

David and Jonathan

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[0 : 00] 2 Samuel chapter 1 verse 26. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan, very pleasant as thou hast been unto me.

Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. These words, thy love to me was wonderful. When David stood with Goliath's head in his hand, in the presence of Saul in the king's tent on the battlefield, a friendship, a bond of friendship was formed and cemented between himself and Jonathan, Saul's son.

A bond which for sincerity, for constancy and as someone has put it for romantic papers, is unrivaled in the annals of history.

The bond that was formed between them, their hearts being knit together, was as we read from the Lord. And in their devotion to his will, and in their faith in God, they were indeed as one.

And now, many years after that bond was formed, formed the first time they ever saw one another, many years after the formation of that bond, David as it were stands over the body of his dead and departed friend and pens these wonderful words as part of his lament for Jonathan and his father Saul.

[1 : 43] Thy love to me was wonderful. And I want for a little this morning to consider these words in the light of what the scripture tells about their love.

And see in it, hopefully, reflected for ourselves something of the love of Christ for sinners. Now there are four references in the Old Testament to Jonathan's love for David.

And that's why I read these passages with you this morning. 1 Samuel 18, 1 Samuel 19, 1 Samuel 20 and 1 Samuel 23.

And it is in the light of what these passages tell us that I want to look with you at the wonder of Jonathan's love for David. We'll look first of all at the account that we have in 18, chapter 18, of their first meeting together, when their souls were knit.

Now what this passage tells us really is something of the oneness and the intensity of this love. And it was wonderful for various reasons at the very outset.

[3 : 01] Wonderful because in its nature it overleaved the barriers that existed between them. Now there were many barriers between Jonathan and Saul.

Barriers which were erected by birth and by position. And yet their love brought them together.

And this is what love does. It bridges dust and unites people together. Jonathan was after all the king's son.

Air apparent to the soul. David. David. David. A mere stripling of a shepherd boy from Bethlehem. Belonging to an insignificant family and pride.

Unheard of in all of Israel. Not so Saul. Not so Jonathan. The son of Saul. The prince in Israel.

[4 : 09] And yet their love brought them together. A nearness and oneness and intensity of feeling. It bridged the gulf.

And then it was wonderful in the first place, in that first meeting, because it also overcame any feeling or sense of jealousy or envy that Saul may have had towards, that Jonathan may have had towards David.

Now we know from the history that Jonathan was a brilliant soldier. And that he was, say, always involved in Israel's military enterprises.

He was a popular man in Israel. Much older than David. Popular. And here now is this youth. No more than a youth.

And he stands with the head of the dreaded Goliath in his hand. A man who was destined, by virtue of this one act itself, to receive more acclaim than any other man in Israel.

[5 : 15] But Jonathan's love overlooked and overleaved any feeling of jealousy or animosity that he may have felt towards a person who was in the process of usurping his position as a popular hero in Israel.

And here was therefore a man that was prepared not just to share something of his own glory with this man, but a love that was prepared to give all the glory, ultimately, to this individual.

And his love was a wonderful effort in that light. And then it was wonderful, thirdly, again thinking of this first meeting, because of the covenant that they made with one another, or rather the token of the covenant that they gave, or perhaps even that Jonathan gave to David.

We read here that he gave him his robe, his garment, his sword, his bow, and his girdle, or his belt. He gave these gifts to David as tokens of his affection for us.

Now this was the practice in those days, that when a bond was formed, tokens were given in appreciation of the affection that one felt for the other. They were given and received, and it is very, very likely that David gave tokens, something to Jonathan as well.

[6 : 48] Now we're not told what that was, and the question may arise, why are we not told? And one answer to the question may be this, that perhaps all that David was able to give Jonathan was so insignificant, that it probably wasn't worth recording anyway.

You see, David had very little of this world's goods compared with Jonathan. And therefore, Jonathan parted with, almost with all that he had, he gave that to David, substantially more than David was able to give to him.

It was wonderful, therefore, in that sense, because of the gifts that were exchanged, and particularly the gift that was given by Jonathan. And finally, it was wonderful at the very outset, because in the formation of this bond and this love, Jonathan had nothing to gain, really, from David's friendship. In other words, he didn't love him because of what David was to become. Because at that time, Jonathan didn't know what David was to become.

