

THE LOVE OF JONATHAN AND THE LOVE OF JESUS

NO. 2336

A SERMON
 INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1893
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
 ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 29, 1889

Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.”
2 Samuel 1:26

DAVID was a poet and when he found that his best-beloved friend had fallen by the arrows of the Philistines, he wept greatly, and then he cheered his heart by writing the very fine elegy, which in after years was called “The Song of the Bow.” Even if David’s lamentation is judged according to the canons of literary taste, it must be placed among the first of poetical compositions. Thus David tried to keep his friend’s memory green—the song was meant to be a memorial of him. Such friends as Jonathan are not common and when we have had them, we must not forget them.

It is sad that, in these days, friendship is proverbially a frail thing. Friends are like swallows that are with us in our summertime and gone when the damps of autumn begin to gather. When a man has a faithful friend, let him grapple him to his side with hooks of steel. And when he loses him, let him know that he has lost what will be very hard to replace and let him not forget his friend though he be buried beneath the sod. True friendship likes to fashion memorials of the departed. We keep mementos of the loved ones we have lost, we like to think of the happy days of communion we have had together, and we will not allow the cherished name to be blotted out from the memory of men.

When I thought of this subject, I said to myself, “I shall see many tonight who are lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ. I shall be face to face with thousands who love Him as they love their own soul.” I believe that is my happiness now. Well then, beloved friends, let us who love Christ keep Him ever in memory. If you can speak of His name, be not silent. If you can make melody in honor of Jesus, in the great congregation, take down the minstrel’s harp, and lay your fingers among the strings, and bring out sweetest music to His dear name that thousands may hear.

But if you have a feebler instrument, sing or play to the two or three, and let those who love you know that you love your Lord best of all. Or if your tongue fails you, use your pen to let men know who Jesus is. Say, with the psalmist, “My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King.”

What shall *we* do to keep Christ’s name before the sons of men? Let us be inventive, and often make the winds and waves to bear the story of His life and love to those who know it not. I would whisper in the ear of someone, “If you love Jesus, how is it that you are never at His table?” If there is anyway of keeping Him in memory, which is better than every other, it is the one which He has Himself chosen—“This do in remembrance of me.”

How do you excuse yourselves, you lovers of Christ, who have never kept up this feast of love? This is one of His dying requests, “Meet and remember Me.” And yet, though you say that you love Him, and I will not challenge the truth of what you say, you have never yielded obedience to His loving request, and come to eat the bread and drink of the cup which are the memorials of His broken body and His poured-out blood.

David, you could sing of Jonathan, though there was no law that you should do so. What will you say of some who love the Christ of God better than you loved Jonathan and yet have never remembered

Him in the way in which He asked to be remembered, but have cast behind their back the sweet forget-me-not of the table of communion?

Let that stand as a preface. May the Lord put our hearts in tune now while we think upon two things! The first is the small type, *Jonathan's love to David*. The second is the infinite anti-type, *Christ's love to men*. Perhaps it will be sweetest tonight if we can each one say, "*Christ's love to me*. He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*." That expression will be in harmony with the words of the text, "Thy love to me was wonderful."

I. First, then, we have to think a little about JONATHAN'S LOVE TO DAVID.

Jonathan's was a singular love, because of *the pureness of its origin*. Jonathan loved David out of great admiration of him. When he saw him come back with the head of Goliath in his hand, he loved him as a soldier loves a soldier, as a brave man loves another brave man. He felt that there was the right kind of metal in that young man, and though Jonathan was the king's son, and heir-apparent to the throne, we find that he "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."

He felt that such a hero, who could so trust his God, and so expose his life, and come off so victorious, deserved his utmost love. It did not begin in self-interest—it did not begin in relationship—but it began in the likeness that Jonathan saw between his own nature and that of David. It was one brave man loving another brave man.

Jonathan's love proved also to be *most intense*. It is said that "he loved him as his own soul." He would at any moment have sacrificed his life to preserve the life of David. In fact, I do not doubt that Jonathan thought David's life much more valuable than his own, and that he was quite willing to expose himself to peril that David might be preserved. Jonathan's was a very intense love. May we see more of this kind of love among Christian men! May they love each other for Christ's sake and because of the love of God which they see in one another—and may they be intense in their affection!

