

Friend and Foe

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- [0 : 0 0] Okay, so we read the beginning of 1 Samuel, chapter 18. Now, the story goes on. David Marys, Michael, who is Saul's daughter, but the jealousy gets deeper between Saul and David. And then most of chapter 19 is about various efforts of Saul to try and kill David.
- And then chapter 20 is more about David and Jonathan again and the final pact that they make to find out exactly what's on Saul's mind. And I'm going to read a bit of that.
- I'm going to read verses 5 to 17, but I'm going to do slightly differently. I'm going to read it in the message, okay, which is a paraphrased version of the Bible. And sometimes for some of these big long stories that we get, it's a good way to read them and maybe have a ESV or an NIV alongside that. But I'm just going to read it. I think it's coming up on the screen from the message as well, is it? Yep. Okay. And it's, this is the interaction between David and Jonathan to find out if Saul really is going to try and kill him. Okay. So David said, tomorrow, Marx is the new moon. I'm scheduled to eat dinner with the king. Instead, I'll go and hide in the field until the evening of the third. If your father misses me, that's Saul. Say, David asked if he could run down to Bethlehem, his hometown for an anniversary reunion and worship with his family.
- If he says good, then I'm safe. But if he gets angry, you'll know for sure that he's made up his mind to kill me. Well, stick with me in this. You've entered into a covenant of God with me. Remember, if I'm in the wrong, go ahead and kill me yourself. Why bother giving me up to your father?
- Never exclaim Jonathan. I'll never do that. If I get the slightest hint that my father is fixated on killing you, I'll tell you. David asked, and whom will you get to tell me if your father comes back with a harsh answer? Come outside, said Jonathan. Let's go into the field. And when the two of them were out in the field, Jonathan said, as God the God of Israel is my witness, by this time tomorrow I'll get it out of my father, how he feels about you. Then I'll let you know what I learn. May God do the worst to me if I let you down. If my father still intends to kill you, I'll tell you and get you out of here in one piece. And God will, and God be with you as He has been with my father.
- [2 : 3 6] If I make it through this alive, continue to be my covenant friend. And if I die, I keep the covenant friendship with my family forever. And when God finally rids the earth of David's enemies, stay loyal to Jonathan. Jonathan repeated his pledge of love and friendship for David, for he loved David more than his own soul. Okay, we're going to look more especially at chapter eight. It'd be good if you've got Bibles. You can follow through. There's one or two references we're going to be making and follow this story. And it's, I think, a really important one. If you do have time tonight or maybe tomorrow at some point, do read the whole section, 18 to 20.
- It's great stuff, it's very dramatic stuff as it's happening. And think about reading it maybe in NLTE or the message. Just it flows sometimes a little bit easier for some of these bigger stories.

And we know that the life of David teaches us about the redemptive work of God. We know it teaches us about our individual lives. And we know it also teaches us about what God is doing in redemptive history, what He's doing right through the Bible. We know they're not just plonked in certain parts of the Bible as random stories. God has specifically chosen what He's chosen to record because it's significant. And it's important for us to learn a little bit more about God and His workings in our lives and what He wants from us as believers as well if we are Christians. And what He challenges us to if we're not Christians to consider in our lives.

And I hope that you hear God's word for yourself in your own lives today. I don't know your situations, but I believe and pray that God speaks through His word to each of us in our needs.

And really the theme this evening is friendship in many ways. It's about friendship in the face of God. That's the first thing I'm going to talk about. And then I'm going to talk about how the gospel story itself parallels very much with this story here of David and Jonathan. But I'm going to initially speak about friendship in the face of God because that's what we've got in these early verses of 1 Samuel chapter 18. It's about this tremendous brotherly love that there was an incredibly strong love between Jonathan, Saul's son, and David who Corey spoke about last week in the great story of David and Goliath. And you know, lots has been written about the nature of this friendship and what exactly this friendship was. But I think if we're to really understand it properly, we've got to understand the situation that they were in the nation the earliest and the situation historically and in the place in the Bible. And then I think it becomes clearer to us how, why and how it's so relevant as a story of friendship and more than that.

[5 : 32] So we see this, I've called it a friendship in the face of God, okay? And I hope that I'll become clear when we go through this story. There's one or two things that help us unpack and open up this whole idea of friendship in the face of God. Because what's clear between these two guys, David and Jonathan, both of them had God in their hearts, okay? God held their hearts. He was their King. He was their Lord. They trusted in Him. And God was their Redeemer and Savior. I mean, David, we've seen already that David has been anointed. We've looked at that story. And we know that he was anointed because God could see into his heart. 1 Samuel 13 and verse 14, Samuel says to Saul, you have done full, so you've not kept the command of the Lord your God with which he commanded you.