It hadn't been unfolded to him, or to anyone apart from Samuel, that David was yet to be the king of Israel. And therefore, he didn't love him, in other words, what I want to say is this, he didn't love David because of what he could get from David.

[8 : 17] He loved him. Because of what he was prepared, he loved him. His love was characterized by what he was prepared to give to himself.

In other words, it was unselfish in its nature. Now then, these are the four things that come to light about Jonathan's love for David at the outset of their friendship.

And they have something to tell us about our Lord's love for us as well. Because every Christian is able to look out upon his own life and able to see and recognize the Lord in his life and to say of the Lord in his life, thy love to me was wonderful.

And I want just to apply it in these four ways before passing on to the next thought. First of all, Jonathan's love brought him near to David. Our Lord's love brought him near to us.

He became a near kinsman. He came near. He bridged the gulf. If there was a wide expanse between Jonathan and David, there was a wider between us and our Lord.

[9 : 31] Far wider. And yet, such was his love that it bridged the gulf. Bridged the gulf by coming near to us. Taking our nature, he became one of us.

Taking our sins. Taking our place. Taking our condemnation. Dying our death. United to us. In his passion, in his sufferings, in the sin that he bore, in the sufferings that he endured, and in the death that he died.

He came here to raise us to his level. And then, secondly, there is that thought as well. There is a suggestion here of the love of Christ in that Jonathan gave to David at the very outset of his friendship.

He could look back over the years and say, thy love to me was wonderful. When he thought of all that Jonathan gave him, the very first time he saw it. The very first time he saw it. The tokens, the great tokens, of his friendship and of his love.

And so it is with us. When you look back to the very first time in which the Lord experimentally met with you in your life. And you consider the wonder of his love and the magnitude, the very magnitude of it.

[10 : 51] in all that he gave to you and bestowed upon you and has been bestowing upon you ever since. You see, when you think about his love, it's what he gave that matters.

Now, think for a minute about what I said about David and that there is no record of anything that he gave Jonathan in return.

And maybe the reason for it is that it was so insignificant that perhaps it wasn't worth recording. But if that be, whether that be the case or not, it is certainly the case with reference to those who have been loved by the Lord.

There is also an exchange of gifts, I believe there is. When the Lord meets a person in his grace for the first time, the Lord gives. And the moment the Lord gives you, he touches your heart so that you respond in a like way to him, what shall I give to the Lord for all his gifts to me?

What will I give? Lord, what will thou have me to do? But I believe this that as a Christian looks upon his own life, he finds it difficult to see anything that he gave the Lord or anything that he can give the Lord.

[12:06] And I think that this is amply brought out in the, very clearly illustrated in the account that we have in Matthew chapter 25 of the day of judgment. When the Lord's people be rewarded for their faithfulness, the Lord will say to him, come ye blessed of my father and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.

I was unhungered and he gave me me. I was a thirst and he gave me drink. I was in prison and he visited me. Naked and he clothed me.

And so on. And then there is this response of wonder on their part. Amazement. Lord, when did we do these things for thee? And this is the, this is the note that the love of Christ strikes in the heart of the Christian.

Thy love to me was wonderful in the light of all that was bestowed upon me by thee from the very outset of the bond that was formed in this world.

It was all on thy side. I think this is what David is saying to his hero but Jonathan as he lamented his death and considered his love. He looked at it at a love that was so great it couldn't be measured.

[13:21] It was wonderful beyond anything that I could ever appreciate. Wonderful in the gifts bestowed upon me by thee.

And so it is with the believer today. Receive all that they received if you try to number them says the psalmist they would go beyond being numbered. And the many gifts he has bestowed ever since unfolding and his giving in our lives from the very moment that he began to throw us to himself from the moment of the beginning of the wooing to the moment of the winning of the soul to himself ever since saving enriching caring providing bestowing in life embracing life and embracing that which is beyond this life to death itself and beyond death.

No man in his love ever gave more than the Lord because it embraces the lives and the deaths and the eternities of those for whom he died.

