

God's Search for a Mediator

The Book of Samuel

^{20:1} Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said to Jonathan, 'What have I done? What is my iniquity? And what is my sin before your father, that he is seeking my life?' ² He said to him, 'Far from it, you shall not die. Behold, my father does nothing either great or small without disclosing it to me. So why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so!' ³ Yet David vowed again, saying, 'Your father knows well that I have found favor in your sight, and he has said, 'Do not let Jonathan know this, or he will be grieved.' But truly as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is hardly a step between me and death.' ⁴ Then Jonathan said to David, 'Whatever you say, I will do for you.' ⁵ So David said to Jonathan, 'Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I ought to sit down to eat with the king. But let me go, that I may hide myself in the field until the third evening.' ⁶ If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly asked leave of me to run to Bethlehem his city, because it is the yearly sacrifice there for the whole family.' ⁷ If he says, 'It is good,' your servant will be safe; but if he is very angry, know that he has decided on evil. ⁸ Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the LORD with you. But if there is iniquity in me, put me to death yourself; for why then should you bring me to your father?' ⁹ Jonathan said, 'Far be it from you! For if I should indeed learn that evil has been decided by my father to come upon you, then would I not tell you about it?' ¹⁰ Then David said to Jonathan, 'Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?'

¹¹ Jonathan said to David, 'Come, and let us go out into the field.' So both of them went out to the field. ¹² Then Jonathan said to David, 'The LORD, the God of Israel, be witness! When I have sounded out my father about this time tomorrow, or the third day, behold, if there is good feeling toward David, shall I not then send to you and make it known to you? ¹³ If it please my father to do you harm, may the LORD do so to Jonathan and more also, if I do not make it known to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And may the LORD be with you as He has been with my father. ¹⁴ If I am still alive, will you not show me the lovingkindness of the LORD, that I may not die? ¹⁵ You shall not cut off your lovingkindness from my house forever, not even when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.' ¹⁶ So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, 'May the LORD require it at the hands of David's enemies.' ¹⁷ Jonathan made David vow again because of his love for him, because he loved him as he loved his own life. ¹⁸ Then Jonathan said to him, 'Tomorrow is the new moon, and you will be missed because your seat will be empty. ¹⁹ When you have stayed for three days, you shall go down quickly and come to the place where you hid yourself on that eventful day, and you shall remain by the stone Ezel. ²⁰ I will shoot three arrows to the side, as though I shot at a target. ²¹ And behold, I will send the lad, saying, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I specifically say to the lad, 'Behold, the arrows are on this side of you, get them,' then come; for there is safety for you and no harm, as the LORD lives. ²² But if I say to the youth, 'Behold, the arrows are beyond you,' go, for the LORD has sent you away. ²³ As for the agreement of which you and I have spoken, behold, the LORD is between you and me forever.'

²⁴ So David hid in the field; and when the new moon came, the king sat down to eat food. ²⁵ The king sat on his seat as usual, the seat by the wall; then Jonathan rose up and Abner sat down by Saul's side, but David's place was empty. ²⁶ Nevertheless Saul did not speak anything that day, for he thought, 'It is an accident, he is not clean, surely he is not clean.' ²⁷ It came about the next day, the second day of the new moon, that David's place was empty; so Saul said to Jonathan his son, 'Why has the son of Jesse not come to the meal, either yesterday or today?' ²⁸ Jonathan then answered Saul, 'David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem, ²⁹ for he said, 'Please let me go, since our family has a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to attend. And now, if I have found favor in your sight, please let me get away that I may see my brothers.' For this reason he has not come to the king's table.' ³⁰ Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan and he said to him, 'You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? ³¹ For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Therefore now, send and bring him to me, for he must surely die.' ³² But Jonathan answered Saul his father and said to him, 'Why should he be put to death? What has he done?' ³³ Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down; so Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death. ³⁴ Then Jonathan arose from the

table in fierce anger, and did not eat food on the second day of the new moon, for he was grieved over David because his father had dishonored him.

³⁵ Now it came about in the morning that Jonathan went out into the field for the appointment with David, and a little lad was with him. ³⁶ He said to his lad, 'Run, find now the arrows which I am about to shoot.' As the lad was running, he shot an arrow past him. ³⁷ When the lad reached the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan called after the lad and said, 'Is not the arrow beyond you?' ³⁸ And Jonathan called after the lad, 'Hurry, be quick, do not stay!' And Jonathan's lad picked up the arrow and came to his master. ³⁹ But the lad was not aware of anything; only Jonathan and David knew about the matter. ⁴⁰ Then Jonathan gave his weapons to his lad and said to him, 'Go, bring them to the city.' ⁴¹ When the lad was gone, David rose from the south side and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed three times. And they kissed each other and wept together, but David wept the more. ⁴² Jonathan said to David, 'Go in safety, inasmuch as we have sworn to each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD will be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.' Then he rose and departed, while Jonathan went into the city.

