

# JONATHAN

NZ Youth Conference 2020



## Message from committee

Dear attendee,

We are delighted that you have booked in to Conference! God willing you will find the life of Jonathan both encouraging and enjoyable to study. He is a remarkable Bible character. Observing his life we see a man who was a loyal friend, a respectful son and a brave warrior but most of all a man of faith. It is our prayer that you will find this notes book and the related activities useful as you prepare for conference. We would encourage you to put effort into preparing for conference. Not only will you be well prepared to contribute to discussion groups, but you will also come to conference with a love and appreciation for the work of our Lord Jesus Christ and God's coming Kingdom.

Here are a few pointers to aid you in your study:

- Ask for God's blessing in prayer before you begin
- Be prepared with your Bible, resources and pens and paper before you begin
- Note down any questions you have or points you want to share during the discussion groups
- Think carefully about how what you are learning applies to your life and come prepared to share this at conference
- Share the exciting things you have discovered with friends beforehand

Please feel free to go beyond this notes book for your own personal study.

With love in our hope

The NZYC 2020 Conference Committee

## Acknowledgements

### Adelaide Suburban Young People

The conference committee would like to acknowledge the Adelaide Suburban Young People for a significant proportion of the content in this workbook. Much of the content comes from the Hebron Study Weekend workbook 2009.

## Structure of notes

This notes book is just that – a notes book rather than a workbook. It is expected that you have read through the notes book before conference, particularly the chapters that are relevant to the discussion groups. The discussion groups will be based on the following chapters:

Discussion Group	Chapter
<b>Discussion Group One</b> Faith in the Father – God's hand at work in our lives	<b>Chapter Three</b>
<b>Discussion Group Two</b> Faithful friendship – an everlasting covenant	<b>Chapters Five and Seven</b>
<b>Discussion Group Three</b> Methods for mediation – relationships with others	<b>Chapter Six</b>

## Completing the study activities

To aid you with your personal study there are three streams of content you can chose from - Bible Marking, Character Studies and Theme Studies. It is expected that every attendee **completes at least six activities with at least two activities from each stream.**

## Activity table

The following table shows where each activity occurs throughout the notes book.

Ch	1 Sam	Bible Marking	Character Study	Theme Study
1	-	Chapter breakdown Tables on Saul, David & Jonathan	Saul Samuel	The Tribe of Benjamin -
2	13	Chiasm Structure Key phrase colouring Key phrase colouring	Gideon - Achan	Spiritual warrior Swords Yahweh saved Israel
3	14	- -	- -	Kingship of Israel Crossing over
4	15-17	Comparison – 1 Sam 14 & 17	-	The Philistines
5	18	Covenant between Jonathan & David -	David -	Covenants Friendship
6	19	Highlight the conversations -	- -	Hearkening Relationships with parents
7	20 & 23	- -	Abner Mephibosheth	'Chesed' mercy -
8	21 – 23	-	-	-
9	31	-	-	-
10	2 Sam 1	Principles of True Friendship	Saul's armour bearer	Amalekites

## Bible Marking Activities

These can be marked straight into your Bible or on a Bible insert. If you are new to Bible Marking using pencil can be a great way to begin. From there you can trace over in pen.

## Character Study Activities

The objective of a character study is to gain an overall impression of a Bible character and the key lessons that come from their life. Here are some pointers to completing each of the character studies:

1. What does their name mean?
2. Where do they occur in Scripture? (Look them up and provide a summary of each of the main occurrences)
3. List out all the things the character does
4. Who else do they interact with?
5. What are the key principles that are brought out in the life of this character?
6. Does this character represent something/act as a type or shadow of something or someone else? If so, what/who do they represent and what does this teach us?
7. Write a character summary of their life summarising the main lessons that come from their life

## Theme Study Activities

The objective of a theme study is to trace a theme through Scripture to gain an overall understanding of the theme and how it applies to us. There are different types of theme studies like word studies, key phrases that are repeated, key characters that are repeated. Often a theme develops throughout Scripture. The repetition of concepts and ideas helps us build a holistic picture of the theme through Scripture. Here are some pointers to completing each of the theme studies:

1. Look up all the passages that this theme occurs in
2. List out the passages noting down the key concepts, key principles or repeated ideas that you see
3. Once key phrases and concepts are identified, look at the meaning of the words. You can then do a word search on the key words to understand how these are used in Scripture

4. Write a summary paragraph of the theme as seen through Scripture
5. Write a summary paragraph of the key lessons that come from the theme and particularly how they apply to your own life

## Resources on Jonathan

Here are some helpful resources for extending your personal study:

Study books:

- The Story of the Bible Volume II – H.P. Mansfield
- 'Jonathan – The Greatest King Israel Never Had' – Jonathan cope

Talks

- 'Jonathan Whose Love Was Wonderful' – Roger Lewis (available on Livonia Tapes)



# CHAPTER ONE

Background



## Activities for Chapter One

### Bible Marking

#### **Bible Marking Activity One**

Mark into your margin or onto insert paper the chapter breakdowns

#### **Bible Marking Activity Two**

Mark into your margin or onto insert paper the summary tables on Saul, David and Jonathan

### Character Study

#### **Character Study One**

Complete a character study on the man Saul. This chapter provides a starting place for your character study.

#### **Character Study Two**

Complete a character study on the man Samuel. This chapter provides a starting place for your character study.

### Theme Study

#### **Theme Study One**

Complete a theme study on 'The Tribe of Benjamin' to understand the background to the tribe of Benjamin, their history and how this relates to Saul and Jonathan.

## The Book of I Samuel

I Samuel is a significant turning point in the history of the nation of Israel. The time period of the book sees Israel progress from the lows of the Philistine oppression to the heights of glory under the reign of King David. It is a book that outlines the transition of both the priesthood and the kingship. The priesthood ceases from the house of Eli and the kingship ceases from the house of Saul. Throughout the book we see the rise and demise of King Saul and the rise of David the heir to the throne. It is during this time that the man Jonathan, son of King Saul, inspires the nation to join in battle with the Philistines and his friend David to become the King that he himself would never be.

The book commences with the nation of Israel at a spiritual high under the leadership of the prophet Samuel. Samuel had captured the hearts and minds of the people and the nation's recognition and worship of Yahweh was at a height not seen in the time of the previous judges. However, whilst the nation respected and loved the prophet Samuel, they could see the different nature of Samuel's sons coming to the fore. With uncertainty about the future rulership and governance of the nation, the people turned to the ways of the nations around them and desired a King. Sadly, in desiring a king the people had not only rejected Samuel as their spiritual leader, but they had rejected God as their true King. In God's goodness He provided the nation with a man that fulfilled the requirements the people desired in their King.

The chosen leader was Saul the son of Kish of the tribe of Benjamin. Kish was a small but wealthy and influential family in the nation of Israel. In his early life Saul was a man who showed humble and meek characteristics fit for a leader of God's people, yet he became one of the most tragic characters in the Old Testament. His reign began with great potential but ended in disappointment and shame. As the first King of Israel, Saul had the opportunity to set a high standard and pattern for all future leaders but as his reign shows he failed to do so.

Saul's jealousy drove him to pursue the fugitive David at the nation's expense. His polarising leadership meant that his attempts to unite the tribes as a single nation then became increasingly difficult. During Saul's reign the oppression of the Philistines was resisted by his military campaigns, and these victories

paved the way for his successor, David. Throughout the reign of Saul Jonathan was a source of strength and encouragement to David.

### The Grand Type – The New Covenant

The story of Jonathan, Saul and David goes well beyond the narrative and the literal record and provides a beautiful type of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we see so often in Scripture, real people in the record are used by God to demonstrate concepts, events and even nations or periods of time. For example, the children of Israel leaving Egypt were real people, but they are used as a type of all those who would cross out of the world, triumphing over the powers of sin and walking towards the Promised Land. God uses the lives of biblical characters to teach us about His plan and purpose with the earth, and particularly the work of His son the Lord Jesus Christ and our relationship with him. Biblical characters form ‘types’ or shadows of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the master ‘type.’ These characters hint at our Lord and provide colour and meaning to his work. So then, what about the story of Jonathan and the characters in the narrative – how do they form a type of the work of Jesus Christ? In order to answer this we need to list out the key attributes that the characters in the record generally display:

#### Saul

Saul, whose names means ‘asked for,’ was the son of Kish of the tribe of Benjamin. He is appropriately named as the people asked for a king and were given Saul who means ‘asked.’ His family, although appearing to be wealthy, was of little importance. Saul became the first King of Israel when he was chosen by God and called out from hiding to be anointed before the people as their leader. Nowhere in the Bible is there a more melancholy character with such deep contrasts to contemplate than that of Saul. Although a man with significant potential he was ruled by strong passions and jealousy. Saul was a character who did not possess a strong conscience and who was rash and hasty in his decisions. At times he became proud, self-willed and self-centred; a man who did not think through his plans before putting them into action or consider the implications and consequences of his acts on himself or others. It was Saul’s impulsiveness and failure to obey the commandments of Yahweh that contributed to his downfall. Saul disregarded his obligations of duty when ambition, envy, jealousy or fear clouded his mind. He never seems to have accepted God unconditionally or trusted in Him implicitly. When Saul found

himself in situations where his weaknesses were evident he gave in under pressure and yielded to his own impulses rather than consult with others, let alone seek the advice of Yahweh. Because of these characteristics, Saul often appears insecure and unable to inspire those around him unlike Jonathan his son. At one moment he is under the influence of prophetic inspiration and the next he is slave to his own ambitions and pursuits. At one time, Saul pleaded with Samuel the prophet to reveal to him the will of Yahweh, but at other times he disobeyed God's commands completely. He drove out of the land all witches, only to later consult the witch of Endor. Saul's failure to keep the commandments of Yahweh ultimately sees the kingship removed from Saul and from his house.

Saul is the man who lives by law, who fails to keep the commandments of Yahweh and as a result has the kingdom taken from him. He had a promise of inheritance but had this removed because of unbelief. His worship was about outward appearances although he fooled himself that he was keeping God's commandments. He realised that David was the heir to his throne and sought to kill him. **Saul symbolises those of natural Israel who fail to keep God's commandments and will ultimately have the kingdom removed from them. These characteristics are seen down through time, for example the unfaithful Israelites in the wilderness who had their hope of the Promised Land dashed, the rebellious nation who were removed from their land and went into captivity, and the Jews in Christ's time who were removed from their land in AD70.**

Saul	Natural Israel
He lives by law I Sam 13:9; I Sam 15:21	Matt 23:23
He fails to obey and keep the commandments of Yahweh I Sam 13:13; I Sam 15:11	Deut 28:15, 25
He is promised an inheritance I Sam 13:13	Exodus 19:5-6
He has the kingdom removed from him because of disobedience I Sam 13:14; I Sam 15:23, 28	Ezekiel 21:25-27

He believes that he is keeping Yahweh's commandments I Sam 15:20	Matt 23:23
His worship is an outward show for others to see I Sam 15:30	Matt 23:27
He seeks to kill David, the heir to the throne I Sam 18:11	Matt 21:38; Mar 12:7; Mar 15:18

## Jonathan

Jonathan was the eldest son of King Saul and therefore heir to the throne of Israel. His name means 'the gift of Yah' or 'Yah has given.' Throughout Jonathan's life, he demonstrated his commitment to God, his loyalty to his father Saul and his love for his friend David. Jonathan showed courage, strength, determination and reliance in God. He was a mighty warrior and captain, highly respected by the men he led and a man who was able to inspire others to greatness by the faith which he demonstrated in action. Jonathan's trust in God and his bravery in battle caused respect for him to grow among the army and nation of Israel. They loved Jonathan so much they protected him when he innocently broke the rash and foolish oath made by his father Saul. With such noble characteristics Jonathan would have made a worthy king. However, when he met David after the slaying of Goliath, Jonathan was moved to love him as his own soul even though he knew that David would be king instead of him. This graceful acceptance of God's plan by Jonathan and his unselfish devotion to the one who humanly speaking was his rival, forms one of the greatest stories of friendship the world has seen. Jonathan's character is also demonstrated in the manner in which he handled the division between his father and his friend David. Rather than siding with either, Jonathan remained loyal to his father to the end, mediating on behalf of David and trying to reason with his father whilst standing constantly by his side. Jonathan remained faithful and true to his friend David throughout his life. He helped guide, encourage and provide comfort to David throughout the trials which developed his character to later be a great king, shepherd and leader of the nation. Tragically, Jonathan died during battle at the side of his father, leaving behind a son named Mephibosheth who was only five years old.

Jonathan is associated with Saul his father but unlike Saul he is a faithful individual. He is the natural heir to the throne of Israel but He comes to

acknowledge that there is a greater than him who has the right to the throne. His father Saul persecuted David, even to the point of death, but Jonathan loves him and enters into an everlasting covenant of ‘chesed’ kindness or ‘mercy’ with him. The covenant that Jonathan and David make is an everlasting covenant between them for ever. **Jonathan represents spiritual Israel who respond and enter into a new covenant with Christ both now and in the future. The covenant is one of mercy – a covenant that we enjoy today through the work of Christ.**

<b>Jonathan</b>	<b>Faithful Israel</b>
Of Saul’s house but faithful I Sam 13:2; 14:1	‘They are not all Israel who are of Israel’ Rom 9:6
Realises that David is king and hope of inheritance is through him I Sam 23:17	Receive the promise of inheritance Heb 9:15
He loves David I Sam 18:1	Relationship with Christ is one of love John 13:34-35
Enters into a covenant of mercy I Sam 20:14-15	God will make a new covenant with Israel Jer 31:34
The covenant is of Yahweh I Sam 20:16	The covenant is from Yahweh Jer 31:33
Has his life preserved by David I Sam 20:14	We have living hope through Christ I Pet 1:3-5
Has a hope of the Kingdom to come I Sam 23:17	Relationship with Christ provides access to the Kingdom II Pet 1:10-11
The covenant is for ever I Sam 20:15	An everlasting covenant in Christ Heb 13:20
There is a hope of future rulership in the kingdom I Sam 23:17	‘We shall reign on the earth’ Rev 5:10
Doesn’t receive his inheritance but he dies in faith and will in the future I Sam 23:17	‘These died not having received the promised’ Heb 11:40

## David

David is the youngest son of Jesse the Bethlehemite. David is the man who was Yahweh's anointed who would be king and ruler over the nation. His name, 'David' means 'beloved.' **He points forward in the narrative to Christ, the beloved Son of God who is the rightful heir to the throne of Israel. It is only through covenant association with David that Jonathan can have hope of life and of a place in David's kingdom. Just like Jonathan, it is only through covenant association with Christ that we can experience the mercy of Yahweh and have hope of life in the kingdom to come.**

David	Christ
David means 'beloved'	"This is my beloved son" Matt 3:17
Rightful heir to the throne I Sam 16:1, 12	Given the throne of his father David Luke 1:32
Offers life through an everlasting covenant I Sam 20:14	We have living hope through Christ I Pet 1:3-5
It is through association with him that entrance into the kingdom is gained I Sam 23:17	Receive the promise of inheritance Heb 9:15
Smote the Philistine in his forehead I Sa 17:49	"...it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Gen 3:15
"And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armour in his tent." I Sa 17:54	"And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull." Mat 27:33
"I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite." I Sa 17:58	"Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee." Gen 49:8  "and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David." Luke 1:32

## Summary of the life of Jonathan

### **I Sam 13 – Saul’s Failure; Jonathan’s Triumph**

Jonathan wins a battle against the Philistines at Geba whilst his father sits on his heels with a greater force, taking the credit for Jonathan’s actions, and provoking the Philistines to war. In his impatience for Samuel’s arrival, and the offering and blessing of God, Saul is told the kingdom will be taken from him and given to another.

### **I Sam 14 – Jonathan’s faith defeats the Philistines; Saul’s foolish words cause strife**

Jonathan leads his armourbearer against the Philistine garrison, and faithfully climbs a cliff to defeat them. Saul takes advantage of this and chases the Philistines, commanding the people to fast till they were defeated. Jonathan is unaware of this and eats, forcing Saul to honour his oath and try to kill him, but the people stand up and save him.

### **I Sam 18:1-4 – Jonathan befriends David and establishes a covenant**

After watching David defeat Goliath and hearing his words to his father, Jonathan befriends this man who had a similar love for God as he had, and after making a covenant between them, gives him his garments, armour and symbols of office.

### **I Sam 19:1-7 – Saul Jealous; Jonathan Mediates**

Saul tells his servants to kill David because he is jealous of David’s success and popularity. Jonathan warns David to flee and hide whilst he pleads with his father on David’s behalf. Jonathan then brings the two men together after Saul swears not to harm David.

### **I Sam 20 – Saul breaks his oath; Jonathan renews his covenant with David**

Saul again seeks to kill David, who flees to Jonathan in despair. Jonathan comforts David and together they make a plan to renew their covenant. Saul’s hatred for David becomes obvious to Jonathan when Saul tries to kill him. The two friends meet, embrace and go their separate ways.

