

# The Prince and the King

## 1 Samuel 18:1-9

Goliath was dead. But Saul's soldiers were still fighting a running battle with retreating Philistines. Sometime during that conflict, Saul ordered Abner, his general, to fetch from the farm the boy who killed Philistia's champion.

So it is that David stood before King Saul. Still in his shepherd's clothing, he carried the bloody head of Goliath in one hand.

Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite." 1 Samuel 17:58

There was nothing impressive about David's dress. Still, even in his humble shepherd's clothing, he was a good-looking young man with a fresh, eager face, red hair, and bright blue eyes.

Centuries later, David's divine descendant would also stand before a king. Jesus would stand silent before Herod. And His appearance was not impressive, either. He was not even graced with a handsome face, as His ancient ancestor was.

He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face...  
Isaiah 53:2-3

Jesus was anything but handsome. He was nothing at all like Joseph and David, who were strikingly handsome with an impressive bearing. No, the Carpenter of Nazareth's face echoed back to his ancient grandmother, Leah. Like hers, His face was anything but attractive. He was a plain, ordinary looking man.

Two men stood in the king's tent with David: Saul and his son, Jonathan. Both men met Christ's honored ancestor that day. And neither of those men were unchanged by their meeting with Israel's next king.

In the same way, no man can have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and go away unchanged. One way or another, life is never the same once we have met Jesus.

This brief story is true. But it is also a parable of how men react to meeting God's sinless son. David is an example of Christ. And each of us is either Jonathan or Saul. We will either love the Lord or hate Him. There is no middle ground.

## Recognizing Jesus

David did not know it yet. But he would never return to his father's farm at Bethlehem.

Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. Verse 2

In the thick of the battle, the young shepherd did not have time to think about the future. But the future was being thrust upon him.

He stood in Saul's tent, still panting from the battle. His face was caked with dust and sweat. And his clothes were stained with blood.

Jonathan had seen David, playing and singing to ease his father's tension and torment. But the prince did not give the young shepherd much thought.

But when his father asked David whose son he was, Jonathan suddenly saw the young shepherd as he really was. And the moment the prince fully recognized him, he could not help himself. He loved David.

Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David and Jonathan loved him as himself. Verse 1

Only John recorded the encounter. Jesus was in Jerusalem for Passover. In a matter of days, He would be nailed to a Roman cross. But during the festive days before that last Passover, some Gentiles came to Philip with a simple request.

Sir, we would see Jesus. John 12:21 (KJV)

One country church had that verse carved into the old oak pulpit of their chapel, so every man who stood behind it could not help but read it. Those church members wanted everyone who proclaimed God's Word to remember what their grand and glorious purpose was.

That is also the aim in all our praising and praying and preaching. We want men and women, teens and children to catch a glimpse of Jesus as He was and is and ever shall be.

When Jonathan saw David, he loved him. And if we can but catch a glimpse of Jesus we will love Him.

After all, no one cares like Christ. As the great God of eternity, He hears every midnight moan and every lonely sob. But He not only sees our tears; He actually numbers every tear we cry.

He is not a God far off, but a God near by. As our Intercessor before His Father's throne, Jesus is never cold and callous. Even in the hallowed halls of Heaven, our Savior feels our every ache.

...we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; Hebrews 4:15 (KJV)

There are no secrets in His sight, either. He is a God who knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows us at our very worst: sinful, shameful, and selfish.

Yet He loves as we really are, not merely for our few favorable qualities. Christ cares for us at our very worst.

In fact, He suffered a savage death, being beaten and bloodied, stabbed, slugged, and spat upon for each of us at our worst. He did that to pay the terrible price of blood and death we justly deserve.

Yes, Christ is high and holy, sinless and selfless, exalted and eternal. Yet He earnestly desires to spend time with weak and wayward human beings like you and me.

That is why He has lovingly and tenderly prepared an eternal home for us. In that shining city, joy bubbles in sparkling fountains and peace flows like a lazy river. There is music and laughter, all for disgraceful degenerates like us. That is how much Jesus loves us.

But He is not merely a loving Savior. He is also a faithful friend. Indeed, no friend is as faithful as Jesus is.

We can fail Him a thousand times, yet He will never give up on us. He will not walk away, disgusted that once again we have wandered back into the muck and mire and manure of this world.

Jesus will never, ever leave or forsake us. We might be false, fickle, and unfaithful, but Christ will always stand with us and for us.

And no matter how many times we come back and ask Him to forgive our failures, He will always gather us back into His arms. He never gives up on us. He always forgives, always cares, always restores.

That is who Jesus Christ really is. Like Jonathan, you might have heard His name murmured in prayers or mentioned in praise. But you never really stopped to take a look Him.

You never considered Who He really is. But this moment, this hour, why not do just that? Why not look at Jesus as you never have before.

If you do, you will not be able to help yourself. You will fall in love with Him. And just like Jonathan did with David, you will love Christ as you love yourself.

Indeed, over the centuries since the Savior returned to His Father, saints have loved their Lord far more than they loved their own lives. Like Jonathan, one wonderful moment they saw Jesus and recognized Him for Who He really is.

And they could not help themselves. They loved Him.

## Relying on Jesus

Jonathan looked at David and selfless love bloomed into a lifelong friendship. Like two trees that have grown into one, Jonathan's very life and soul was inseparably knitted together with David's.

That love for a poor shepherd was the prince's one and only motive. It was love which compelled him to enter into a covenant with David.

Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Verse 3

No one counseled or confronted Jonathan declaring and demanding that he make unbreakable promises to David. The prince made a covenant with David urged on by love alone.