Jonathan's love was *very unselfish*, because as I have said, Jonathan was heir-apparent to the throne, but David had been anointed king by Samuel. The kingdom was to be taken from the house of Saul and given to the house of David. Very naturally, the young prince Jonathan might have felt first envy, and then hatred of David, who was to supplant him.

But instead of that, he said to him one day, very touchingly, "Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee." He meant to be his friend and his helper, taking joy in seeing David wear the crown which might have adorned his own brow. Happy Jonathan, to be able to put himself in the background like that, and to feel that, if David was first, it was what he himself desired. That friendship, in which a man can set himself on one side for the sake of another, is not yet so common that we can have it in the streets.

Jonathan's was a love which *bore up under all opposition*, for he soon found that Saul, his father, in his black heart, hated David. Saul could not bear the thought that another man would take the place which he coveted for himself, though he did not, himself deserve to keep it. He wished to see David dead, and because Jonathan took David's part, Saul was exceedingly angry and made Jonathan's lot hard to bear.

Yet Jonathan did not cast off his friend—he clung to David through good report and through evil report. Jonathan was faithful to his father and very obedient to him, but still he would not give up his friend David, and he would sooner be in jeopardy of the javelin of Saul than end the friendship that existed between himself and God's chosen servant.

And this love was *very active*, for you know how he pleaded for David with his father. He went out into the field and took counsel with David. He arranged plans and methods for David's preservation, and on one occasion, we find that he "went to David in the wood, and strengthened his hand in God." Yes, his love was not a matter of mere talk—it was real, practical, active—it was a love which never failed. When the arrow of the Philistine went through the heart of Jonathan on Mount Gilboa, it struck the name of David that was engraven there.

*“He loved him long, and loved him well,
And loved him to the death;”*

so that David could truly say, Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.”

Now, dear friends, do you not think that when we read a story like that of Jonathan and David, it should stir up in us the desire, not so much to have such a friend, as to be such a friend as Jonathan was to David? Any man can selfishly desire to have a Jonathan, but he is on the right track who desires to find out a David to whom he can be a Jonathan.

There is great joy in life with real friendship on both sides. Some people expect friendship to be always heaping its treasures upon them, but true friendship has two hands, and two feet, and two eyes. You cannot have a real friendship that is all for taking, and never for giving. David loved Jonathan as Jonathan loved David. May that blessed Spirit of God, who teaches us to love even our enemies, help us to cultivate sanctified friendships and to be willing to help those who are our brethren in Christ in time of need!

I shall say no more upon that part of my subject, but I hope it will rebuke some who are no friends at all. Oh, how often have we met with such! They are very friendly when their legs are under your mahogany, but they are not so friendly when you have no mahogany and have hardly a deal table left. They think all the world of you while you can be a ladder by which they climb the wall of prosperity, but when they are on the top of the wall, they too often say that they never saw that ladder in all their lives—and you may take it away. We continually see that kind of thing among men of the world. May it not be so among Christians! May we be true to all who are our friends, as we would be generous even to any who are our foes, if such persons are in existence!

II. But I want now to talk of something more sweet and more sure. THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO ME. Using the first personal pronoun, because it is in the text—Thy love to *me* was wonderful.”

I hope that many here will be helped to use that same pronoun, each one for himself or for herself. I do not wish to preach tonight—I want rather to be a sort of fogleman, just to go through the exercises that others may do the same. I am to speak of love which I trust many feel, which I hope they may feel even more than the speaker does—and let it be the ambition of every one of us to love Christ more and more. Let us think of Christ as present here tonight, for so He is, according to His promise, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” There He stands. With closed eyes, faith perceives Him, and she cries, “Thy love to me was wonderful.”

I think that we feel this most when *we see our Savior die*. Sit down at the foot of the cross and look up. Behold that sacred brow with the thorny wreath upon it. See those blessed eyes, red with weeping. Mark those nailed hands that once scattered benedictions. Gaze on those bleeding feet which hurried on errands of mercy. Watch till you can peer into that gaping side—how deep the gash—how wide the breach. Look how the water and the blood come streaming forth!

This is the Lord of life and glory, who thus dies amid derision and scorn—suffering the Just for the unjust—to bring us to God. Oh, if you can picture Christ on the cross, and believe that He died for you, you will be led to cry, “Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of mothers or of wives. Your love to me was—I cannot describe what it was—it was wonderful—as full of wonders as the heavens are full of stars, or as a forest is full of leaves. Your love, as I see it in Your death, was wonderful.”

