

Place: Lurgan Baptist 24:11:2002

Readings: 1 Samuel 18:1-4, 19:1-7 23:16-18

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF DAVID

### 4. EVERYBODY NEEDS A FRIEND

Have you ever someone say this, " What I long for more than anything else is a genuine friend, I am busy serving the Lord, I have a great marriage but sometimes in the church I feel very alone, and I long for someone to be a friend to me." Hudson Taylor had reached a cross-roads actually it was more like a dead end. He was only twenty three years of age and for less than two years he had been working as missionary in China. But that time had been marked by a growing disillusionment with his missionary society and by discouragement caused by criticism from his fellow missionaries. Then there came two more blows. His girl friend in England wrote to him telling him she did not love him, and an order came from his missionary council telling him to stop his work in a certain town.

" My dear mother," he wrote, " my heart is so sad, sad, sad, I do not know what to do."

At this stage God graciously gave Hudson Taylor a friend. A Scottish missionary twenty years older named William Burns. Burns sensed in Taylor a young man with a kindred spirit and a need for a friend. He encouraged Taylor to rest in the Lord and to trust in His goodness, guidance, and resources. For seven months they travelled, preached, and prayed together, and those months left an indelible mark on Hudson Taylor. Now William Burns was not the only reason that Hudson Taylor became a man of God but he was an indispensable factor. Have you ever thought how large a place friendship played in the lives of the men God

used ? Moses had not only Aaron but Joshua to support him. Daniel was supported by his three friends. What about the Lord Jesus ? He had twelve disciples, but where there not three that were intimates ? What about the powerful team Peter and John formed in Jerusalem ?

And as Paul faced death, who did he long to see ? But Timothy ! ( 2 Tim 4:9-11 ) Someone has said,

" Loneliness is the most desperate of all English words." You see, " Everybody needs a friend." The Christian life is in one sense very like a crossword puzzle. Until both the vertical and horizontal lines are finished its incomplete. To know the Lord Jesus involves not only a vertical dimension with the living God, but a horizontal relationship with the family of God. We need solid, godly friendships if we are to become the people God wants us to be. Solomon says,

" Two are better than one for if they fall the one will lift up his fellow." ( Eccl 4:9-10 ) If you have one or two godly friends you are indeed a rich person. For a true friend is someone who will draw you closer to the Lord. Now one of the best friendships in history is the one that we want to consider this .... !

#### (1) THE COMMONALTY THEY FOUND IN EACH OTHER

Look at ( 18:1 ) Jonathan, the son of King Saul, the heir apparent, befriended David, the shepherd boy, who was destined to become the king and take the place that had been his by right of inheritance. Now Jonathan and David were men who had much in common. Both of them were marked by piety, humility, duty, and loyalty. These men sensed that they had something in common. You see, we need friends:

##### (a) For Emotional Encouragement:

Proverbs says, " Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel." ( 27:9 ) Jonathan and David gave to each other emotional encouragement, they shared the deepest concerns of life.

##### (b) Because we need Help in Trouble:

" A friend loveth at all times and a brother is born for adversity." ( Prov 17:17 ) My .... the whole of their friendship was circled in trouble. David was a young man on the run from an insane king, who sought his life

and Jonathan helped in trouble.

(c) For Spiritual Help and Counsel:

" Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." ( Prov 27:17 ) A godly friend puts a cutting edge on our lives, and makes us more effective for the Lord Jesus. " In the multitude of counsellors there is safety." ( Prov 11:14 )

(d) To give us Personal Stability:

David did not need to be left to his own rashness and whims. You see, so often when we cut ourselves from our natural family, our church family, we lose that personal stability.

(e) For Freedom of Expression:

David and Jonathan had their hideaways, their schemes and plans. They were perfectly free to share themselves freely. Do you have someone like that ? Someone with whom you can be yourself, no matter what that self looks like.

(f) For Protection from Loneliness:

" It is not good that the man should be alone."

( Gen 2:18 ) If you read the story of David and Jonathan you'll notice that David did well in his spiritual life until Jonathan died. ( 31:2 ) It seems that from that time forward, that there was a inclination downwards. Did he become isolated with no friends ?

(g) So that we can be Loved:

" Jonathan loved him as his own soul." ( 18:1 ) The pastor of a very large church in the USA said, " I am a very lonely man, the only interest the membership have in me is what I do, I don't know one single person who cares for me for what I am, not just for what I do."

