

LOVE PLIGHTING TROTH NO. 2774

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 13, 1902
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 3, 1881

*“Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.”
1 Samuel 18:3*

*“And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him:
for he loved him as he loved his own soul.”
1 Samuel 20:17*

MANY books have been written concerning that surly old prophet Jonah, yet here is a man with a name somewhat similar—Jonathan—but scarcely anybody has had much to say about him. Yet there was more sweetness in the little finger of Jonathan than in the whole body of Jonah. A wonderfully noble, lovable, magnanimous man was that heir apparent to the throne of Israel. I admire, beyond measure, the disinterested, unselfish affection which he had for the young shepherd-hero. It must have been perfectly clear to Jonathan that David had supplanted him.

Jonathan himself had been the bravest of the brave, accompanied only by his armor bearer, he had gained a notable victory over the Philistines, and now, here comes another young man, who becomes even more distinguished than himself, and who takes his place as commander-in-chief of the army. Most young men, in such a position as that, would have been very jealous of the newcomer, and something of the envy of Saul the father might very naturally have been begotten in the heart of Jonathan the son. But it was not so, for Jonathan loved David as he loved his own soul.

Moreover, Jonathan knew very well that David was ordained of God to mount the throne, that throne was his by hereditary right, yet he foresaw that neither he nor any of his descendants would sit upon it, but that David would occupy it. Yet there was no trace of jealousy, or envy, or malice towards David, but he loved him as he loved his own soul.

It was a case of love at first sight, for he had no sooner looked upon David than “the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David,” and it was also a case of love that was strong as death, for he clung to David to the last, and David, on his part, loved him intensely, and after he had fallen upon the fatal mount of Gilboa, lamented his death in sweetest strains of poetry.

But I am not going to talk much about the friendship of Jonathan and David, I want rather to use the union of heart that existed between them, and the consequences that resulted from it, as a lesson to those of us who have the sacred fire of love burning within our heart towards the Well-beloved, even our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whose love toward us is marvelous, matchless, unspeakable, divine love, the likes of which has ne'er been seen on earth.

There are two observations which I wish to make, and to emphasize; they are taken from our two texts. The first is that *great love desires to bind itself to the beloved one*, “Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.” And secondly, *great love desires renewed pledges from its object*, “Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.”

I. Now, first, GREAT LOVE DESIRES TO BIND ITSELF TO THE BELOVED ONE.

I am going to speak of the greatest love that ever was—the love of Jesus Christ to His chosen, and I want you to notice how the love of Christ to His people made Him desire to bind Himself to them. Think

of this wondrous theme with all your hearts, so that, however feebly I may speak, the ardor of your imagination will put life into my poor words.

And first of all, remember that *Jesus bound Himself to His people by covenant bonds*. Of old, or ever the earth was, our Lord Jesus had set His heart upon a people whom He foreknew, and His delights even at that time were with the sons of men. He delighted to think upon them as a people that should be His forever, and therefore, He accepted them, to be His own, by a covenant gift from His Father's hands. His Father gave unto Him all those who should thereafter believe on Him, and His great heart of love was set upon all the chosen ones who were thus given over to Him to be His portion and heritage forever and ever. This was the first link between Christ and the church.

Then, in the fullness of time, our Lord's great love to us led Him into visible union with us, for as He had undertaken, when His Father gave us to Him, that He would save us, and keep us, He came into the world to begin that great work by taking upon Himself our nature.

That was a wondrous union with us when He, who had made all things, did hide Himself away in the body of a babe—when He, whose presence filled the heavens and the earth, deigned to find a dwelling place in this world in the form of a carpenter's son, for "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

For this cause did the Son of God leave His Father's house, that He might be joined unto His church, and they twain became one flesh. "This is a great mystery," said the apostle, "but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Because He loved us as His own soul, nothing would satisfy Him until He had partaken of the nature of those who had been given to Him to become His portion and His heritage. "Bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," is the eternal Son of God now that He is also the Son of man, "for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

This being done, Jesus determined that the covenant between Himself and His people should be kept up as an indivisible union right through,

*“‘Yea,’ saith the Lord, ‘with her I’ll go
Through all the depths of care and woe;
And on the cross will even dare
The bitter pangs of death to bear.’”*

