
Golden Text: “And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (I Samuel 18:1).

I. INTRODUCTION. King Solomon wrote, “A friend loveth at all times” (see Proverbs 17:17) and “there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (see Proverbs 18:24). King David, Solomon’s father knew the truth of these proverbs because of the loyal devotion and friendship of Jonathan, King Saul’s eldest son and heir to the Israelite throne. Perhaps Solomon as he grew up heard David talk of the deep loyalty of his friend Jonathan. This week’s lesson reveals how blessed a person is who has a friend like Jonathan.

II. BACKGROUND FOR THE LESSON. At the time of our lesson, King Saul had begun his reign with the Lord’s blessing and the feeling of hope in the nation. By the second year of his reign, Saul had already given indications that he would not fully follow the Lord (see I Samuel 13:1-14). This resulted in the notice that his family would not remain in
power. Saul’s outright rejection by God, and the anointing of David as Israel’s new king came about through Saul’s failure to totally destroy the Amalekites (see I Samuel 15:13-35). Prior to the slaying of Goliath, David had spent some time in Saul’s court (see I Samuel 16:14-23). After he killed Goliath, David was called to Saul’s presence for a conversation (see I Samuel 17:57-58). The Bible doesn’t tell us what they discussed, but our lesson begins when their conversation ended.

III. A COVENANT OF FRIENDSHIP IS MADE (I Samuel 18:1-5)

A. Jonathan’s love for David (I Samuel 18:1). Our first verse says “And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.” David had spent some time in Saul’s court prior to slaying Goliath (see I Samuel 16:14-23), but the phrase “And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul” refers to the conversation Saul and David had after he killed Goliath when Saul summoned him to his court (see I Samuel 17:57-58). We are not given the details of this conversation, but “when he (David) had made an end of speaking unto Saul” or when the conversation was over, we are told that “the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David.” The verb translated “knit” here means “to bind, to join, or to tie together.” Things that are “knit” together become one item
with a unique texture and strength. They become identified as one. This is the picture of David and Jonathan’s friendship. It is a perfect example of what true friendship is all about. The description of Jonathan’s affection for David is further given in the statement “and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.” In Scripture, the word translated “soul” can have more than one meaning, but here it most likely means “self” or one’s entire being. This would include one’s will and emotions. Therefore, the word “soul” here indicates that “Jonathan loved” David with his innermost being. In essence, “Jonathan loved” David like he “loved” himself. “Jonathan’s soul,” both his will and emotions were tied up with “David’s soul,” his will and emotions. Their relationship speaks of the commitment they had to each other. This commitment was born out of a deep emotional and spiritual attachment. But this love was not one-sided, it was mutual (see II Samuel 1:25-27). **Note:** I believe that the key to David and Jonathan’s friendship can be found in the fact that they were both men of valor. To better understand this, we should consider a little known incident in Jonathan’s life. On this particular occasion, it appears that the Israelites must have been hiding or running from the Philistines (see I Samuel 14:11). Jonathan was determined to go against the Philistine garrison on his own (see I Samuel 14:1. With the help of his armor-bearer, Jonathan killed twenty Philistines (see I Samuel 14:13-14). His bravery led the way to an Israeliite victory and certainly must stand on equal ground with David’s victory over Goliath. So, Jonathan could identify with David’s going out alone against Goliath when no one else would accept the
Their dispositions and counsels made their spirits unite so easily, so quickly, and so closely, that they seemed as one soul in two bodies. The experiences of both men no doubt increased the level of friendship they developed.

B. David connected in service (I Samuel 18:2). This verse says, “And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father’s house.” David’s victory over Goliath and his friendship with Jonathan brought about a change in David’s status. We are told here that “Saul took him (David) that day, and would let him go no more home to his father’s house.” Before this, it appears that David was allowed by King Saul to come and go as he wished (see I Samuel 17:15). But now, “Saul” selected David for a place in his court. King Saul valued David’s contributions to his court (see I Samuel 16:14-23) and to his military, so he required David to stay close to him. Going forward, David would no longer be a shepherd for his father’s sheep (see I Samuel 16:11).