Do you picture David saying this as he thinks of the body of Jonathan pierced with the arrows of his enemies? “Thy love to me was wonderful.” Will you not stand so tonight, in imagination, over your Savior’s body, as you see it wrapped in spices and laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea? Ere yet the stone is rolled to the cave’s mouth, will you not look on that mangled form and say, “In very truth, Thy love to me was wonderful”?

Beloved friends, sometimes we feel as if our love to our departed ones would know another great flood-tide if they could come back again. You have lost—no, I will not harrow up your feelings—you have all lost those most dear, and your sorrow was great as you laid them in the grave. But if tonight,

when you reached your home, you should find, sitting in that room of yours, the beloved one come back, I think that your love would suddenly leap up into an ecstasy and it would be greater than it ever was before.

“Has my husband returned to me? Has my spouse come back to me? Has my mother, my child, been restored to me?” Oh, what a feast of love our souls would have if there could be such a reunion in our bereaved households! Well, remember that *He who died for us rose again*.

“He lives, the great Redeemer lives,”

lives with our love still within His heart, lives to love us as much in His eternal glory as He did in the shame and spitting while He was on earth. Come, give your love room tonight, as you remember Him as dead, but rejoice in Him as living.

I think also that we sometimes feel the greatest love to dear friends when we find others doing them despite. When David found that Jonathan’s body had been dishonored by the Philistines, that they had taken away the bodies of King Saul and his sons to hang them on the wall of Bethshan, then was he sorely troubled, and his love broke forth again in sighs, and cries, and tears.

And I must say tonight that *I love my Lord all the more because of the insults others heap upon Him*. When I have lately seen books written against His atoning sacrifice, when I meet with men calling themselves Christians, who speak lightly of the sacred expiation and even of the divine person of the great sacrifice, my heart first burns with indignation against the traitors—true successors of Judas—and then my soul cries, “My Savior, by the dishonor that they put on You, I love You all the more. By the shame that they again cast on You, as though You were a hundred times crucified, I vow to serve You with a hundredfold energy and force of concentrated love, for Your love to *me* was wonderful.”

Some can speak lightly of Christ. Mayhap they never knew such love as He has shown to me. Some can despise His blood. Possibly they were never washed from such sins as mine. Some think lightly of His faith. Perhaps they have never had such communion with Him as my heart has known. I must say of Him, “Thy love to *me* was, is, and ever shall be wonderful, passing all loves supposable in heaven or earth besides.”

Now let me briefly tell the story of that love—it is a long story—the love of Christ to me. Part of its wonder *lies in the object of this love*, that it should be bestowed upon *me*. “Thy love to *me*.” Dear brother, dear sister, will you talk about it just now to yourself?” “It is a wonder that Christ should love anybody, but is it not the greatest wonder of all that He should love me? Who am I, and what is my father’s house, that Christ should love me?”

***“What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?”***

Your love to me! There was special undesert—there were many reasons why love should have passed me by, but Your love to me was wonderful that You should single me out. Tell it in heaven that there is no greater wonder there than that Christ should love me. And when you get there, say to all the bright spirits before the throne, “There is no greater wonder in the salvation of you all than there is in my salvation. Your love to me, my Lord,” and you will bow adoringly at Christ’s feet as you say it, “Thy love to me was wonderful.”

Then throw the emphasis on the first word, “*Thy* love to me,” and you have another part of the wonder, that is, in *the Giver of this love*. For a man to love me, well, should not men love their kind? But for God to love me, for the Infinite, for the inconceivably lovely One, whose ideal of that which is loveable must be far beyond human conception, for Him to love me, this is a miracle indeed.

Can you imagine it, that God who is greater than immensity, whose life is longer than time, that God the all-boundless One, should love you? That He should think of you, pity you, consider you, this is all

very well—but that He should *love* you, that His heart should go out to you, that He should choose you, that He should have graven you on the palms of His hands, that He should not rest in heaven without you, that He should not think heaven complete until He brings you there, that you should be the bride, and Christ the Bridegroom, that there should be eternal love between Him and you—oh, as you think of it, lift up your hands with adoring wonder, and say, “Thy love to me was wonderful.”