### **I Sam 23:16-18 – Jonathan strengthens David in his time of need**

Jonathan goes straight to David in the wood while Saul pursues and searches for him in vain. Jonathan strengthens David and they renew their covenant for



the third and final time. They go their separate ways, never to see each other again.

### **I Sam 31 – The death of Saul and his sons**

The battle on the slopes of Mount Gilboa, illustrates Jonathan's love and loyalty to his father. He loses his life to defend Israel's anointed.

### **II Sam 1 – David laments the death of Saul and Jonathan**

When David hears of Saul and Jonathan's death, he laments for them and writes the Song of the Bow.

## Chapter breakdown

### I Samuel 13

- Vv 1-7            The Battle at Michmash
- Vv 8-16        Saul's unlawful sacrifice followed by Samuel's rebuke
- Vv 17-23       Various advances of the Philistine armies

### I Samuel 14

- Vv 1-10        Jonathan's plan amongst a state of desperation in Israel
- Vv 11-16       Jonathan and his armourbearer attack the Philistines
- Vv 17-23       The Philistines fear leads to Israel's victory
- Vv 24-35       The people sin by following Saul's unreasonable adjuration
- Vv 36-46       Lots are drawn to uncover the breach of adjuration
- Vv 47-48       The wars and victories of king Saul
- Vv 49-52       The family of king Saul

### I Samuel 18

- Vv 1-4           Jonathan's covenant with David
- Vv 5-9           Saul is jealous of David's success
- Vv 10-12       David escapes Saul's javelin
- Vv 13-16       David behaves wisely before Saul
- Vv 17-19       Saul offers David his daughter Merab

Vv 20-27	Saul offers David his daughter Michal
Vv 28-30	David smites the Philistines

### I Samuel 19

Vv 1-7	Jonathan changes Saul's heart
Vv 8-10	David flees Saul's javelin
Vv 11-17	Michal saves David
Vv 18-24	David flees to Naioth

### I Samuel 20

Vv 1-10	David seeks Jonathan's help
Vv 11- 17	Jonathan and David reaffirm the covenant
Vv 18-24	Jonathan and David's plan
Vv 25-34	The feast – Saul reveals his feelings towards David
Vv 35-40	Jonathan and the bow
Vv 41-42	Departing words

### I Samuel 23

Vv 1-6	David saves Keilah
Vv7-14	David flees from Keilah
Vv 15-18	Jonathan and David's final reunion and covenant
Vv 19-29	Saul seeks David's life

### I Samuel 31

Vv1-13	The death of Saul and his sons
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### II Samuel 1

Vv 1-16	David and the Amalekite
Vv 17-27	The Song of the bow



# CHAPTER TWO

I Samuel 13 – Jonathan The Warrior

## Activities for Chapter Two

### Bible Marking

#### **Bible Marking Activity Three**

Mark into your margin or onto insert paper the chiasm structure of verses 13 and 14 as well as what this teaches us.

#### **Bible Marking Activity Four**

Look up and colour in these key phrases and related words throughout the life of Jonathan:

- The Philistines
- Jonathan his son
- Hebrews

### Character Study

#### **Character Study Three**

Complete a character study on the man Gideon, particularly noting and comparing the similarities and differences with the man Jonathan. This chapter provides a starting place for your character study.

### Theme Study

#### **Theme Study Two**

Complete a theme study on the spiritual warrior, summarising the main elements of the warrior, their weapons and their significance.

#### **Theme Study Three**

Complete a theme study on 'swords' and what they symbolise in Scripture.

## V 1-7 – The Battle at Michmash

V 1 “Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel”

This verse is variously interpreted; according to the Hebrew it probably means that during the first year nothing remarkable occurred; but after two years (or in the second year of his reign) the subsequent events took place.

Saul’s reign begins with action against the Ammonites. Why then for the rest of the first year does he do nothing when Israel is in sore need of military help? Could it be that for the first year Saul needed to consolidate his rule and organise his kingdom? Possibly, but it was only in the second year that he organises his army – shouldn’t this have been a high priority for a new king?

V 2 “Saul chose him three thousand *men* of Israel; *whereof* two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.”

### **‘Saul choose him three thousand men of Israel’**

In verse two, Saul chooses out for himself three thousand men of Israel. Two thousand are with Saul and one thousand are with Jonathan. The word for choose here means to ‘try’ or ‘select.’ These men are hand-picked for the job of delivering Israel with Saul. It is interesting to note what happens to these three thousand men. These chosen warriors of Israel are scattered from Saul in the chapter. They realise that Saul has no power to deliver from the enemy and they go and hide. In verse six the men of Israel are distressed and go and hide. In verse eleven Saul acknowledges that the people have been scattered from him. By verse 15 there are only six hundred men left of the chosen of Israel!

So what happens to these three thousand chosen men? The three thousand men of Saul become a small theme throughout Saul’s life. The men re-group with Saul because three thousand chosen men of Saul are used to hunt for David in I Sam 24:2 and I Sam 26:2. Somehow David is not found. In fact, in I Chron 12:23,29 we see what happens to these three thousand men. When David is made king these three thousand men come to Hebron to turn the kingdom to David. A number of these men had kept the ward of the house of Saul while he was king! This group of men is showing us something important

– deliverance was not to be of Saul. Saul was unable to deliver, but there would come a man who could deliver them, king David.

We aren't told why he chose the men, what his purpose was or even who was his enemy. It is quite possible that Saul was not planning any immediate attack, but was preparing Israel's defences within the land, to enable them to respond to attack by any particular enemy. It would seem a good strategy, especially when their enemies were ten times stronger (v5). However, Jonathan realised that God had given the land to Israel and that if he acted decisively God would assist him (Josh 23:3-5). He immediately uses his command to strike out at Israel's most dangerous and feared enemies, the Philistines. In our fight it is important to firmly take the initiative and to have the faith to know when to act and when to wait. We see Jonathan step forward in faith to do battle with the Philistines.

These references speak of the numbers in Saul's army:

- 3,000 – ***1 Sam 13:2***
- 600 – ***1 Sam 13:15***
- 600 – ***1 Sam 14:2***
- 210,000 – ***1 Sam 15:4***
- 3,000 – ***1 Sam 26:2***

If Saul had 210,00 soldiers at his command, then why does he only choose three thousand men?

Compare this with Gideon's selection of an army in Judges 6 & 7:

<b>Gideon – Judges 6 &amp; 7</b>	<b>Saul – 1 Sam 13 &amp; 14</b>
Self-deprecating when appointed	Self-deprecating when anointed
300 men chosen, the rest were sent to tents	3000 men chosen, the rest were sent to tents
Blew the shophar horn	Blew the shophar horn
3 companies	2 companies
Enemy numerous as the sand on the seashore	Enemy numerous as the sand on the seashore
Gideon and his servant surveyed the Midianite army	Jonathan and his armourbearer went down to survey the host but Saul was too afraid

Enemy self-destructs	Enemy self-destructs
People faint pursuing the enemy – Gideon tried to feed them	People faint pursuing the enemy – Saul prevented them from eating

Gideon chose on the basis of faith, whereas Saul chose his men on the basis of valour and personal strength (I Sam 14:52). Saul put emphasis on the strength of his army but Gideon's victory with only three hundred men showed that it was won through God's strength and not their own (Judges 7:2, II Cor 12:9). Saul was hoping for a victory by imitating Gideon, without understanding the power that had achieved Gideon's victory. He had all the facts, but not the correct attitude. With God, it is not about the size of our army, but that He is on our side (I Sam 14:6).

### **‘Whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Bethel’**

The fact that Saul split his army suggests that he wasn't planning a major offensive in the near future. It is probable that he split the army to protect the two most strategic positions in Benjamin – Michmash and Gibeon. But Saul could be attempting to copy the campaign of Gideon who split his army into three groups of 100 men. The difference being Saul keeps two of these companies with himself and one goes with Jonathan.

### **‘And a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin’**

We then have Jonathan introduced for us. Well, not really introduced! We launch straight in to details about where this man is and what he is doing. This is the first time Jonathan is mentioned for us in scripture and instead of elaborating on his background and providing us with context for who this man is, we have a direct contrast painted for us – a contrast between Saul and Jonathan. Two thousand men are with Saul and one thousand men are with Jonathan. There is a deliberate separation here of these two men. Jonathan is acting separately from Saul. Saul is in Michmash, meaning 'hidden'. Jonathan is in Gibeah, meaning 'a hill'. Saul and his men are hidden whereas Jonathan and his men are on the hill. What a stark contrast!

Saul means 'asked.' From I Sam 12:1, 17 and 19 we know that the **people asked for a king**. Jonathan on the other hand means 'Yahweh given.' This was the one who **Yahweh gave**. The people ask for Saul but Yahweh gives them Jonathan. The man who the people ask for is unable to deliver them from the Philistines but Yahweh gives them a deliverer in Jonathan.



Jonathan commanded a thousand men, indicating that he was a leader of quite some strategic skill and talent. Even though Jonathan was the king's son, this alone would not have guaranteed him a position as commander as there were other able men like Abner who would have been capable of handling this amount of men. The nation of Israel was in crisis and it was not time to give command of a third of the army to an individual incapable of leading. As this is only two years into Saul's reign, we can surmise that Jonathan wouldn't have been a particularly old man. While we don't know how old he was the record paints a picture of Jonathan as a young, energetic and inspiring leader.

### Lessons for us

Jonathan as a young man is given a daunting task of leadership. How would you have coped with his position? How could you bear this enormous responsibility of a thousand lives on your shoulders? Paul, speaking to Timothy, says to not let any man despise his youth but to be an example to all. The best example of leadership is leadership by example. Jonathan was a great leader because he personally led in both his attacks on the Philistines. He wasn't reliant on others, he would lead them but if the need was there and no one else was willing, he was the one who would quietly do it alone or with a friend if need be. It's an incredible example for us: are we hearers of the Word only, or are we also doers? Are we prepared to lead even when it appears no-one else is following?

### **'And the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.'**

This is word-for-word the same as what Gideon did when choosing his army (Judges 7:7-8).

V 3 "And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear."

### **'And Jonathan'**

Jonathan's actions clearly show him to be a gift from God to a nation lacking decisive leadership. Once again God provided for His people. They had decided to snub God and choose their own king to lead them. However, when that king failed them God was willing to intervene and provide a way of escape that we may be able to bear the consequences (I Cor 10:13).

### **‘Smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba’**

This verse speaks of Jonathan smiting the garrison though we can be fairly certain that his men went with him. Jonathan would have personally led and inspired his band of men to fight for God was with them. In this way, it could be said that it was Jonathan who destroyed the Philistine garrison.

Comparing Gibeon and Michmash with Geba, Jonathan had half the men and about twice the distance to travel to reach the garrison of the Philistines. Jonathan had initiative, courage and determination.

A particular garrison of the Philistines is mentioned in I Sam 10:5 as being the garrison of the Philistines on the hill of God. The Hebrew word for ‘hill’ and for ‘Geba’ is virtually identical, literally meaning ‘a small hill’. It seems reasonable to assume this is the same garrison. To Jonathan it would have been abominable to have a Philistine garrison in the city of God where the prophets dwelt. The question also arises, why the garrison was there at all. Geba is in the middle of Benjamin, way out of Philistine territory in between two Israelite forces, yet the Philistines felt safe to be there within Israel’s borders and Saul had done nothing about it. The Philistines were in the very place where Saul had experienced the spirit of God upon him.

### **‘The Philistines heard of it’**

There would be consequences for Jonathan’s brave action. Jonathan was now a marked man. A faithful stand won’t always cause a problem to go away. It is only through faithful endurance that we can overcome.

### **‘Saul blew the trumpet’**

On this occasion Saul blows the shophar to rally Israel, yet in doing this he is copying the actions of Gideon in Judges 6:34 when Gideon blew a Shophar to rally his home town.

### **‘Let the Hebrews hear’**

Saul uses the term “Hebrews” to rally the people to him. There is obviously some significance in the use of the word Hebrew. The phrase “Hebrews” is used of those from the tribes of Israel who hadn’t yet joined Saul and committed to become part of his kingdom. The contrast is seen in ch 14:21-22, where three groups of people are mentioned: Israelites, Hebrews and the men of Israel. The Israelites were those with Saul and Jonathan, who were the

warriors of faith in the nation, the princes with God. The men of Israel were those who were part of the nation but hadn't joined Saul's army. These were characterised by a lack of faith and courage. They did not fight but rather hid from the enemy v22. The Hebrews were those from the tribes of Israel, without any connection to Saul's new nation of Israel, they fled over Jordan (13:7) or joined the Philistines (14:21); they had lost their identity as Israelites. We can all be like these classes of people. We can hide away from problems hoping they will go away, we can submit to the problems, or we can as spiritual warriors act to address the problems (Eph 6:11-17). Saul is trying to use the victory to convince the Hebrews who hadn't joined him, or had gone over to the Philistines, to join him in his fight. Later, they did join in when the Philistine army was defeated (14:21).

V 4 "And all Israel heard say that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal."

**'And all Israel heard say that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines'**

Not only the Hebrews responded – all Israel did. The whole nation, now known as Israel, unified, from northern Dan to Judah and Gilead had heard of Saul's victory over the Philistines even though the Philistines were only a regional enemy. The scriptural principle is for us to bear our brother's burdens (Gal 6:2). Burdens can be made so much easier to bear when others are there to help, support and pray for us. This is why James advises us to "confess our faults one to another and pray one for another..." Jas 5:16. This was Saul's job, to make the nation one united group and it required faith and action to make the bold move. Jonathan did the deed, but it was Saul that was given the credit. It is a very hard thing to step back and allow someone else to take the credit for something that you did, especially if it was a hard and difficult task to achieve. Jonathan didn't seek his own glory (we never hear a selfish thing done by him) he did not pursue other people's opinions of himself, he only cared about saving Israel and pleasing God. God sees the things that are done in secret and will reward us openly (Matt 6:6).

V 5 "And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand

which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven.”

### **‘Sand on seashore’**

The same description is given of the Midianites against Gideon (Judges 7:12). Saul was trying to model himself on the great deliverer Gideon, and so God sends him an enemy like Gideon’s. This was Saul’s opportunity and trial. A trial is not always a negative thing; it is provided to develop, teach and strengthen us (Romans 5:3-5). A trial is an opportunity to choose to obey God.

### **‘Michmash’**

When Saul was in Michmash it was in the mountain range of Bethel – ‘the house of God’. Now it is located and known as being east from Beth-aven – ‘the house of vanity’. Israel had left Michmash, and the house of God had become the house of vanity inhabited by Gentiles. Michmash means ‘hidden’ or ‘put out of sight’ with the idea to store up in memory. What is stored up in our memories? Do our minds become the house of God or the house of vanity? God’s purpose is to write His law in our hearts (Jer 31:33). Paul quotes this to say that by obeying God in our hearts we are the temple of the living God and He dwells in us (2 Cor 6:16). On the other hand we can fill our hearts with idols (Ezek 14:4) or anything that is vain and worthless.

V 6 “When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed), then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits.”

### **‘Distressed’**

The word ‘distressed’ means to be ‘driven like an animal’. It gives us an insight into what was going on in the lives of the ordinary Israelites. The Philistines were oppressing them and they were little better than slaves in their own land whilst their king was doing nothing. The Israelites hid in the highest places like watchtowers and cliffs, and in the lowest places like pits and caves. In all these places mentioned there is no reference to the Israelites calling or even thinking of God. Whom do we trust in time of need? The word for rocks here is used by God in describing how He is a refuge for us in times of trouble (Psa 91:2; 18:2). Will we trust in the highest places (strength of this world) or the lowest places (run and hide) or in God? We know that we cannot hide from God. He sees and

knows all we do (Psa 139:1-2). Wherever we are, He is there and able to help us.

### **‘People did hide themselves’**

This was the same as with Gideon (Judg 6:2) – God was providing Saul with another opportunity to take the leadership and inspire confidence in the nation. Saul had the reassurance that as God had helped Gideon, so He would help him. The fact that the Israelites were hiding in fear, was a point of shame seen when Jonathan later attacks the Philistine garrison (14:11). Israel’s unbelief and disobedience, permitted God to punish them through the Philistines. This in turn, made the Philistines to hold the God of the Israelites in contempt. Israel’s God seemed to them as insignificant because He could not protect His servants. When our lack of faith in God diminishes and we lose hope, how can we expect to convince our associates of the truth of our beliefs? We have to be very careful of our actions and give thought to how our actions are viewed so that we don’t give the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme (2 Sam 12:14).

V 7 “And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.”

