

## **Jonathan, A Good Friend to David**

(I Samuel 14, 19-20)

**By**

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Good friends are wonderful to have, aren't they? Well, in the book of I Samuel in the Old Testament part of the Bible it tells us about a man who was a very good friend. This man was a very good friend to David. Yes, to David, the shepherd boy who became the king of Israel. David's very good friend was named Jonathan. Well, I thought we'd talk about Jonathan today. Would you like that? All right. And everything I'm going to tell you is true; it really happened.

So who was Jonathan? Well, Jonathan was a very brave Jewish man who was also a prince and a general in the land of Israel. You see, Jonathan's father was King Saul, the first king of the children of Israel, of the Jews. And Jonathan was in charge of a large part of Saul's army.

Now there were some enemies of King Saul and of Israel called the Philistines. The Philistines were very bad people, and the Philistines had a very big army, much, much bigger than Saul's army.

Now, wherever the Philistines had a group of soldiers, this was called an army post or a garrison. Well, the Philistines had a garrison in the Jews' land, and one day Jonathan attacked this Philistine garrison. The other Philistines heard about it, so they got their big army together and got ready to fight the Jews. And it also sounds as if part of the bad Philistine army divided up into 3 groups and went out and were stealing food and other things from different parts of Israel. But I'm not really sure how that was.

Anyway, Saul's little army got together, too, and they had a camp. And Jonathan was in charge of part of King Saul's army. Now, generals and captains would often have a man who would carry their shields for them. These men were called armor bearers. They would bear (carry) part of the armor for their officer. Well, one day Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come on, let's go to the Philistine's garrison over there." But Jonathan didn't tell his father, King Saul, what he was going to do. No, Jonathan and his armor bearer just quietly started out toward the Philistine garrison.

Well, Jonathan and his armor bearer got to a place where there were big rocks like cliffs on both sides with a gap, a passage, between them. And the Philistine garrison was on top of one of those big rocks. Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come on. Let's go over to that garrison of those bad men. If the Lord wants to, He will help us."

And Jonathan said, "After all, the Lord can win with just a few people as well as with many people." Jonathan really had a lot of faith in the Lord God, didn't he?

Well, the armor bearer must have trusted Jonathan and been very brave too, because he said to Jonathan, "Do whatever you think best. I'm with you."

Then Jonathan said, "Look here. We'll go over there and let the Philistine soldiers see us. Then if they say to us, 'Wait there until we come down to you', we will just stand still and not go up to where they are. But," said Jonathan, "if they say 'Come on up here to us', then we'll go up to where they are. Because that will be a sign to us that the Lord will let us beat them."

So Jonathan and his armor bearer went out into the passage between the two cliffs. The Philistine soldiers up on the cliff saw them and said to each other, "Hey, look! The Hebrews are coming out of their holes where they had been hiding!" ("Hebrews", of course, means the Jews, the children of Israel.)

Then the Philistine soldiers up on top of the cliff called down to Jonathan and said, "Come on up here to us, and we'll show you a thing or two!" It sounds as if they were sort of making fun of Jonathan and his armor bearer, doesn't it? After all, just 2 men against a bunch of Philistines soldiers!

Then Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Follow me, because the Lord has given these soldiers to Israel." Yes, Jonathan had faith in the Lord!

So Jonathan started climbing up the big rock where the Philistines were. The rock was so steep that he had to climb on his hands and feet. And the armor bearer came right along behind Jonathan. They were both very brave men, weren't they?!

Well, Jonathan attacked the wicked Philistine soldiers, and his armor bearer killed them as they fell. They killed about 20 of them.

Now, Jonathan had said that the Lord had given these soldiers to Israel. So what do you think the Lord did now?! Why, the Lord had a big earthquake come, and that scared the Philistines! And the Philistines started running around and fighting each other! And lots of the Philistines killed each other! And then they began running away!