He had come into the closest possible union with His church, because He loved her as His own soul, and He determined to maintain that union although it involved a life of toil, humiliation, poverty, and pain, and although it also involved death, "even the death of the cross." But He would, at all costs, carry out the covenant that He had made with His Father to be the Surety and the Substitute for His own people, "Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

Because of this close connection with His church, our Lord Jesus Christ has bound Himself to every believing soul by very definite promises. Christ so loves you, beloved, that He has said to each one of you, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Up in heaven, He maintains your right, and defends your cause, and He has pledged His honor to secure your eternal safety, and has linked His own cause and kingdom, and His future success, with your being ultimately delivered from all sin and sorrow. It is wonderful to note how Christ, in entering into covenant with His people, has bound Himself by every conceivable tie to those whom His Father gave unto Him, and whom He has redeemed with His precious blood.

Then next, *Jesus would have us bound to Him on our part*. This kind of bond can never be all on one side, for true friendship leads to mutual love. To my mind, there is a measure of mystery in both my texts, "Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul." Which is the "he" and which is the "him" referred to in this verse? Is the "he" David, and the "him" Jonathan, or is the "him" David, and the "he" Jonathan?

There is the same indefiniteness in the second text, there is a kind of mixing up of the pronouns, and I like that, because a true friend or a true love is one's other self, the two persons are so closely joined to one another that they have become one. So our blessed Lord Jesus, who has linked Himself with us by many strong ties, would have us link ourselves with Him by many ties also. Let us see whether we have bound ourselves to Him in that way, how is it done?

Our first conscious love-union to Christ is when we come, and submit ourselves entirely to Him, that He may save us. Have all of you done this? I remember when I first realized that there was nothing I could do to save myself and that Christ had done it all, and I was quite content that He should be my Savior on those terms. Content, did I say? Nay, more than that, I was delighted just to lay myself down at His dear feet that He might save me entirely.

After that submission to Him, there next came into my soul next, an ardent love to Him. I feel sure that it was so with all of you who have believed in Him, when you realized that He had saved you, you felt so glad and so thankful that you could not help loving Him who had done so much for you. That is the kind of union that Christ desires on our part toward Himself—that we should be grateful for His redeeming love, grateful for the forgiveness of our sin, and then that we should love Him in return.

You did feel that love once, did you not? Do you feel it now? Let me stop a minute, and ask you to think of Christ as actually being here. He is a real Christ, you know—no dream, no mere imaginary personage, who has simply figured in the pages of fiction. He is a real, living Christ, and if you have submitted yourself to Him to save you, He has saved you. Then, do you not love Him? Give your love an opportunity of expressing itself, look your Savior in the face, and say to Him—

***“Do not I love Thee, O my Lord?
Behold my heart and see.”***

And if you can truthfully do it, let your soul as well as your voice sing those well-known words—

***“My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine,
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign;
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou,
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.”***

Because Jesus loves you as His own soul, He wants you to avow your union with Him by expressing the love which you really feel in your heart towards Him. That love should constrain us to confess that we belong wholly to Him, with all we are and all we have. There is not anything about us which is not our Lord's, from the crown of our head to the soles of our foot, He has redeemed us with His precious blood. So let us own that we are “bought with a price.”

Because Christ loves us, He wants us to own that we are His as surely as that He is ours, and not only to admit this in our own heart, but also to confess it before men by casting in our lot with His people. Has my Lord Jesus a visible church anywhere on earth? Then, let me share the lot of those who are its members. What are its fortunes? Let them be mine. Is the church dishonored and despised, maligned and persecuted? Then, let me take the rough side of the hill with her, and bear the brunt of the storm with her, rather than in a cowardly manner, be ashamed of my Master, and shrink from avowing that I belong to Him.

Because He loves you as His own soul, He wants you to openly declare that you are really His. In the presence of men and angels, or in the presence even of legions of devils, be not ashamed to let it be known that you belong to Jesus, just as Jonathan and David were not ashamed to let it be known that they were fast friends to one another.