### **‘Went over Jorden to the land of Gad and Gilead’**

The river of Jordan provided an effective barrier against a following army. The land of Gad and Gilead were well renowned for their tough and warlike inhabitants. Gilead provided a safe haven for the Israelites from the approaching Philistine army. The word ‘Gad’ means ‘a troop of soldiers’ and the nature of these men is seen in the character of the hard, forthright prophet Elijah (I Kings 17:1). Some of these very soldiers later joined David when he was fleeing from Saul. They swam the river Jordan fully armed when it was in flood and they are described as being as fierce as lions and swift as the roes upon the mountains. They were the elite troops of Israel (I Chron 12:8, 14-15).

But was this wrong to leave Jordan and go to the comparative safety of Gad and Gilead as it was just part of Israel? God required the Israelites to stay in their tribal areas. If there was an issue such as a regional enemy then they were to resolve it. An example of this is the tribe of Dan, who left their God-given territory because the Philistine enemy there was too hard to defeat and went

off in search of an easier inheritance (Judges 18:1-2). It was the symptom of a lack of faith in God's ability to overcome the enemy and give them their promised land. In effect, what they were doing was giving up their inheritance and part in the kingdom. Today it would be like leaving our Ecclesia because it gets too hard and becomes the easy option out. If we run from our trials we will never learn from them and be developed. Trials are sent by God to try us and prove us and see what is in our hearts whether we will keep His commandments or not and to learn to place our trust and confidence in God.

### **'And some of the Hebrews went over'**

Some of the Hebrews (meaning a crosser over) crossed over. Their actions were a betrayal of when the Israelites had first crossed over Jordan leaving the world of Egypt behind. They were denying their heritage and all they stood for. The result of doing so was a loss of identity. They were forsaking the Promised Land and going back to the world they had left behind.

V 8-16 – Saul's unlawful sacrifice followed by Samuel's rebuke

V 8 "And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him."

### **'But Samuel came not'**

This was another test for Saul. This time, God was testing Saul's patience and confidence in His words to obey His command and wait. Meanwhile, the Philistine camp grew larger and became more active. At times, patience and waiting can be harder than having to do something as it requires us to rely completely on God, demonstrating our faith. We can be in situations where we are vulnerable, just as Saul appeared to be with the advancing Philistines and also when Israel was trapped at the Red Sea. At times like this we must remember the voice of Moses, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Yahweh which He will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. Yahweh shall fight for you" (Exod 14:13-14). This requires amazing faith to have the enemy advancing towards you and to not take any action to defend yourself, but trust in an invisible help that will destroy the army. How would we have fared if we were in Saul's place here? There is a blessing in Lamentations on those who patiently and quietly wait for God. "Yahweh is good unto them that wait for Him, to the

soul that seeks Him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of Yahweh” (Lam 3:25-26).

V 9-12 “And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him. And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.”

These verses display Saul’s disobedience in offering sacrifices before Samuel came. He became impatient, waiting for Samuel and felt he could wait no longer. We may think the punishment on Saul a little harsh but we only see the external act which is small. God saw that the reason for Saul’s disobedience was an utter disregard for Him and Saul’s lack of faith meant he treated God’s authority with contempt. Saul performed the sacrifices early for several reasons. Firstly, because he was told he must do so before going into battle to receive the blessing from God. Secondly, in an attempt to instil confidence in the people that God would be with them. Saul sacrificed to appear righteous before the people.

V 13-14 “And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which He commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.”

The section here in verses 13 and 14 is chiasmic in structure, meaning the phrases form a symmetry focusing on a central idea. The central idea that the record focuses on is that Saul’s kingdom would not continue:

A       thou hast **not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God,**  
 B               which **He commanded thee:**  
 C               now would the LORD have **established thy kingdom**  
 C'               But now **thy kingdom shall not continue:**  
 B'               and **the LORD hath commanded him** to be captain  
 A'       because thou hast **not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.**

If you were Jonathan what would you be thinking? Saul's kingdom will not continue! His father had been king for only two years and had just lost his right to the kingdom. God had sought Him a man after His own heart and commanded him to be captain over His people. You would ask the question: "who is this promised captain, the man who God has selected to be king instead of your father Saul?" From this day on Jonathan would be looking for this man who was the promised captain over Yahweh's inheritance.

V 15 "And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people that were present with him, about six hundred men."

### **'Six hundred men'**

Saul retreats back to his stronghold in Gibeah. It would appear that these six hundred men are out of Saul's army of two thousand v15 as it is the people present 'with him' as opposed to v16 where it is the people present 'with them' (Saul and Jonathan). It would appear that Jonathan's courageous leadership had affected his men so that they didn't turn and run but stuck with Jonathan whom they trusted and who had led them to victory against the Philistines before. However, by chapter 14:2 the whole army under Saul's leadership had degraded to only 600 men. The lack of leadership damaged the morale of Saul's troops. As with us when there is an enemy that presents itself as an issue to be faced in our lives, we need to be decisive and act in faith.

V 16 "And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash"



### **‘Jonathan his son’**

Jonathan is now addressed as Saul’s son, whereas before we knew nothing of their relationship. Jonathan was introduced anonymously and his actions were independent of Saul. Jonathan’s acts were not motivated by his father’s actions nor lack of action. Jonathan saw his role as the deliverer who could save Israel through God’s hand. It is at this point that we are told Jonathan is the son of Saul. The record is making a stark point – Jonathan is Saul’s son. He was heir to the throne of Israel but through Saul’s lack of faith he would no longer be destined for kingship. There is a considerable contrast in this relationship. Saul and Jonathan are two completely different people, yet Jonathan’s loyalty to his father holds this relationship together despite the strain it went through. “In death they were not parted from each other” (2 Sam 1:23). The theme of Jonathan the son of Saul runs throughout the record of Jonathan’s life as shown by the list below:

- 1 Sam 13:16
- 1 Sam 14:1
- 1 Sam 14:29
- 1 Sam 14:39
- 1 Sam 14:40
- 1 Sam 14:42
- 1 Sam 14:49
- 1 Sam 19:1
- 1 Sam 19:2
- 1 Sam 19:4
- 1 Sam 20:27
- 1 Sam 23:16
- 2 Sam 1:2
- 2 Sam 1:17

Saul’s actions and rage comes close to severing their relationship in chapter 20:30, where it says “then Saul’s anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother’s nakedness?” Saul makes his relationship to Jonathan remote (almost as if he were disowning him) but in v32 Jonathan still refers to him as “his father”. The summary of this theme is given in the Song of the Bow where it states, “Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided” (2 Sam 1:23).

### **‘Michmash’**

The writer repeats this piece of information to emphasise the fact that Saul had retreated and the Philistines inhabited his stronghold. Of the two places the Israelites originally held, only Jonathan’s was still in their hands. The word

encamped means ‘to lie down’. The Philistines were lying down right in the middle of Israel’s land and Saul as Israel’s commander had shown no token of resistance or leadership.

#### Vv17-23 – Various Advances of the Philistine Armies

V 17-18 “And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way that leadeth to Ophrah, unto the land of Shual: And another company turned the way to Bethhoron: and another company turned to the way of the border that looketh to the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.”

#### ‘Spoilers’

Who were these people? The world means ‘ruiners’ and ‘decayers’. They were raiding troops, who went out ahead of the main force to spread terror and prevent any organised resistance from forming. They went out in a three-part flanking movement with a strategy to isolate the small Israelite army from gaining help from the other tribes of Israel, and to pin them between the three groups and the main army. In the face of this strategy, Jonathan marches straight into the main Philistine encampment. A big contrast is seen here between the Philistine strategy and Jonathan’s apparent lack of strategy. The difference is in how they fought their battles. The Philistines relied on all the devious intelligences of man, whilst Jonathan was armed only with simple trust. His faith was that if God was involved then strategy would make no difference to the outcome of the battle.

V 19-20 “Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears: But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his axe, and his mattock.”

The Philistines dominance over Israel wasn’t only military, they also had a monopoly in iron and blacksmiths. The fact that there were no smiths in Israel is interesting. At the time of the making of the Tabernacle there were plenty of skilled people in metal working (Ex 31:3-5, 35:35). It would appear that the Philistines had stamped out craftsmen, smiths included, and kept the secret of iron so the Israelites were forced to go to the Philistines to sharpen their farm tools (hoes, ploughshares, axes and pickaxes). Just think how much control the

Philistines had over every aspect of the Israelites lives. Relating this to our lives the psalmist in Psa 19:13 asks that God would ‘keep him from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over him’. Just like the control the Philistines had over the nation of Israel a habit-forming sin can take over our life and fill every aspect of it so that we are in subjection to sin.

V 21 “Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulter, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads.”

Another translation for this verse says “And the charge was two thirds a shekel for the plowshares and for the mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and for setting the goads.” (ESV) Not only were the Israelites dependent on the Philistines for agricultural instruments, but they were charged exorbitant prices for their maintenance. General usage of the word ‘shekel’ refers to the silver shekel which weighed approximately 11 grams.

V 22 “So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.”

### **‘There was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people’**

As a result of this subjection the Israelites were totally unprepared for any war. It would seem that due to the Philistines, the warrior spirit in Israel had stagnated and been lost with their weapons. Thus when the day came for them to fight they were neither ready nor equipped. As spiritual warriors of God we are urged to put on the armour of God so that we will be able to stand in the evil day. Our warfare is not natural but against our wicked imaginations and thoughts that are against God (2 Cor 10:5). As warriors we have to give daily attention to our weapons to make sure they are still sharp and ready for daily battle.

### **‘With Saul and Jonathan’**

This sword was one of the distinguishing features of Jonathan that marked him out from others. As one of only two people in the land who had a sword, Jonathan had a responsibility to use it in Yahweh’s service. We see this in the very next chapter where Jonathan fights against the Philistines with his armour bearer: ‘And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and

let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for *there is* no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few' I Sam 14:6.

Like Jonathan, we are often given special attributes, qualities or talents by God and have a responsibility to use them in His service. It reminds us of the parable of the talents in Matt 25:14-30, where Christ teaches that we are to make use of what has been provided to us to serve Yahweh. Sadly, the faithful action of Jonathan provides another contrast with his father Saul who had failed to lead the people into battle with the Philistines.

Later in the record David is offered both of these swords! David is firstly offered Saul's sword in I Sam 17:39 when he goes to fight Goliath but he does not accept as he hadn't proved his use of it. In offering his sword to David to fight the Philistine giant Saul once more shows his trust in the hand of man to deliver rather than relying on the strength of Yahweh. In contrast to Saul, David takes his sling into battle knowing that God is on his side: "Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied" I Sam 17:45. David acknowledges that the battle is Yahweh's and that Yahweh would deliver Goliath into his hand. In so doing David echoes the sentiments of Jonathan in I Sam 14, where Jonathan had said to his armourbearer: "Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel" I Sam 14:12. When Jonathan then presents his sword to David in I Sam 18:4 David graciously accepts. We can appreciate how great an honour this gift would have been. Not only was this sword a rarity in the land of Israel, but it had been the very sword that Jonathan had used to fight the Philistines. It spoke of faith, courage and trust that Yahweh would deliver His people.

V 23 "And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash"

To the Philistines' commander, this move was but a precautionary measure to keep a watch on the Israelites, preventing them from passing through the mountains. God was working through this strategy to set the scene for one of the most dramatic fights ever recorded in the following chapter.



# CHAPTER THREE

I Samuel 14 – Jonathan the Deliverer

## DISCUSSION GROUP ONE

## Activities for Chapter Three

### Bible Marking

#### **Bible Marking Activity Five**

Colour in the following:

- The repeated idea of 'going over' and the related words. Hint: These are listed in the notes in the section on verse 1.
- Colour in all the words that show Jonathan and his armour bearer as being 'together'. Hint: These are listed in the notes in the section on verse 13.

### Character Study

#### **Character Study Four**

Complete a character study on the man Achan, particularly noting and comparing the similarities and differences with the man Jonathan. This chapter provides a starting place for your character study.

### Theme Study

#### **Theme Study Four**

Complete a theme study on 'Yahweh saved Israel' to see how God saves His people and when.

#### **Theme Study Five**

Complete a theme study on the kingship of Israel and how this relates to the tribe of Judah. Hint: Begin in Genesis 49 with the blessing from Jacob to Judah. This theme finds its fulfilment in Christ.

#### **Theme Study Six**

Complete a theme study on 'crossing over.' Hint: start with Abraham the 'Hebrew' and include the crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan in your study.

## V 1-10 – Jonathan’s plan amongst a state of desperation in Israel

V 1 “Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines’ garrison, that is on the other side, But he told not his father.”

### **‘Jonathan the son of Saul’**

Once again we see emphasis placed on the relationship between Jonathan and Saul. This takes us straight back to the previous chapter where we first read of Jonathan as Saul’s son. The context in I Sam 13 is Samuel’s words to Saul, that his kingdom would not continue:

‘But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him *to be* captain over his people, because thou hast not kept *that* which the LORD commanded thee’ I Sam 13:14.

We must ask ourselves, what would Jonathan be thinking in these circumstances? Saul’s kingdom would not continue. His father had been king for only two years and had just lost his right to the kingdom. God had sought Him a man after His own heart and commanded him to be captain over His people.” He would ask the question: “who is this promised captain, the man who God has selected to be king instead of your father Saul?” At this stage it is not clear that the kingship has passed from his father’s house. All Jonathan knows is that his father has been demoted as king. Perhaps Jonathan thought “am I the captain that Yahweh has sought?” After all, his name meant Yahweh given!

### Lessons for us

There are many times in life when we are faced with uncertain situations. We might have been let down badly by a trusted friend, we may be bearing the consequences of someone else’s folly, we may be faced with an opportunity to advance our own position at the expense of someone else. It may be that we have to make a choice: where to study, what career to pursue, where to live, who to marry, what ecclesia to belong to or what job to take. Sometimes we wrestle with these decisions for days, months, even years. Eventually though, we are brought to a realisation that God is in control. We learn to trust. And having learnt to trust, we realise that if we faithfully and prayerfully



commit our way to God then He can work. But in order for God to direct our paths we must take the first step in faith:

‘Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths’  
Pro 3:5-6.

It is with this context that we observe Jonathan in I Sam 14. Faced with an uncertain situation we see Jonathan act in faith. Maybe he was seeking an answer to his question: “who is the man that Yahweh has chosen to be captain over His people?” He makes a decision and moves forward in faith to see if God will bless his actions.

### **‘Said unto the young man that bear his armour’**

We don’t know who this young man was that bore the armour of Jonathan. The man is described as a ‘young man.’ The word is used of anyone from boyhood to adolescence. It is used of servants, of David who was a ‘youth’ and of Jesse’s ‘children.’ Despite his young age, this young man had an unwavering faith and a loyal affection for Jonathan his master. There is a strong relationship between these two men that we will see highlighted later in the chapter.

### **‘Come let us go over to the Philistines garrison’**

Jonathan outlines that this is a battle with the Philistines. The theme of the Philistines garrison is repeated throughout the chapter: v1, v4, v6, v11, v21 and v22. The contrasting group is ‘Israel’ and ‘the Hebrews.’ This is the age-old battle between the power of the flesh, here seen as the Philistines and the people of God, here seen as the Hebrews. This is our battle. We fight it every day of our lives – the battle between the serpent thinking and God’s way of thinking.

The second thing we note is the idea of *going over*. Jonathan says ‘let us *go over* to the Philistines garrison that is on *the other side*.’ There is a separation here between the Hebrews on one side of the passage and the Philistines on the other. The land where the two armies camped was divided by a deep wadi or river gully. The sides of the valley were steep and descended into a river

valley far below. On one hill was stationed the garrison of the Philistines and on the other side hide Saul and his men.

The concept of 'going over' to the 'other side' is a repeated theme in this chapter. The Hebrew word for 'go over' in v1 is the word 'abar' from which we get the name 'Hebrew', literally meaning 'to cross or go over.' The phrase 'on the other side' at the end of the verse is the word 'eber' which comes from the same root. It means 'beyond, side or opposite.' We have the idea of crossing over and going over emphasised in verse one. We see this idea come up in v1, 4 (the word passages is 'ma-abar' in the Hebrew), v6, v11, v21 and v23.

For the children of Israel 'crossing over' spoke of Abraham obeying God and crossing over the Euphrates, it spoke of being delivered by God in crossing over the Red Sea and it spoke of crossing over to battle with Joshua. Jonathan and his armour bearer cross over to fight the Philistines. We cross over through baptism into Christ and we fight against sin in our lives.

### **Story of the Bible**

The Story of the Bible has this to say about 'crossing over:'

'When Abram crossed the Euphrates, he commenced, as it were, a new way of life. He had left Babylon for good, and his standing with God, and the people about him, had changed. He had obeyed God's voice and was now trying to live as God would have him live. To the people of the land he became known as Abram the Hebrew. We often hear this word used today, for the Jews have inherited this title from Abraham. But the word 'Hebrew' really means a crosser over. Abram was called 'The Hebrew' by the people of Canaan because he had passed over the river into the land.'