Now begin, if you can, to *consider the commencement of this love*. When did God begin to love His own elect? There was a time when He began to make the worlds, but from eternity He has loved His chosen. Before the first flash of light illuminated the primeval darkness, God loved His people. Before the first pulsation of life came into human bodies, long ere there were such beings as men and women, He loved His own.

He saw them in the glass of predestination and foreknowledge, and He loved them. His delights even then were with the sons of men. His love had no beginning, it was like Himself, self-existent, starting from itself, and there never was a time when God did not love His own people. Think of that wonder of grace, that such a speck of dust as you are should have been loved from eternity, that such a handful of ashes as I am should have been loved from before all worlds! Tell it as with voice of trumpet, for God has said it, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”

Christ’s love, then, is wonderful in its beginning and when *it began to work on me*, it was still wonderful, for what did I do? I refused it. When Christ came in robes of love to me and presented Himself as a candidate for my heart’s acceptance, I told Him that I would not have Him. There was a wanton world that had my heart. There was the devil himself, in all manner of sinful shapes—and he had my hand—and I was his.

Was it not so with some of you, that Christ wooed you many a year and you would not have Him? He came to you sometimes threatening, and sometimes inviting. He came to you by providences, by preachers, by books, by His good Spirit. Yet though you turned your back on Him, He never turned His back on you. He would not take “No” for an answer.

***“Determined to save, He watched o’er my path
When, Satan’s blind slave, I sported with death.”***

Think of a man who used to come staggering out of a public house late at night, yet He is loved of God! Or of a thief, whose hair was cut short in the prison, yet He was loved of God—and here he is tonight sitting at Jesus’ feet, rejoicing in that love! Oh, what songs there will be in heaven concerning the love of Christ to His own and the rebuffs which the dear Lover of our souls received by the sad, sad usage of ungodly, willful men! “Thy love to me was wonderful.”

And when *Christ’s love led Him to come here and take our nature*, was it not wonderful? He reigned enthroned in heaven. Seraphim and cherubim gladly did His bidding. He was God and yet He came down from yonder royal palace to that stable at Bethlehem, and to the manger where the horned oxen fed. ‘Tis He! ‘Tis He!

But as George Herbert reminds us, He has unrobed Himself and hung His azure mantle on the sky, and all His rings upon the stars—and there He lies, a babe in swaddling bands, taking human nature into union with His divinity because He loved us. Truly, Thou blessed Child, whom I would take into my arms as Simeon did, and say, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” Your love to me was wonderful!

Behold Christ with the scepter of heaven in His hand, and then see Him sitting on the edge of a well, talking to an adulterous woman. Gaze on Him with the harps of angels ringing out His praise, and then see Him with all the riff-raff of Jerusalem scoffing at Him, and bidding Him come down from the cross. If He stooped to become a man like ourselves, and stooped lower still, even unto death, truly may each saved one cry to Him, “Thy love to me was wonderful.”

There is one thing that makes the love of Christ more wonderful than anything else and that is that He not only took our nature, but *He took our sin*. There, scrape it up together, the filthy stuff that has made God Himself to sicken at the thought of man—I mean, the sin and the pollution of our lives. Behold, the Lord has gathered it up together in one foul heap, enough to putrefy the universe—and He has laid it all on Christ. And the great Sin-Bearer takes it upon Himself as though it were His own—though it was not. He suffers for it, He bears the sentence of justice on account of it, and then He hurls it all away into the abyss of oblivion, where it shall never be found again. My Savior, did You bear my sin in Your own body on the tree? Were you condemned for my condemnation? Then, in very deed, Your love to me was wonderful.

I do not know how to break my text up so as to bring it home to each believer. I wish that everyone here, who really has known Christ's love, would help me by a personal thought upon *the brotherly and condescending character of this love*. Times have been when we, who love Christ's name, have been in trouble and He has been very near to us. Times have been when we have been misrepresented and abused—and He has smiled, oh, so sweetly on us!

Times have been when bodily pain has made us very faint and He has put underneath us the everlasting arms. Speak as you find, beloved—how have you found the Lord Jesus in your dark days, in your heavy days, in your weary days? Have you not found Him a matchless Friend? I can bear my own witness that there is no comfort like His comfort, there is no smile like His smile, there is no touch of help like His delivering hand. "Thy love to me was wonderful."

