

DAVID AND JONATHAN.

– DEC. 15. – 1 SAM. 20:32-42. –

**Golden Text – "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."
– Prov. 18:24.**

TRUE friendship is a rare flower on our sin-cursed earth, and when it is found and proved it should be greatly prized. It is an element of the original likeness of God. True friendship can never exist in a heart where selfishness reigns; for the moment self-interest is crossed, the false and fickle friendship begins to decline or proves treacherous.

The friendship of David and Jonathan was evidently of the true kind; for it was proved on the part of both in the furnace of trial, and it held fast through years under circumstances of temptation which meaner souls could never have withstood. It was founded, not upon a mere fanciful whim on the part of either, but upon real moral worth in each; and those points of moral worth were the attractions and bonds of their friendship. Both were devout men of God, men of faith and of godly courage and heroism, and lovers of truth and righteousness; and it was the discovery of these elements of character in each other that knit their souls as one.

Jonathan, the eldest son of King Saul, was the natural heir to his throne, and doubtless would have succeeded his father had Saul not incurred the divine displeasure and so forfeited that privilege for his posterity and cut short his own career. (1 Sam. 13:13.) Jonathan was a devoted son to his father and a devoted and energetic servant to God and to his people. The deep attachment of father and son is manifest from several facts: Jonathan could undertake his dangerous expedition against the Philistines only by keeping his project a secret from his father. (1 Sam. 14:1.) The effect of Saul's strange vow was emphasized by his affection for his son. (1 Sam. 14:39-44.) That dearest object he

declared he would sacrifice, if need be, in fulfilment of his vow. But the people rescued him, declaring the Lord to be on the side of Jonathan. There was very marked and intimate confidence between the father and son. (1 Sam. 20:2.) "Behold my father will do nothing, either great or small, but that he will show it me." And Jonathan had great influence with his father (1 Sam. 19:6), and was very active in cooperation with him in the defence of the Lord's people against their foes and oppressors.

Jonathan loved the Lord and his people, and had strong faith in the power of God on their behalf. Like David before Goliath, with faith in God he with his armour bearer approached the garrison of the Philistines, saying, "It may be that the Lord will work for us; for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few." – 1 Sam. 14:6.

In that beautiful friendship there was no spirit of rivalry, no jealousy, no vain glory, although Jonathan was the natural heir to the throne of Israel, and David had been anointed to take his place; though Jonathan was of the royal family and a man of some thirty odd years, while David was but a shepherd youth, probably about twenty-three years of age. Each in simplicity of heart accepted the Lord's appointments as wisest and best, and determined nobly to do his part toward the Lord and toward **[R1908 : page 290]** his people and toward each other. And so Jonathan, cooperating with his father in the duties of his office to Israel so long as the Lord sustained him in power, nobly used the privileges of his position for the protection and preservation of the one whom he knew to be appointed to reign in his stead.

And while Saul, filled with envy, malice, hatred and revenge against this one whom he regarded as his rival and the rival of his house, determined, and continually sought, to slay him, Jonathan, by every means in his power, protected and defended him, even at the risk of his own life. – 1 Sam. 20:32,33.

When David first came to the house of Saul to minister to him, and Jonathan's soul was knit to that of David, "Then Jonathan and David

made a covenant because he loved him as his own soul; and [in recognition of the fact that he was the Lord's anointed – the Lord's choice for the kingdom by and by] Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword and to his bow and to his girdle." Thus they covenanted faithful friendship to each other, being subject in all things to the will of God.

And when David was taking leave of Jonathan to fly for his life from the face of Saul, again they covenanted perpetual friendship. "And David arose out of his place **[R1908 : page 291]** ...and [approaching Jonathan] fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times [in token of great respect for both the person and office of his friend]; and they kissed one another, and wept one with another until David exceeded." And Jonathan said, "Go in peace, and the Lord be with thee, as he hath been with my father. And [when thou comest into the kingdom] thou shalt not only while I live show me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not; but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house forever [as he foresaw David might be tempted to do when later the descendants of Jonathan might urge their claims to the throne]; no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth....And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him; for he loved him as his own soul." – 1 Sam. 20:13-17.

Only once again they met, a year or two later. It was under very similar circumstances, in the wilderness of Ziph. Saul was still hunting for his rival to slay him, and again Jonathan, learning of his situation, sought him out. "And Jonathan went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him, Fear not; for the hand of Saul, my father, shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also my father knoweth. And [again] they two made a covenant before the Lord." – 1 Sam. 23:16,17.

In this touching narrative there are valuable lessons which we cannot afford to overlook. (1) It shows that true and enduring friendship is possible, though it be of rare occurrence.

(2) It suggests that true and lasting friendship can exist only between noble and unselfish souls, whose wills are fully submitted to the will of God, and who are actuated by the fixed principles of truth and righteousness.

(3) It suggests that if such friendship existed under the dim light of the Jewish law, it ought to be of much more frequent occurrence under the light of the gospel. True, there may not always be just such circumstances to make it manifest, but there are many similar circumstances. There are always temptations to rivalry, to the ignoring of the will and appointments of God and the substituting of one's own will and way.

When tempted thus, let us call to mind the noble examples of Jonathan and Samuel – Jonathan strengthened the hand of David in God, and saying, "Fear not, ...thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee;" and Samuel saying of Saul, his rival, "See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people!" So let *us* "in honor prefer one another," and ever rejoice to see the Lord's will and the Lord's way prosper.

The friendship of David and Jonathan seems also to be suggestive of that beautiful accord which shall exist between the glorified Church and the earthly princes who shall be next to them in the Kingdom of God. There will not be a note of discord or rivalry or jealousy between them; for each will be delighted to fill his honored place in the wonderful plan of God, and will love the other as his own soul. Though the Gospel Church will receive the first place of favor offered in the Abrahamic covenant, and the ancient worthies will find themselves *next* in honor, they will rejoice to have it so, because divine wisdom and love have so planned it.

And as David remembered his covenant with Jonathan not to cut off his kindness from the house of Jonathan (2 Sam. 9:1-13), so the glorified Church will remember its covenant to bless the ancient worthies first, and then all the families of the earth who will then be under their jurisdiction. Their loving ministry through the law and prophecies and their noble examples of godly life and character, which have been so helpful to us, while Satan was hotly pursuing us ("as a roaring lion," 1 Pet. 5:8), as Saul pursued David, shall be held in "everlasting remembrance."