Then, beloved, it will delight Christ's heart if you show kindness to all who belong to Him. You remember how David looked after poor Mephibosheth, the lame son of Jonathan, when he found him, he took care of him for Jonathan's sake. So, dear friends, look after Christ's lame people, Christ's poor

people, Christ's despondent people, Christ's sick people. Visit them in their affliction, relieve their distresses, comfort their hearts, and do it all for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

And because Jesus loves you, He wants you, beloved, to merge all your life's interests more and more in His, and to find your gain in advancing His honor. He wants you to come to this point—that you will be rich when His cause prospers—that you will be poor when His church declines—that you will be happy when Christ is honored, and that you will be sad when He is not loved. It will be to Him a great joy when He shall see you more and more entering into covenant with Him, as He has already, to the fullest possible extent, entered into covenant bonds with you.

If this is our Lord's desire, shall we not fulfill it? I think I hear some of you say, "We know all this, and we have done all this." Then keep on doing it. As you sit in your pews, try to feel, more really than you have ever done before, the bonds of love which bind Christ to you and which also bind you to Christ. Say, with the apostle, "We love him because he first loved us."

These bonds are mutual and they are indissoluble. With confidence we may repeat the apostolic challenge, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" For we know that nothing can make Him leave off loving us, and nothing can make us leave off loving Him.

Further, as David accepted Jonathan's presents, we accept, O gracious Savior, all the priceless gifts that You do bestow upon us! We see You taking off your royal robe, and girding it around us. You did lay aside all your bright array, that we might be clothed as princes of the blood-royal of heaven. "Even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle," did Jonathan give to David, and our Lord Jesus has done the same for us, so that we have "the sword of the Spirit," with which we may "fight the good fight of faith," and from His bow we may shoot upward the pointed arrows of prayer, and that we also may be girt about with the girdle of the truth.

There is nothing, O Lord, which You have that You have not given to us, and with both our hands we do accept of that which is Yours, and of Yourself also, for You too, are given to us, and in return, we give ourselves to You, "'Tis all that we can do." Let it really be so with us now, let our love embrace the Well-beloved, let this be a time of love with us. Look up at His blessed face, and then ask, "Was there ever any other so fair as He is?" Then look into His heart, and inquire, "Was there ever another heart so tender, so true, so kind, as His?" Then count His royal and divine honors, and see whether any other lover ever wooed with such bejeweled hands, and such a crown of glory as He wears upon His blessed brow.

Ay, look Him all over, and see if there ever was such incarnate love in any other as you behold in Him. Did any other man ever love so intensely, or did any woman ever expend such a wealth of love as He has bestowed on us in stooping from the highest heavens to the lowest depths of misery and shame, and even to the grave itself, that He might lift us up to sit forever with Him on His throne?

O heart! Heart! Heart! you ought to be smitten till you break into a thousand fragments if you do not love the Well-beloved! What are you at, cold soul, lukewarm soul, that you do not burn and glow with such good matter as this when you are speaking of the things which concern the King! Come, beloved, let us love our Lord, or die. If we really are Christians, our hearts would sooner cease to beat than cease to love our blessed Savior.

Thus much, but all too poorly said, upon the truth in our first text, great love desires to bind itself to the beloved one.

II. Now, secondly, we learn from our second text that GREAT LOVE DESIRES RENEWED PLEDGES FROM ITS OBJECT, "Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul."

It was not out of distrust, but *by reason of a sort of sacred jealousy*, that "Jonathan caused David to swear again." He did not fear that his friend would prove untrue, but he wanted to have every possible confirmation of the covenant of love which they had made with one another. And believing soul, though Christ does not distrust you, He knows what is in you, and He is jealous of you. Our Savior is as jealous of us as His Father is, the immeasurable greatness of the love of Jesus Christ to us moves Him to feel an

infinite jealousy of us. He loves us so much that He will have all our love, and if you are really His beloved ones, He will adopt ways and means of extracting from you the last particle of your love, that He may have it all for Himself.