### **Lessons for us**

As we have already seen in I Sam 13:22 the only swords in the whole nation belonged to Saul and Jonathan. This brought about a huge responsibility to use them wisely – a responsibility that Saul neglected, but Jonathan adopted. In this world, we are a privileged group who have been given the power of the sword of the spirit (Eph 6:17). How do we use this 'weapon' against the uncircumcised today?

**'But he told not his father'**

This is specifically mentioned to highlight the different ideals of Jonathan and Saul. There is a growing distance between the characteristics and actions of Jonathan and Saul as the record of 1 Samuel progresses. It is also interesting to note in v3 that Jonathan also specifically neglected to tell the people of his intentions. Jonathan might be Saul's son, but he definitely isn't letting his father know what he is doing. In the last few days Saul has disobeyed God, has lost the kingdom and is hiding in Gibeah.

V 2 "And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which is in Migron: and the people that were with him were about six hundred men"

### **'Tarried'**

Strong's #3427 – to dwell, remain, and settle down. Saul is not simply tarrying, he is setting himself up with little intention of moving.

### **'Uttermost part'**

Strong's #7097 – extremity, end or outskirts. Also rendered in the AV as end, edge, border, outside, utmost, uttermost, coast, and quarter. The point is emphasised that Saul has backed away and is as far away as possible from the Philistines.

### **'Gibeah'**

Saul and the army were already camped in Gibeah (ch 13:16). This shows Saul had made no attempt to act against the Philistines.

### **'Pomegranate tree which is in Migron'**

We read that Saul 'tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree.' The ESV says 'Saul was staying in the outskirts of Gibeah in the pomegranate cave at Migron.' The word Gibeah means a 'hill' and the word Migron means a 'precipice,' so the suggestion by the ESV that Saul is hiding in a cave is a good one. This is also consistent with v11 which says "the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves." Here is the natural king of Israel – unable to save and hiding in a cave.

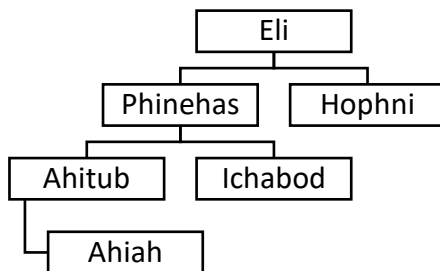
**‘And the people that were with him were about about six hundred men’**

This is all that remained of Saul’s army. Ch 13:2 shows an army of at least 3,000 men, while Ch 13:6 explains the discrepancy. 80% of the army had deserted, while the Philistines mustered their forces together. A formidable threat to Israel in the past was Jabin king of Hazor’s army which consisted of 900 chariots of iron (Judges 4:1-3) but now the Philistines had massed 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen! Even using a modest estimate of the Philistine army, the odds against Israel exceed 400 to 1. The hopelessness of Israel’s situation is more than obvious.

V 3 “And Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod’s brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, Yahweh’s priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod. And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone.”

**‘And Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod’s brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli...’**

Here the record deliberately highlights the genealogy of the priest whom Saul has employed.



The genealogy is traced back to Eli. In I Sam 2:27-36, and I Sam 3:11-14, the word of God comes to Eli and Samuel (as a lad in the temple) and God clearly states the house of Eli will be cut off because of their wickedness before God. God was going to raise up ‘a faithful priest’ that would do His will (I Sam 2:35) and the priestly line of Eli would not continue. The genealogy shown in v3 highlights the fact that the priest Saul employs as his mediator with God in this situation, is not from the line of the ‘faithful priest’ God selected.

We see the same priest Ahiah with Saul in v18. The natural priest of Israel is with Saul – he is also unable to deliver Israel and hides from the enemy.

Throughout the book of I Samuel there is a parallel between the kingdom being removed from the house of Saul and the priesthood being removed from the house of Eli. Both the natural kingdom and natural priesthood would be removed in Israel. So what is the record telling us in verses two and three? We have here a picture of natural Israel – both the king and the priest who cannot save. Jonathan, in contrast is the one who Yahweh has given who will deliver the people.

### **‘Wearing an ephod’**

The ephod was a sacred vestment worn originally by the high priest (Ex 28:4) afterwards by the ordinary priest (I Sam 22:18) and characteristic of his office. It was made of fine linen, and consisted of two pieces, which hung from the neck and covered both the back and front, above the tunic and outer garment (Ex 28:31-32). The ephod of the high priest was embroidered with divers colours. The two pieces were joined together over the shoulders (hence in Latin called *superhumerales*) by clasps or buckles of gold or precious stones and fastened round the waist by a “curious girdle of gold, blue, purple, and fine twined linen” (Ex 28:6-12). The breastplate, with the Urim and Thummim, was attached to the ephod. The Urim and Thummim were used for enquiring of God. We see Saul attempt to enquire of God in this chapter, but he seeks to control the process, using the priesthood where it suited him but disregarding his responsibilities as king.

### **‘And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone’**

We know from I Sam 13:2 that Jonathan was a leader or general of the Israelite army.

V 4-5 “And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines’ garrison, there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. The forefront of the one was situated northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah”

### **‘And between the passages’**

The word for passages is the word ‘ma abar’ from the word ‘eber’ which means to cross over. The words ‘on the one side,’ ‘on the other side’ and ‘go over’ are all related words! Once again we see the concept of crossing over emphasised. This battle that Jonathan is about to fight reminds us of the Israelites leaving Egypt, Abraham crossing the Euphrates and, of course, the battle that our Lord Jesus Christ would fight against sin.

### **‘Sharp rock’**

The RSV renders this phrase a ‘rocky crag’. The description of v 4-5 is that of a deep wadi with steep sides so that where the descent into the wadi meets level ground surface on each side, a sharp crag is formed. It seems the wadi cuts through the land east-west, so that the sharp rocks formed point north and south. Imagine the difficulties associated with climbing down and back up such a rock-face, with a Philistine garrison waiting directly above!

### **‘Bozez’**

Strong’s #949 – ‘surpassing white, glistening’. This is the same word as Strong’s #948 which is only used of ‘fine linen’ or ‘white linen’. For example, II Chron 5:12 speaks of the fine white linen worn by the singers the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthan (Levites). See also I Chron 4:21; 15:27. The fine white linen is a symbol of righteousness and especially the righteousness given by God to the saints. See Rev 19:8.

### **‘Seneh’**

Strong’s #5573 – ‘thorny’. This is the same word as Strong’s #5572 which has a very unique usage. #5572 is used exclusively of the burning bush where Moses came into the presence of God (Ex 3:2-4). See also Deut 33:16 where the bush is seen to be a symbol of the presence of God.

Jonathan reaches the passage or wadi where he must cross over to the Philistines and he is in the presence of two very uniquely named rocks – rocks that speak of righteousness and the presence of God. This is in total contrast to the camp of Israel where Saul has established a man wearing fine white linen that is not righteous and a man through which God’s presence should have been seen yet God was absent. See I Sam 13:13-14.

V 6 “And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that Yahweh will work for us: for there is no restraint to Yahweh to save by many or by few.”

**‘Come let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised...’**

Compare Jonathan’s words here to those in v1. Previously his intention was to go over to the ‘Philistines,’ but now the battle is raised to another level. It is no longer Israel versus Philistines; it is God’s principles of circumcision versus those who were ignorant and indifferent to the true God.

**‘It may be that Yahweh will work for us’**

Consider the attitude of Jonathan here. He is not demanding God to act for him, but he sees the situation and offers himself as an instrument God can use. Jonathan acknowledges that the battle is in God’s hands. Deliverance comes from Yahweh alone. We see this idea in v6, v10, v12 and in v23.

**‘For there is no restraint to Yahweh to save by many or by few’**

Again compare these words to Jonathan’s initial statement in v1. His motive is not mentioned up until this point. His motive is not for self-glory, frustration with Israel’s situation, or his will to attack Philistine soldiers, but a confident belief that Yahweh is both willing and able to bring about salvation, regardless of human weakness. The principle that Yahweh is neither assisted nor limited by human power or weakness is illustrated in many examples through Scripture.

- Gideon – Judges 7:16-22
- Esther – Esther 4:13-16; 8:4-7; 9:1-6
- Barak – Judges 15-16
- Samson – Judges 16:30
- Paul – 2 Cor 12:9

The same principle applies today. God's salvation and purpose with men can work through us as individuals or groups (few or many) and is not limited by human weakness.

V 7 "And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart."

What a beautiful attitude we see displayed here by Jonathan's armourbearer. We see a similarity of outlook here between these two men. The armour bearer is with Jonathan according to his heart. Their friendship is based upon believing that the work is Yahweh's and that it is Yahweh who has the power to save. This is a principle of true friendship in the Truth – like mindedness. Jonathan and his armour bearer fight the Philistines together. The record really highlights this for us in v7, v8, v9, v10, v11, v12 and v13. This is not a battle that Jonathan wages alone. He fights the Philistines with a friend who has the same outlook as him. They share a common purpose in life and they see the Philistines the same way. Like minded friends in the Truth are a tower of strength in our fight against sin.

Consider the faith of Jonathan's armourbearer. It is probable that this man was an experienced soldier, and easily assessed the impossibility of the task before them. Such a man could have persuaded Jonathan against irrational battle tactics, yet his heart is set with Jonathan's heart and his faith is on a similar plane. Not only was his faith stated here, but also his actions in the following verses show his faith to be real.

V 8-10 "Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto these men, and we will discover ourselves unto them. If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them. But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for Yahweh hath delivered them into our hand: and this shall be a sign unto us."

### **'And we will discover ourselves unto them'**

In any natural situation, this was an absurd option. What hope would two men have against a garrison of soldiers even if ambush was used, let alone if the men deliberately drew attention to themselves? This demonstrated the men had absolute trust in God and no trust in the flesh.



**‘If they say thus... but if they say thus...’**

Jonathan now introduces a test so that God is able to direct his next steps. Consider the two outcomes of this test. This method is not one Jonathan is using to try and get out of the situation since both outcomes involve fighting with the Philistines. To Jonathan, the only thing to decide is where they will fight! It is interesting to note that the test is based upon what his enemies will say. Once again, Jonathan allowed God to direct his steps.

**V 11-16 - Jonathan and his Armourbearer attack the Philistines**

V 11 “And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves.”

**‘And both of them discovered themselves...’**

The faith, conviction and courage of the two men is now demonstrated in their actions. James 2:14-26 speaks about the importance of backing our faith with physical actions that prove our faith is real.

**‘Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves’**

Chapter 13 describes the state of the nation with men deserting and hiding in caves. This verse shows that the Philistines were not only dominating Israel in battle, but accurately knew the state of the people in Israel and had the opinion that Israel were at their mercy. The utter desperation of the situation is plain.

V 12 “And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armourbearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armourbearer, come up after me: for Yahweh hath delivered them into the hand of Israel.”

### **‘The men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armourbearer...’**

We see the faith and courage of not only Jonathan but also his armourbearer. The Philistines did not simply address Jonathan but answered them both, indicating neither was hesitant nor hanging back.

### **‘Come up to us’**

This was the easiest option for the Philistines, and the most probable answer they would have received. Was this an answer from God, and how could Jonathan be sure of this? Not only was the task ahead next to impossible but accepting this challenge would also include taunts from the Philistines.

### **‘For Yahweh hath delivered them into the hand of Israel’**

Notice Jonathan’s whole focus here:

- Yahweh is the one who is working not Jonathan and his armourbearer
- Deliverance is so sure it is spoken of in past tense. (Past tense is often used in this way – see Josh 2:24; Judges 3:28; 4:14; 7:15)
- The enemies are delivered into the hands of the nation; removing any thoughts of self-glory on the behalf of Jonathan and his armourbearer
- Jonathan simply offers himself as a tool by which his God could work for His people

V 13 “And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him.”

### **‘And Jonathan climbed upon his hands and upon his feet’**

Hands and feet throughout scripture speak typically of where one walks (way of life) and what they do (actions). This is seen in the negative examples of Jezebel (2 Kings 9:35) and Rechab and Baanah (2 Sam 4:12). Ex 30:17-20 also speaks of the laver specifically designed for the priests to wash their hands and feet before entering into the tabernacle. The reason – contact with God demanded perfect holiness in both actions and walk.

The picture we see of Jonathan here is one whose whole way of life and actions were focused on an allegiance to God against the uncircumcised. Our actions and direction should also include a strong awareness of God as we approach

the humanly impossible climb of life. The climb is steep, and we are often vulnerable to our enemies, but if we are on God's side, Jonathan's testimony shows we cannot fail. As Rom 8:31 states: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" See also Rom 8:37.

**'And his armourbearer after him... and his armourbearer slew after him.'**

Emphasis is placed on the armourbearer with or just behind Jonathan throughout this chapter, and especially in the verses listed below:

- v6 'us'
- v8 'we'
- v9 'us', 'we'
- v10 'us', 'we'
- v11 'both of them'
- v12 'Jonathan and his armourbearer', 'after me'
- v13 'His armourbearer after him', 'his armourbearer slew after him.'
- V14 'Jonathan and his armourbearer'

This emphasises the strength that is added when people of like mind come together. Ecc 4:9-12 explains the strength gained by positive friendship, and Amos 3:3 shows that agreement of mind is necessary for two to walk together. Notice also, that the armourbearer slew 'after' Jonathan. Once leadership is established, there will always be others who are willing to follow the lead and 'slay' after the leader.

There is another reason why Jonathan's armourbearer may have been behind Jonathan. In the previous chapter we read in v22 that there had only been two swords in the land of Israel – the sword of Saul and the sword of Jonathan. Perhaps the armourbearer was armed with bow rather than sword.

V 14 "And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armourbearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plow."

### **‘Within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plow’**

The translators had difficulty with this verse. The RSV renders it “And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armourbearer made, was of about twenty men within as it were half a furrows length in an acre of land.”

V 15 “And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling.”

Note the repetition of the idea of ‘trembling’ or ‘quaking’ in this verse.

### **‘Trembling’**

Strong’s #2731 – ‘fear, quaking, trembling, and extreme anxiety’.

### **‘Trembled’**

Strong’s #2729 – ‘afraid, tremble, fray, and discomfort’.

### **‘Quaked’**

Strong’s #7264 – ‘quake, rage, to shake, quiver, and agitate’.

### **‘The garrison and the spoilers’**

This incident had effects on the whole Philistine army even to the outposts (Roth) and the raiders (RSV). See I Sam 13:17-18, where the spoilers or raiding parties are throughout the whole land of Israel.

### **‘And the earth quaked’**

Often natural phenomena are used by God to aid His cause or reveal His presence. See Josh 10:11 (hailstones), II Sam 22:8 and Psa 18:7 (earthquake), Matt 27:51 (earthquake at Christ’s death, and Judges 5:21 (river flooding).

V 16 “And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another.”

### **‘In Gibeah of Benjamin’**

Compare this with I Sam 14:2 – while Jonathan was fighting the Philistines, Saul still hadn’t even moved from his position (neither offensively nor defensively).

### **‘Melted away’**

This was exactly the attitude of the Canaanite nations before the campaigns of Joshua. See Josh 2:11 (because of Yahweh's power over the Red Sea and Sihon and Og), and Josh 5:1 (Because of Yahweh's power over the Jordan River).

**'They went on beating down one another'**

See comments for v 20.

**V 17-23 – The Philistines fear leads to Israel's victory**

V 17 "Then said Saul unto the people that were with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armourbearer were not there."

**'Number now, and see who is gone from us'**

The watchmen had reported the turmoil and confusion of the Philistine host, and it seems that Saul suspected the reason. Obviously, it was not a noticeable group that were missing, yet Saul's words show he suspects someone. Jonathan was the only other man in the nation that had weapons of war, and he was clearly one of very few who had enough faith and courage to stand up against God's enemies.

V 18-19 "And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the Ark of God. For the Ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel. And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise that was in the host of the Philistines went on and increased: and Saul said unto the priest, Withdraw thine hand."

**'Bring hither the Ark of God'**

Why does Saul decide to fetch the Ark of God when the recent history with Hophni and Phinehas clearly showed the mistake of involving it in battle? (I Sam 4:3-4; 4:17-18).

Saul brings the Ark which was the representation of God's presence and proceeds to enquire of Yahweh presumably regarding his next move. Notice Saul's involvement. As Saul talks to the priest, he notices the increase in the noise and commotion of the battle (possibly leading to a similar pressured situation as in I Sam 13:7-12) and informs the priest what he is to do. The whole set up seems artificial and any mention of enquiring for Yahweh's assistance is lacking. Saul is only interested in an appearance of spirituality and using God

to his on advantage. Contrast this to David's enquiry of God in I Sam 23:9-12, and the method used in I Sam 10:20-22 where Saul is selected as king. Between verses 19 and 20, no conclusion or explanation is announced by the priest, yet Saul assembles the army as if the answer was clear. It is also interesting to note that David reinstates the Ark of God later because it was neglected in Saul's time (I Chron 13:3).