C. A covenant formed in love (I Samuel 18:3-4).

1. (vs. 3). This verse says, “Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he (Jonathan) loved him (David) as his own soul.” At this point, “Jonathan and David” sealed their friendship with “a covenant.” A “covenant” is a pact, an agreement, a pledge, or an alliance. This last meaning, alliance, describes what took place between “Jonathan and David.” We know that this “covenant” lasted because even after Jonathan’s death and
David ascended to the throne, David showed kindness to the house, or family of Jonathan for his friend’s sake (see II Samuel 9:1-13). More importantly, this “covenant” was never violated by either man. What a friendship! It is a fact that true love is eternal (see I Corinthians 13:8, 13). Those who love Jesus Christ as their own souls will be willing to join themselves to Him in an everlasting “covenant” (see Hebrews 13:20-21). We are told that they “made a covenant because he loved him as his own soul.” This is a repetition of Jonathan’s love for David given in verse 1. He “loved” David “as his own soul” or like he “loved himself.” Note: When we look closely at the situation in which “Jonathan and David” became friends, their friendship appears all the more amazing. It’s amazing that they were even friends at all, let alone inseparable companions. According to custom, Jonathan was heir to the throne, yet David had already been anointed by Samuel to become king after the death of Saul (see I Samuel 16:1-13). If Jonathan had been like most people, he would have seen David as a threat, but he saw him as a friend. Some people argue that Jonathan didn’t know about God’s plans for David to be king. This may have been true at first, but at some point during their friendship Jonathan learned the truth that David would be the next king of Israel (see I Samuel 23:17).

2. (vs. 4). This verse says, “And 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.” Notice that
“Jonathan” took the lead in the friendship. This was in keeping with the social standing of the two men. Even though “David” would become king, at this time he was still only a member of Saul’s court (see I Samuel 16:12-21).

“Jonathan” testified his love to “David” and sealed the covenant between them with a generous present. First, we are told that “Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David.” He took off his royal “robe” and “gave it to David” to wear in place of his normal shepherd clothing. Being given a set of royal clothing to wear was a sign of great honor (see Esther 6:6-8). No doubt, Jonathan was uneasy at seeing such a great soul, covered in the ruddy clothes of a poor shepherd, and therefore he takes it upon himself to dress “David” in a “robe” befitting someone who was often in the king’s court.

Second, Jonathan gave David “his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.” The words “his garments” refer to Jonathan’s armor or weapons of war which included his “sword,” his “bow” and his “girdle.” Instead of his staff and slingshot, David now had a “sword” and a “bow,” and instead of his shepherd’s scrip around his waist, he now had a “girdle,” which was either a belt or a sash. The weapons Jonathan gave David accorded him a hero status, and also showed a profound respect on Jonathan’s part. As further proof of this, during this time “there was no smith (blacksmith) found throughout all the land of Israel” (see I Samuel 13:19), so on one occasion when the army had gathered to fight the Philistines, Saul and Jonathan were the only ones with swords and spears (see I Samuel 13:22).

D. David sent out in service (I Samuel 18:5). This
verse says “And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.”

Now a part of Saul’s military, “David went out” or fought battles wherever “Saul sent him.” True to his character, “David” also “behaved” or acted “wisely,” and in so doing he was successful in all his assignments. As a result, “Saul set” or appointed David “over the men of war.” This pleased “all the people” including “Saul’s servants” or his officers causing David to be “accepted” by all. Certainly, it was the power of God’s grace in “David” that made him able to bear all this respect and honour suddenly flowing upon him without being lifted up in pride. Those who are so quickly successful need to have level heads and good hearts. It is harder to know how to abound than how to be abased. “David” had no problem with humility even in the midst of such praise and acceptance. But notice that we are told that all the people and the soldiers were very pleased with “David,” but nothing is said about “Saul.” We learn why in the second part of our lesson.

IV. THE COVENANT OF FRIENDSHIP IS KEPT (I Samuel 19:1-7). I Samuel 18:6-30 are not part of our printed text, but we will review those verses because they reveal why Saul turned against David. In verses 6-7, after returning from one of his military victories against the Philistines, David was greeted by the women from all the cities of Israel singing and dancing and playing their musical
instruments in his honor. They also proclaimed “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.” We can guess what was about to happen next. Saul became jealous and “very wroth” or angry because of the praise David received. Saul said within himself “They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?” (see I Samuel 18:8). Today we might say it this way, “What’s going on here? They credit David with killing ten thousands and me with only thousands. Next they’ll be making him their king!” Then we are told that “Saul eyed David from that day and forward” (see I Samuel 18:9) meaning that Saul kept a close eye on David thereafter. Saul’s anger soon found ways to express itself. He attempted to kill David twice with a javelin, but David avoided it each time causing Saul to become afraid of him, and to conclude that the Lord was with David and had departed from Saul (see I Samuel 16:14; 18:11-12; I Samuel 28:15). Through all of this, David continued to act wisely because the Lord was with him (see I Samuel 18:13-16). Then Saul tried to kill David indirectly by demanding the lives of one hundred Philistines instead of a dowry for his daughter who Saul offered to David to be his wife (see I Samuel 18:17-25). Saul’s plan failed because instead of David being killed by the Philistines, he killed the one hundred men Saul requested and once again Saul concluded that God was with David. So, Saul became more afraid of David and became his enemy from that day forward (see I Samuel 18:26-30). This is where the second part of our lesson begins.