Questions

1. Give context
 - a. God's search for a mediator to stand between Him and the people.
 - b. Simultaneously, Israel's search for a king: Found in Saul? No.
 - c. God has already declared to the prophet Samuel that he will find another king: David. David has been anointed by Samuel, one of the greatest spiritual leaders Israel will ever have (1 Sam.16). David has recently slain Goliath, as a representative of Israel (1 Sam.17). This has made Saul jealous of David's rising popularity (1 Sam.18 – 19). Saul has already tried to kill David in several ways, though Jonathan has attempted to calm his father, King Saul, down.
2. Questions from everyone?
3. Notice that the drama shifts location between city (v.1 – 10), field (v.11 – 23), city (v.24 – 34), and field (v.35 – 42).
4. How come David needs to persuade Jonathan that his father, King Saul, wants to kill David.
5. What script does David prepare Jonathan to say?
 - a. ⁶ If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly asked [literally, *shaul, shaul*] leave of me to run [literally, *escape*] to Bethlehem his city, because it is the yearly sacrifice there for the whole family.' ⁷ If he says, 'It is good,' your servant will be safe; but if he is very angry, know that he has decided on evil.
 - b. Why might David craft the speech this way? Not just for the content, but because it also pushes buttons in Saul. The phrase for 'earnestly asked' is a repetition of the word 'shaul', which sounds like his name. The literal word for 'run' is 'escape', which would make David sound like he is fleeing Saul.
6. How does Saul interpret David's absence at first?
 - a. Perhaps David is ceremonially unclean: 'He is unclean' (20:26)
 - b. This is ironic because David has been upright, and Saul is unclean in his hostility toward David.
7. What does Jonathan actually say? He sticks closely to the script, but adds a few things:
 - a. ²⁸ Jonathan then answered Saul, 'David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem, ²⁹ for he said, 'Please let me go, since our family has a sacrifice in the city, *and my brother has commanded me to attend. And now, if I have found favor in your sight, please let me get away that I may see my brothers.'* For this reason he has not come to the king's table.'
 - b. 'My brother has commanded me to attend' makes it sound like David has a higher loyalty to his family than Saul.
 - c. 'If I have found favor in your sight' makes it sound like David was appealing to Jonathan's judgment and favor in this situation.
8. What is Saul's reaction?
 - a. ³⁰ Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan and he said to him, 'You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?' ³¹ For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Therefore now, send and bring him to me, for he must surely die.'
 - b. Saul essentially calls his own son Jonathan a bastard and disowns him.
 - c. Saul reveals his true motive: the establishment of throne and the kingdom. But he dresses it up as 'you and your kingdom' even though it is himself and his throne he cares about.
 - d. Saul now tries to kill Jonathan: ³² But Jonathan answered Saul his father and said to him, 'Why should he be put to death? What has he done?' ³³ Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down; so Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death. ³⁴ Then Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did not eat food on the second day of the new moon, for he was grieved over David because his father had dishonored him.
9. What do you think it was like for Jonathan to experience that? Surprised that his own father would want to kill him, 'fierce anger' at him; his eyes were opened to what David had gone

- through and the true character of his father. But Jonathan was now sure that he could not mediate between them, because his father was not open to it.
10. Application: No divided loyalties. When have you had to choose between someone you cared about and the reality of God's truth?
 - a. Illus: I lost a friend because I believed he mistreated someone at work, and I pointed it out to him. He denied it and believed I was undermining his leadership. We could not reconcile that, so I did what I felt was right: I chose God's truth rather than maintain a friendship that had become untrue.
 - b. Pastor Brian Morgan of Peninsula Bible Church Cupertino points out, 'Maturity demands we make truth, not peace, our primary goal. This is the correct order, as James points out, 'The wisdom from above is *first* pure, *then* peaceable.' (Jas.3:17)
 11. Application: A commitment to Jesus comes before all other authorities and loyalties, whether it be to parents, friends, bosses, coaches, and so on. That is freeing for us. It is also challenging to us if we just want to not make waves. We must be willing to be driven out into the wilderness, uncharted lands, like David was, or lose our throne and position, like Jonathan was.