But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart. And that was David. David was someone who trusted in the Lord and whose heart had been changed by the Lord, and for whom the Lord was his Redeemer and his Rescuer. And the Spirit of the Lord was on him. He knew God's will. He obeyed God's will. He followed God's purposes. He submitted to the kingdom of God before anything else. And although Saul had rejected God's way, David was the one who would follow that through. And we know God had rejected Saul and Saul's leadership.

And David was next in line. He served God's first, served God's first. And even already, that had some major challenges as we've seen last week with Goliath. He was an outsider in the palace.

He wasn't royal blood. He was the youngest. He wasn't trained. But in all of these hurdles, he overcame them because his heart was fully focused on trusting and in following his God and his Lord. So his heart was held by the Lord, and he loved the Lord. Jonathan also loved the Lord. That was the basis of their friendship. Because in the first four verses of chapter 18, we see Jonathan here making an alliance with David. Now, it's a friendship for sure.

They are brothers who love one another for sure. He loved David more than his own soul for sure. We'll talk about that in a minute. But there was more than that. It was a formal commitment that was happening between the two of them. Jonathan was making a covenant, we're told.

[8 : 12] Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul. And it was a covenant that was made before the Lord. Chapter 20 verse 8 tells us that this was a covenant before the Lord.

It was something significant. And what he was doing here was massive. He was entering into this formal kind of relationship with David. And by doing so, he was renouncing his right as the crown prince because he was next in line after Saul. But you see, there's this great symbolism of going on. You may be wondering what he's doing. He's stripping off his clothes in front of David.

Well, he is. He stripped himself of the robe and the armor and the sword and the bow and the belt. And what he was doing was, this was a great symbolic act where he was handing over, as it were, the right of succession. The royal clothing was being handed to David.

And by doing so, he's absolutely turning convention on its head. And he was, in many ways, he was signing his own death warrant. Well, normally that would have been the case. It was a crazy thing to do. But his, he was doing it before the Lord because he was aware of a different kingdom. He was aware that David was God's choice. And he was willing to submit to that, not only because he loved David, but because more importantly, he loved the Lord. And this was a great act of obedience on his part. Both of them, in many ways, were signing their expected lives away, lives away. David wasn't going to be the shepherd boy. He was going to be thrown into this incredible role. And Jonathan wasn't going to be the next king. He was giving up that right because both of them, God held their hearts. They loved God and they obeyed God first. So God held their hearts. And that was a very important part of their friendship. But they also shared God's love in their friendship together. You know, we're told that twice in this little section. We're told that Jonathan made a covenant because he loved him, loved David as his own soul. And earlier on in verse 1, we're told that David and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. A very strong language, warrior men, strong language, loved each other. Sacrificial love because they both had a new understanding, both of themselves, in the light of God's love for them and of one another.

You see, Jonathan could love David as his own soul because he knew God loved him. And when he knew God loved him, he could love himself. And as God loved, as he knew God loved him and he could love himself, then he knew that he could share that love with David. These were tough warriors. And yet, they were able to love one another because they'd experienced God's love for them. How do we know that? Well, it's really interesting, but I've actually read it in chapter 20. If you flick forward, if you've got a Bible, if you've got it on your phones, chapter 20, and verse 8, I'm actually sorry, I'm going to change Bibles. Sorry, I've got lots of different Bibles tonight. Okay, but I've prepared and worked on the sermon from my own study Bible, and it's easier to, I find it easier to find things in my study Bible than I do in the pulpit Bible.

[11 : 46] Sorry. So, chapter 20 and verse 8, where David and Jonathan are talking about what Saul is going to do or what Saul might be going to do and what might happen if they find out that Saul hates them. 20, verse 8, David says, as for you, show kindness to your servant, for you have brought him into a covenant with you before the Lord. That's David speaking. And then in verse 14, Jonathan says, but show me unfailing kindness like that of the Lord as long as I live so that I may not be killed. Both of them want each other to show them loving kindness because of what the Lord has done for them. And see what's happening there. This word that both of them use, kindness or loving kindness or treat me kindly, is that great Old Testament word, *Hesed*, is, I think the A.V. authorized version uses the translation loving kindness. And I think that's probably my favorite or steadfast love. And it's this great redemptive word. It's the word that's used right throughout the Old Testament of the way God's saving love, the way He saved them as a people, redeemed them, bought them back. They knew this kindness, this loving kindness, this

Hesed of the living God. They knew God as their Savior. They knew His mercy. They knew His forgiveness. They knew His friendship, this covenant keeping God. And that was the basis of their ability to love one another like they love themselves. Because they understood, you see, that His love was sacrificial for them, was forgiving. And they could show that same love to one another. And that changed everything. It changed the whole course of their lives. It changed the way that they responded to their circumstances and the guidance that they sought. And that was how they could love each other with this incredibly loyal friendship. Because they themselves had experienced their warrior king.