The same is true for us. If we genuinely love Jesus, no one will have to tell us we ought commit our lives to Him. We will want to make a complete commitment to Christ. Love will compel us to.

We will run to make the Redeemer our Captain, Commander and King. We will want to serve Him and stand both for Him and with Him. Our very lives will be grown together with His. We will be one flesh.

Somehow, Jonathan instantly knew he could trust David. The prince's father was an evil, ugly man. He was unstable, unpredictable, and unsavory. He was angry and abusive. But Jonathan loved him.

Later, the young prince told David he knew the young shepherd would one day be king. Saul knew that too. That was why the king hated David and conspired to kill him.

But it made no difference to Jonathan that his father considered David his enemy. The prince knew he could trust David. He never believed for a moment that David would harm his father.

And Jonathan was right. More than once, David had opportunities to kill Saul. Yet the son of Jesse never touched the evil old king.

Like Jonathan did David, we can safely trust Jesus with anything and everything in our lives. We can trust Him with all that is secret and sacred. No one in all eternity is more reliable than our Redeemer.

Jonathan knew he could trust David when he made a commitment of friendship and faithfulness with his friend. So there was no reluctance in the young prince's covenant. He made it eagerly and avidly.

David was a small town shepherd. Yes, he had defeated Philistia's champion and sent their soldiers scurrying away in terror. But he was still not dressed for battle. He was fighting for his God with neither weapons nor armor. So Jonathan stripped off his own and gave it to David.

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. Verse 4

It was not good enough for Jonathan to simply provide David with arms and armor. He wanted David to have the best. So he gave the shepherd boy his very own.

There is also a parable in those gifts. First, Jonathan stripped off his own royal robe and put it on David's shoulders.

That robe was a symbol of the prince's authority. The Lord made that clear when He announced He was about to replace a wicked king.

I will clothe him with your robe and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him. Isaiah 22:21 (NIV)

That is why the prodigal son's father put a robe on his returning son. He was telling his boy his authority as his son had been restored.

When we commit our lives to Christ, that is what also we are doing. We are giving Jesus unconditional and unlimited power and authority over our lives. We are actually giving ourselves to Him as His property.

Next, Jonathan took off his own armor and gave it to David. So while David had been unprotected, now the prince was. He was willingly placing his life in harm's way.

From that moment on, if Jonathan was to be safe, it would be up to David to protect him. That is what it meant when the prince gave the young shepherd his armor.

When we make the Master our Savior and King, we must make the same sort of commitment. Like Jonathan, we are not going to try to protect ourselves any longer. Our safety and security is the hands of our Savior. The Lord we love is our Rock of refuge and the shield of protection for our lives.

I love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psalm 18:1-2

But Jonathan not only left his defense up to David. He also trusted the young shepherd with offense against his enemies. The prince indicated that by giving David his weapons: his sword and bow.

Again and again, God reminded Israel that they did not have to struggle and strive against their enemies. The Lord Himself would go before them and fight for them.

The Lord your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, Deuteronomy 1:30 (NKJV)

We never need to worry about our enemies when we trust in Jesus, either. We are free to love those who hate and persecute us. So we can joyfully keep Christ's commandment.

...love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, Matthew 5:44 (NKJV)

We are free to love like Jesus did because do not have to protect ourselves and wage war against our enemies. God goes before us and fights our battles for us.

Last of all, Jonathan gave David the sash or belt that held all the armor together. The Hebrew word which is used there is found but a few times in the Bible.

Most notably, it is found the Bible's description of the darkness that came over Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after they had sinned.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. Genesis 3:7

The word translated loin coverings in that verse is the same word used to describe Jonathan's belt. Our first parents used them to try hide their sin and shame from God.

And that is just what making a covenant with Christ precludes. We no longer hide our sin and shame from our Savior. In fact, there is nothing in all our lives that we hide from Jesus.

After all, He is the Friend who sticks closer than any brother. He is the Lord who loves us and gave His life for us.

Why would we want to hide from the One Who is our all in all?

## Rejecting Jesus

Saul also saw David the day the shepherd slew the giant. But it was not love that bloomed within him.

On the battlefield, the battle was still raging away. So the king sent David back out to fight the Philistines.

So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and prospered; and Saul set him over the men of war. And it was pleasing in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants. Verse 5

David eagerly obeyed every order, giving his whole heart to every command. Soon, even the cynical, self-serving servants in Saul's court admired him. But the king did not.

When the campaign was finally over, the troops wearily plodded home. And in every town and village, women gathered to sing and dance in honor of their victory.

It happened as they were coming, when David returned from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with musical instruments. The women sang as they played, and said, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Verses 6-7

The women did not mean anything by it. It was just a way of honoring David as the hero of the day. And Saul should not have paid any attention to it. But he did.

Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on. Verses 8-9

Saul never came to love David for the very same reason many people never experience the glory and grace of Jesus' power and presence. Like Saul, they are afraid.

Saul was afraid of David, 1 Samuel 18:12

Saul was even more afraid of David. Thus Saul was David's enemy continually. 1 Samuel 18:29

Saul was afraid of David because he feared the young shepherd would take his kingdom away. And in the very same way, it is fear that keeps us from Jesus.

We look upon Jesus with fear rather than as a friend, as an enemy to be resisted rather than a loving Lord to be embraced because we are afraid of what He might demand of us.

But in the end, that is an empty, aimless fear. God's Son demands nothing of us but love: complete love.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; Luke 10:27

No one wrenches treasures from our hands. It is love alone that makes us want to live only for our Lord. And it is love that makes us willing to leave all our sin and our self-centered lives behind.

In the light of Jesus Christ, we finally see things clearly. And we wonder why we ever hung onto such tawdry trinkets.