

Loving Christ More than Father and Mother

Call to Worship: Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Hymn Insert- *Go Tell it on the Mountain*

1st Scripture: Matthew 10:34-39

Hymn #639- *Once in Royal David's City*

2nd Scripture: 1 Samuel 20

Hymn #164- *Angels From the Realm of Glory*

Introduction:

David is on the run, as a righteous fugitive, whom King Saul is trying to murder. God continues to protect and preserve David the whole time, through various providential means. Last time, God had intervened in a most direct way, by bringing Saul and his messengers into a prophetic trance of some sort, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Saul wound up prophesying the whole day, lying down before Samuel, stripped of his outer garments, while David escaped once again.

Our text for this morning, brings us to the next part of David's journey, as a fugitive, where he seeks aid, once again, from Jonathan, the king's son. On a previous occasion, Jonathan was able to reason with his father, restoring David to his favor, but only for a short time. As we consider the events that take place here (in chapter 20), I want us to begin this morning, by focusing primarily on the heart of Jonathan. Once again, I believe that we will find very helpful, practical and biblical principles, taken from the heart and actions of this beloved friend of David. And Lord willing, next week, we will draw other important principles from the text, as well, especially concerning the very specific events given therein.

I. The Events that Transpire

David flees to Jonathan, certainly full of confusion, as he was under the impression that all would be well, when he last spoke to Jonathan. And since then, he has done absolutely nothing wrong, and things have only gotten worse now. And so, understandably bewildered, David begins by questioning Jonathan, "What have I done? What is my sin and my wrong,

which has led your father to pursue my life. I don't get this! He is even pursuing me in other parts of the land now...why is he doing this?" Jonathan then responds, a bit bewildered himself, because this time, he himself has not even been made aware of all that is going on. "David, this cannot be true! My father would not do anything, big or small, without telling me first. Why would he hide this from me? He trusts me." At least so Jonathan thought, but he is about to find out that his faithfulness to David is actually driving a wedge between him and his father.

David wisely responds, "Jonathan, don't you see? Your father realizes that I have found favor in your eyes; he knows that you are a light shining in his concealed darkness, and so, he has kept back from telling you of his ill intentions, anymore." "Perhaps he doesn't want to upset you; whatever the case, you have to believe me. Your father is hunting me down. There is but one step between me and death, Jonathan. I have only narrowly escaped, a few times already."

Convinced now of what David is saying, Jonathan responds, "Look David, tell me whatever you want me to do. In whatever way I can help you, I am here...I am for you, David." And then David comes up with this plan, which would test the heart of Saul before Jonathan, to determine if his desire is indeed to still kill David. Perhaps, the king will once again have a change of heart, especially after hearing the voice of reason, once again, from his son, Jonathan.

And so, here is the plan. The festival of the "New Moon," would start the next day, and usually David would participate in this festal celebration with the king and those who ate at his table, which included Jonathan, of course. David was expected to be there. Jonathan would observe the king to see how he responds to David's absence. David would be in hiding for three days (out in the field), waiting to hear from Jonathan, concerning the king's response to David's absence. Should the king ask Jonathan where David was, Jonathan would tell the king that David had asked permission to go to Bethlehem, to make a yearly sacrifice with his family, and that Jonathan had granted him this request. The king's response at that moment would indicate whether or not David would be welcomed back again. Jonathan would then go out into the field where David was, and send a signal (involving the shooting of arrows, and whatever instructions he gives his servant, concerning retrieving the arrows), indicating whether or not the king still intended to harm David, and whether or not David should return or flee.

And so, the first evening passes, and the king remains quiet. And we are told that the king did not say anything because he thought that David had become unclean somehow, necessitating that he absent himself from the feast for a night, in order to go out and regain his purity, in accordance with the Levitical laws. On the second day of the feast, however, Saul began to realize that something was wrong, as David's seat remained empty a second time. And so, he looks over to Jonathan and says, "Why has the son of Jesse not come to eat, either yesterday or today?" (vs. 27). And here, the moment of truth has finally arrived.

