

October 29

Scriptures: Read 1 Samuel 20

Key Verse: “Go in peace, since we have both sworn in the name of the Lord, saying, ‘May the Lord be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever’.” (1 Samuel 20:42)

Overview

Once again in this chapter, we see the beautiful love and friendship between Jonathan and David. Jonathan’s nobility of character and faith in God are evidence that he would have made a good king. However, God, in His wisdom, had chosen another from the tribe of Judah. Even though Jonathan was aware that it was God’s plan for David to be the next king rather than himself, he was not jealous (as was his father) but was more concerned to see God’s will accomplished. Therefore, he supported David.

The two friends reaffirmed and put a seal on their covenant by the solemn oath before God that when David eventually became king he would not forget the covenant with Jonathan. It would be binding, even upon their descendants (20:14-17, 42). In the interest of his children, Jonathan secured this promise, for in those days when a different dynasty came to power, they would often totally destroy the family of the previous king. David, however, was faithful to the covenant and later showed kindness to Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 9).

It appears that Jonathan had a close relationship with his father (20:2) and was trying to believe the best of him. Because of this, he thought his father’s attempts upon David’s life were only because of the distressing spirit that occasionally had come upon him, causing him to behave abnormally. He felt that when in his right mind, Saul would not harm David. David, however, was not convinced of this, nor did he trust Saul; therefore, he wisely devised a plan to discover Saul’s true intentions. This would prove to Jonathan that David was right.

The observance of the New Moon, which marked the beginning of the Hebrew lunar month, was a religious and civil festival accompanied by the blowing of trumpets and sacrificing to God (Numbers 10:10; 28:11-15). David, as a member of the king’s household, was expected to attend this three-day feast. On the first day, Saul excused his absence thinking he must have been “unclean”, possibly from touching something dead, which would exclude him from participation in religious feasts. Ceremonial uncleanness, however, only lasted until sunset, therefore this could not be the reason for his absence on the second day (Leviticus 15:10, 16).

Saul’s furious response to the excuse Jonathan made for David clearly proved his evil intention to kill David. He insulted Jonathan in the most vulgar language with the worst expression of contempt (20:30). He expressed his fears about David taking over as king and expressed Jonathan’s foolishness in befriending the man who would plot his downfall and violently take his rightful throne, thus putting him to shame. Saul would now make every effort to have David killed.

In case there were spies watching, Jonathan had to be cautious. He pretended to go out for archery practice, so that by the prearranged sign he would be able to warn David. The words

Jonathan shouted to the boy who fetched his arrows were actually intended for David. He knew exactly what they meant: “Is not the arrow beyond you?... hurry, do not delay!” (20:37-38). David knew it was not safe for him to remain, and he would have to flee as an exile. Jonathan’s words of “go in peace” (20:42) would truly reflect David’s departure, for though he was grieved to leave his friend, God would be with him, and when one is in the will of God, there is true peace.

Prayer

Lord, thank you that You are a friend that sticks closer than a brother. As Jonathan was a true friend to David, help us to be friends to someone who needs our assistance.