A. Saul’s decision to kill David (I Samuel
19:1). This verse says “And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.” One would think that since “Saul” had determined that the Lord was with “David,” he would leave him alone. But again, pride raised its ugly head and “Saul” became even angrier with “David.” He was so angry that he “spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.” In other words, “Saul” wanted “David” dead so badly that he even ordered “Jonathan his son,” and David’s beloved friend to take part in a plot to “kill David.”

Note: While “Jonathan” was loyal to his father, this loyalty did not include helping to betray and kill an innocent friend. The fact that “Saul” would even make such a request of “his son,” knowing about the friendship that existed between the two men, reveals something about “Saul’s” terrible state of mind during this period. “Saul’s” attempts to take “David” out had failed, so therefore, he essentially labels David an outlaw. He commands everyone around him to take the first opportunity to “kill David.” It’s strange that “Saul” was not ashamed to show his malice toward “David” even when he could give no reason for it, and knowing that all his servants loved “David” as “Saul” had said himself (see I Samuel 18:22). He was not even afraid of provoking his servants to rebel because of this bloody order. Saul’s state of mind reveals what can happen when the Lord departs from someone as He did “Saul” (see I Samuel 16:14). It is true that God’s Spirit will not always remain with man because he is only flesh and given to sin and corruption (see Genesis 6:3).
B. Jonathan’s plan to protect David (I Samuel 19:2-3).

1. (vs. 2). This verse says “But Jonathan Saul’s son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself.” Jonathan’s immediate response to his father’s orders was to warn “David” because he, “Saul’s son delighted much in David.” So he went to “David” to warn him of the danger he faced “saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee.” Then “Jonathan” told “David” to go to a “secret place” that only he and “David” knew about, and “hide” there “until the morning.” Jonathan could not be sure if Saul’s servants would be so envious of David and execute the king’s orders or not. Therefore, he took great care to make sure “David” would be safe until he could come to him the next day. The covenant that “Jonathan” made with “David” kept him from obeying his father’s orders. But this put him in a difficult situation. Choosing to help his friend and disobey his father could lead to whatever punishment the king wanted to give his son for such rebellion. However, Jonathan’s love for his friend caused him to honor the covenant with “David” and protect him.

2. (vs. 3). This verse says, “And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee.” Jonathan told David that while he was hiding, “I will go out and stand beside my father
in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee.” Jonathan said that he would ask his father to go with him into the part of the field near where David would be hiding and while there he will talk to his father about David. Then Jonathan said to David “and what I see, that I will tell thee.” In other words, he would tell David everything he could find out. Undoubtedly, the place where David hid was located in the field where Jonathan and Saul went to talk. The location of the hiding place would make it easy for the two friends to confer if the result of Jonathan’s conversation with Saul didn’t turn out well.

C. Jonathan defends David (I Samuel 19:4-5).

1. (vs. 4). This verse says, “And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good...” Unfortunately, it’s hard to find a friend so surprisingly kind as “Jonathan” was to “David.” He not only continued to delight in “David,” although David’s glory eclipsed his, but “Jonathan” bravely appeared before his father “Saul” on behalf of “David” now that the tide had turned so strongly against him. The next morning as “Jonathan” and “Saul” walked in the field, “Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father.” He began speaking on behalf of “David” saying to his father, “Let not the king sin against his servant, against David.” He didn’t want his father to do anything that he might later regret. “Jonathan” then gave two reasons why “Saul” should not “sin against his
servant, against David.” First, he said “because he hath not sinned against thee.” If “Saul” was in his right mind, he would have acknowledged the truth of that statement. “David” had given absolute obedience to his king and had done nothing to take away from Saul’s rightful position. No doubt “Jonathan” was well aware of the fact that if his father harmed “David” who was not guilty of anything, he would eventually bring harm to himself (see Proverbs 17:13). So, “Jonathan” showed that he was not only concerned about David’s welfare, but he was also concerned about the welfare of his father. Second, “Jonathan” said “and because his works have been to thee-ward very good…” In other words, David’s “works” or service, had only been good toward the king. The Scriptures don’t tell us to what extent David’s service to “Saul” was. But what we do know about it indicates that “David” was a great asset to “Saul.” From a strictly selfish point of view, that of looking out for the best interest of his kingdom, “Saul” would be making a great mistake to harm “David.” Note: Jonathan’s intercession for David was very prudent. He exhibited a great deal of the meekness of wisdom, and he showed himself faithful to his friend by speaking good of him, although he was in danger of incurring his father’s displeasure by it. This indeed was a rare instance of valuable friendship! Jonathan reminds his father of the good services David had done for him. Certainly, this would include the relief David had given Saul with his harp to calm his evil temper (see I Samuel 16:14-16, 23).

