

"Loyalty Before Royalty" - 1 Samuel 20

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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It's been said that *"those who don't appreciate the value of loyalty can never appreciate the cost of betrayal."* I have witnessed those who have betrayed everyone around them and once that relationship was broken go on to stand aghast at why people are treating them strange! They are like children on the playground who fail to grasp a world that is anything beyond their own feelings, wants, and desires. Anything beyond *them*.

The day in which we live knows little about the concepts of devotion and loyalty. Our culture seems to have lost its natural and historical values of allegiance and trustworthiness, and have exchanged them for a post-modern position of situational ethics and individual truth. Of course such an entrenched social pandemic could not but affect the greater church and larger Christendom. The fact today is one is hard-pressed to trust another when commitments and promises are broken on a whim and relationships sacrificed in selfish want and ambition. Yet here in our account we see a friendship rooted in integrity and devotion. In *our* day, Facebook friendships are more important than real friendships, supporting another in whatever they do and whatever they are is called brotherhood, and love must always be an emotionally positive feeling for me or you are put out of the club!

But the friendship that ran between David and Jonathan ran deeper than that. Theirs was a bond that few today have ever known and perhaps never will in this life. Jonathan was in a position in which he was the presumptive heir to the throne. He was to be king after his father! But Jonathan's loyalty ran deeper than any lust or need for power and position. His nature was honest and he seemed to almost instinctively know that while his being king may be the will of *man*, it was not the will of *God*. God had not chosen Jonathan to be king, despite great qualities and abilities. Most folks today who are void of the Holy Spirit are quite willing to throw lifelong loyal friends 'under the bus' in order to get what they want. Such is pure and unadulterated wicked idolatry. Perhaps that is why God warns us of the sin of such repeatedly throughout scripture!

David at this point is livid! He doesn't understand why the king wants to kill him! It seems to have consumed his soul and passions. Guys' that have such a heart and understanding concerning relationships seem to inevitably be found in this position! It's like they fall through a time doorway into our modern age of selfish ambition and cut-throat passions and don't know how to function. They just tend to stand around emotionally bleeding most of the time.

David and Jonathan made a promise to each other, and that actually meant something to these two guys! Most folks break promises and commitments like canceling a lunch date, even ones they made before God. *I'm* always surprised by such behavior but God isn't! Seeing the past, present and future with equal clarity, He knows when a promise is made whether we mean it or not and whether we will keep it or not, and IF not, then that clarity is manifested later as to why we were not used in some such manner as we thought we should, or as we desired we would.

The fact is many of us are liars! We said one thing and did another. And while such a 'slight' is thought of as a little thing in our culture, such is not the case in the kingdom realm...in a community of faithful believers! In fact the bible is serious about lying and broken vows:

Proverbs 6:16-19 *"There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a **lying tongue**, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers."*

Proverbs 12:22 *"**Lying lips are an abomination** to the LORD, but those who act faithfully are his delight."*

Revelation 21:8 *"But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, **and all liars**, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."*

Leviticus 19:11 *"You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; **you shall not lie** to one another."*

Malachi 3:5 *"Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, **against those who swear falsely**, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts. "*

Jonathan and David made a vow to each other of loyalty, commitment and friendship. It would stand as more important than blood family, health and safety, worldly position and power. There was no price that would supersede their vows! How rare! What a blessed gift they received from each other. Jonathan would go on to stand in his commitment to David no matter the cost. In our culture, there is always an excuse to gain our 'pass'...our 'get-out-of-jail-free' card when it comes to promises and vows. We have to present an unbiblical picture of God to do it, but we are seemingly just as guilty in the greater Christendom.

We publically present a God who apparently "changed His mind," even though the Bible clearly says He never does. We pretend that changing circumstances have allowed us to break our covenant, but not for David and Jonathan. And thankfully not for the covenant that Christ made with us! We certainly have given plenty of reasons and opportunities for God to 'throw in the towel' and abandon us along the road someplace. But He remained and remains still. Still loving...still holding out His hands of redemption and forgiveness for those would repent and come to Him. Perhaps we need to re-evaluate the meaning of the word "covenant?"

Romans 8:35-39 *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. "*

Jeremiah 31:3 *"The LORD appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you..."*

Psalms 63:3 *"Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you."*

Being unsure of Saul's motives or ultimate goals, David and Jonathan decided to "test the waters." For it is in such times of testing and trial where one finds out just how true a person's claims are! Apparently King Saul held a formal multi-evening dinner each month for the "crème de la crème" of their day, and David was expected to show up. In an effort to find out where his heart really was, the boys conspired to see how Saul would act when David failed to show and further when Jonathan relayed his excuse. You see, the thing about bitterness and hatred is that such resides just an inch this side of explosive anger and verbal tirade. You know what I'm talking about...when someone gets poked a little and the response is so unbalance that the individual is left steaming and everyone else is left far away! It's the "I can't believe you did that to me!" routine and it's a dead give-away as to the heart behind it.