As Rutherford said to a noble lady, who had lost a number of children, one after the other, "The Lord Jesus loves you so much that He will not let one drop of your love go in any other direction than towards Himself." And though He may not deal in that way with us, by taking away our friends and kindred, yet I am sure that, where He loves us much, He will have the whole of our love. He cannot bear that our heart should be divided, or in any measure taken from Him, so again, and again, and again, He causes us to renew our vows and our covenant with Him. So would He have us again renew our love to Him.

Further, *this is the only return we can make for His love*. Your little children on your knee, cost you much care and anxiety, and when they kiss you, and fondle you, and tell you how much they love you, they may well do so, for that is all they can do. They cannot help you in your daily toil, or bear any share of your heavy burdens, and in like manner, all that we can do for Christ is to love Him. Alas! that we do so little of that,

I fear that sometimes, we are more ready to preach, or teach, or give away tracts, or do something in the way of active service for Christ, but after all, the acceptableness of these things is to be measured by the love to our Lord that is in them. To love Him is the chief thing, it is our love that Christ longs for above everything else. "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all your heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." This is the first and greatest commandment of all, and therefore does our Savior wish us again and again to renew our vows of love to Him.

Besides, *it is for our highest benefit that we should do this*. Our love is often so feeble and cold that it needs to be stirred up again. The fire in our heart so continually burns low that we need constantly to have the flame fanned, and fresh fuel put on, that we may love our Lord more and more.

And chilly as we are in ourselves, *we are often tempted and allured by other loves*, and are apt to lend a listening ear to the charmer's fascinating voice. You know that it is so, beloved, we are not true to our Lord as we ought to be, and therefore does He ask us again, and again, and yet again, "Lovest thou me? Lovest thou me? Lovest thou me?" And if we are grieved that a third time, He puts to us the question, "Lovest thou me?" we ought to remember that we have grieved Him many more than three times, and it is our unfaithfulness to Him that lays upon Him the necessity of putting this inquiry to us so often.

It is also for our benefit that we should often renew our pledges of love to our Lord, *because we cannot be happy unless we are wholly taken up with love to Him*. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," said Solomon, and we may well say the same. There is nothing upon earth that can give solid satisfaction to a Christian apart from Christ. You may make him rich, you may lavish upon him all conceivable delights, but these things will all mock him, like the mirage of the desert, unless his heart is right with Christ, and is filled with the love of Jesus, and the sunlight of the divine presence is there. I am sure that it is so.

You unconverted people may be happy enough in your way, without Christ, but a true born child of God cannot have any bliss apart from His Lord. If you mean to be a Christian, you must recollect there remains but one source of true delight to you, but that one source of delight contains more than all other springs of joy put together. If you do but drink of it, you shall be more than satisfied, but if you turn aside from that fountain of living waters your soul will thirst and faint. It is God's decree that you shall mourn until you come back to the Beloved, and yet again swear allegiance to Him, for He will have you do it because He loves you as He loves His own soul.

I wish that all of us, who do love the Lord, would at once renew our covenant with Him. It may help us to do so if I remind you of the past times when we have given ourselves up to Him. I recollect well the first surrender of my soul to my Savior, do not you remember the like hallowed season? Turn over the leaves of your diary till you come to the record of it. "On such a day, I was born again. On such a day, I was married to Christ. My heart was wholly given to Him, and I rejoiced in Him." Recollect that solemn surrender, and as you recall it, say over again, as you said then—

*“Here, Lord, I give myself away;
'Tis all that I can do.”*

Do you recollect your baptism—you who were in Scriptural fashion, buried with Christ in baptism? I recollect mine. What did I mean by it? I meant that, as I gave up my body to be temporarily buried in the river—as the water rolled over me, and I was as one dead and buried, so did I declare that I was dead to sin, dead to the world, and buried to it all—and I also meant that, as I rose again from the stream, so would I live for Christ alone, in newness of life, as one who had been dead, and buried, and had risen again.

To me, that was the most solemn day of my life. I recollect rising early, at the break of day, that I might have some hours of prayer before starting, for I had some miles to walk along a country road, and all the way I was thinking of the public dedication of myself to my Master. I meant that to be my funeral day to all except Himself, and the day of my resurrection with Him, and I hope it was, and also hope it was the same with you. If so, I pray you, do not belie your baptism. I charge you, who have been buried with Christ, that you bear in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus, not in one place only, as was the fashion under the old law—but in your entire body, that you may be wholly Christ’s, completely Christ’s, henceforth and for ever.

