

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF DAVID

Taught in Ambassador's Class of Peninsula Bible Church, Palo Alto, California

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by

Robert H. Roe, Pastor

I Samuel 18, 19, 20 Lesson #7 May 20, 1979

Last week we looked at the relationship between Saul and David and saw Romans 1:18-32 played out in the life of a carnal man. This week we will view the relationship between Jonathan and David and see Romans 1:18-32 played out in the life of a righteous man.

There is a progression in Romans 1:18-32 that, depending upon the choices made, leads either to the righteousness of God or the wrath of God. Last week we saw Saul progressively deteriorate as he made one choice after another in defiance of the known will of God. We saw him progress through three stages of deterioration: from an "impulsive" stage, [Romans 1:24] where he was gripped by his impulses and emotions, to a "compulsive" stage [Romans 1:26] where he made deliberate, willful, knowingly evil choices and finally to a "consumed" stage, a trialess mind, [Romans 1:28] where he could no longer tell truth from error.

How tragic! Originally Saul loved David "greatly." He even chose him as Aide-de-Camp. But, as David increased in popularity, Saul became jealous and suspicious. Then, as God continued to bless him, Saul actually came to fear David. Finally, when Saul became obsessed with maintaining his throne and passing it on, God gave him over to a trialess mind. He could no longer tell truth from error, and he openly ordered David killed. How sad! God had offered Saul the kingdom and a royal line, but Saul, by his choices, set himself, not only against David, but also against Yahweh.

II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, tells us that judgment of this kind will occur in the last days. Because the world refuses the love of the truth, God gives them over to "the delusion," the anti-Christ, that they might believe the lie because they rejected the truth. God gives us our choices if we insist on having them.

If you have ever made a snowball, you know it begins small enough to hold in your hand. But, let it roll down a hill, and it gathers more and more mass and with more and more mass comes more and more inertia, until, at the bottom of the hill, you no longer have any control of it. Well, along with the evil snowball we have just seen in Saul, there is a snowball on the other side of the hill, a good snowball. It follows the same exact pattern. Romans 6 talks about this. In verses 1-14, it looks at whether a Christian can live, settle down and make his home, in sin? [present, habitual tense] The answer is no! He has died to sin. Well then, can a Christian, just once in awhile, make a deliberate choice to have a fling at sinning because he has been good for so long? God says no! [Romans 6:15ff] Why? Because there is a process involved, and that process reacts the same whether dealing with good or bad choices. Whatever we choose to obey becomes our master. See: Romans 6:15-19.

Verse 15:

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!
[This is a different tense. These are little acts of sin, deliberate, willful little choices, not a lifestyle of sin. Can we choose to do intermittent acts of sin? He says, "May it never be."] Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, [such as to lustful thoughts] you are [it is not an issue anymore] slaves of the one whom you obey,

either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, [Have you ever noticed that sin never satisfies. It only gratifies. It takes more and more to get less and less. So, as you present the members of your body to sin for lawlessness, it takes more and more lawlessness to get the same thrill you used to get.]so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

Now let's look at Jonathan's relationship to David during the same time frame as we looked at Saul's relationship to David. We will see the same process, but opposite results. Jonathan begins with emotion just like Saul, and let me say there is nothing wrong with emotions if godly directed. We will look at 1 Samuel, Chapter 18, verses 1-4 but this time with Jonathan in mind.

Jonathan followed along with his father as Saul talked to this young man who had just killed Goliath. Saul had been checking David's genealogy to see if he measured up as a son-in-law. Saul had made this promise, you recall, that whoever conquered Goliath would be rich, would be given Saul's daughter in marriage, would have his house set free in Israel, would have no more taxes and no more conscription. Well, David had conquered Goliath, but he was also a shepherd boy. Saul quizzed Abner, his general, concerning David's lineage and found he was a nothing. So he failed to keep his promise and denied David his daughter. During this discussion, apparently between the last part of Chapter 17 and the first part of Chapter 18, Jonathan listened, but his reaction to David's lineage was completely contrary to Saul's. He was drawn to David. I do not believe it was just by the Spirit of God, because they both were godly men. Nor do I believe it was because they were alike, as many of the commentators do. I think they were opposites. I believe Jonathan was a very compassionate, loving man. He had all the things that David had never had, and he longed to share them with David.