And His love, His covenant love, His great love for them, His mercy and His forgiveness. And they knew as it were, and this isn't really maybe related to this exactly, but they had tasted His meekness, the great loving meekness and sensitivity and care of God in their lives.

And that word meekness is a great word, isn't it? And I think it's relevant here because when we think about that word, and when we think of it as the genesis of that word in the Bible, it's really the meekness is not weakness, which sometimes we think meekness is. It's the controlled strength of a war horse. You know, a horse that is no longer wild, but is under the control of its rider. And immense strength. And you can think of these guys, you can imagine that with these guys.

These were warriors. They were warrior kings, they were warrior men. And they had this great controlled meekness, this great strength. But it was governed by God's love and by God's sensitivity and God's grace and God's forgiveness. And that enabled them and enabled Jonathan to love David like his own soul and vice versa. And it's why they basically wanted one another. Whatever was happening with Saul, whatever happened if Saul threatened to kill David and if David had to run away, they would show each other and their families down the line loving kindness, because that's what they had received. So it was a friendship that was motivated by God's love, but also it was a friendship that was fiercely protective. We saw that, didn't we, in the two two, please that they make for one another. We recognize that Saul by chapter 20 here was determined to kill David. We've seen that in chapter 19. If you read it in chapter 20, verse 3, David says, you know, I know that I'm not going to be far from death if I stay here, even though I don't know what I've done wrong before King Saul. And both of them made this pact to protect one another.

[16 : 33] You know, that story of Jonathan goes in and finds out that everything's a disaster, Saul's raging. And so he goes back in the field and he's got a boy with him who's going to he's going to ping the arrow and it goes so far. And if the boy runs out and if he says, no, go beyond there, then David who's in the field at this time hiding, he knows that Saul's going to kill him.

And so they have this kind of pact and this way of explaining to one another the situation. And Saul in this chapter reveals his heart, of course, to Jonathan when he finds out that David isn't going to turn up for the meal. And in chapter 20 and verse 30, Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan.

He said, you son, 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 your mother who bore you, to the shame of the nakedness of your mother is the literal translation. As she bore you, you have shamed the family by siding with David, even though that was God's anointed.

And so we recognize that Saul is determined to kill David. And yet David and Jonathan have this incredibly fiercely protective love for one another. Both, and it's unique, isn't it? Because both of them are dependent on each other showing mercy. David says to Jonathan, you'll please show me mercy and if I've done wrong, you kill me yourself. And Jonathan says, look, if everything goes pear shaped and I die, please look after my family for my sake and protect them. And of course we know that happens. Later on, we'll probably look at the story of Mephibosheth.

And so it's an incredible story of friendship and of loving merciful kindness to one another. And isn't it interesting in this story, there's the very opposite, isn't there?

[18 : 44] Saul's relationship with David is so different in verses 8 and 9 of chapter 18. We just see that, don't we? That he's jealous when the women are singing about David killing his tens of thousands.

And we're told, you know, that he was very angry. And from that on, that time on, Saul kept an eye or a jealous eye on David. We know that he'd rejected God's covenant lordship. He wanted God, he's such a sad character, Saul. He wanted God's love, but on his own terms. And his heart was really closed to the truth. You know, he didn't value God. You look back at some of the accounts of Saul, he just didn't value God as God. At best, he kind of, he tried to get what he could from God, the best from God. But he didn't treat sin seriously. And he didn't treat his own heart condition seriously. He talked a good religion. Go back and read. It's a really sad chapter, chapter 15. Read that chapter again and see how just how misguided Saul was in his relationship with God. He loved himself first. He loved his position, his reputation. He loved the fact that he had a kingdom and that he came first in that kingdom. That's why he was so jealous and so raging about David and David being more popular than him. His rotten heart mastered him. And you see the difference between the three characters, David and Jonathan, whose hearts were won by the kindness and mercy of God. And Saul, who was such a confused and broken character, threatened by David's popularity, jealous, paranoid, violent, guilty, a betrayer, divided. He couldn't believe his own son's loyalties. And he couldn't even protect his own son. It really is a sad, so it's a really sad story of wasted talent, selfish pride, of heart, a heart that was closed to God's work of grace.