V 20 "And Saul and all the people that were with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle; and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and there was a very great discomfiture."

**'Every man's sword was against his fellow'**

See v16. This is another method by which God is victorious. See the examples of Gideon in Judges 7:21-22 (exactly the same phrase used) and the Israelite army under Jehoshaphat in II Chron 20:22-23.

**'Discomfiture'**

Rotherham and RSV translate this as 'confusion'.

V 21-22 "Moreover the Hebrews that were with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp from the country round about, even they also turned to be with the Israelites that were with Saul and Jonathan. Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in Mount Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle."

**'Hebrews'**

The Israelites and Hebrews. See notes on I Sam 13:3.

**'That were with the Philistines before that time ... the men of Israel which had hid themselves'**

Compare I Sam 13:2 with I Sam 14:2. 2,400 men from the army had deserted and hidden themselves. See also I Sam 13:6-7, even joining the Philistines. Now the courage and faith of two men has prompted new courage and strength in others. This is a testimony to the powerful effect of Godly and courageous leadership.

### **‘Followed hard’**

The zeal of Jonathan was passed onto the Israelites. The phrase literally means to cling, stick, cleave, be joined to, and to catch. The same word is used frequently in the context of cleaving to God. eg. Deut 10:20; 11:22; 30:20.

V 23 “So Yahweh saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven.”

### **‘Yahweh saved Israel’**

Although Jonathan was the instrument by which the salvation occurred, he is not mentioned. It is Yahweh’s battle and God alone who brings about salvation. The salvation of God is a recurring topic of the Psalms. eg. Psa 18:2, 46; 62:7.

### **‘Beth-aven’**

Beth-aven is also known as Bethel.

V 24-35 – The people sin by following Saul’s unreasonable adjuration

V 24 “And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged of mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food.”

### **‘Distressed’**

Strong’s # 5065 – ‘press, drive, oppress, and to exert demanding pressure’.

### **‘Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on my enemies’**

Notice Saul’s motivation here. It is all about him – he isn’t concerned about the fact that they are enemies of God and the Israelites. Why does Saul make this oath, and where did he get his ideas from? In Judges 8:4-9, 300 men of Gideon faint with hunger, but continued pursuing until they were avenged of their enemies. In Gideon’s case the men hungered because those in Succoth and Penuel refused to help them, but in Saul’s case, he forces the men under an oath not to eat anything. It is a rash request and one that could have been fatal for his men. Saul shows complete disregard for his men.

### **‘So none of the people tasted any food’**

Consider the ramifications of Saul’s oath which are emphasised to show it was a rash decision.

V28 – “and the people were faint”

V29 – “my father hath troubled the land”

V30 – slaughter of the Philistines was limited because of the restriction

V31 – “and all the people were very faint”

V32 – it caused the peoples’ unlawful behaviour when spoil was taken.

V 25-29 “And all they of the land came to a wood; and there was honey upon the ground. And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath. But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened. Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food this day. And the people were faint. Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.”

### **‘The honey dropped’**

The Hebrew word ‘dropped’ literally has the idea of a traveller. The sense of this expression can be seen by the following versions; ‘there was a flow of honey’ (NASB), ‘the honey was dripping’ (Amplified Bible), and ‘the honey oozing out’ (NIV). Evidently, as the men entered the woods, the honey was just before them. Not only was the honeycomb saturated and dripping with honey, but it was on the ground; making it easier to get.



**‘And dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes were opened’**

‘Enlightened’ (Strong’s #215) literally means to light, shine or to kindle fire.

Psalm 19:7-10 speaks of the law, testimony, statutes, commandments, fear, and judgements of God, summarising them by stating that they are “sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” v10. Verse 8 also states that God’s commandments are pure enlightening the eyes. Psalm 119:103 makes a similar statement comparing honey to the Word of God, then continues in v105 to state “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light (Strong’s #216) unto my path” which is the very idea expressed by “enlightening the eyes”.

Illustrated here is a picture of God’s Word placed before the men of Israel, saturated, oozing and in an easy place to find and obtain, yet the restrictions placed upon them by Saul forbid them to touch it. The nation under Saul were starving and fainting for lack of God’s words, while Jonathan alone partook of them. As the start of I Samuel 14 shows, Jonathan and his armourbearer are the only ones in the nation whose eyes are truly enlightened to the situation.

V 30 “How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?”

**‘If haply the people had eaten freely to day of the spoil of their enemies’**

Deut 20:14 shows God’s will concerning the spoil of Israel’s enemies. “But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which Yahweh thy God hath given thee”. Exceptions occurred in instances such as Jericho where the spoil was dedicated to God – Josh 6:17-19, 7:1, 11-15. See also 1 Sam 15:2-3 (the destruction of the Amalekites).

V 31-32 “And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon: and the people were very faint. And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground: and the people did eat them with the blood.”

### **‘And the people flew upon the spoil’**

Not long after, exactly the same problem occurred. In I Sam 15:19-21 the Israelites destroy the Amalekites and did “fly upon the spoil” despite the fact that it was forbidden by God (I Sam 15:2-3).

### **‘And the people did eat them with the blood’**

What did God think of this? Lev 17:10-12 explains very clearly the issue of eating blood – “And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood.” See also Lev 3:17.

Num 11:31-34 shows what God thinks of lust and greed. God sent quails into the camp but smote the people with “a very great plague” and named the place “Kibroth-hattaavah” (graves of lust).

V 33 “Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day.”

### **‘And they told Saul’**

In v33 and also in v34, there seems to be a third party communicating between Saul and the general people. Who are these people? Possibly they were part of Saul’s personal servants just as Samuel warned the people of in I Sam 8:11-16.

### **‘Behold the people sin against Yahweh ... Ye have transgressed’**

Saul blames the people for their sin but doesn’t acknowledge that it was his own decision initially that brought about such circumstances. Saul is also quick to blame the people in I Sam 15:21.

### **‘Roll a great stone unto me this day’**

Where did this idea come from? Joshua had previously used a “great stone” when making a covenant with the children of Israel (Josh 24:24-27). He set it up as a witness of the covenant made on that occasion to serve God, incline their hearts and obey Him.

V 34-35 “And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay them here, and eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew them there. And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD.”

Samuel was raised up in the prospect of offering upon God’s altar (I Sam 2:28) and he was involved later with building altars (I Sam 7:17). Although Saul had made offerings (presumptuously in I Sam 13:9-10), it is never recorded that he built an altar, before this time, nor afterwards. Other kings also build altars or offered upon them, for example:

- David built                      2 Sam 24:25
- Solomon offered              1 Kings 3:4
- Jeroboam offered              1 Kings 12:32
- Ahaz offered                    2 Kings 16:11-13

### V 36-46 - Lots are Drawn to Uncover the Breach of the Adjuration

V 36 “And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God.”

### **‘And let us not leave a man of them’**

God had spoken this to the Israelites before they entered the land. They were to “utterly destroy” all the Canaanite nations (Deut 7:1-2) to prevent intermarriage and adoption of their idols. This attitude is a commendable one and is carried through by other faithful men. For example:

- Joshua dominating the land – Josh 21:44
- Ehud destroying the Moabites – Judg 3:28-29

- Barak destroying the host of Syria – Judg 4:16
- Jehu killing the prophets of Baal – 2 Kings 10:21

V 37 “And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day.”

### **‘And Saul asked counsel of God’**

Note from v36 that this was not Saul’s idea. At this stage Saul seems to be acting more and more of his own accord without God in mind. It is as if this is acknowledged and God does not answer – Saul was asking counsel from God because he had been asked to, not out of a spirit of willingness.

See comments on verses 18-19.

V 38 “And Saul said, Draw ye near hither, all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day.”

### **‘And know and see wherein this sin hath been this day’**

This shows the type of man Saul really was. God did not respond to his requests, so Saul determined to find someone he could blame. Saul is too proud to accept the fact that he was wrong and that the influence of God was drifting from his life. Hence he assumes a sin has been committed. The situation is similar in Joshua 7 where Achan sinned and broke the nation’s relationship with God, but there are some key differences:-

- Joshua sees a problem, and pours out his heart to God in prayer, whereas Saul’s problem as the leader of the nation is that he has little or no relationship with God at all.
- Joshua is concerned about the Name of God being despised amongst the nations, whereas Saul is only interested in promoting his own name against the nation.
- Joshua is told by God that Israel had sinned, whereas Saul, in effect, tells Israel they have sinned and caused the problem.
- Joshua is told what to do, and how to go about his investigations in detail, whereas Saul initialises the investigations, and proceeds as he thinks is best.

V 39 “For, as the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But there was not a man among all the people that answered him.”

**‘For, as the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die.’**

This is not typical language for Saul. Consider the previous oath (v24), where there is absolutely no mention of God at all. Once again, Saul is giving an appearance of spirituality, but even the context shows it up as a rash statement. Saul is assuming a sin; based on the fact that God won’t answer him.

**‘Surely die’**

Literally in the Hebrew, this is the word ‘die, kill or execute’ (Strong’s #4191) repeated twice in a row for strong emphasis/surety. The same phrase is used in Gen 2:17; 3:4, 20:7; Num 26:65, and were all given in absolute surety. Again this shows how extreme and rash Saul is, especially when considering this is broken in v45.

**‘But there was not a man among all the people that answered him’**

After such a faithful and courageous act, it is hardly possible to assume Jonathan thought he could conceal his sin from both God and Saul as Achan had attempted in Josh 7:19-21. Jonathan knew of his father’s oath (v28), but could never have imagined his ‘offence’ would be used as the blame for God not answering Saul

V 40 “Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do what seemeth good unto thee.”

**‘Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side’**

Why does Saul set about his investigations in this way rather than using the systematic, logical and God-given method Joshua is told to use in Josh 7:13-14? Again, it is apparent that Saul thinks of himself first, and the nation later. He is more interested in clearing his own family name than the rest of the men gathered there.

V 41 “Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect lot. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped.”

### **‘give a perfect lot’**

I Sam 28:6 shows that enquiry of Yahweh was capable of yielding answers via several pathways – i.e. God could respond by dreams, by Urim, or by prophets. Clearly then it was also possible for no answer to come from God as in v37. In this light, it is interesting to notice that the method Saul chose for his enquiry here is by lots which gave a Yes/No or True/False answer. An answer to a question could be obtained despite the fact God was not answering. Divine acknowledgement is shown here as Jonathan is selected as the person responsible. Here Saul’s utter hypocrisy is exposed. The reason he assumed someone had sinned was because God wasn’t answering him, and he sets about to find the sinner using a method where divine acknowledgement is not observed. Yet at the same time he works under his claim of “Yahweh God of Israel, give a perfect lot”.

V 42 “And Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken.”

### **‘And Jonathan was taken’**

Compare this with v41 where it states ‘the people escaped’. Although Jonathan is selected by the casting of lots, it does not say Saul escaped. As the true source of trouble (v29) Saul could not escape or ‘go forth’ (margin).

V 43 “Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and, lo, I must die.”

### **‘Tell me what thou hast done’**

When comparing this to the question Joshua posed to Achan in a similar situation, we again see the type of man Saul was. Joshua had said, “My son, give, I pray thee, glory to Yahweh God of Israel, and make confession unto Him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me” (Josh 7:19).

Saul leaves out two critical things. Joshua addresses Achan as ‘my son’, but as v44 shows, Saul had little care about his fatherly relationship to Jonathan at this time. Secondly, Joshua clearly shows how the sin was against God, and

that confession should be to Him, whereas with Saul there is no thought of God in his mind, and he says “tell me”.

**‘I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and, lo, I must die’**

There is some confusion as to what Jonathan is saying here. Is he meekly accepting death, or is he politely pleading his cause?

- “I merely tasted a little honey with the end of my staff. And now must I die?” (NIV)
- “I certainly tasted with the end of the rod that [is] in my and a little honey; lo, I die!” (Young’s Literal)

Literal translations of the phrase tend to imply it is a slightly incredulous statement, implying a question as posed in more liberal translations (e.g. NIV above).

V 44 “And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.”

**‘God do so and more also’**

Again Saul makes an incredible oath, this time placing his own life as a substitute if the oath is not carried through. This oath and the one in v39, is broken because of the attitude of the people in v45, bringing dire implications upon Saul. Consider God’s thoughts on the importance of keeping oaths in Num 30:2. Once broken, the sin was to be confessed, but in the following verses, there is no confession or apology from Saul. Other characters in Scripture used a similar phrase. For example:

- Solomon of Adonijah in I Kings 2:23 – Adonijah was killed in the following verses.
- Ahab of Elisha in II Kings 6:31
- Jezebel of Elijah in I Kings 19:2

V 45-46 “And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not. Then Saul went up from following the Philistines: and the Philistines went to their own place.”

### **‘Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel?’**

Again, Saul’s inconsistency is highlighted by the record. In I Sam 11:13 Saul gains a victory, and afterwards those who denied his right to be king are brought to him so he can put them to death. Saul responds “There shall not a man be put to death this day: for today Yahweh hath wrought salvation in Israel.” The people now use Saul’s own word to stop him killing the man who brought about the great victory – his own son! Jonathan also uses these words to Saul concerning David (I Samuel 19:5).

### **‘As Yahweh liveth ... wrought with God’**

Here the people show more understanding and perception of the will of God, than Saul who was supposed to be leading them. Saul has just been embarrassed and humiliated in front of the whole gathering, while Jonathan is seen and loved as the mighty warrior responsible for God bringing about the victory on that day. Saul is seen to be a fool while Jonathan receives the support of the people. Under these circumstances how easy it would have been for Jonathan to take over his father’s position as king in the nation. Yet Jonathan patiently waits for God to work and leaves it up to God.

Parallel with Achan – Jonathan’s answer to the kingship!

So, what is this story in I Samuel 14 really about, and in particular these links to the life of Achan? It is hard to miss the links between the story of Achan in Joshua 7 and the story of Jonathan and Saul. While there are so many similarities there are also some notable differences:

### **Achan**

In Josh 6v18 a commandment is made. Anyone who broke the commandment would be cursed, and the result of breaking the commandment was death. Achan in Josh 7v1 saw a goodly Babylonish garment and took it. It was known to all the people that Israel had sinned because someone had taken of the accursed thing (Josh 7:11). Achan’s name means ‘troublesome’ and he had troubled the land of Israel (Josh 6v18; 7v25). As a result of taking of the accursed thing Israel would not be able to stand before their enemies in battle (Josh 7v13). The people came to Joshua by their tribes and families to determine who had sinned (Josh 7v14). The one who had taken of the accursed thing was to be put to death (Josh 7v15). Achan from the tribe of Judah was



taken (Josh 7v18). Achan is asked to confess his sin (Josh 7v19). Achan then confesses to Joshua (Josh 7v20). The result is that Israel stone Achan with stones (Josh 7v25).

## Jonathan

In I Sam 14v24 Saul makes a commandment that anyone who eats of any food would be cursed. The result of breaking this commandment was death. In I Sam 14v27 Jonathan put forth his hand and took of the honey. Rather than Jonathan troubling the land, it was Saul who had troubled the land (I Sam 14v29). As a result of the commandment being broken, Israel were not able to go to war against their enemies (I Sam 14v37). The people and Jonathan and Saul are on separated sides and lots are taken to determine who is guilty (I Sam 14v40). Jonathan was worthy of death because he had eaten the honey (I Sam 14v39). Lots were then cast and Jonathan was taken (I Sam 14v42). Saul then asks Jonathan what he has done and Jonathan tells him (I Sam 14v43). The end result is Saul seeks to slay Jonathan but Jonathan is spared by the people (I Sam 14v44).

So, why does the record point us back to Achan of all people? Why is the story of Achan relevant to the story of Jonathan? At the beginning of this chapter we noted that Jonathan was most likely seeking an answer to his question: “who is to be king over Israel, the captain over Yahweh’s inheritance – is this promised captain me and am I to be king?” The key here is to realise that Scripture is not condemning the character of the man Jonathan here in this parallel with Achan. Jonathan did not hear the commandment of Saul and the commandment of Saul was a rash vow. It is the similarity of events that is important. The key lies for us in who Achan was and what Achan took.

Achan took:

- A goodly Babylonish garment
- Two hundred shekels of silver
- A wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight

A garment is fairly hard to miss and this was no ordinary garment – it was a goodly Babylonish garment. This was conspicuous consumption at its finest. Wherever Achan walked he would be noticed. He also stole silver and gold. Achan was after power and wealth and for very good reason. It is the **motive**

behind Achan's actions that is relevant for us. The scripture is drawing a link to teach us something that is relevant for Jonathan's life. Achan was a direct descendant from Judah through his father Zerah. In Genesis 49:10 we read of the blessing given to Judah. We read that the sceptre would be Judah's and that the lawgiver would be Judah's until Shiloh come. Judah would be the kingly tribe of whom Christ the king and lawgiver would come. We read in Joshua 7:1 that Achan was a direct descendant from Judah through his father. However, the line of Zerah was not going to be the kingly line. Achan was not the one who would be king. Instead it was through the line of Pharez that the king and lawgiver would come. Achan wanted to be king and coveted kingly garments and possessions but he was not the one who would inherit the throne promised to Judah.