1 Samuel, Chapter 18, verse 1:

Now it came about when he [David] had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. And Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt [the whole ball of wax].

I mentioned that, upon hearing David's story, Jonathan had exactly the opposite reaction from Saul. Jonathan reacted with righteous emotions; Saul with selfish emotions. It is worth noting that Saul and Jonathan had similar backgrounds. Saul was the son of Kish, a very wealthy and powerful man. He had all the security that comes with wealth. His name meant "prayed for" or "desired," so, along with the security of wealth and power, he had the love of a father who really wanted him. He also had the security of a very religious father. Saul was "gifted" by God, a "choice" man. [The word literally means "excellent."] He was gifted by God with height, the tallest in Israel, and with good looks, the most handsome in Israel. All his life he had been naturally accepted. Wherever he went he was the most handsome, the biggest, the most muscular, the richest. He was fully accepted, a natural leader. His self-worth, his self-esteem, was very secure. The calamity was that he let it turn into pride. He let it become perverted.

Jonathan, a product of Saul, had a similar background. His name meant "YHWH given," indicating Saul saw him as a gift from God. Jonathan had an undying love for his father, so Saul must have been a good father. Jonathan also had a very secure background, a very wealthy background, a godly background, and he was loved by the people. [Remember in Chapter 14 when Saul made that rash oath that no one was to eat food until the Philistines had been slain, and Saul was going to kill Jonathan because he had broken that oath, all the people refused to allow that.] Jonathan was a very well liked, gifted, natural leader, and a loving godly person, secure in his home life. There he stood with good self-worth and good self-esteem, a man of God. He loved his neighbor as he loved himself.

As Christians we can not love our neighbor unless we have a proper godly love for ourselves. I stress "godly." We need to understand who we are in the sight of God, not in ourselves. We were chosen by God before the foundation of the world. We are His elect. We are the dwelling place of our God, the sanctuary [actually the Holy of Holies], of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. We are adult sons in the household of God, by the gift of adoption, the gift of son placing. It means taking into your home someone who is not yours by natural birth. It also means declaring them an adult son. By the declaration of God, we are adult sons in his household. During World War II I was made an officer and a gentleman by an Act of Congress, a fiat declaration of Congress. Likewise, by fiat declaration of God, we are his adult sons. By the grace of God, we have been given this self-worth. We are extraordinary! Now, we are extraordinary, by grace not merit, but we are extraordinary!

So Jonathan, a godly man, secure in self-worth and self-esteem, saw this poor shepherd boy and heard his story. Also, he had undoubtedly heard of Eliab's scathing remarks and how David was treated when he showed up in camp, "Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, 'Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart.'" Mistreatment of this type had been David's lifestyle. He responded like a whipped cur, "What have I done. I only asked a question?" David knew, socially speaking, he had nothing to offer Saul. His mother had probably been previously married to Nahash, an Ammonite, a Moloch worshipper, an anathema in Israel. He was possibly illegitimate; one of the Psalms implies that. He was not even accepted by his parents; another of the Psalms implies that. He had seven half-brothers and two half-sisters; none of his brothers were friendly to him. He was all alone. He had never had anything that Jonathan had had. I think Jonathan was just drawn to this young man as an older brother would be. He wanted to help him grow up to be a man of God.