And it reveals itself as he raged against David and his son, Jonathan. So that's the first part of the story. And I want to just finish off by looking at why there's a strong gospel parallel here in the story. Because we know in Matthew 26, verse 28, you know these words very well, where Jesus is inaugurating the Lord's Supper. He says, this is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin. I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now until the day when I drink it new with you in my father's kingdom.

And so we recognize that there's a New Testament covenant as well, isn't there? Of which this is an early exposure of. And that there is another kingdom that we belong to as well, just as David and Jonathan recognized a different king and a different kingdom. So we recognize that God makes a covenant. Jonathan made a covenant with David. So God through Christ has made a covenant with us. It's different. And this here is just a shadow of it. But it's nonetheless pointing towards it. Now it's different because the covenant God makes with us is a one sided covenant.

David and Jonathan had both received God's mercy and God's forgiveness. They were both sinners, ordinary sinners saved by grace as it were. But that's different between the covenant with us and God. Because God promises, makes all the promises. God's the one who fulfills the covenant.

[22 : 33] God's the one who pays the price for the breaking of the covenant himself. So that we're able in his strength to become covenant keepers. It's not a covenant between equals. We don't come and say, Oh God, I'm going to bargain with you. I'm going to give you something.

You're going to give me something. God gives us everything. We are guilty. We are lost. He is God. He is just. He is innocent. Yet he dies as the covenant breaker in our place for you and for me.

And he's raised to life and that changes everything. And yet he promises to be faithful and just and protective to the very end for us. And it's the covenant he first made with Abraham fulfilled in Christ. He makes the promises. He reveals the plan. He becomes flesh.

He too faces opposition. His family are also against him. He's also betrayed by his friends. He's forsaken also by his father. His blood is shed. Yet he defeats death. And he does it because of hesed, because of loving kindness, because of mercy for each and every one of us.

And so redemption, the work of Jesus Christ for us is a recovered friendship. That's what it is. He is recovering a lost friendship. If you are a Christian today, through Jesus Christ, you have the pathway to a renewed and recovered friendship with the God that sins separates you from. And his sin is separated us from. And he asks us simply to trust in his covenant promises and in his covenant work and in his covenant shed blood on our behalf and enter into a friendship with him by faith. So there's a strong gospel parallel both between David and Jonathan and the covenants and how that points forward to the living God in Jesus Christ. And that reminds us that our friendship with God is our radical friendship. Just as this friendship between David and Jonathan was a radical life-changing friendship. So our friendship with God through Christ is a really radical friendship for us in our day-to-day living. Because when you come to Jesus Christ, when you call yourself a Christian, when I call myself a Christian and then coming into a relationship with Christ, what do we do? We're giving ourselves and our allegiance to a different kingdom.

[25 : 15] We're saying, God's kingdom, your kingdom come, we pray. We belong to another kingdom. We're citizens of another kingdom. We are friends with God. And that affects us in our very soul, in our ego, in our person, in our being, in our heart, our mind, and our will. And he reorders our loves, because we've entered into this new relationship with him, covenant relationship where we put God first. And each of us are asked to put God first. David did so, and God was with him in all the impossibilities he faced. And he even knew peace through that chapter 20 and verse 41, just at the end of that chapter when Jonathan and David separates. David got up from the south side of the stone, bowed down before John, and three times with his face to the ground, they kissed each other and they wept together. But David wept the most. Jonathan said to David, go in peace, for we have a sworn friendship with each other in the name of the Lord. And so there was, you know, even as they put God first, and they were probably separated for life, God was with them. And there was a peace because they were doing the impossible by obeying him, even though there was rejection, opposition, heartache, Saul sought David's life. He put God first. Tomorrow, well, tonight, what is it that you need to do to put God first? What's relegating him to a second or third or fourth place? God comes first in the kingdom of which we belong. How is God first in your workplace relationships? How is

God first in your marriage? How is God first in your studies? How is God first in your choices, in your thought processes, in your imagination? God, He comes first as we obey Him. We're called to obey Him. And all the impossibilities that that means, okay, we haven't got Saul rampaging after us with a sword to cut our heads off. It's not as simple as that. It's not as black and white, isn't it? But we have spiritual enemies who want to take us down and who will take us down if we are casual like Saul was in our relationship with God. And I think it didn't really matter.

We put God first. Our friendship with God is radical. And every believer, like David in this case, every believer now, like David, is anointed. So we're anointed. Second Corinthians 12:1 says, now, is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, put His spirit in our hearts as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come. We have a new life and a new love and a new power in our lives. And we're called to obey. And can I just encourage you to say we're called to obey even in our miserable failures? Because what is obedience?