(h) Because we have a Definite Opportunity to Give Ourselves otherwise we Stagnate:

Did you notice the initiative Jonathan took here ? Some folks say, " I have no friends in the church, nobody cares about me, nobody is interested." My .... is your understanding of friendship and fellowship such that you have taken the initiative to form a friendship or to be friendly ? Do you what the Bible says, " A man that hath friends must show himself friendly." ( Prov 18:24 )

Now when Jonathan took the initiative, he had everything to lose and nothing to gain, and when people see that you are a person who takes the initiative, builds relationships and invests himself in other people, then friendship will be reciprocated. " The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David." ( 18:1 ) (1)

(2) THE COVENANT THEY MADE WITH EACH OTHER

Notice ( 18:3 ) This was a pact of friendship. They made a vow, took an oath, underwent a pledge. It was a Covenant that was:

(a) MADE SOLEMNLY:

The word " made," in ( 18:3 ) really means " they cut a covenant." In those days they would take an animal and cut it on two pieces. They would lay those pieces in one side against the other. Then the two parties that were entering

into this covenant would walk together through those two pieces of the animal as if to say, " we are making our commitment to one another, and if we do not keep these words, may we go to pieces like this animal." Its a very special thing, a covenant .... a commitment to one another. Thats what friendship is.

Now marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman and the Lord. ( Mal 2:14 ) but have you ever thought of friendship as a covenant ? You see, we tend to drift in and out of friendships, but not David and Jonathan, they committed themselves to one another. Have you ever done that with your friends ? Have you ever said, " I value you very much, and I am committed to you, there's going to be no back doors in our friendship." Now that's not easy yet the Lord declares his love and friendship for us. ( Jn 13:34 15:14 ) (a)

(b) MADE SACRIFICIALLY:

Do you know what this covenanted friendship cost Jonathan ? The throne of Israel ! It was Jonathan who said to David, " Thou shalt be king over Israel and I shall be next unto thee." ( 23:17 ) Friendships are costly. It costs you something to be a friend. Now remember you can choose to BE a friend, but not to HAVE a friend. Your friends will choose to be your friends. You see, you cannot operate from the basis of need and demand their attention, but you can operate from the basis of supply and offer yourself to the area of need. Is that not what Jonathan did ? As he offered himself as a friend to David ? (a) (b)

(c) MADE SUCCESSIVELY:

Not just here initially, ( 18:3 ) but in the middle of their friendship ( 20:16 ) and then again on the last occasion when you see the pair of them together. ( 23:18 )

They are not a bit awkward about telling each other,

" Lets be friends forever." I heard about a husband who on his honeymoon said to his wife, " I love you more than life itself." The next time he said that it was their 20th anniversary. He said exactly the same thing, " I love you more than life itself." She started crying. He said, " Whats wrong ?" She said, " You have not said that in twenty years." He said, " Don't you recall I told you that I am not a man to repeat myself." You see, friendships need to be reaffirmed. " David, lets be friends for life." And they were. Indeed the sweet thing about this friendship was that it lasted until the next generation. Jonathan died in battle. But David kept his promise.

" Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake ?"

( 2 Sam 9:1 ) So David brought Mephibosheth to eat at his table continually. Do you know what friendship

does ? It makes promises and keeps them. Are you loyal to that covenant of friendship that you have made ? I think one of the saddest expressions in the Bible is from the lips of the great apostle Paul. Here he was, about to be executed because of his faith in and stand for the Lord ! The missionary statesman, the faithful pastor, the flaming evangelist, the defender of the faith, but do you recall his words, " At my first defence no man stood with me." ( 2 Tim 4:17 ) Where was his friends ? My .... have you got a David in your life ? Have you got someone to whom you have pledged your friendship ?

(3) THE CONCERN THEY HAD FOR EACH OTHER

Two friends who were inseparable enlisted for the first World War. They were shipped overseas together and fought side by side in the trenches. During an attack one of the men was critically wounded, in a field filled with barbed wire obstacles and he was unable to crawl back to his foxhole. The entire was a battlefield and it was suicidal to try and reach him, yet his friend tried. Before he could get out of his trench however, the Sergeant yanked him back ordered him no to go, " Its too late you will only get yourself killed." A few minutes later after the Serge had turned his back, the man was away after his friend. A few minutes later he staggered back mortally wounded with his friend now dead in his arms. The Serge was angry and deeply moved. " What a waste, he's dead and you're dying. It just was not worth it." With almost his last breath the dying man said, " Oh, yes," Serge, " for when I got to him the only thing he

said was, I knew you would come Jim." One of the marks of a true friend is that he is there when there is every reason for him not to be, when to be there is sacrificially costly. Did you notice that Jonathan was concerned for David ? He was concerned:

(a) TO GIVE:

Look at ( 18:4 ) Friends do that. They're never stingy with their possessions. Unselfishness prevails.