There is emotion here too, but it is godly emotion. Saul loved David for what David could do for Saul, but Jonathan loved David for what Jonathan could do for David. So right away we see contrasting loves. Saul refused to accept David into his family. But Jonathan accepted him completely. Saul dishonored David publicly. Jonathan now honored him publicly. He stripped off his regal cloak [David was probably wearing goatskin], and gave it to him, along with his armor, his sword, his bow and his belt. He identified himself completely with David. Out of his riches, Jonathan equipped David in a glorious manner so he would not have to be ashamed in the court of Saul. Saul once loaned his armor to David, too, you remember, but it was so David would fight in his stead. Jonathan gave his gear to David when it did not matter. Goliath was already defeated.

I often wondered why Jonathan himself did not fight Goliath, but, after looking at his relationship with his father, I believe he was determined to see his father carry out the duties God had called him to. Saul was the champion of Israel. Jonathan wanted him, trusting in the Spirit of God, to do what he had been called to do. He would not fight Saul's battle for him.

So, Jonathan's soul was knit to the soul of David and David's soul to the soul of Jonathan. Finally, David had total, unconditional, unqualified acceptance, an older brother, a flesh and blood somebody, who loved him. He began to get some concept of what it meant to be totally accepted. Jonathan was going to be God's instrument to build David into a man after God's own heart, and to give David some concept of how God loved him. A godly love always elicits a godly response of love, and David, now, began to love responsively to Jonathan. Up to now he had only had a love affair with God. Growing up he had had to fight for everything. He was a feisty little fellow, cruel and vicious. We will see that. But now instead of depraved emotions, as before, we begin to see godly emotions.

Saul had depraved emotions. Jonathan had godly emotions. Next, Saul made willful deliberate evil choices and ended up locked into compulsion. Jonathan made willful deliberate righteous choices and ended up more and more committed to David and more and more in a position from which he could not retreat. Saul went from the impulsive to the compulsive. Jonathan went from emotions to a commitment. He had to make a choice between his father and his friend, and he made that choice. Interesting enough, he did not in any way play down, put down, leave or become a traitor to his father. Instead, he tried every way possible to help Saul become the man God wanted him to be.

Going on to Chapter 19, we will look at the first 7 verses. Here is the second step in the contrast between Saul's and Jonathan's relationship with David. This is one of the best examples in the whole of Scripture of what I would call godly civil disobedience.

I saw numerous instances of "civil disobedience" at Stanford. They were supposedly done in the name of society, or progress, or freedom, but were actually a purely selfish desire to shake a fist at authority. With few exceptions there was absolutely nothing godly about them. They were pure anarchy. Godly civil disobedience does have a place, however, and we will look at it here. It was done by Jonathan, and you will see two attitudes, both redemptive, that mark godly disobedience. One is an attempt to redeem the person being sinned against. The other is an attempt to redeem the person sinning. If those two marks are lacking in any civil disobedience, it is not godly civil disobedience; it is ungodly. Look at Chapter 19, verses 1-7:

Now Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to put David to death. [Literally, Saul intended to put David to death.] But Jonathan, Saul's son, greatly delighted in David. So Jonathan told David saying, "Saul my father is seeking to put you to death. Now therefore, please be on guard in the morning, and stay in a secret place and hide yourself. And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak with my father about you; if I find out anything, then I shall tell you." Then Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father, and said to him, "Do not let the king sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds have been very beneficial to you. For he took his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and the Lord [Yahweh] brought about a great deliverance for all Israel; you saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood, by putting David to death without a cause?" And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan, and Saul vowed, "As the Lord lives, he shall not be put to death." Then Jonathan called David, and Jonathan told him all these words. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as formerly.

Saul's policy now was to kill David. He told Jonathan and all of his courtiers, "This is the policy from now on. This is my intention." In light of this unrighteous policy, Jonathan made a choice. He defied the policy of the powers that be, his father. But notice how he defied this ungodly policy. First, he tried to save the one who had been sinned against, David. Second, he put his own life on the line. He did not randomly put a pipe bomb in a building. Third, he tried to save Saul from committing an unrighteous act.