He has made provision for them for time and throughout eternity. Thy love to me was wonderful and another thing here you see when Jonathan loved David I mentioned to you that he didn't love him because of because he knew that David was to be king in other words it wasn't as selfish in this you know there are people who love like that people the term that we use today is they suck in or they lick other people's boots if they think that someone is going to benefit them then they'll hang on and they'll stay in there and that's why some people love that's why some people cling because of what they can get out of it themselves there was a day in the history of this country for example when it was it would benefit apparently to become a member of the church if they could become a member of the church well they had a better chance of getting into office somewhere one hopes that these days have gone

I don't know but one hopes that they have the same time that I love that hangs on just because of what can be got out of this association but not so with David and Jonathan Jonathan didn't know that David was to be king their hearts were knit together they loved one another and in doing it Jonathan was setting his interests to one side the sacrifice was on Jonathan's side thy love to me was wonderful and so it is with the love of Christ he set his interests to one side in our interests he sacrificed us all for our welfare he gave us all and he renounced us all that we might be enriched by what he gave this is a thought in the apostle's mind when he says let this mind be in you which was in Christ who made himself of no reputation became a servant and you can put it like this he became a servant that we might be made sons thy love to me was wonderful then there are lots more you could say about it you see it in the very first meet that they had 1st

[17:03] Samuel 18 now secondly we turn to the passage in 1st Samuel chapter 19 where Jonathan intervenes on behalf of David Jonathan discovers that his father Saul has murderous

intentions towards David and he's sad so what does he do well here you have a wonderful example of love at its best here's a man Jonathan the son of a father who loved him and as a son he loves his father like every son should he loves his father notwithstanding the fact that his father has very serious blemishes in his character at the same time he loves as his own soul this man David there's a bond between them and the Lord now then the bond that was formed between him and

David in the Lord didn't sever the bond that was already established between himself and his father this filial relationship and so when he discovers that his father is intent on murdering his beloved friend David what does he do well he shows the perfectness of love he shows the love of a son by pleading with his father for his good and he speaks to his father he says do you not realize as we would say do you not realize father that the thought even of the suggestion of trying to murder David is an awful one that's an awful sin after all have you forgotten what you owe David do you not remember how he killed Goliath not remember how your own soul thrilled the day he did it in the name of Israel and in the name of Israel's God have you forgotten that and so he brings Saul back to that exercise of profound thankfulness to

God that David was there to defeat Goliath and he turned Saul's wrath away from David now that's love there's love for you love for a father power in putting him right directing him from a bad caution from a sinful caution and you know my friend that's when you love and mine will be at its best with reference to those that we love when we direct them away from a bad or from an evil curse from an evil curse and I know at least of one instance and I'm sure that there are many others but I know of one instance and it happened not very far from this town where a young boy a young boy of eight or nine years of age was the instrument in the hand of God of turning his mother from a sinful curse and leading her to the way of salvation

I know of one and I'm sure that there are many others that's love and let me say this to you today boys and girls who are here and if what I'm going to say to you goes as an arrow to the heart of your mother and your father praise be to God for it let me say this to you boys and girls you try and be examples and instruments of good in leading your parents in helping them see that you do it you would live a very worthy life if like Jonathan he would try to keep them from sin and try to lead them in the right way you try and remember that but you see there's another side of Jonathan's love why did he speak to Saul like that because he wanted to save David that's why he wanted to protect him he wanted to preserve his life and he wanted to defend him he wanted to defend him and that's what you have in 1st

Samuel chapter 19 he didn't turn against his father though he because he hated David rather he saved his father from sinning against David that's love he was called as someone put it to decide between his father and David and yet he was true to his friend without being unfilial to his father and that was love at its very best in David's absence he pleaded his case before Saul thy love to me was wonderful David knew that and when you and I think of our love the love of our Lord Jesus Christ we have the same to say today his love is actively engaged on our behalf to this very moment protecting defending our cause pleading our case before the father's throne not that the father in heaven is at any time evil disposed to his people no no but there's a suggestion here that the

[22 : 30] Jonathan of the new testament pleads the case of his people in heaven and his intercession always embraces their interest little do you and I know my friend little do we know what evils and dangers we are kept from by the intercession of our Lord in heaven today little do we know and realize how actively engaged he is in his love on our behalf and we can say today looking over the life that we've lived in which we have been kept by his power we can say today of that life thy love to me was wonderful then thirdly there is the answer that we have referred that we write in 1st Samuel chapter 20 that's a long chapter one of the most wonderful chapters in the Bible remember the plan that they made up together that if Jonathan discovered that