Well, King Saul and the Hebrew army looked up at the cliff and saw the Philistine soldiers running away. And Saul checked around and found out that Jonathan and his armor bearer were missing from the Jewish camp. Then Saul's soldiers all started running after the Philistine soldiers who were running away. And the Jews killed a lot of the bad Philistine soldiers and chased the other Philistines soldiers back into their own land.

Wow! Jonathan was really a very brave man. And he trusted the Lord. And the Lord had saved Israel that day, hadn't He? But let's go on now.

King Saul didn't have as much faith in the Lord as his son Jonathan had. And two different times Saul disobeyed the Lord, not doing what the Lord had told him to do. So the Lord said that He was going to choose another man instead of Saul to be king of the Jews, a man who would obey Him. Well, several years went past, and then who do you think the Lord chose? Yes, the Lord chose the shepherd boy David. David was going to be the next king of Israel. But it wasn't the time yet for David to become king.

Then comes a story that I'm sure you know. David, the shepherd boy, killed the Philistine giant Goliath. And then the Philistine army ran away, and the Jewish army killed many of the bad Philistines. Well, King Saul liked that, and he had David join his army. And that is when Jonathan first met David. And Jonathan liked David very much. And Jonathan and David made an agreement with each other and became best friends. And Jonathan gave David presents, his own weapons (his sword and bow) and some other things. And from now on in the Bible we almost only hear about Jonathan in connection with David.

So now David was a soldier in Saul's army. But David was such a good soldier that the people loved him and began saying more good things about David than they were saying about Saul! Oh, dear! That might cause trouble, mightn't it?! And it did! You see, after a while King Saul got jealous of David. Then Saul told Jonathan and some other men that they should kill David! But David hadn't done anything wrong, had he? David was just being a good soldier for King Saul, wasn't he? But Saul was jealous anyway.

But remember, Saul's son Jonathan was now David's good friend, wasn't he? So Jonathan went to David and told him, "My father Saul is looking to kill you. So please, be careful until the morning. Hide someplace, and I will go talk to my father about you. then I will tell you what I find out."

So David hid himself. And Jonathan went and talked to his father King Saul and said to him, "Don't be against your servant David. He hasn't done anything to you. In fact, he's always done good things for you."

And Jonathan said to Saul, "Remember how David risked his own life to kill Goliath and because of that the Lord brought us a great victory? You saw that and were happy about it. So why would you want to kill David now for no reason?" (Now, what had been the reason that Saul had wanted to kill David? Yes, because Saul was jealous of David. But being jealous of someone is no reason to want to hurt them, is it?)

Anyway, Saul listened to his son Jonathan and then said, "I promise David won't be killed." Whesh!!

So Jonathan told David what Saul had said. Then Jonathan took David back to where Saul was, and everything was fine for a while.

Well, there was war again with the Philistines, and David went out with his part of the army and fought the Philistines and beat the bad Philistines, killing many of them, and the rest of the Philistines ran away.

But instead of being happy that David had done so well against their enemy, Saul got jealous again and was very unhappy. So what do you think Saul did? Why, one night David was playing music on his harp for Saul to help make Saul feel happier, and Saul was sitting there with a short spear in his hand. -- And Saul threw the spear at David! But David ducked, so the spear missed him and

went into the wall instead! And David ran out and went to his own house.

Then Saul told some men to watch David's house and to kill David in the morning. But David's wife helped David get away safely.

Finally David went to Jonathan and said, "What have I done wrong? Why is your father trying to kill me?"

Well, Jonathan hadn't been home when this had happened. So Jonathan didn't know anything about it. So Jonathan said to David, "You're not going to be killed! Why, my father doesn't do anything without telling me. He wouldn't try to kill you and not have told me."

But David said, "Well, your father knows that we are friends, so he must have decided not to tell you so you wouldn't be unhappy. But really, there is just a step between me and death."

Then Jonathan said to David, "I'll do anything you want me to do."