2. (vs. 5). This verse says, “For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and
the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou 
sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou 
sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a 
cause?” Jonathan did mention one of David’s good works 
toward Saul in particular—the slaying of Goliath. He said to 
his father, “For he did put his life in his hand, and slew 
the Philistine.” In other words, Jonathan was emphasizing 
that David’s conduct toward Saul didn’t have any malicious 
intent toward the king at all. In fact David’s actions had been 
useful to the king, for David had risked his life for the benefit 
of the king and the nation when he “slew the Philistine,” 
Goliath. As a result of that victory, Jonathan also declared 
that “the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel.” 
It was “the Lord,” not David who had brought about 
Israel’s deliverance from the Philistines at that time. Yes, the 
risk was David’s, but the victory belonged to “the Lord.” 
Then Jonathan reminded his father of this saying “thou 
sawest it, and didst rejoice.” Saul himself witnessed 
“David” slaying Goliath (see I Samuel 17:55) and he even 
rejoiced over it. Jonathan ended his conversation by asking 
Saul “wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent 
blood, to slay David without a cause?” Since “David” 
had been guilty of nothing except serving Saul well, Jonathan 
wanted his father to tell him how could he “sin” or do harm 
to an “innocent” man and kill him without a good reason? 
Of course, that would not only make no sense, it would also 
be sinful. **Note:** The loyal friendship between Jonathan 
and David motivated Jonathan to challenge the king’s 
actions toward David which took real courage. 
Jonathan’s actions demonstrated true friendship in that 
his life could also have been in danger for defending
someone whom the king wanted killed, whether he was innocent or not (see I Samuel 20:32-33). Later, David’s son, Solomon would write “A friend loveth at all times” (see Proverbs 17:17) and “there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother (see Proverbs 18:24). Both David and Jonathan are great examples of covenant friendship.

D. Saul’s promise to Jonathan (I Samuel 19:6). This verse says “And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain.” By this time, Saul’s overall condition had gotten worse, but he was not beyond the reach of reason. In this instance, we know that Jonathan’s words made an impression on his father because we are told that “Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan.” In other words, “Saul” listened to what “Jonathan” said about him wanting to kill David for no reason. Being persuaded by Jonathan, “Saul sware, As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain.” The king realized that his son had spoken the truth and swore or took an oath that he would not kill David. Some scholars suspect that when Saul swore he did it with malicious thoughts in order to bring David within his reach again, looking to take the first opportunity to kill him. But as bad as Saul was, the Bible gives us no reason to believe that he did not speak with good intentions; at least for the time being. Regardless of what we might think, on this occasion it appears that Saul didn’t “sware” (swear) or make this oath falsely just to catch Jonathan and David off guard. We must give him the benefit of the doubt and assume that at this particular time he was serious about letting David live.
E. Jonathan and David are reunited (I Samuel 19:7). Our final verse says “And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.” According to I Samuel 19:3, Jonathan advised David to hide in the field where he and king Saul would be walking. After the conversation with his father ended and he was alone, “Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things.” Just as he said he would do, “Jonathan” gave “David” the “all clear sign” and when “David” came out of his hiding place, “Jonathan” shared with him everything that he and his father had discussed. Then “Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.” At this particular time, “Saul” and “David” were reunited by “Jonathan,” and “David” was once again welcomed in Saul’s “presence as in times past.” The king renewed David’s place in his court as he had before all this happened. No doubt, both David and Jonathan were hoping that the storm was now over and going forward the king would stay in his right mind. Unfortunately this truce only lasted until David’s next recorded victory over the Philistines (see I Samuel 19:8) when once again “the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul” and he tried to kill David again (see I Samuel 19:9-15; 20:28-33).

V. Conclusion. Friendship ties are illustrated with the relationship between David and Jonathan in this week’s lesson. The depth of this relationship is seen in that Jonathan
loved David as his own soul (see I Samuel 18:3). The Bible gives us heartwarming accounts like the one in this week’s lesson to encourage and to motivate us. People become so busy today that they seldom take the time to develop close friendships; friendships that cannot truly develop over twitter, Instagram or Facebook. Relationships like the one between Jonathan and David need to be developed so that individuals can grow together in their love for the Lord.