Sometimes, when I have told the story of God's goodness to me, a Christian friend has said, "Have you not written all that down?" "No, I have not," I have replied. "Will you not take care, before you die, that it is all written down?" I have said, "No, I do not know that I shall." Now perhaps your life's story will die out with yourself yet have there not been very marvelous touches of Christ's love in it? Have there not been windows of agates and gates of carbuncle through which you have seen your Lord's face, and can you not say tonight, looking over your pilgrim path from the first day until now, "Lord, You have been ever with me. Your love to me was wonderful in condescending, helpful fellowship in the time of my need"?

Think, also, *of the comforting and thoughtful provisions of Christ's love*. Sometimes you have been well-nigh slipping, not merely as to trouble, but as to sin. Our lives are not all to our credit—there have been sad moments, when unbelief has crept in on the back of thoughtlessness and you have been almost a skeptic.

There have been evil moments, when sin has insinuated itself into the imagination and you have almost done that which would have been your ruin. Have there not been times in your life when you have been smitten, and if there had not been some One to hold you up, you would have fallen, almost unconsciously fallen, and there have lain down to die?

But oh, how Jesus has watched over you and cared for you! Never mother nursed her babe with such care as Christ has given to you. When you look back, sometimes, and see the pit from which you have been preserved, into which you might have fallen—when you meet with some old friend who used, years ago, to be singing at your side, but is now a drunkard or profane, and you say, "Why should he be like that anymore than I should? Who has made me to differ? What but the grace of God has kept me until now?" Ah, then you see how Christ's love to you has been wonderful, passing the love of women!

But the love of Christ to us is most of all wonderful *in its plans for the future*. You know not, and you cannot conceive, what He will yet do for you. You are in trouble, are you? Well, joy comes in the morning. But now, you have to drink the bitter cup and God gives you pills that you do not like. Take them at His hand, for they are meant for your good. 'Tis but a little while and then sorrow and sighing shall forever flee away.

Has any redeemed man here any notion of what God has prepared for them that love Him? You shall stand among the perfected and go in and out amongst the holy. You shall be where no trouble shall ever

reach you, or even the noise and dash of a wave of sorrow ever reach your ears. You shall be where it shall be your joy to serve God without mistake, without transgression, and without omission.

You shall behold the face of the King in His beauty, not now and then, but forever without a cloud or a veil between. You shall find it your delight to praise Him and your voice shall be heard amid the choirs of the glorified as you adore the Lamb whose love to you has been so wonderful. And what will be your employments in heaven? Ah, that I cannot tell you, but they shall be employments that shall be equally honorable and delightful!

I have told you before what I sometimes dream shall be my lot in glory—to stand not here and preach to a handful of people, though it is truly a large handful—but to stand upon some starry orb and preach of Christ to whole constellations at once, and thunder out my remembrances of His sweet love to myriads of beings who have never heard of Him as yet, for they have never sinned, but who will drink in all the tidings of what Jesus did for sinful men.

And each of you, according to your training for it, shall make known to angels, and principalities, and powers, the manifold wisdom of God. There is plenty of room for you all, for God's universe will need millions upon millions of messengers to go through it all and tell out the story of redeeming love. And we, I believe, are here in training for that eternal work of making known to illimitable regions of space, and countless myriads of intelligent beings whom God has created, but who have never fallen, the story of this little planet, and of the God who loved it so that He came here and died that He might save His people from their sins.

Get ready, brethren, for the eternity which is so near. Within about a hand's breadth, you and I shall be in eternity. Even if we live to be eighty or ninety, or fulfill the count of a hundred years, it is but a little while and we shall have quitted these dark shores and landed in the everlasting brightness of endless glory, that is, if we know the love of Christ today and trust in Christ today. We shall go on and on forever and forever experiencing more and more of this great truth, "Thy love to me was wonderful."

Now let each one answer this question—Can you say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me"? If not, you are an unhappy man. God make you even more unhappy until you come and look to Jesus Christ, as men looked to the brazen serpent—and as by their looking they were healed, so by your looking may you be made to live tonight!

Remember that—

*“There is life for a look at the Crucified One;
There is life at this moment for thee;
Then look, sinner—look unto Him, and be saved—
Unto Him who was nail'd to the tree.”*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

1 SAMUEL 20

Verse 1. *And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?*

David had an enemy upon the throne, and God gave him a friend in the heir to the throne. If you have an enemy, you have also a friend. God sets the one over against the other in His providence, do you set the one over against the other in your thoughts, and be you comforted thereby. David might have been very heavy at heart about Saul, and so he was, but Jonathan came in to be the makeweight on the other side, and turn the scale in favor of the son of Jesse. Of him David inquired, "What is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?"