So David told Jonathan, "Your father is having a special feast tomorrow. The feast will last for two days, and I am supposed to be there with him at the feast. But I won't be there. Instead, after it's all over, I'll hide out in the field until evening."

And David said, "If your father asks why I'm not there, you tell him, 'Oh, David begged me to let him go to his home in another city for a yearly sacrifice that his family is having there.'"

And then David said to Jonathan, "Please be kind to me and let me know what your father says about that."

And Jonathan promised to do that. Jonathan said, "Of course. Why, if I knew that my father was planning to do bad things to you, wouldn't I tell you?"

Then David said to him, "But how will you let me know what your father has in mind to do?"

Jonathan said, "Come on out into the field with me." (I think he said that so no one would be able to hear what they were going to say.)

When they got out in the field, Jonathan said to David, "This is how I'll let you know what you should do. After the feast is all over, you go hide here again and stay by this big rock. The next morning after the feast I will go out as if I'm practicing with my bow and arrows. I'll shoot the arrows, and then I'll send a boy out to get them. If I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; get them', then you'll know everything is all right and you can come back. But," said Jonathan, "if I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you', then you go away, for the Lord will be sending you away. It won't be safe for you here."

Then Jonathan said to David, "And promise me that after the Lord stops all of your enemies, you will always be kind to me, and after I die that you will be kind to my family."

And David promised that.

Well, there was the holiday the next day, and Saul had the feast for 2 days. The first night of the feast Saul noticed that David wasn't there, but he didn't say anything.

But then the second night of the feast King Saul saw that David still wasn't there. So Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why wasn't David here yesterday and isn't here today?"

Jonathan said, "Well, he told me that his family was having a feast, too, and his brothers had told him to go home for it. He asked me if he could go, so I told him he could."

Well, that made King Saul very angry at Jonathan! And Saul said, "You are a bad son! I know that you are on David's side, and you are making trouble for yourself, because after all, you know that as long as David lives, you can never be king! Now, you send for David and bring him here, because he's going to die!"

But Jonathan said to his father, "Why should David be killed? What has he done?"

Well, Saul was so very angry that he actually threw a short spear at his own son Jonathan! (But he didn't hit him.) So, of course, Jonathan knew then that Saul really wanted to kill David. And Jonathan got angry, too, and he got up and left the feast himself. And Jonathan was very unhappy for his friend David.

Well, then the next morning Jonathan went out into the field as he had promised. He took his bow and arrows and a boy to get the arrows for him after he'd shot them. And David was hiding there as they had agreed he was to do.

And Jonathan said to the boy, "You run and find the arrows I'm going to shoot."

And as the boy ran out, Jonathan shot an arrow farther out than the boy was. As the boy got out there, Jonathan shouted, "Isn't the arrow beyond you?"

Then Jonathan shouted to the boy, "Hurry up! Don't stay there!" And the boy picked up the arrows and brought them back to Jonathan. Now, the boy didn't know that this was a message to David! No. He just thought he was helping Jonathan with his target practice!

Then Jonathan gave his bow and arrows to the boy and said to him, "Take these back to the city."

Well, as soon as the boy had gone, David got up from where he was hiding. He went up to Jonathan and bowed to him. Then they both cried and kissed each other goodbye. They were both very unhappy. After all, David and Jonathan were best friends.

Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace. We have made a promise to each other before the

Lord that we and our families will be good friends to each other forever." Then Jonathan went back into the city and David went far away.

Well, David would have to hide from Saul now, wouldn't he? And other men who were in trouble came to David. And then David and these men hid in different places from Saul for quite a while. Saul went out and tried to find David and kill him. In fact, there were two times when Saul got near where David was hiding, and both times, though David could have killed Saul, he didn't. After all, David knew that it would be wrong to hurt someone that the Lord had made to be king of Israel. David was trusting the Lord to take care of him and to make him king someday as He had promised.

