant I've made with you. I have done nothing against your father. I promised you I would do nothing against your father. I have done nothing against your father.

If I am guilty of doing anything against your father, well then kill me yourself. Indeed, that was his promise. But John, I will not lift up a hand against your father. Although he's anointed king, and I've been anointed king, I will wait.

I wonder if that was the great difficulty of David. Not so much that when he had the opportunity to take Saul's life, he wrestled with the difficulty of taking matters into his own hands for revenge.

I wonder if the real difficulty of the anointed one was simply to allow God's plans in life to play out. You know how difficult it is to allow God's plans to play out? I mean, imagine, look at the picture you have of David in this chapter.

He's fearful for his life. He's sleeping under a stone hoop. He's crying like a baby, not a man. He's at the end of all things.

[33 : 17] Could it be, could it be, that even Jesus, in his humanity, wrestled most intimately with what it was to wait, to be afraid, to be distrustful, to wonder how or if it would all work out, to be absolutely isolated and totally alone?

The one difference, of course, is that Jesus had no one with him at the end. David had Jonathan with him all the way through.

Jonathan pledged his allegiance to David, which means that Jonathan transferred his allegiance to David.

Have you done that with Jesus? Hey, think of this transfer of allegiance.

There are two men in our chapter who have both been anointed king. Saul and David. Jonathan is the son of Saul, and his allegiance goes to David, which means that all of the privileges of his birth, he has foregone, and all the future hold of power, he has let go, and he has submitted himself to being a follower, him.

[35 : 04] Let me ask it to you this way, what privileged rights are yours by way of birth? Now, for some of you, you say very little, came from nothing, still got nothing, but not so for all.

There are Jonathans here today who by birth have untold privilege through life.

Would you hold that over Jesus? If so, that's not a transfer of allegiance. Jesus, what about your future?

What about what you're owed? What about where you think you can end up? Would you be willing to relinquish the most exalted and comfortable of places to be nothing more than a follower of the king?

Jonathan was. He's a hero. He's a hero. No wonder David wept.

[36 : 26] You don't find people like this. But in the making of a Christian, this is exactly what happens. You and I renounce our self-authenticated claim to rule.

And we step aside and we say, Jesus, you rule. I have decided to follow Jesus.

That's what being a Christian is. Have you ever done that? If you haven't, I encourage you to do it today. All throughout this church, this is what we are learning. That God can be at work in your life.

And this is where he starts. he always starts with a transfer of allegiance. Jonathan shows you the way.

What an example for us today. I commend Jonathan to you. As one who teaches us what it means to follow the king.

[37 : 43] In loyalty, in love, in prayerfully for all the days of our life. Our heavenly father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you today for Jesus. Help us to put our minds on him again. Help us to be loyal to him. Help us to love him with all that we are and all that I have.

Help us to follow him. And for those here today who are just learning this for the first time, help them even now to say, dear God, I relinquish my purported claim to rule my life, and I follow Jesus from this day forward.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.