It's coming to Him for forgiveness. It's repenting. It's coming to Him in prayer. And that, you know, David was a man after his own heart, after God's own heart, but he was a failure as well, massive failure. But he took that failure to the living God and they sought repentance and sought in confession a new life of faith. Every believer is anointed like they were anointed with the Spirit. And we go back to it and back and back and back to the living God in that covenant relationship that he promises never to leave us or forsake us. Because there is such a danger, isn't there, of keeping our hearts closed. You've got a great danger because I know, because I have too, of keeping my heart closed to the living God like so, like Saul. Maybe when we make mistakes and we sin, we regret it, but we don't repent. We're sorry because we've been found out or we're annoyed because we haven't got our way or we regret the mistakes we make, but we're not repentant because Saul is a warning to us of that. He owned his own heart, but he couldn't change it. And it's such a danger for us to try and own our own hearts. But we forget we can't change it.

For Saul, the cost was too high of giving God his heart. Cost was too great. But his loss is inestimable. And that's the same challenge for us. What are you holding on to potentially? Why is there something that you're keeping your heart closed to from God? He simply is asking for access to your heart. To all its blackness and darkness and mistakes and failure and doubt and struggles. And he says, let me in here. Give me your heart. That is the friendship.

[30 : 26] That's the radical nature of that friendship. The cost can never be too high to do that, because the loss is inestimable. You lose something absolutely inestimable if you will close your heart to the living God. And that's the friendship that is spoken of here. Our friendship with God is radical. And the very last place in terms of this, our gospel community is a covenant friendship community. Okay, the same covenant friendship that Jonathan and David shared is one that we aim to have in St. Columba's here. And you know that the level of our French spiritual friendship, or as I called it at the beginning, friendship in the face of God, reflects our understanding of what God has done for us. So our commitment to friendship with one another is a reflection of how much we understand that God has done for us and has brought us into friendship with Him.

So we will have that same committed, sacrificial, patient, forgiving friendship with one another, just as David and Jonathan had. Remember what they said? They said, please show me loving kindness.

Jonathan said, show me in my family loving kindness in the name of the Lord, because that is what they had received. So the friendships of St. Columba's that we strive after are God-shaped friendships, before the Lord friendships, committed, generous, loyal, fiercely protective, devoted kind.

You know, we speak quite a lot now, and I think it's a great thing. We speak quite a lot in different places about church culture, the culture of our congregation. And it's such an important thing to have a good culture. That is a culture where Jesus Christ is glorified and honored in the kind of relationships we have. And we want to be a gospel community that has this kind of God-shaped friendship as our culture. And I say gospel community rather than church, because I think sometimes when we think of church, we think of the institution or the organization or just the Sunday service. But it's that gospel community where there's this God-shaped friendships. So that we look at one another, that we, Jesus, looks at us long-term committed, forgiving, open, merciful, loving kindness. And can I just finish by saying, be encouraged, be encouraged. You do a fantastic job at working towards these committed friendships here. Keep it central, keep working at it. I know it's difficult. We're a gathered congregation. It's struggle, it's hard. It's difficult to make these commitments and these friendships. But keep on developing that as we see God working in our heart and receive His covenant keeping. He said,

His loving kindness. Keep showing that to one another and all the sacrifice that it requires as we are emptied in His service. Our Christian friendships are like no other because they are Christ-centered, God-filled friendships where Christ is Lord. He's the center of them. He's the motivation behind them and He is what gives them their flavor. And if you don't know Christ, He is the greatest friend that we can ever have. And He simply asks you to trust in His finished work and commit your life and your heart and your soul to Him. It is a great journey. Let's pray.

[34 : 19] Father God, help us to understand You more through Your Word and through Your promises. Thank You for this very old story from the Old Testament that is as sharply up to date and relevant as any newspaper article could be today because it's the living Word of the living God, a message from God to us that You've always been faithful. You've always had this pleasure to enter into covenant with us through Your saving work. You become the covenant breaker in our place, and yet You become the covenant maker in Your resurrection. Rejoice. Help us to rejoice in that truth and follow You with all our hearts. Forgive us when we don't show covenant Christ-centered before the Lord friendships, when we're grumpy and selfish and judgmental and distant and cold and our hearts are not open to the living God and His mercy. Help us. It's so simple, Lord, we know, and yet we make it so complicated. Forgive us. We pray and bless us as we sing in response to Your greatness and goodness. Amen.