Romans 13 clearly teaches that the powers that be are ordained of God, and you violate them at your own risk. Romans 13 was written when Nero was on the throne in Rome. Nero was a homosexual, a mad man, a vicious killer. He was known to cover Christians with pitch and burn them to light his banquets. He tossed Christians, along with their children, to hungry lions. The tragedy of it all was that, at the beginning of his reign, there was a golden age. He had two very brilliant advisors, and, as long as he listened to them, he was an outstanding ruler. Sadly, he traveled the same path as Saul [Romans 1:18-32] and ended his days a tyrant, utterly insane. Paul pointed out, however, that the government of Rome [Nero's] was ordained of God and you disobeyed it at your own risk. Nero had expanded the cult of Emperor worship and demanded that everyone say, "Nero is Lord." He was the personification of Rome. He was called "Lord" in the same way we salute the flag of the United States. When Christians would not call him Lord, it was godly civil disobedience, but it was also treason. Thousands of Christians went to prison, or paid with their lives, for their refusal, but they were up front with their disobedience, and they paid the penalty. Christ opposed the civil authorities and paid with his life. He did not hide. He did not behave as the Zealots who hit and ran [Simeon the Canaanite, one of Jesus' disciples, was previously a Zealot. They incited the revolt that ended in the Roman siege and sacking of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.]

So we see here that Jonathan took a deliberate, willful, open stand against his father, publicly declaring his opposition, and in so doing, put his life on the line, but he did it as an appeal for his father to make a godly reversal of his policy. Jonathan wanted to save not only David but also Saul. He pointed out that Saul was sinning against innocent blood. Also, since Yahweh had greatly blessed David, Saul was sinning against Yahweh too. Even Saul himself had rejoiced in the victories of David. There was no occasion whatsoever for Saul to adhere to his policy. We do need to remember, however, that Saul had periods of madness at this time, so that could have played a part in his conduct.

What was the result of Jonathan's godly civil disobedience? He did save Saul, be it only temporarily, but for awhile Saul did repent and did have remorse. He did see his position as wrong, and did change his mind. How about David? He went back to court, back to the palace. Jonathan was dealing with two men, one righteous and one unrighteous, trying to bring them both to a position of righteousness. He accomplished that. It was very risky, too, since Saul was in that stage where he was dreading David.

Notice, by making godly choices himself, Jonathan helped others make godly choices. By standing up to Saul, he helped Saul make the godly choice. The tragedy is that Saul soon felt threatened again and locked himself into a position from which he could no longer retreat. So in chapter 20, Jonathan was faced with a second choice. Saul began his death threats again, began trying to kill David. You remember, he tried to have him ambushed at his house, but David escaped. He sent messengers after him, but they prophesied. He was irrevocably committed to having David killed. So, Jonathan had to make a second decision. He had to make a righteous choice against his own father, to deliberately choose to, in a sense, become his father's enemy. That was what he did.

Chapter 20, verse 1:

Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came [secretly] and said to Jonathan, "What have I done? What is my iniquity? And what is my sin before your father, that he is seeking my life?" And he said to him, "Far from it, you shall not die. Behold, my father does nothing either great or small without disclosing it to me. So why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so!" Yet David vowed again, saying, "Your father knows well that I have found favor in your sight, and he has said, 'Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved.' But truly as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is hardly a step between me and death."

We have been watching Jonathan make one righteous choice after another. Let us look at the results in the lives of the three men involved. First, Jonathan. What effect have these choices had on Jonathan so far? The more he chooses righteously, the more he reaches a settled condition of loving trust, rather than suspicious dread. He has a loving trust of anybody. Even with Saul he always gives him the benefit of the doubt. He really does not think Saul is capable of killing David. To the end he trusts and respects his father. Even in the midst of Saul's madness and unrighteousness, Jonathan is still loyal to him. Notice, also, how he deals with David, the one he knows has been anointed by God to replace him on the throne. He really loves him.