### **The lesson of the kingship**

Scripture is drawing a parallel between Jonathan's life and Achan's life to show that, while Jonathan had faithfully delivered Israel from the Philistines, it was not Jonathan who would be king. Although rightful heir to the throne of Israel, Jonathan was not the promised king from the tribe of Judah.

### **What would Jonathan have been thinking at this stage?**

We cannot say for sure if Jonathan saw this parallel between his own life and the story of Achan. However, it seems likely that he would have. The events in both stories even take place in the same location:

"And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethaven, on the east side of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai" Jos 7:2.

"So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Bethaven" I Sa 14:23.

If Jonathan saw the similarity then what would he have known? He knew that the kingdom was to be removed from his father's house and given to someone else. He would accept that the kingship was not his and that he would never be king. He would realise the lesson from the life of Achan which was that there would be a promised king from the line of Judah. As a result, Jonathan would

look and wait for this promised man from Judah. Here are some indications that Jonathan did see this parallel and understand these lessons:

- Jonathan does not fight in the battle against Goliath. Although the most likely candidate after his father Saul, it is as if Jonathan is waiting for the promised captain to come forward in I Sam 17
- It is when Jonathan hears David say he is the son of Jesse from Bethlehem, a town from Judah, that Jonathan loves him as his own soul in I Sam 18
- Jonathan willingly submits to David in I Sam 18 and gives him his kingly possessions

#### V 47-48 – The Wars and Victories of King Saul

Saul's wars and victories included:

- Moab – the Moabites occupied the land bordering the Dead Sea to the east of Israel.
- Ammon – the Ammonites occupied the land to the east of Israel, and directly north of the Moabites.
- Edom – the Edomites occupied the land to the south of Israel and south of the Dead Sea.
- The Kings of Zobah – Zobah was a Syrian province to the north east of Israel.
- Philistines – the Philistines occupied the land to the west of Israel which ran north/south up the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.
- Amalek – the Amalekites occupied the land south west of Israel between the Philistines to the west, and the Edomites on the east.

#### V 49-52 – The Family of King Saul

This section details Saul's family and a few of his relations. Additional details are obtained from I Sam 9:1 (e.g. to establish Abiel was the father of both Kish & Ner).

## This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines, and the page is completely blank except for the lines themselves.



# CHAPTER FOUR

I Samuel 15-17 – Saul Loses the  
Kingdom and David is Elevated

## Activities for Chapter Four

### Bible Marking

#### **Bible Marking Activity Six**

Mark into your Bible or onto an insert the comparison between I Samuel 14 and I Samuel 17.

### Character Study

No character studies for this chapter.

### Theme Study

#### **Theme Study Seven**

Complete a theme study on 'The Philistines' to understand who they were, what they represent in Scripture and how they relate to the story of Jonathan and David.

## I Samuel 15 – Saul loses the Kingdom

This chapter marks a turning point in the life of Saul, Samuel and Jonathan; for it is in this chapter that “Yahweh repented that He had made Saul king over Israel”. What a statement! Can you imagine this being said of you? How did Saul get to such a state that God would think this of him? Chapter 15 begins with God giving Saul a command to destroy the Amalekites. Saul proceeds to carry out this command, but as we know he allows the soldiers to take the best of the sheep and cattle and Agag the king as a spoil. God had specifically commanded that anything associated with the Amalekites was to be destroyed.

Saul is boastful of his success in battle and proclaims to Samuel (v13) “Blessed be thou of Yahweh: I have performed the commandment of Yahweh.” Samuel is shocked to see and hear that Saul had not fully carried out the Yahweh’s command. As Samuel questions Saul, Saul stumbles over his own words endeavouring to put together an excuse.

Samuel sees through Saul’s motivation (v22-23). “Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offering and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Yahweh? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” David shows in Psalm 51:16-17 that God doesn’t desire either of these things, but rather a broken spirit and a contrite heart He will not despise. Samuel then continues, “Because thou hast rejected the Word of Yahweh, He also hath rejected thee from being king.”

Saul is immediately repentant and seeks for Samuel to ask forgiveness of God on his behalf. But it is too late. Samuel replies, “Yahweh hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou.” Saul’s desire is still for himself. “I have sinned. Now honour me, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, then I will bow down unto Yahweh thy God” (Roth). Saul tries to get Samuel to proclaim before the people that he is king.

Samuel, under God’s instructions had made him king and now proclaims that his kingship is finished. Saul wants him to re-establish his authority with the people; to “take back”, as it were, his words and worship Samuel’s God together. This is a selfish and self-centred request. It seems that Saul was the kind of person desirous of truth for the glory and not to glorify.



## I Samuel 16 – A New King is Anointed

In chapter 15 Saul is rejected by God as the king over His people. Because of his continuing lack of spirituality and disobedience he could no longer be tolerated by God, though there were people in the kingdom that loved and served him. God then asks Samuel in v1-3 to go to Bethlehem, to the house of Jesse and anoint the chosen son of Jesse to be the next king over His people.

God teaches Samuel an important lesson; “Yahweh seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looketh on the heart.” David, the youngest of Jesse’s sons is anointed in the midst of all his family by Samuel.

We are told in v14 that the spirit of Yahweh departed from Saul and an evil spirit from Yahweh troubled Saul. To appease Saul’s anger, David is called before Saul to play the harp. At this time we learn that David was with Saul often and Saul developed a close relationship with David and he became Saul’s armourbearer. This was a position reserved for a valiant and courageous man who could protect the king, but also a man in whom the king could place explicit trust. Saul grew to love David. How things were to change for these two men over the coming chapters.

## I Samuel 17 – David and Goliath

David is commanded by his father Jesse to take supplies and see if his brothers were faring well at the battlefield. David is outraged by Israel’s lack of assurance in Yahweh their God and tells his brethren and Saul later in v36 that he is prepared in faith to face the uncircumcised Philistine that dares to defy the army of the living God. What faith is displayed by David! This man had such explicit trust in God’s ability to guide his life.

Goliath mocked as David approaches him the next day and taunts the inability of the Israeli army to send out a man to fight, but in doing so he challenges the God of Israel. It became Yahweh’s battle. David was a talented and proven sling thrower but this battle was between God and the uncircumcised Philistine. God would ensure that this challenge was answered in such a way that they would be in no doubt that the battle would be won and Israel assured that there is only one God in Israel v47.

David victoriously carries the head of Goliath to Jerusalem and there answers the questions of Saul concerning his background and the act performed that day. No doubt David reiterated his words of faith, that though Goliath came to him with a sword, spear and shield, he came in the name of Yahweh of Armies with courage, faith and motivation which enabled him to slay such an individual as Goliath.

### **Context of Jonathan**

While we observe these heroic acts from David, we must remember that Jonathan is present too. While Jonathan is not mentioned by name, we know that he was a captain over Saul's army and most likely there during the battle with the Philistines. We understand from I Sam 18v1 that Jonathan was with Saul when David brought the head of Goliath to Saul. He heard the words of David and it was at David's words that Jonathan loved him. This is the revealing of the promised captain over Yahweh's inheritance – the promised King from the tribe of Judah. Jonathan looks at David and he loves him as his own soul (I Sam 18v1). Here is the answer from Yahweh, the captain over His people Israel. Jonathan sees in David the neighbour that is better than Saul and he loves him as his own soul. It is in the next events that we see the true character of Jonathan. We see a man who has learnt to accept the plans that God has for him and who faithfully submits to the will of Yahweh.

Jonathan sees in David someone who was like minded with himself. Look at the similarities between these two men that are displayed in their lives:

Jonathan vs Philistines I Sam 14	David vs Goliath I Sam 17
V4 And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison	V3 And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and <i>there was</i> a valley between them.
V12 the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel.	V37 The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.
V6 the uncircumcised Philistines	V26, 36 Uncircumcised Philistine
V12 come and see us and we will show you a thing	V44 come to me, I will feed your flesh to fowl & beasts
V13 Unafraid climbed up on hands and knees	V48 David Hasted and Ran to meet the Philistine
V13 They fell before Jonathan	V49 he fell upon his face before David
V10 Yahweh has delivered them into our hand	V47 Yahweh will give you into our hands
V6 No restraint, God saves by few or by many	V47 Yahweh saves not with sword and spear, the battle is Yahweh's
V12 Delivered them into the hand of Israel	V46 that all earth knows that God is in Israel
V22 ...they followed hard after them (philistines) in battle	V52 Israel pursued the Philistines in Battle
V23 So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Bethaven.	V47 And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle <i>is</i> the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands.

# CHAPTER FIVE

I Samuel 18 – Faithful Friendship

DISCUSSION GROUP TWO

## Activities for Chapter Five

### Bible Marking

#### **Bible Marking Activity Seven**

Mark into your Bible or onto an insert the key elements of the covenant that Jonathan and David make. Hint: you can either mark this in one place, or summarise each of the three sections on the covenant in your Bible.

### Character Study

#### **Character Study Five**

Complete a character study on the man David. This chapter provides a starting place for your character study.

### Theme Study

#### **Theme Study Eight**

Complete a theme study on 'covenants' to understand what a covenant is and what covenants are recorded in Scripture.

#### **Theme Study Nine**

Complete a theme study on 'friendship' in Scripture. Consider how Abraham was the friend of God, how we can be God's friends and what it means to be a 'friend' in Scripture.

## V1-4 – Jonathan’s Covenant with David

V 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.”

### **‘And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul’**

Chapter 18 continues on from the previous chapter without a break, as David answers Saul’s questions about his family and descent. It is at the words of David that Jonathan loves him. David had said: “I *am* the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite” revealing him to be the promised captain from the tribe of Judah I Sa 17:58.

### **‘that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David’**

‘Knit’ = Heb. qashar – ‘to be tied, or bound, or girded’. Cp Gen 44:30 – speaking of Jacob and Benjamin seeing that his life is bound up in the lad’s life.

Jonathan’s heart was knit with David’s although there were many differences between them in respect of their ages, positions and status in the nation, education and experience. They shared common goals, ideals, beliefs and hope. Jonathan would have heard David’s words about Goliath (I Sam 17:26), and his testimony to Saul (v32-37), his defence of Yahweh in response to Goliath (v45-47) and witnessed how Yahweh had blessed David in battle. He also saw the meekness and humility of David after the victory of the battle and in the answers he gave to king Saul. From this, Jonathan was able to see that they shared a common hope and love of God and these were the qualities upon which their friendship was based.

### **‘And Jonathan loved him as his own soul’**

Jonathan’s love was shown to David in I Sam 18:1-3, 19:2, 20:17 and II Sam 1:26. Even king Saul showed his love for David in I Sam 16:21. However, the love that Jonathan showed to his friend was based on the common Godly characteristics and hope that they shared; which allowed their love for each other to become a deep and meaningful relationship (cp. I Cor 12:12-20; Rom 12:4-5), whilst the love that Saul had for David was shallow and only based on how David could benefit him (cp. Prov 18:24).

V 2 “And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more to his father’s house.”

### **‘Saul took him that day’**

Here Saul’s selfishness comes to the fore and is a direct fulfilment of what Samuel told the people would happen if they wanted a king to rule over them (cp. I Sam 8:11). David was taken and incorporated into the court of Saul. He was separated from the influence of his own family.

Verse 3 “Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul”

### **‘Then Jonathan and David made a covenant’**

The word ‘then’ indicates that this action was prompted by the events of v1-2, showing that Jonathan was a man of action. Perhaps once they realised their similarities and the common hope that they shared, David told Jonathan that he had been anointed as the next king. It may have been this that caused Jonathan to make a covenant with David as Jonathan knew the kingship had been removed from his father and he was on the lookout for the next king. If this was the case as it seems in v4, this action displays Jonathan’s humility, that is, to submit to the will of God, even though it was not in his best interests as the next in line to the throne.

This is the first of three affirmations of the covenant that these friends make:

- I Sam 18v3 – When David moves into the palace
- I Sam 20v16 – When David is about to flee from Saul
- I Sam 23v18 – In the woods where Jonathan found David

It was Jonathan that initiates this covenant, “Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him”. As the king’s son, it was Jonathan who takes the leadership and instigates the friendship with David.

### **The theme of the covenant**

As we have seen in the Background section of this book, the main theme of the life of Jonathan and David is the covenant that these men make. There is one covenant but it is reaffirmed between these men at different stages throughout their lives. As we have already mentioned, the covenant that these

men make is typical of the New Covenant that we enter into in Christ. Here is a description of the various elements of the covenant:

I Sam 20 v 11–17, 23, 42

- V 13 The covenant would result in peace
- V 14 The covenant was of the kindness i.e. ‘chesed’ of Yahweh
- V 14 The covenant had resulted in preservation of life for Jonathan
- V 14 The covenant was with the house of Jonathan
- V 16 The covenant was made with the house of David
- V 23 The covenant was for ever
- V 42 The covenant was sworn in the name of Yahweh for ever
- V 42 The covenant was between the seeds of Jonathan and David

I Sam 23 v 17–18

- V 17 The covenant confirms that David will be king
- V 17 The covenant provides a hope of rulership in the kingdom next to David
- V 18 The covenant is made before Yahweh

### **The transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant**

David has been revealed to Jonathan as a man from the tribe of Judah who delivers from the enemy and has been victorious. It is through personally identifying with this man David and entering into a covenant of Yahweh with this man that Jonathan can have hope of life. The result of this covenant being made is life and peace. The covenant that Jonathan and David make is an everlasting covenant of kindness or ‘chesed’ mercy. As part of Saul’s house Jonathan has had his hope of inheritance removed, but through identifying with David as the promised seed Jonathan has a hope of being elevated in David’s kingdom.

The picture conveyed in the narrative of Saul, Jonathan and David is the picture of the transition in Scripture from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. In other words, it is a picture of the transition from the Law of Moses to Christ. Refer to Chapter One for more information on the theme of the covenant.



## Moral power of the Type

The story of Saul, Jonathan and David then is the story of the new covenant that is made between faithful Israel and Christ. These three characters outline for us the work of God with His nation, both unbelieving and believing Israelites and the hope of inheritance and life that is possible through the work of His son. So, what are the lessons for us that come from this picture of the work of Christ? We must become Jonathan – a man who realised that he had no right to the kingdom of God, but that it was only through association with the Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ, that salvation could be attained. We must develop the same love that Jonathan had for David in our relationship with Christ. Our love for Christ will be shown in our willingness to lay down our lives for our brethren sacrificing our own position in life, status, wealth and possessions for their sakes. We must heed the warning of the character Saul. He was a man that was provided an inheritance but failed to obey the commandments of God, rejected David as his king and as a result had his hope of inheritance removed.

V 4 “And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.”

### **‘And Jonathan striped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments’**

A number of tokens are given to David by Jonathan. So what is Jonathan doing here? Jonathan strips himself of his robe and he gives it to David. Jonathan is acknowledging David as his king. He is acknowledging that regal authority belongs to David and not to himself. Jonathan then proceeds to give David his sword, his bow and his girdle. These were all prized possessions! They were well-known weapons that marked Jonathan as a successful warrior. These were the weapons that Jonathan has used to faithfully deliver Israel from their enemies in times past. And what is the effect of Jonathan’s actions here? Jonathan now stands in front of David completely defenseless having surrendered all of his weapons to David. David, as the heir to the throne of Israel, could have killed Jonathan. Having surrendered all of his weapons to David, Jonathan stands reliant on David’s mercy, unable to defend himself in his presence.

Jonathan gave his robe to David as a symbol of his power and royal position in the nation. The positions of David and Jonathan were reversed, with Jonathan taking on the position of a servant, whilst David held the symbol of royalty in the nation. In doing this, Jonathan laid down his title and position (John 13:14), an attitude the Apostle Paul says we need to develop in our lives (cp Phil 2:4). The robe is often used as a cloak, coat or mantle. It was a highly valued piece of clothing. In the Hebrew, the phrase 'his garments' probably has reference to Jonathan's armour, as it is the same word that is used for 'armour' in I Sam 17:38-39. David was not prepared to take the armour of king Saul in chapter 17, however he was prepared to take the armour of Jonathan, the heir to the throne. The garments were used as a protection for the body – it is used as a symbol for defence in the Bible. The strength of our defence is based on righteousness, faith & love. (Eph 6:14-16, I Thess 5:8).

### **'Even to his sword'**

In I Sam 13:22 there were only two swords in the entire land of Israel, and they were held by Jonathan and Saul. Whilst there were probably more swords in the nation by this time, Jonathan's sword was still marked as a special sword in the history of the nation. The sword is a symbol of Divine judgement (Psa 17:13, Jer 12:12, Rev 1:16), power & authority (Rom 13:4), the justice of God (Deut 32:41; Zech 13:7) and the protection of God (Deut 33:29). The sword of the spirit is illustrative of the Word of God (Heb 4:12, Eph 6:17).

