

Jonathan and David —Faithful Friends

Key Verse: *“And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.”*
—I Samuel 20:42

Selected Scriptures:
*I Samuel 18:1-9;
19:1-7; 20:1-42*

After being governed for several centuries by judges, Israel desired a king so that it could be like all the other nations around them. God had told Moses this day would come and set forth the requirements of such a king. (Deut. 17:14-20) Samuel was a key figure in the institution of a kingdom under Saul. It was Samuel who later told Saul that his kingdom was to be taken from him because of disobedience to God, and that he would be succeeded by a man after God’s own heart. (I Sam. 13:13,14) It was also Samuel who anointed David, when God commanded him, “Arise, anoint him: for this is he.”—I Sam. 16:12,13

As a result of this anointing, the spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David while at the same time departing from Saul. Noticing the king’s melancholy condition, his servants sent for David to play his lyre and bring musical relief to the ailing leader. Saul came

to value David's service and made him his armorbearer.
—vss. 14-23

A significant result of these events was the reaction of Saul's son, Jonathan, to the great service David was rendering to his father and to the nation of Israel. "Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. ... Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul." (I Sam. 18:1,3) Thus we see the formulation of a friendship which was based upon a mutual love of the service of God, as also shown in the words of our Key Verse.

This friendship would soon be put to the test. After David's defeat of the Philistine army, the people proclaimed, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." (vs. 7) Saul was furious and thought to conspire against David. However, as David won battle after battle against Israel's enemies, Saul settled on a more direct way to remove him. He instructed his son Jonathan and his servants to kill David.—I Sam. 19:1

Jonathan loved his father, and as the eldest of four sons stood to be the next king of Israel. His highest allegiance, however, was to the God of Israel. As recorded in I Samuel 19:4, Jonathan told Saul he was committing a great sin to plot against the life of a man who had rendered invaluable services to his country, and whose loyalty had been uniformly steady and devoted. Jonathan's words produced a positive effect on the impulsive mind of his father. Saul bound himself by an oath to relinquish his hostile purpose. (vss. 6,7) Thus, through the intervention of Jonathan, a temporary reconciliation was effected, and David returned to service of the king and the people of Israel.

In the foregoing experiences we find an invaluable lesson in laying a foundation of love for our brethren. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."—John 15:13 ■