Since that time of our baptism, how often have we renewed our vows of love to our Lord as we have come to His table! We have partaken of the bread and the wine as the memorials of His love to us, and I think that, there, we have often given ourselves up to Him again. Do so again, beloved, as you come presently to the communion, come as if you were coming for the first time. Say, “My Savior, I take Thee to myself, to be my life, and the food of my life, and I will, by Thy grace, live to Thee and to Thee alone.”

Some of us have a further reason for renewing our vows of love to our Lord, because we have lately risen from a sickbed. Shall not the life that has been prolonged be wholly the Lord’s? If He has taken away from us the heavy burden of terrible pain—the iron yoke of deep depression of spirit—do we not feel bound to yield ourselves up to Him as though we were beginning our Christian life over again? And I think that others of you, who have not been in pain, and have not been depressed in spirit, ought to feel as though, because of God’s great mercy to you in keeping you out of such trials, you should yield yourselves anew to Him.

Some of you may have reached another anniversary of your birthday, or you may have come to some other period of your life that is memorable, perhaps you have taken a new business, or have gone to live in another house—well, I hardly like to think of going into a new house, or even sleeping in another room, without once more saying, “Come here with me, my Lord. I am Yours, wherever I am, on land or sea, in this country or in a foreign land, I am eternally joined to You, and Your servant would I be at all times.”

It would not be amiss to renew your covenant with your Lord every morning when the day breaks, and to renew it yet again every night as you fall asleep, for oh! it is most helpful to the spirit to be often coming to Christ—to be constantly committing your soul into His dear hands.

I am sure that Christ is pleased with you when you do this, for He loves you as He loves His own soul. He is never tired of hearing you tell Him how much you love Him, you can never continue speaking on that theme so long as to weary Him by your confession of love to Him. You never praise Him until He is tired of your song. You never implore His mercy till He is weary of your prayers. That can never happen, and when you come, and bring yourself—poor, poor self, as it is—to Christ, He never disdains your love.

A little child delights to caress its mother, and as the mother is never happier than when she is receiving the child’s love, so believe me, it is with Christ. Yet some of you seem to think that He does not want your affection, or you fancy that it does not signify how you express your love—that a few hurried words of prayer will suffice, or a dull, formal hymn of praise, but it is not so. Do you not want to

make Him happy? My brother, in his prayer, thanked God that it was possible for us to add even to the bliss of Christ in heaven, and it is so. The shepherd rejoices when he finds the sheep that was lost, but does his joy end when he finds it? Oh, no! The father had great joy when the prodigal returned, but did his joy end when his boy came home? Oh, no! Christ is always glad of converse and communion with His beloved ones, so give Him much of it. Say to Him sometimes—

*“With Thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.”*

And sometimes, hour by hour, do nothing but commune with Him. Yea, always, when about your business, or whatever else you have to do, abide in Him, for He would have you so to do.

In closing, I would earnestly urge those who love the Master to take frequent opportunities of getting alone with their Beloved, that they may express their love to Him. Do you often do that, dear friends? To my mind, that is one of the choicest forms of devotion—just to tell the Savior how you love Him—to sit down, or kneel, or stand, or walk, and say, “My gracious Lord, I do love thee, teach me to love thee more.” Tell Him why you love Him, rehearse His deeds of grace towards you. Keep on at that theme till your heart burns within you with a vehement flame of love to your Lord.

Another acceptable thing to do is, every now and then, to do something specially for Christ Himself or to give something directly to Christ Himself—as directly as it can be done. As the woman washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the flowing tresses of her head, and kissed them unceasingly, and anointed them with the precious ointment, so do you something for Him.

Some will think it wasteful to break the alabaster box, and to anoint Him thus, but do it, whatever they may say. There is nothing too precious to be lavished upon Christ. Possibly, you can find out some poor saint to whom you will do some great deed of love because you are doing it for Christ. Or you may know of some part of the work of Christ that needs help that will cost you much self-denial to render. Do it, but tell nobody about it, never let your name be seen in the matter, but do it unto Him. If you do really love Him, and He is All in all to you, you will not need any urging to do this.