[Read verses 28-29]. Jonathan lays down the excuse, and then the tell-tale sign of Saul's fury is let loose! [Read verses 30-32]. Needless to say, when Jonathan dodged a spear with his own name written on it, he knew that his father's intent was to murder David. And so, Jonathan, enraged himself now, angrily gets up from the table and leaves without eating, and we are told that he was especially grieved for David. [Read verses 33-34]. By the way that Saul had grossly mistreated and shamed his firstborn son, who was merely trying to defend a righteous man, Jonathan knew that his father was well over the cliff in his rage and madness. Saul's wicked intentions toward David were so strong, that he would publicly shame Jonathan as an expression of this evil. Whatever ill motives lay in the secret recesses of the heart, have a way of uncontrollably coming out, when they are tampered with. An evil root of bitterness will eventually "spring up and defile many," as James the Apostle, stated so well. And while this certainly hurt and wounded Jonathan's own heart [to see your dad---the king---treat you---the well respected firstborn son of the king---in such a way as this, will indeed tear the heart to pieces!], yet Jonathan was all the more especially grieved because of what this meant for David. Jonathan, the "outward focused" brother-in-Christ, was more concerned for David, than he was for himself; a pattern that *has been* and will continue *to be*, consistent with his godly character.

Needless to say, in the morning, Jonathan goes out into the field, to send David the warning signal. And he does so, with an added sense of urgency, ultimately leading to a tearful farewell between these two beloved friends. [Read verses 35-42].

II. Loving Christ More than Father and Mother

Now brethren, there is much to be said about what has transpired here, and I hope to continue with this text, next time, Lord willing, for this purpose. But for today, I want to hone in on a critical principle taken, once again, from the heart of Jonathan. I want us to stop, and to place ourselves in Jonathan's shoes here for a moment; I want you to appreciate his own circumstances for a moment, as we get to the bottom of a critical Gospel principle.

If you are Jonathan, what types of thoughts may be going through your mind here, and what manner of sorrow, might be welling up in your heart, as you strive to make the right decision, concerning your beloved friend David, whom you know, is destined to take the throne, which normally, you would have been entitled to sit upon in the future? Isn't it true that even close friends part and become enemies when power or money are at stake? When one friend sees another friend advancing, how often do feelings of bitter envy and jealousy begin to rise up from within the heart? David, the shepherd boy, is presumed to be Jonathan's king in the future, though Jonathan is currently the firstborn prince. We are talking about far more than David purchasing a nicer computer, car or house, than Jonathan here, but lets bring our current context into the equation, and see where this really takes us, and then reveal something profoundly glorious about the heart of Jonathan. What are some of Jonathan's thoughts "along the way," here in chapter 20?

1) "My father has always confided in me about everything! I was his most respected soldier; heir to the throne; the one to whom he always, always came for advice, concerning even so-called little matters. And yet now, I take a stand for David, because David is indeed innocent here, and my father has distanced himself from me, concerning what he is presently doing. How could he do this? How could my own father snuff me in this regard? What does this say about his love and respect for me now? Well, I suppose David is right, and he means only not to grieve me, because he knows that I love and respect David."

2) "I know and accept that David is going to be the next king, and not me. And I am very happy for him. He deserves it, for God is with him! I will do whatever I can, on my part, to serve and help David get there, in accordance with God's revealed will. I will risk my own life, and even jeopardize my relationship with my father, to do what I know to be right, though I love

my father, and treasure his love and respect toward me. I will make a covenant with David, both to assure him that I support him to this end [I will stand against my father, and protect David], and also to ensure that David is willing to maintain kindness toward my house, when he does reign." [See verses 11-17].

3) "My father used to respect me; I was the son, of whom, he was so proud; everyone in the kingdom knew this, but now, that has all changed. He has shamed me in front of Abner (a major commander of the army) and the others who were present, calling me the son of a perverse woman! And then, he tells me that David is an obstacle to my potential future reign, ordering me to go and get David, so that he could be killed. And when I seek to merely ask my father what David has done wrong, he casts his spear, and nearly kills me! I mean, how could he do this to me? How could his hatred for David be that strong...to the extent that he would murder his own son, in order to remove any hindrance from laying hold of his conscience with the truth! Indeed, I am grieved and deeply hurt by the way my father treated me, but I am even more grieved for David, who has done no wrong, in all of this!"

4) "While I could remove the wedge that now stands between my father and I; while I could easily regain his respect and erase the present tension that exists between us, by merely turning David over to him (After all, I know where David is), I could never commit such a great injustice! My father is wrong, dead wrong, and God forbid that I should sin against David, and more importantly God, by caving into my father's demands! David is to reign, and though I lose that close relationship *with* and respect *from* my father, I will go in the morning and warn David to flee!"