Imagine you're a British war hero and after you return home you're touring Buckingham Palace. Suddenly the entire Royal Family appear dressed in their Royal Robes. You whisper to your tour guide, " this is some tour." You reach for your camera when Prince Charles steps forward, calling you by name. " Would you come before us ?" With fear and trembling you bow before Royalty. Then Prince Charles come to you, removes his royal robe, puts it on you, puts his ring on your finger, his sword in your hand, and everyone exclaims, " the hero has become royalty." Now that what's Jonathan did for David ? " And Jonathan stripped himself .... "

( 18:4 ) Is this not what a friend does ? A friend is willing to sacrifice, to assist whenever and in whatever way is needed. (a)

(b) TO GUARD:

For when Saul eventually gave in to his murderous jealousy and sought to kill David Jonathan defended his friend. " And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father." ( 19:4 ) Let me stop right there. That's another mark of a true friend. A true friend is someone who speaks well about you when you aren't around. If you have a friend who is one way to your face, and another way when you aren't around, that's not a friend.

You see, Jonathan was concerned to build up David in the eyes of others . " Dad, you aren't right about David." Are you a loyal friend ? Some gave the impression that they are your friends, but behind your back, they are putting the knife in ? Samuel Johnson said this, " A real friend is one who will tell you your faults and failures in prosperity and will assist you with his hand and heart in adversity." You need a friend, like that don't you ? You need someone that will stand up for you. (a) (b)

(c) TO GUIDE:

Do you know what a friend is ? Someone who helps you realise God's purpose and potential for your life ! The very last time they met Jonathan said to David, " Thou shalt be king over Israel and I shall be next unto thee."

( 23:17 ) My .... that is nothing less than a renunciation of the throne, because Jonathan was convinced that it was God's will for David to be King. What kind of friend are you ? Are others better Christians because of your friendship with them ? Is it not so sad that so many of our friendships are so shallow ? We converse about jobs, holidays, sports, studies, families, but how little we focus on God. His Word, Plan, Purpose for our

lives ! Do you help your friend realise God's purpose and potential for his or her life ? What a friendship this was. Look for a moment at Jonathan and David as for the last time they meet in the woods. ( 23:16-18 )

Think of it, here were two men who fought lions, bears, giants, Philistines with jaws set and undimmed eyes, but now their chins quiver with emotion, and their faces glisten wet with tears as they kiss each other farewell.

Can you see (1) (2) (3)

(4) THE COMFORT THEY GAVE TO EACH OTHER

" Jonathan .... went to David in the wood, and strengthened his hand in God." ( 23:16 )

Think of that. There was a hit man after David, and his name was Saul ( Jonathans father ). David was out in the wilderness, and at any moment behind any bush or rock or hill, Saul and his men might have been waiting to strike

him down. The murderous hatred of Saul haunted David's life. And what does the son of this hit man do ? He encourages his friend in God. That's the kind of friend to have. He sees David at the lowest moment of his life, frightened, beleaguered, stumbling through the wilderness, and he brings him encouragement. David was being swallowed up by circumstances and Jonathan redirects his gaze on God. Do you see what happened ? Jonathan:

(a) REBUKED HIM FOR HIS FEAR:

" And he said unto him, fear not." ( 23:17 )

(b) REMINDED HIM OF HIS FUTURE:

" Thou shalt be king over Israel .... " ( 23:17 )

(c) REASSURED HIM OF HIS FAITHFULNESS:

" And I shall be next unto thee." ( 23:17 ) No sermon, just heart to heart encouragement. As you examine your friendships this .... ask yourself this question. Have I encouraged my friends in the Lord ? How sad that we eat together, walk together, play together, but never pray together, never encourage each other in the Lord.

Here is a basic yardstick to measure your Christian friendships and mine. Is your friend stronger in the Lord because of the time they spend with you ? Is he

weaker ? Or is spiritual growth issue that you don't talk about ?

" EVERYBODY NEEDS A FRIEND." David needed Jonathan. Someone needs you. But before you can be a friend like Jonathan, you need to make sure you have a friend like Jesus, " a friend of publicans and sinners, a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

( Prov 18:24 Matt 11:19 ) The best friend of all. Is He your Saviour and your Friend ?