Saul was out to murder David he would go to the field he would shoot arrows beyond a specified point and he would say to the young boy who was running after the arrows go the arrows are beyond that point run hurry use a message to David that he had to get out that he had to get away from that environment otherwise Saul would murder him now there's no need to refer to this passage it would take up too much time remember it was one of the festivals of Israel and you have in it recorded in chapter 20 one of the best known words in the Bible again David's place was empty he should have been there beside Saul at the table that night but he wasn't and Saul thought that it was because he wasn't in the light of the mosaic law that he wasn't clean enough he'd be back

tomorrow but then he wasn't and he discovered from Jonathan that he had gone to Bethlehem and he was furious with his son Jonathan and you see how mentally disturbed

Saul was he called Jonathan his son your son of a rebellious woman and he tried to kill Jonathan himself and Jonathan ran to the field and shot the arrows and then he had this brief and wonderful meeting with David before David ran away when they wept upon one another's shoulder and David went off now what was that love that David here remembers thy love to me was one it was a love that put itself in the place of danger in the place of suffering a love that exposed itself in the interest of another and David never forgot it a love that was prepared to go to great lengths to defend its object a love that survived that danger a love that bore upon the severe trial to which it was saved to which it was exposed because at that time

Jonathan discovered three things that put his love to the test he discovered as we read in chapter 20 that his father was bent on murdering David he discovered this is important he discovered as well the lofty destiny that God had appointed for David that he was to be king the discovery by this time had been made the fact was beginning to dawn on him this man is to be king in Israel and his father had told him you fool he said do you not realise that you're befriending this man to your own heart the more you befriend him the nearer you bring in that moment when he will be installed king in Israel and he discovered also not only that David was in danger from his father but he discovered also that his own life was in danger from

Saul as well you see his love led him into the place of exposure to danger and to death so it is with the love of Christ thy love to me was wonderful this is what the love of Christ led him into into the place of exposure the place of danger and ultimately the place of death remember how the prophet puts it he was bruised for our iniquities he was wounded for our transgressions bruised for our iniquities the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with the strife we were healed what's he saying well this is what he saying Jesus Christ by becoming man Christ by becoming man and by becoming the sin bearer entered into the place of danger into the place of death as the old testament would put it he came into the far off land he went to the place that no one else could go to for those who were in danger themselves because of their sin willingly bore their punishment all the suffering that they ought to have endured that they were that they deserved to suffer themselves he bore it he endured it all for them there is one point here I want to mention in that chapter 1st

[28 : 24] Samuel chapter 20 Jonathan says this to David you know he says there's one thing I want you to do for me in life and in death and beyond death I want you he says always to remember my family never forget those who are mine even when I'm not here myself many years afterwards David was to honour that pledge that he gave he was to make a special provision for Mephibosheth at his own table Jonathan's son and this is something that we are reminded of as well with the love of Christ my friend if the Lord loves you in the covenant love remember that he says this to you that you are to love not only him but those who are begotten of him he reminds you that you have a special regard for his own family that is why he places so much importance upon these deeds of kindness and acts of mercy and acts of love bestowed upon those who belong to him in this world by others in this world in as much as he have done it unto one of the least of these my little ones he have done it unto me you remember this let me remember this well that our

Jonathan the Jonathan of the New Testament our Lord in heaven has entrusted this to your care and to mine don't forget the members of my family when I am gone and this is one way in which we see the wonder of his love in that he has given to us from himself and he has entrusted to us as well the care of others and to others our care and I'm sure of this as someone said many years ago I'm sure he said that it will not dawn on us to the day of the resurrection how much we owe the Lord's people in this world for their goodness to us without our realising it while we were in the world ourselves thy love to me was wonderful and finally there is the last episode that I just remember four incidents in the

Bible about Jonathan and David's love and this is the fourth 1st Samuel chapter 23 David is on the run Saul is haunting him hounding him as it was from pillar to post and he finds himself now in a wood in a part of his home and he's afraid that Saul will find out where he is and somehow or other Jonathan discovers what David is hiding and he makes his way to David and here we have in chapter 23 the final interview the last meet between the two of them and this is what is said of Jonathan and this is wonderful the last time they ever met in the world do you know what the Bible says about this man Jonathan why did he want to see David that he might strengthen his hand in the Lord that was why and he found him and he says to him don't be afraid Saul won't find you you'll

be king one day I shall be next to you and my father knows that that is so what comfort that was from