And in the morning, Jonathan did that very thing, bidding his beloved friend and brother in Christ, farewell. Can we imagine, brethren, for a moment, how difficult this was for Jonathan as well? And what is the root principle here, brethren? Jonathan's fear of God brought him to the place that he was in contention with his own father; indeed, he nearly lost his life for defending David. You see, God's providence drew a line in the sand for Jonathan, didn't it? How hard is it friends; young people, how hard is it to live under the rejection of your own dad? But if dad is ungodly; if dad is in darkness, walking in the light, might just bring that type of a

hardship into your life. Now, many of you would say, "Well, my dad loves the Lord or my dad is ok with my Christianity," but let's take it down a notch, "What about when your friends are opposed to your Christian ways?" Will you stand with God at the expense of any other relationship in this world? If those around you; if those *visible*, indeed, seek to push you in a direction that would contradict the righteous will of your *invisible* God, will you take a stand for righteousness sake? Will you let God be true, and every man a liar, in comparison? Will you take a stand with Jonathan, when you have so much to lose, in doing so? Do you love Christ more than any other?

Here again the words from our first Scripture reading. [Read again Matthew 10:34-39].

How does this perhaps work its way out, in everyday life, brethren?

1) "Well Dad/mom, I know that you would like to get together and do those things next Sunday, but that is the Lord's Day, and I just cannot do that with a clear conscience. Can we do that Saturday instead?"

2) "You know Sam, I would love to watch the Super Bowl, but Sunday is the Lord's Day, and my church has a 6:00pm service. I would love to watch a recorded version with you on Monday though, if you are available, even if you saw it already."

3) "Mr. Thompson, I really love this job and I do everything I can to follow your orders, but for me to do that, would require some level of dishonesty. And I just cannot do that before God."

4) "Dr. Wilson, I know that the insurance companies play certain games, and set up all kinds of red tape, but writing that down on the form, would just not be honest. I don't have those symptoms. I have to honor God, and leave the consequences to Him."

5) "Mr. Jones, I cannot work off of the books. My God calls me to pay all taxes, regardless of how the government spends that money."

6) "Well Janet, you are right, if I did that, you would have to pay much less in taxes to the government, but that would be lying, and I just cannot bring myself to do that. I would like to

remain being your accountant, and frankly I am not sure of how I could go on without your business, but I have to honor my God above all."

7) "Sandy, please don't take this the wrong way, but Johnny is not present now, and what you are saying is a form of gossip. I know you don't mean that, and you would not want to hurt anyone, but let's be careful with the things we say about those who are not around us, particularly things we know would bother them. And honestly, if you feel that way, I really think that you need to go directly to Johnny. For the sake of unity, you should clear that up with him."

8) "Joe, Paul, I would love to continue this conversation, but I have to get back to my shift. I realize that the boss would never know, but God knows, and I fear him more than my boss. My half-hour break is over."

9) "Yes dear, I know that I could easily get that promotion if I do that, but if I do that, I realize that I will shatter my Christian witness before Cindy. And while I know that she has not been treating me well, I want to continue to leave the fragrance of Christ around her. I may be the only light she has."

10) "Son, I love you so much and I will always love you no matter what, but I cannot attend your wedding with a clear conscience. A marriage is to be between one man and one woman. God is not pleased with what you are doing, and for that reason, I cannot support it."

11) "I realize that embracing Christ will lead my family to reject me, but I must be willing to lose all for His sake."

12) "I know that this woman/man likes me, but the Scriptures clearly teach me to "marry, only in the Lord," and not to bear an unequal yoke. Lord, my heart is ailing; you know my desire, but I will wait upon You."

13) "I know that I might get mocked or looked down upon by my family, but I must proclaim the Gospel to them! I cannot hide the truth. There is too much at stake."

14) "I will sacrifice my son Isaac in obedience to God; I will embrace the fiery furnace rather than bow down to that statue; I will take no short cut, even unto the preservation of my physical life, if that short cut causes me to dishonor God."

And brethren, there are millions of other examples that you and I can give, which are very "at home" to our own circumstances, and while failing in any of these kinds of ways does not necessarily equal committing the "unpardonable sin," we must realize that every fork in the road, where God's honor is on one side of the fork, is hand picked by God, and providentially placed right in front of us, as a means of testing our hearts. And when we make the right choices, by grace, we find great growth and blessing. When you face the difficult decision of having to choose between God and anything/anyone else, know that God has brought you right there. He has ordained that precious and yet difficult opportunity for you to glorify His great Name!

Jonathan made the right choice, and he had much to lose because of it! May God give us the grace to do likewise, confirming again and again that a work of grace has infiltrated our hearts. And when we fail, may God grant us repentance in Christ, so that we will strive unto better obedience in the times ahead! Life is short! It can be painful, but it is also short, and brethren, let's take every opportunity given; let's make the best of every opportunity God gives us, to bear witness to Christ. Whether we are received, mocked, oppressed or persecuted, let us be reminded that the fragrance of Christ is always left, wherever we are faithful! Leave the results to God!

The Gospel

Amen!!!

Benediction: 2 Corinthians 2:14-17