One time David helped a town that was in trouble, and Saul heard that David was there. So Saul got his army together and went to try to find David and kill him. But some way Jonathan found David. Then Jonathan encouraged David and reminded him of the Lord. And Jonathan said, "David, don't be afraid of my father. He won't find you. You will be king over Israel. I know this, and my father Saul knows this."

Now, Jonathan could have been jealous of David, couldn't he? After all, probably at one time everyone had thought that Jonathan would be the next king. But Jonathan was a very good friend to David and wasn't at all jealous that David would be the next king. He knew this was God's plan, and he trusted the Lord. Instead, Jonathan and David made another agreement with each other to be good friends. They were like brothers who loved each other very much. And then Jonathan went back home, and David stayed in the wilderness to hide from Saul. And the Lord protected David, so Saul wasn't able to find David. So David was safe even though he still had to hide from Saul.

And this is the last time that the Bible tells us about Jonathan's seeing his good friend David. (It would be very hard not to see your best friend anymore, wouldn't it?)

But the next time in the Bible that we hear about Jonathan is very sad. You see, later the Philistines came again with a big army to fight against Saul and his army. There was a big fight, and during the battle, both Saul and Jonathan were killed.

Well, when David heard about this, that Saul and Jonathan were both dead, he was very unhappy about it. David wrote a beautiful song about Saul and Jonathan, and he taught the song to the people. You can read this song in the Bible. The song says how good Saul and Jonathan were (even though Saul had tried so many times to kill David). The song says that Saul had been a king who had taken good care of the people. The song ends up saying, "O Jonathan! You were killed, and I am very unhappy for you, my brother Jonathan. You have been very good to me."

Well, just as God had promised, David became king of Israel. Of course, anything God says will happen, always does happen, doesn't it?! And after things got settled down, David remembered the promise he'd made earlier to Jonathan to be good to Jonathan's family. So David said, "Are they any of Jonathan's family left so that I can be good to them?"

Well, a man who had been one of King Saul's servants was called to David, and David asked him the same question. He asked, "Are they any of Jonathan's family left so that I can be good to

them?"

Then the servant said to David, "Jonathan had a son named Me-phib-o-sheth who is crippled in both of his feet."

David said, "Where is he?" And the servant told him.

Then David sent for Jonathan's son Mephibosheth. And David gave Mephibosheth everything that had belonged to Saul. And Mephibosheth lived with David and was treated as if he were David's son. So David really remembered his agreement with his friend Jonathan, didn't he?

And that is the end of the true story Jonathan, a prince, a general, and a faithful friend.

But what can we learn from this story of Jonathan? What can it teach us? Well, first it can teach us to trust the Lord God no matter what happens. And it can remind us that the Lord can do anything, even if He only uses a few people. It can remind us that whatever God says will happen, always does happen, that we can trust the Lord to do what He says He'll do.

Also the story of Jonathan can teach us to do good for our friends and to want good things to happen to them. It can also teach us how very bad it is to be jealous, can't it? And it can teach us to be happy when good things happen to other people, even if we don't get that good thing ourselves.

Jonathan trusted the Lord, and Jonathan was unselfish. We should try to be like Jonathan that way, too, shouldn't we?

Yes, Jonathan did good for his friend David. And David went on to become the greatest king that the Jews ever had. And who do you think was a great-great-great-grandson of David? Jesus!! Yes, Mary, the mother of Jesus was descended from King David! Jesus is God, but He loves us so much that He came to earth as a human so that He could die for our sins. Of course, 3 days later Jesus was alive again, and He's still alive in heaven, isn't He? And if we trust in Jesus, He will forgive our sins and be our King, and then someday we can be with the Lord Jesus. And the Bible tells us that someday the Lord Jesus will come back and will be King over the whole earth forever. -- And everyone who has trusted in King Jesus will be with Him forever. And do you know what? That includes those best friends, Jonathan and David!

King Jesus, the great-great-great-grandson of David who was best friends with Jonathan.