Jonathan to David when he was alone with his trusted band of warriors around going from place to place dependent on the shelter and the protection he could get from his friends in Israel sometimes he got it sometimes he didn't and here's Jonathan he comes to him and he strengthens his hands in the Lord no wonder someone said like this amidst the trials and sufferings of earth oh for such a friend and he says two things that are very interesting to David my father he says knows that you'll be king in Israel and isn't it an insight into the tormented state of Saul's mind that knowing what God had destined he was still trying to thwart still trying to thwart and it gives an insight also into Jonathan's wonderful mind that he was acquiescing in the purpose of God and delighting in the purpose of God and he strengthens David's hand in this way in what way by showing him and reminding him that the Lord was acting on his behalf and he needed it he needed I'm sure that many a day when he was outlawed on the run from Saul destined to be king in Israel I'm sure there was many a day when David wondered if he had mistaken the call of God if he had mistaken the providence of God if he had mistaken the promise of God I'm sure that he was exposed to that temptation many a day that he was wrong and that he had misread it all and here day Jonathan finds him and he says don't you be afraid the

[34 : 07] Lord is with you to make you king and I shall be next to thee thy love to me was one that remembers that and so it is with Christ and his people he draws near to them to quicken their faith to animate their hope to remind them in the midst of their troubles and their fears that the Lord is with them many a time my friend you've been exposed to danger perhaps alone maybe conclude that you've misread it all against smear all these things and at that very moment of your need the Lord draws near to speak peace to your heart don't be afraid I am with you the wonder of the love that meets our fears that assures us of our safety that reminds us of his purpose for us and that reminds us as well that his purpose will be fulfilled you know if

I may put it like this there was only one mistake that Jonathan made in what he said to David there in chapter 23 I'll read it to you Jonathan said to him fear not for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee thou shalt be king over Israel and I shall be next unto thee it's as though he's looking forward to that day when David would be crowned and he would stand beside him but he wasn't to see that day he was to fall on the mountains of Gilboa he would never stand beside David in Jerusalem but you see the lord of the new testament the lord of his church the Jonathan of the new testament he never makes a mistake what he says will be assuredly fulfilled and he will stand beside his people or to be more precise they will stand beside him his purpose his promise will never fail nothing will ever thwart it thy love to me says the church concerning Christ was wonderful Jonathan didn't see the day when he would stand beside David at the throne but the people of God will see the day when they will stand beside the Lord Jesus Christ on his throne and in his throne thy love to me was wonderful and one other thing here was our love that was remembered at the very time when Jonathan's very passion had been maligned you see he had died on the field of battle the Philistines had taken his own body and his brothers and souls carried them back to their own country mutilated their bodies and hung them up exposed them on the walls of the city and when word was brought to David he was beside himself with grief and yet though

Jonathan's body as it were was in that state itself death I'm sure I'm sure that David's love was never fuller than at that moment even though Jonathan in his death physically was in that sad sad state and is it not true of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world today that our Lord is maligned just as Jonathan's body was mutilated by his enemies so our Lord Jesus Christ is torn to pieces as it were by his enemies he's ridiculous people say so much about the Lord in derogatory terms and my friend if you're a Christian here today I'm sure of this your love to the Lord never burns with a fierce flame than when his enemies castigate his name and spit in his face thy love to me was wonderful perhaps if one at time you could devote some attention to that thy love to me was wonderful

David I've no doubt dwelt on that a long time of all people me to be loved by Jonathan the people of God will dwell on that theme for all eternity who loved me of all people and gave himself for me a love that was wonderful it passed the love of women whether there's a reference to the comparison between Jonathan's love for him and David's his wife's own love for himself it isn't very clear but there's one thing true about it the love of God that which is the born of God will go where human

love could never go far though human love will go at its best it will never reach the point that the love of

[40 : 10] God reached and the love of God reached this point he stooped from heaven on high he stooped to hell beneath and he saved me as someone put it from the guttermost to the uttermost let us pray our Lord bless us bless thy truth to us and have mercy upon us now part of thy blessing this day and prepare us for our evening worship for Jesus sake Amen