When we are in love, we need no one to urge us to give tokens and pledges of love, it is a joy to us to do anything that will give pleasure to our beloved. It is no misery to the tree to produce its luscious fruit, and it is no severe task to a Christian to perform deeds of love to Christ, so I will not urge you to it, but leave the matter with you, and with the Well-beloved of your souls.

But what shall I say to those who do not love Christ? Do not love Christ! O you blind, you dead, you foolish ones! The Lord have mercy on you! If He does not, remember that this is the text that belongs to you, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha”—“let him be accursed, for the Lord comes.” And every godly soul must say “Amen” even to that dreadful sentence, for he who loves not the blessed Lord must be accursed. God save you all from that terrible doom, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

1 SAMUEL 18:1-16 AND 20:1-17

1 Samuel Chapter 18 Verse 1. *And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.*

Jonathan, the brave young soldier who had himself done great exploits, naturally admired the youthful warrior who had slain the Philistine giant, and also admired the modesty of his speech when he returned with the head of Goliath in his hand, “The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.”

2-4. *And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him,—*

No doubt, one suitable to his rank as the heir-apparent to the throne of Israel.

4-5. *And gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war,—*

Probably, Jonathan had previously occupied that position, but now that David is called to supplant him, Jonathan is not jealous of him, but he loves him as he loves his own soul.

5-7. *And he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants. And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick. And the women answered one another as they played, and said,—*

Singing in chorus, with answering refrains,—

7-9. *Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day forward.*

This shows how envy will destroy a man's own peace of mind, as well as make him plot against the one of whom he is envious. Instead of being thankful to God for sending him such a valiant champion as David to deliver both himself and his people, Saul is full of malice towards the young hero simply because he receives his due reward of praise for his victory over the giant. "Saul eyed David" with an evil and envious eye—looked askance upon him, and determined to do him mischief whenever he could.

10. *And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house:*

Probably, talking wildly and foolishly,—

10. *And David played with his hand, as at other times:*

That is, as he had at other times, played upon the harp to chase away the evil spirit.

10-12. *And there was a javelin in Saul's hand. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice.*

And Saul was afraid of David,—

David was not afraid of Saul, although Saul was the man with the javelin, and with the murderous, malicious spirit, which prompted him to hurl it at the young harpist. David, guileless, brave, honest, trustful, was not afraid of Saul, but "Saul was afraid of David,"—

12-14. *Because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul. Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him.*

And young man, you also will be wise if God is with you, and you will be able to behave yourself wisely, discreetly, prosperously, as the word seems to mean. Even when malicious eyes are fixed upon you, they will not be able to find any fault in you if the Lord is with you. You will win favor where you least expect it, if you do but so live that God can be with you, if you keep the vessel of your nature so pure that the Master can use it. May it be your portion and mine to have it said of each of us, "The LORD was with him!"

15-16. *Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.*

This love of the people only caused Saul's hatred of David to be carried to a still greater excess, but Jonathan still loved David, and promised to cleave to him whatever might happen. In the twentieth chapter, we can read still more concerning this faithful friendship.

1 Samuel Chapter 20 Verses 1-2. *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? And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die:*

He could not think that his father really intended to take the life of his friend.

2-3. *Behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it to me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so. 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 had so often escaped, as it were, by the skin of his teeth, from his cruel persecutor, that he knew himself to be in a position of extreme peril.

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

Such was his love for David that he would make no exception, whatever there was that David wished him to do, he would do it for him.

5-10. *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. 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 shouldst thou bring me to thy father? 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 I not tell thee? Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly?*

What am I to do in such a case as that? If your father should turn against you as well as against me, what is to be done then?

11. *And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.*

To get quite alone, that they might express to one another the feelings of their inmost hearts, and also might consult together without any risk of being overheard.

12-17. *And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about tomorrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there be good toward David, and I then send not unto 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. 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.*

Thus were these two men bound together by ties of mutual love, may we be thus bound to Jesus! Oh, that there may be such love between us and our Lord as shall even excel the love of Jonathan and David!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—809, 795, 788

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.