### **'And to his bow'**

The bow is representative of Jonathan himself, as David sung about this when he wrote the Song of the Bow at Jonathan's death. It is used as a symbol of power and action.

### **'And to his girdle'**

The swords, daggers and money pouches were all attached to a man by their girdle, hence the expression, 'to gird one's self'. The girdle is expressive of one's readiness for any service or action which is required (Luke 12:35; I Pet 1:13). The girdle was a symbol of strength, activity and power (Job 12:18; Isa 23:10, 45:5; I Kings 20:11). Righteousness and faithfulness are called the girdle of the Messiah (Isa 11:5).

## V5-30 Saul's Attitude to David's Success

We have just seen in v1-4 the wonderful spirit of Jonathan. He is a man that will not allow his own pride or ambitions to get in the way of serving God. Jonathan has observed David and looked on him as Yahweh's anointed and God's chosen. We are about to see the contrast between Jonathan and Saul. The first accepts God's will, the other becomes fearful that their position is challenged.

### Questions and comments for Discussion Group Two:

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# CHAPTER SIX

I Samuel 19 – Method for Mediation

DISCUSSION GROUP THREE

## Activities for Chapter Six

### Bible Marking

#### **Bible Marking Activity Eight**

Colour in/underline each of the key people in chapter 19v1-7 in order to show the conversation visually.

### Character Study

No character study for chapter six.

### Theme Study

#### **Theme Study Ten**

Complete a theme study on 'hearkening' in Scripture and then compare this with Saul's life and actions.

#### **Theme Study Eleven**

Complete a theme study on relationships with parents. Focus on biblical characters who have obvious relationships with parents in Scripture such as David and Solomon.

## V 1-7 - Jonathan Changes Saul's heart

V 1 "And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David"

Jonathan and David's friendship is flourishing following the covenant they had created in 1 Sam 18:3. Saul however, gathers his servants and Jonathan his son and organises to have David killed.

### **'Spake'**

Spake indicates that there is an 'arrangement' according to Strong's Concordance, being made. It seems that this is a special meeting organised by Saul, to appoint his trusted subjects to the task of killing David. It would seem that at this time Saul was unaware of the covenant that had been created between Jonathan and David. It is not until David is fleeing from Saul, that Saul who is in Ramah realises that his son has "made a league with the son of Jesse" (1 Sam 22:8).

### **'Jonathan his son'**

Saul's whole life was revolving around preserving his house as the royal line. Hence he involves 'his son' in this attempt to extinguish David as a threat to his kingship. This brings intense pressure into the friendship shared by Jonathan and David, which is going to test them both in their commitment to each other and to their God.

V 2 "But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself:"

Saul would have had any number of excuses and reasons to convince Jonathan and his servants that David should be killed. He would have done everything he could to protect his own power and reputation, while pulling down David. Despite Saul's words, Jonathan was committed to supporting his friend.

### **'Delighted much in David'**

'Delighted' means 'to incline to' according to Strong's Concordance. Jonathan's inclination was to protect David despite his own position, but Jonathan's problem was trying to honour his father at the same time as maintaining his

loyalty to David, when there existed such hostility between David and Saul. The same word occurs in the previous chapter where we read in I Sam 18:2 that Saul had ‘delight’ in David and so wanted him to be the king’s son in law. In chapter 18 this was false delight – Saul was planning David’s death. Here in chapter 19 Jonathan’s delight in David is sincere.

### **‘Saul my father seeketh to kill thee’**

Such was Saul’s fascination with killing David. The word ‘seeketh’ in the context of “Saul my father seeketh to kill thee”, means ‘to search out, by any method; specifically in worship or prayer’. Saul’s desire became so intense that he saw it as almost a religious act. He would achieve his own ends by any means possible.

### **‘take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself’**

Jonathan was in a very difficult position. On the one hand he was presented as “Saul’s son”, but on the other hand he delighted much in David. Jonathan does not condemn his father outright, but he tells David to conceal himself in a secret place for his safety.

V 3 “And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee.”

### **‘And I will go out’**

It is notable that Jonathan takes the lead in this situation. It is Jonathan who comes to David. There is a very deliberate process that Jonathan sets out here that is worth noting:

- I will go out
- I will commune
- I will tell thee

Jonathan sees he has a personal responsibility in this situation to bring Saul and David together and he purposes to bring this about.

### **‘and stand beside my father’**

Jonathan was dedicated to honouring his father, however he was still conscious of David hiding close at hand. Ultimately Jonathan ends up beside his father in his final battle in I Sam 31. The phrase ‘stand beside’ is the Hebrew word ‘Yad’ which means ‘hand.’ Jonathan is going to stand hand to hand with his father beside him. It reveals the personal lengths that Jonathan will go to in order to bring David into Saul’s presence. We can imagine Jonathan Saul’s son leading him out into the field.

### **‘in the field where thou art’**

The word for ‘field’ here means ‘spread out.’ This is a wide open place, perhaps bordered by a forest or with rocks where David would be hiding. Jonathan will lead Saul out from the city and into the very field where David would be hiding to speak with his father. While the field will be a secret place, it will be a place known to both David and Jonathan.

### **‘and I will commune with my father of thee’**

The word for ‘commune’ literally means to ‘arrange’ or to ‘speak.’ While Jonathan tells David that he will speak with his father, he says to David that he will tell David what he ‘sees.’ As Jonathan is going to be speaking with Saul it would make more sense for Jonathan to tell David what he hears. However, Jonathan will pass on to David what he perceives, not just what Saul says. This gives us an insight into the mind of this man – he is perceptive.

The other notable feature of this verse is the relationship that these two men have. Their relationship involves communication. Jonathan promises David that he ‘will tell’ David what he sees. As friends these two men trust each other explicitly and rely on the other. This relationship is picked up in the next chapter: “Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee” I Sam 20v4. “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 not I tell it thee?” I Sam 20v9.

### **Lessons for us**

Jonathan goes through a deliberate process of mediation. It involves communication with both parties. He will begin with David as the party who has been wronged. He will then go and speak with Saul as the party who has



caused the division to reason with him. He will then communicate this with David. We see that mediation between brethren relies on faithful communication.

V 4 “And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David’ because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good:”

Here is the king’s son, the man who stands to lose the most in the preserving of David’s life, doing everything he can to protect and promote David.

### **‘Jonathan spake good of David’**

This is a characteristic of true friendship. Jonathan, prepared to give up his right to the throne, strives to further David’s cause.

### **‘Let not the king’**

There is a reverence and respect here for his father, even though Saul is not acting wisely. It shows the tact that Jonathan possesses. He is respectful to his father as the king and shows this when he speaks to him. This is also exactly what Saul is brooding over. His obsession with maintaining his seed as the royal family, causes him to view David as a potential threat. Jonathan reaffirms Saul’s position as king.

### **‘sin’**

Rather than condemning Saul’s actions, or telling Saul why he is wrong, Jonathan leads with concern for his father. He says ‘let not the king sin.’ In so doing he draws Saul’s attention the effect of his actions, rather than condemning his actions outright. If Saul was to slay David he would be sinning. Saul, as a man who lives by Law, would have his conscience pricked by this thought. If Saul slays David he will be sinning and therefore his actions will not only be against David but against God. The words of Jonathan here are carefully chosen to appeal to Saul’s sense of justice and law.

### **‘against his servant’**

Jonathan’s carefully chosen words are telling Saul that David is merely “his servant”. It is clear that Jonathan’s approach is not condemning Saul, but

desperately trying to win him over. He reveals the futility of Saul's command to kill David. On one hand Saul has requested that his servants kill David but on the other hand, David was one of Saul's own loyal servants.

**'because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good:'**

Only once Jonathan has introduced David in such a way, describing how unreasonable Saul's request is. David has not sinned against Saul and David's works towards Saul have only been good.

Lessons for us

We see here the attitude of Jonathan as a mediator. He has genuine concern for both parties – concern for David who he delights in, but also concern for Saul. His objective is to stop Saul from sinning, rather than just condemn Saul for his actions. When we speak to one of our brethren about how they have wronged us or we need to explain to someone that what they are doing is wrong, how do we do this? Jonathan's objective is to save his father and he shows genuine concern when he seeks to bring Saul and David back together:

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Gal 5v25-6v2

V 5 "For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?"

### **‘For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine’**

Jonathan brings Saul’s attention to the fact that David had slain Goliath the Philistine. Why was this relevant for Saul and why would Jonathan bring this up in the context of pleading for David’s life? David had slain Goliath when it was actually Saul as the king over Israel who was the most evenly matched for Goliath. Saul, head and shoulders above the people, would have been the most likely candidate to fight Goliath. In slaying Goliath David had preserved Saul’s life from danger.

### **‘and Yahweh wrought a great salvation’**

Jonathan draws Saul’s attention here to the fact that Yahweh was the one who had wrought salvation through David. There is no ulterior motive to David’s actions, he has been put there by God. If Saul now slays David, he is ignoring the fact that God has worked with this man and puts himself in opposition not to David but to the work of God.

Jonathan also uses his father’s own words to support what he is saying. In I Samuel 11v12-13, Saul, a much more spiritually minded man, proclaims that God was working in the nation to achieve the victory against the Ammonites. The people had been looking for the men who were not supportive of Saul’s kingship, that they might put them to death. On that occasion, Saul himself responds, “there shall not a man be put to death this day: for today the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel.” So Jonathan uses his father’s own words to remind him of the event and to rekindle this spirit in Saul.

However, not only is Jonathan alluding to Saul’s commandment from chapter 11, he is also bringing Saul’s attention back to the previous time that he attempted to kill an innocent person in cold blood. That person was Jonathan himself who had wrought with God to bring about a great victory in I Samuel 14. There the people had rescued Jonathan from Saul. Jonathan is bringing Saul’s mind back to that time to remind Saul that slaying a man in innocent blood was not a wise decision.

Proverbs 16v13-14 shows the wisdom that Jonathan possesses in his careful plea to his father. “Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right. The wrath of the king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it.” Jonathan stood to face his father’s wrath, but in his

thoughtful approach he showed wisdom that he might pacify the king and win over his father. He had a number of issues that he could have confronted Saul with that would have shown him the error of his ways, but the spirit that Jonathan showed enabled Saul's response.

### **'for all Israel'**

Jonathan then reminds Saul that the salvation of David was for all of Israel. Jonathan reminds Saul of the relief that Saul felt at that moment in time. Saul had been spared from fighting Goliath and, in effect, David had saved Saul's life. David fought Yahweh's battles and his victories were not for himself. Jonathan shows how Saul's motivation for seeking David's life was ill founded. Rather than seeking the kingship, David was fighting Yahweh's battles.

### **'wherefore then wilt thou sin'**

Jonathan does not question his father for attempting to slay David. He reasons with his father to show Saul how Saul will be sinning in slaying David. Jonathan is appealing to Saul's duty to the Law as Saul's life is governed by Law. While in many parts Saul failed to keep the Law of Yahweh and Yahweh's commandments, Saul had striven to uphold The Law on previous occasions. In slaying David Saul would be breaking the law and sinning. In I Samuel 14 Saul reveals his aversion to sin as revealed by Law: "And Saul said, Draw ye near hither, all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day" I Sam 14v38.

In earlier chapters, Saul has been adamant that innocent blood should not be shed. We see here the inconsistency in Saul's behaviour. He also has an apparent aversion to breaking the Law but is now going about to commit sin through seeking to kill David. Saul reveals the attitude displayed by those who keep the Law without understanding the spirit of it – if we don't understand the principles governing our actions and see actions as merely rule based, then we may unwittingly act in a way that is opposed to the principles we are meant to be upholding.

### **‘against innocent blood’**

Jonathan reveals to Saul that, not only would he be sinning in slaying David, he would also be killing an innocent man something which the Law expressly forbade: “Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked” Exo 23v7.

V 6 “And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan; and Saul swore, “As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain.”

### **‘And Saul hearkened’**

The words of Jonathan caused Saul to hearken to him. This is astounding. The words of Jonathan had such an effect upon Saul that he listened and acted upon Jonathan’s advice! The word for hearken is the word ‘shama’ and it means ‘to hear intelligently.’ The idea of hearkening is a key idea in the life of Saul. Saul is a character who would hear the Word of God, would hearken to it but who would ultimately not obey it, reject the Word of God and as a result God would reject Saul from being king.

Saul began by **hearing** the word of God shown him by Samuel: “As they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may **shew** thee the word of God” I Sam 9v27.

Saul was commanded by Samuel to **hearken unto the voice of Yahweh** and keep his commandment to slay Amalek: “Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee *to be* king over his people, over Israel: now **therefore hearken** thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD” I Sam 15v1.

However, Saul failed to hear and obey the voice of Yahweh: “And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in **obeying** the voice of the LORD? Behold, to **obey** is better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams... and Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and **obeyed** their voice” I Sam 15v22,24.

### **‘unto the voice of Jonathan’**

Saul was pacified through the wisdom and discretion of his son. Jonathan’s part in this redemptive work is mentioned four times in this verse. The point cannot be missed. This reconciliation was all the work of Jonathan. He was always conscious of, and submissive to God’s will.

### **‘as Yahweh liveth’**

Saul then swears an oath by Yahweh. An oath cannot be by anything greater than Yahweh. Unfortunately, Saul will go against his own oath here and he will attempt to slay David throughout the rest of his life. Once again, the words of Saul will be proven to be worthless.

V 7 “And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan showed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as in times past.”

### **‘And Jonathan called David’**

Picture the scene as it unfolds. Saul and Jonathan are standing side by side in the open field outside the city. They are standing in the field where David is hiding. Across the morning air we hear Jonathan calling his friend. He walks over to where David is hidden, confirms the words of Saul with him and then brings him to his father Saul. As a faithful friend, Jonathan follows through on what he had set out to do. He calls David, he shews him all the things that Saul has spoken and he brings David to Saul. The word for ‘shewed’ here is the same word as in verse three for ‘tell.’

### **‘and Jonathan showed him all those things’**

The phrase can be rendered ‘all these words.’ This phrase is often used of the words of Yahweh that are spoken, heard and then recited by the prophets so that every word of Yahweh is passed on to God’s people. This is a principle of conveying truth – every word which is spoken must be passed on. As a faithful friend, Jonathan passes on all of the words that were spoken with Saul. He does not change the facts, highlight his impression of the conversation or select what he thinks David may want to hear or what he thinks David should hear. Just as Yahweh spoke His words to Moses and they were faithfully passed

on, so we should pass on an accurate record of our conversations with others when we deal with reconciliation.

### **‘and Jonathan brought David to Saul’**

David is now brought to Saul. We see a restored relationship – David is brought back into Saul’s presence.

### **‘And he was in his presence as in times past’**

The phrase ‘as in times past’ is a fascinating phrase. The word for ‘time’ indicates the day before yesterday. A correct rendering of the phrase would be ‘three days ago in the past.’ Three days have passed since David was in Saul’s presence. The concept of ‘three days’ is a common one in the life of Jonathan and David. It comes up extensively in the next chapter in **chapter 20**.

Lessons for us:

In this section we see Jonathan’s amazing attitude of loyalty to both his father and to David. Jonathan could have dishonoured his father by showing his father’s sins before all the servants. Instead, he took time to discuss these things with David and after a night of prayer, Jonathan speaks with his father in the field, a private place, and reasons with his father, showing that David is merely his servant and Saul is the anointed king.

We can also see, highlighted all the way through this section, Jonathan’s mediatory role, showing his deep care and concern for the relationship between his father and David. Jonathan tried everything to keep David alive, in full knowledge that by doing this he was aiding David’s rise to the throne. Such was his loyalty to God and his friend that he continued to act the way he did. Do we follow after the will of God, even if this means the lowering of our ambitions? Such is what we are called to do “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matt 10:39).

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# CHAPTER SEVEN

I Samuel 20 & 23 – A Covenant of Kindness

DISCUSSION GROUP TWO

## Activities for Chapter Seven

### Bible Marking

#### **Bible Marking Activity**

No Bible marking activity for chapter seven.

### Character Study

#### **Character Study Six**

Complete a character study on the man Abner.

#### **Character Study Seven**

Complete a character study on Mephibosheth the seed of Jonathan and show how David kept his covenant to Jonathan.

### Theme Study

#### **Theme Study Twelve**

Complete a theme study on 'chesed' mercy and how it relates to the covenant that Jonathan and David make. This is the word 'kindly' in I Samuel 20v8. Hint: mercy is closely tied to the theme of the covenant in Scripture.

# I Samuel 20 - David and Jonathan's Covenant

## V 1-10 – David seeks Jonathan's help

V 1 “And David fled from Natioth 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?”