When Saul exploded, Jonathan tried to reason with him but he only got his own hand bitten, and frankly alot worse as Saul was willing to even kill *him* to gain satisfaction! His own son! Such would seem incredulous if I hadn't seen it repeatedly over the years. Folks willing to sacrifice the spiritual standing of their own kids if it means they get to exercise their perceived "righteous retribution!" Some of those children spent years in turmoil and were still tender and venerable but the parent wanted their revenge for the disrespect that they feel they received so no price was too steep to pay!

We don't truly appreciate the rapid spread of the disease of bitterness and anger! We think we can keep it focused, but it inevitably spills over upon those around us, even our family! This sin...like nearly all sin, is not something that is our own alone. Sin always affects and *infects* those around us. Saul wanted his son to hate David too. Again...he was willing to sacrifice the well-being of his own child if he could gain the upper hand in what he perceived as a struggle for position and public standing.

Now Jonathans loyalty demanded that he overcome the natural tendencies of jealousy and envy. It seems it was never about what Jonathan *wanted* but rather what was *right*. Those kind of men are a rarity. Because for most of us, what we want is what is right! We think in terms of what we *deserve*, what we feel we have *earned*, and what we *want*. No matter that our lives, our spiritual maturity, our marriage dynamic, etc, says something completely different! And anybody who does not support my pursuit of such is wrong, evil, hateful, and worthy of dismissal from the friendship club! Eventually that also includes God Himself, because I have never known God to EVER give ANYONE everything they want or feel such is their birthright because of one thing or another. That's why our 'friends' are the first to go, and God is the eventual to go!

David in his pain and passion was jumpy. When you have folks inexplicably hanging you out to dry, it becomes very hard to trust anyone. In verse 8 he told Jonathan that if the accusations are true then Jonathan should kill David himself! It's hard to endure people's deceit and broken allegiance. But Jonathans willingness to step away from the 'first chair' position, not only proved his allegiance, but his integrity and his loyalty. "***Loyalty before Royalty...***"

When Jonathan excused David's lack of attendance before his father, Saul exploded. He freaked out and began to act in paranoia. Everybody is out to get me! Such is an age-old attack method by Satan. The thought that everyone else is wrong...everyone else is evil...everyone else is out to get me, and *I'm the only one left thinking straight and doing right*. Such is the very definition of 'crazy.' And it's one of the last steps before your exit from the church by the way. So let me say it here for posterity: "*You are not the lone voice of reason...when you get to that point, you are undeniably under the attack of, if not the power of, demonic presence.*"

We all like to be respected. We all want the honor of our fellow man. But how many of us throw all of such away out of greed, lust, and idolatry and then wonder why everyone is "dis'ing" us? Another quote on this subject says "*Trust is earned, respect is given, and loyalty is demonstrated. Betrayal of any one of those is to lose all three.*" Saul was losing it and yet he didn't see the 'writing on the wall.' He was blinded by his rage, his jealousy, and his paranoia. We think we feel hostility or anger because we've been wronged. In reality, however, the irritation, the frustration, the lack of respect that we feel has been dealt us doesn't *produce* the hostility, anger, or frustration within us, but simply *reveals* the anger, hostility, or frustration already there. Something is wrong with our soul before we even arrived at that point. There are issues of pride, self-entitlement, need for position, and works oriented standing. And when those around us did not show us the respect we felt we deserved and had earned, we became irritated. And it was all about ourselves. It was all about the need to be thought of in a certain way.

I pray that we are willing to hear this message! Because I know some of us struggle with this and it is *sin*. Let us not write it off and make it small and give ourselves license because we think we really deserve it! It is *sin*. It was for Saul, and it is for us today, because our God is "the same yesterday, today, and forever." Saul ended badly. But at any point in this journey he could have pulled up. At this point he could not remain king, but he could have remained viable and useful, not to mention *alive*! But his blindness and bitterness ran so deep there was no stopping him, and he eventually lost *everything*. I have learned to simply step aside when I see someone coming at me like that. It is their fight to lose and I seek to guard my own heart and not join them in a schoolyard tantrum!

John Courson says the following: "I see a sponge in my kitchen sink. I can see it's wet—but I don't know what's in it. It could be apple juice. It could be milk. It could be water. The only way I'll know what's in it is to squeeze it. Then, what's already in it will flow out. My squeeze won't put the liquid there—it will simply reveal what was already there. So, when you're squeezed, when I'm bumped, when we feel under the gun or under pressure, the way we respond will reveal what's already in our soul."

Saul at this point had already proven on more than one occasion that he was a man of rebellion and disobedience. Thus it was Saul's disobedience in the first place that made him vulnerable to the evil spirit that came upon him. Folks who constantly struggle with rebellion are so venerable! A un-repentant and fostered heart of rebellion is ripe for Satan to exploit and I have seen him come for such folks over and over and so many have lost so much. And you will not be able to say "the devil made you do it." Because *you* did it! Such folks may have invited Jesus to be their Savior but He never became their Lord. Saul lived more and more alone and in the end he died alone. What will it be for us? Our pride and desires? Or Christ and His plan? Because we cannot have both....