2. And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so.

One admires Jonathan for defending Saul. He will not believe anything bad of his father. Children should never believe anything evil of their parents unless it is forced upon them. This rule is a part of the command, “Honour thy father and thy mother.”

3. And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death.

He wanted Jonathan to believe the truth, namely, that Saul was seeking to kill him, and that he was in great danger from the wrath of the king, therefore he took a double oath that it was even so. It is not for Christians to imitate David in this respect, for our Lord’s command to His disciples is, “Swear not at all; but let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

4. Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee.

Love promises large things. One is reminded here of the love of Christ, and of how he says, “Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

5-6. And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even. If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.

The family of David was a godly household, and they had a meeting, not for pleasure-making, but for sacrifice—a special family gathering for worship and David must needs be there. He spake no untruth, he did desire to go to Bethlehem.

7-8. If he say thus, It is well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him. Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the LORD with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldest thou bring me to thy father?

These two men had entered into a solemn covenant before God that they would be friends for life, so David pleaded with Jonathan. He was innocent, he knew that he had done no ill, and therefore he put it to Jonathan, “If I am what thy father thinks me to be, slay me thyself.”

9-11. And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee? Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly? And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.

Quite alone, away from their troops, where they could talk together without being overheard. These two good men sought private fellowship, and do you not think that, if we love Christ, we shall want to get alone with him? Shall we not say to Him, “Let us go out into the field”? Where there is no private devotion, there is no devotion at all. If we never get alone with Christ, we are altogether strangers both to Himself and also to His love.

12-15. And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to morrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there be good toward David, and I then send not into thee, and shew it thee; the LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father. And thou, shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth.

In Jonathan’s great love, he wished not only to be David’s friend himself, but that all his children should be in love with the same valiant hero. Brethren, our love to Christ makes us long to see our

children love Him, too. I will not believe that you have any love to Christ unless you pray that your boys and your girls may also love Him. Dear children of godly parents, our heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may love your mother's God, and trust your father's Saviour.

16-18. *So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul. Then Jonathan said to David, To morrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.*

David was not a nobody—if he was away, he was missed. I wish that all attendants at the house of prayer would remember that, when they are away, they are missed. Perhaps some of you have come tonight from some little chapel, where you will be greatly missed. I am not going to thank you for coming here, because I am possibly unconsciously causing pain to your pastor, and I do not want to rob him of one of his sheep. David's seat is empty tonight and he will be missed.

19-23. *And when thou hast stayed three days, then thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was in hand, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel. And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. And, behold, I will send a lad, saying, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for there is peace to thee, and no hurt; as the LORD liveth. But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee; go thy way: for the LORD hath sent thee away. And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the LORD be between thee and me for ever.*

Thus he arranged how to let David know in case he was in danger. Love is thoughtful, love would keep its object out of harm's way. Therefore, as we love any, let us try to preserve them from sin, let us endeavor to warn them when temptation is near, that they may not fall by the hand of the enemy.

24-27. *So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat. And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty. Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean. And it came to pass on the morrow, which was the second day of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day?*

David was the son of Jesse, but he was Saul's own son-in-law, yet, out of contempt, the angry king calls him "the son of Jesse."

28-30. *And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Beth-lehem: and he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there: and now, if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table. Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?*

He was in such a passion that he began to abuse his own wife, the mother of his own son. In the East, if you want to sting a man most severely, give ill names to his mother, and surely, in the West as well, if anyone has anything to say against a man's mother, it cuts her son to his heart if he is what he ought to be.

31. *For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.*

Saul knew that David, and not Jonathan, was to succeed him on the throne. He gives Jonathan warning of that fact, yet seeks his rival's life.

32. *And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?*

Very reasonable questions, very properly put.

33-42. *And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame. And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him. And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, Is not the arrow beyond thee? And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. But the lad knew not anything: only Jonathan and David knew the matter. And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry them to the city. And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. 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.*

Behold the love of Jonathan and David! Here was a brother born for adversity, who clung to his friend in the day of danger, and even jeopardized his own life that he might defend David. Let us see here a faint emblem of what our great Friend, the Lord Jesus, has done for us.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—439, 797, 735

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