Jonathan is a lesson for us, too. You cannot minister to someone if you do not love them, do not trust them. They will know it. But as you allow the Lord to "snowball" you down the righteous side of the hill, he will let you love your enemies, and this is what will win them. A person, particularly an unbeliever, knows if you are truly loving. It does no good to quote platitudes and Scripture and try to be loving, if you are not. The person you are trying to minister to will spot your hypocrisy at once. Jonathan became truly loving and trusting.

Second, what effect did Jonathan and his righteousness have on David's attitude? David was dealing here with the eldest son, the heir apparent to Saul's throne. Since David had already been anointed king of Israel and was, therefore, a threat to Jonathan's throne, they should have been enemies. But when Saul was trying to kill David to whom did David flee? To the person he should have feared the most; the man whose throne he was anointed to claim. And yet he trusted him with his life and loved him like a brother.

And lastly, what about Saul's attitude toward Jonathan? Was Saul threatened by Jonathan? Even though he knew Jonathan would confer with David, he did not consider Jonathan an enemy or a traitor. He still trusted him, and he still loved him. And, to spare Jonathan grief, he even attempted to keep from him his own determination to kill David. Jonathan had an intriguing rapport with both sides---two enemies--- simply because he was an unselfish, loving person.

How did Jonathan get the kind of attitude he had? What let him love Saul the way Saul was at this time? How can you get this loving attitude toward an enemy? Yes, it is from God, but how do you acquire it in your own life? You choose righteousness. You choose righteousness for righteousness sake no matter the cost. That is what our Lord did.

I can remember when my father, who was a Christian, was in business in Hollywood and worked with a lot of Jewish clients who were very astute businessmen. When these Jewish businessmen were dealing with each other, they did not want a Jewish broker between them because they thought a Jewish broker just might happen to keep a little something for himself, even though he was a brother. There was something about the life of Jesus Christ in my father that said, "This fellow is safe. We want him in the middle." So, for a long long time, many of dad's clients were big Jewish merchants or big chain store owners, for whom he played middleman, because his life spoke of the righteousness of God. I am sure he had lots of struggles in his Christian life. I look back and realize how imperfect he was as a Christian, as I see how imperfect I am, but, interestingly enough, there was an aroma about my father that said to those Jews, "We can trust this man." They would give him carte blanche to buy property, and they always came through with the money.

We sometimes have a nasty attitude toward Jewish businessmen. Yes, these were shrewd businessmen, but I think God gave the Jews a special gift for business so they could stay alive during the centuries of anti-semitism. My father worked with them for years in Hollywood, and he really loved them. They always had the money. They always kept their word. They always paid their debts. They never wshed. He thought the world of them. He said, "Yes, when they have money, they have greater "visibility." They have longer cars, bigger houses, flashier clothes." But think, if, in the name of Jesus Christ, you had been persecuted and hounded for 2,000 years, forced to wear funny clothes, live in ghettos and get the short end of the stick and then you made it big in Hollywood. [And make no mistake, the Jews were big in Hollywood. That was not Gentile country down there; Gentiles worked for the Jews. I grew up down there, I know.] Well, you just might buy a big Cadillac too. So would I. You do not categorize people by their race. You categorize them by their love and their actions, or sadly in the case of King Saul, by their lack of love.

Prayer:

Father, we thank you so much for the fact the you love us. Because you first loved us, we respond in love, and, Father, we just thank you so much for the fact that you are committed to us, committed to make us men of God, to teach us how to love our enemies, to teach us to be righteous men and to make righteous choices, to be firm in those choices and committed to those choices and thus to snowball down the right side of the hill. And as we continue to make choices righteously before you, it becomes easier and easier to make the next choice as the momentum grows. Father, we thank you so much that in your Word you have made it so plain that that is the way you want us to fly, and as a result of that we will have a righteous life. It may be a short one, as in Jonathan's case, but it will be one that will be glorifying to you and it will reach out to people that are unloving, that are enemies and it will give them a sense of trust and rest in the person of Jesus Christ as they see him in us. Father, help us to be that kind of person. Help us to be your manifestation in an ungodly world. Thank you, Father, in Jesus Name. Amen.

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