David here is very agitated in his mind. He is concerned about what Saul is thinking and unsure as to why Saul is seeking to slay him. He is not thinking of his own safety, but very confused as to why Saul is hunting him with no apparent motive. He didn't know what he had done or why this was happening. So David gives a triple statement of grief:

1. “What have I done?”
2. “What is mine iniquity?”
3. “What is my sin?”

V 2 “And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so.”

Jonathan, seeing David upset like this, would have been equally as distressed. He is surprised by what he hears from David, because he thought that he had resolved the issue by reconciling the two men (I Sam 19:1-7).

### **“God forbid” means ‘be it far from thee’**

Jonathan in turn gives David three responses to his concerns (verse 1):

1. “Be it far from thee”
2. “Thou shalt not die”
3. “It is not so”

Jonathan's own concern is shown to match David's grief. How could Saul his father kill David with no valid reason? The amazing thing about Jonathan is that his first thought toward his father is good. He is only prepared to assume the best of Saul, despite his knowledge of Saul's character. It would have been clear to him that Saul was uneasy underneath, but he would not accept that his father still sought to slay David, particularly after his reconciliation in

chapter 19. Whatever the case, it is apparent that Jonathan is completely unaware of what has happened in the latter part of ch 19. He had not been informed:

1. That Saul had thrown a javelin at David in a rage
2. That Saul had sent spies to watch David's house
3. That David had fled to Samuel in Ramah and been pursued by Saul's servants

### **'it is not so'**

It is possible that Jonathan had been sent by Saul to some other part in the kingdom. Saul seems to be concealing it from him. See v3, though Jonathan was not inclined to think this of his father.

V 3 "And David swore 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."

David 'sware' with an oath, confirming to Jonathan that this was a very serious matter. Saul obviously had some knowledge of the friendship between David and Jonathan, so he was careful to conceal from Jonathan anything that might upset him. Saul knew from Jonathan's requests in chapter 19 that he was protective of David. He was also aware that Jonathan would know that his attitude and motivation was not right. When Jonathan found this out, he would have been very disappointed. Saul and Jonathan had been very close and Jonathan had an implicit trust in Saul. Jonathan had always tried to be faithful, loyal and true to his father. This would have made it even more distressing for him, for it meant he could no longer trust Saul. This section introduces another twist into the dialogue, with David still being hounded by Saul, even after their seeming reconciliation. This of course, seems ludicrous to Jonathan because of his implicit trust for his father and the fact that his father hadn't disclosed his intentions to him as beforehand ch 19:1.

### **Lesson for us**

Jonathan and David in this section, address sensitive issues in each other's lives. Their motivation was to help each other, even if it meant a temporary

wound to each other cp. Proverbs 27:6. Are you a friend that seeks to build up friendships by saying needful words?

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

When Jonathan heard David swear with an oath, he was assured that David was right. Jonathan was impressed by David’s conviction. This should be the attitude of all faithful disciples towards Christ. The margin of the Oxford King James Version says ‘what is thy mind?’ This would seem to indicate that Jonathan could sense that David already had something planned. He was willing to trust David’s decisions in order to support his struggling friend.

Christ says in Matt 10:34-39:

“Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

Jonathan was a fantastic example of a character who was prepared to give up everything he had, that he might follow his friend David and support him. Amazingly, throughout all this, he still remains loyal to his father despite their differences.

V 5 “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.”

The Septuagint version renders this: “And David said to Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow is the new moon and I shall not on any account sit down to eat, but thou shalt let me go, and I will hide in the plain till the evening.”

**‘I shall not on any account sit down.’**

David suggests that, though he should be there, there is no way that he is going to be.

V 7 “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.”

It would be reasonable to suggest that if David said this, then he would do it. Three days was suitable time to make the journey down to Bethlehem and back again. At this stage it was important that they make such a plan that Saul would be caused to show spontaneously what was really in his mind, so that Jonathan could witness it firsthand. In this way, despite what Saul was withholding from Jonathan, it would clarify in Jonathan’s mind exactly what David had said.

V 8 “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 shouldest thou bring me to thy father?”

The Jerusalem Bible renders this: “Do this favour for your servant, since you have united yourself with him by a pact in Yahweh’s Name. But if I am guilty, then kill me yourself – why take me to your father?”

David’s respect for Jonathan is still very clear. In v 7-8, he addresses Jonathan as “thy servant”. This shows that while Jonathan was prepared to give everything he had to support David becoming the next king, David was in no way assuming that position readily in Jonathan’s place. Their friendship was deeply focused on what they could offer each other.

V 9 “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 not I tell it thee?”

### **‘Far be it from thee’**

This is the same phrase used in v2 “God forbid”. He does not condemn or criticise Saul out right.

V 10 “Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly?”

It seems like David is starting to panic. Despite the fact that he has killed a giant, a lion and a bear, he still does not have the strength of mind and character to deal with the mental issues that were facing him at this time. It will take Jonathan, as the more mature and experienced of the two, time to calm him and refocus him that God’s will might still be worked out.

David, in this section conceives a plan to make known to Jonathan the real feeling in Saul’s heart. Jonathan’s reaction is still one of shock, unable to believe his father’s plan is to assassinate David.

### V 11-17 – Jonathan and David reaffirm the covenant

V 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.”

It is Jonathan, as the elder and more mature of the two men, that takes the action once again. He decides to take David somewhere private to discuss the issue. Out in the field, there would be no one else able to hear. While they were in Saul’s house it would be very difficult to discuss the matter privately. Jonathan wanted to do all that he could to help David and also to honour God in the way that he achieved this.

Gen 4:8 shows another occasion where two went out into a field. In this case, Cain slew his brother, Abel. When Cain was asked “Where is Abel thy brother?” he denied that he was responsible for the safe-keeping of his brother. This is a powerful contrast to the attitude of Jonathan here, who wanted to do everything in his power to protect his dear friend, David, even at his own loss.

V 12 “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”



### **‘And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel’**

The Jerusalem Bible translates this more accurately, as “Yahweh the God of Israel be witness”. The first thing Jonathan says is “let Yahweh be witness”. It is Jonathan who brings God into the matter. Good friends in the truth should always seek for God’s involvement, because “a threefold cord is not quickly broken” Ecc 4:12.

### **‘when I have sounded my father’**

Jonathan outlines who the main characters of this story are. They are Yahweh, Jonathan, Saul his father and David. There is a clear link established between Jonathan and Saul is father. All through the chapter Saul is described as his father, in fact, the phrase ‘father’ comes up 14 times in this chapter.

### **“or the third day”**

In this chapter the third day is a major thread. In verse 5 David says he will hide in the field until the third day at even. In verse 12 Jonathan will sound out his father on the morrow or third day. In verse 19 David is to wait three days. In verse 27 it is very clear that Jonathan talks to Saul on the second day of the month. In verse 35 Jonathan then rises up in the morning on the third day at the time appointed with David. The time appointed for David to be reveal himself from his hiding spot is the third day.

V 13 “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.”

### **‘that thou mayest go in peace’**

In verse 13 Jonathan reveals his faith in Yahweh and his dedication to David. Whatever the outcome of his meeting with Saul, David will go in peace. What an outstanding example of faith in God’s will brothers and sisters. Whatever the outcome, Jonathan acknowledges that David will go away in peace and Yahweh will be with him.

### **‘Yahweh be with thee, as he hath been with my father’**

Jonathan tried to help without compromising his loyalty to his father. The Jerusalem Bible translates this as “Yahweh be with you as he used to be with my father”. He could see that Yahweh was not with his father any more.

V 14–15 “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 everyone from the face of the earth.”

In verses 14-15 we then have a personal plea from Jonathan to David. Once again, the characteristic of kindness is mentioned. Jonathan's life is in David's hands. It is not David who is in mortal danger it is Jonathan. Jonathan knows that Yahweh will deliver David and that he will go in peace. Jonathan pleads with David that when he is king he will show kindness to him in keeping him alive. The kindness of this friendship between these two men is the kindness of Yahweh. The word is 'chesed' and it means the goodness or mercy of Yahweh. This kindness is not only Yahweh's kindness but it is also David's kindness in verse 15. Jonathan acknowledges that David has God's character and pleads with him that he might show the mercy of Yahweh to him in keeping him alive.

What other things do we learn about this covenant? This kindness of Yahweh is to continue with Jonathan and with his house. Here we have the covenant extended to not only Jonathan but also his house after him. This kindness of Yahweh's is to be FOR EVER. This is not a covenant that ends with Jonathan and David only but a covenant that will continue for ever. This kindness will continue even after all of David's enemies have been cut off from the face of the earth.

David never forgot this promise. See II Sam 9:1, II Sam 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 was when Yahweh cut off the enemies of David, and this is when he remembered the promise. It is no coincidence that Jonathan's own son was the only survivor from his household.

V 16 “So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies.”

This is now the second time they make this covenant together. The first time was in I Sam 18:3. Now they are renewing their covenant in the midst of trial to reinforce the strength of their friendship. In this renewal of the covenant, however, they extend it to include their own families. Jonathan consistently

acknowledged that the kingdom and the throne was rightfully David's. We acknowledge this same commitment every Sunday. We renew our covenant with Christ and declare that one day he will be king. We also desire that his kindness will be shown to us when that time comes.

V 17 "And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul."

### **'For he loved him as he loved his own soul'**

Their covenant is still based on the same foundation as the beginning, because Jonathan loved David and there was a shared likeness between these two men. Rather than Jonathan causing David to swear, he actually swears to David. He is trying to reassure David that his feelings have not changed, despite the dramatic change in circumstances that had taken place.

Jonathan's love is shown throughout David's life:

- 1 Samuel 18:1 (x 2)
- 1 Samuel 19:2
- 1 Samuel 20:17
- 1 Samuel 20:41
- 2 Samuel 1:26

This is one of the principles of true friendship and is essential to maintaining a strong bond between friends. "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" Prov 17:17.

Lessons for us:

The opening words of the covenant, which Jonathan spoke to David, give us a great insight into the friendship between these two. "And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel..." True friendship is based on Godly principles and the acknowledgement of God working. This is really a fundamental thing but ever so powerful Ecc 4:12. Having your friendships bound by God strengthens them. Would all of your friendships be able to withstand such pressure?

V 18-24 – Jonathan and David's plan

V 18 "Then Jonathan said to David, Tomorrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty."

This is almost restating what David had already said to Jonathan in v5. Not only is the new moon a time of sacrifice and feasting Num 28:11, but it would also be very dark, and a good opportunity for David to hide from Saul.

Verse 19 “And when thou hast stayed three days, then thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was in hand, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel.”

**‘when thou hast stayed three days’**

“Stayed” is not in the text. It is speaking rather of ‘at the end of three days’. David returned within the space of three days.

**‘and come to the place’**

v24 shows that “the place” was in a field. It is possible that this place is the same place where “the business” was conducted in I Sam 19:3. Jonathan had been successful in reconciling them here before, and maybe he believed that he would have that same success on this occasion.

V 20-22 “And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. And, behold, I will send a lad, saying, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for there is peace to thee, and no hurt; as the LORD liveth. But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee; go thy way: for the LORD hath sent thee away.”

Jonathan is frequently using Yahweh’s Name and in so doing he is keeping Him in the centre of their relationship and all of their decisions. Of course the first thing that Jonathan suggests is that “there is peace”. However, if that is not the case, then he wanted David to understand that “Yahweh hath sent” him away. He wanted to ensure that David was aware of Yahweh’s hand at work in his life and in their friendship.

V 23 “And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the LORD be between thee and me for ever.”

### **‘And as touching the matter’**

Strong’s renders ‘matter’ as ‘the word’. The word of friendship, which they had made.

### **‘Yahweh be between thee and me for ever’**

Jonathan could see their friendship continuing “forever”. He was looking past the present, to the kingdom with confidence that they would both be privileged to enjoy it together.

The purpose of Jonathan’s whole speech was to comfort David. He did not just commiserate with David’s struggles, but he actually understood what David was going through and offered a helping hand.

Jonathan could clearly see David’s issues:

- He is concerned about Saul’s opinion and what he has done amiss. Jonathan tries to reassure him by sounding his father out about his feelings toward David v12-13.
- He is anxious to know how Jonathan feels about him in all this. Jonathan renews their covenant “for he loved him as he loved his own soul” v16-17.
- He is wondering how they will be able to resolve the problem Jonathan confirms their plan of action v18-20.
- He needs to realise that God’s hand is still working with him. Jonathan tells him that it is Yahweh that controls the events in his life v21-22.
- He risks becoming too absorbed by what is going on around him. Jonathan lifts up his spirit and sets his focus beyond the present v23.

Lessons for us:

“The LORD be between thee and me for ever”. What an amazing statement of faith from Jonathan. Surely it is a wonderful view to have in a friendship of any kind. This also highlights the reason why God blesses us with friends. It enables us to watch for their eternity, which is referred to frequently in Scripture (Ezek 3:17-21). By making every friendship we have an eternal thing adds mightily to the strength of our friendship.

V 24 “So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat.”

Everything up until now is going according to what the friends have planned. David has finished his part and has come back to hide in the field. The record now reverts back to what is happening with Jonathan.

V 25-34 – The feast – Saul reveals his feelings towards David

V 25 “And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul’s side, and David’s place was empty.”

**‘as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall’**

The scene is beautifully set for us. Saul is sitting in his usual place “as at other times upon a seat by the wall”. Seated in this position with the wall behind him and a trusted friend at his side, he was protecting himself from anyone that might attempt to do him harm. He is very concerned about his position as king and everything in his mind is revolving around keeping the throne.

**‘and Jonathan arose’**

The Jerusalem Bible translates this as “with Jonathan facing him”. The fact that he sat opposite Saul also shows Jonathan’s attitude during this time. He is opposite his father in every way, though still not prepared to criticise him.

**‘and Abner sat by Saul’s side’**

Abner is introduced in I Sam 14:50 as the captain of Saul’s army. Being Saul’s own uncle, he was always deeply committed to preserving the house of Kish upon the throne. He even takes Ishbosheth, Saul’s son, and makes him king when Saul dies.

**‘and David’s place was empty’**

David has a place at the king’s table because he is a captain, a friend of Saul’s son, and Saul’s own son-in-law.

Verse 26 “Nevertheless Saul spake not anything that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean.”

**‘Befallen him’**

Strong’s Concordance renders this “chance or accident”. Saul thought he must have been unclean. It is amazing that his first thought was that it must have

been for religious reasons. He knew how trustworthy and committed David was to keeping the Law. Lev 11:24 shows clearly that uncleanness ended at even and Saul knew this, and so the drama unfolds. We see in this section the workings of Saul's mind and the uncleanness he assumes upon David. Such is the working of a twisted mind.

V 27 "And it came to pass on the morrow, which was the second day of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day?"

### **'On the morrow'**

After the evening has passed v26. Saul picked up what was happening straight away. He is very uneasy, and suspicious of anything, so as soon as David does not appear the second day he begins to worry.

### **'the son of Jesse'**

Up until now Saul has always called him David, but all of a sudden he becomes "the son of Jesse". See also v30-31 and I Sam 22:8. Saul couldn't even bear to use his name. Jonathan would pick up the change of address immediately. This is incredibly contrasted to his approach to David in I Samuel 24:16 where he calls David "my son".

V 28-29 "And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem: And he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there: and now, if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table."

### **'And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem'**

This is what they had agreed on in v6, however, Jonathan is nervous and starts adding things he perhaps should not have.

### **‘Let me go, I pray thee’**

Strong’s renders this “Let me get away” means ‘to escape by slipperiness’. This is the same as when David “escaped” from Saul in I Sam 19:10. Jonathan should not have said this, because Saul picked it up immediately.

V 30 “Then Saul’s anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother’s nakedness?”

Lacking anything to answer, Saul hurls this insult at Jonathan. Jonathan’s mother, Ahinoam, is mentioned in I Sam 14:49-50. Her name means ‘that which is related to pleasantness’. Jonathan’s godliness must have come from his mother. Perhaps she has also angered Saul by standing up for God’s principles. It might have been more correct for Saul to say ‘thou son of a perverse, rebellious father’.

V 31 “For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.”

Samuel had spoken to Saul in I Sam 13:14 telling him, “Thy kingdom shall not continue”. He was told again in I Sam 15:28 that the kingdom would be rent from him. He never accepted this, instead, from that time forward he was very suspicious of everyone and went out of his way to try and protect himself and his family.

Matt 6:33 says: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these (material) things shall be added unto you.” Saul on the other hand sought his own kingdom above anything else and tries to convince Jonathan to give up his friendship with David in order to receive the material possessions of the kingdom of Israel. Saul is telling Jonathan that it was either one or the other, he could not have both. Saul says, ‘secure your kingdom first, then you worry about other things’. But Jonathan was more concerned about his friendship with David and the things of the spirit. Jonathan was facing ‘all these things’ being taken away from him, but he remained loyal to David.



V 32 “And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?”

“Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?” Ecc 8:4. This is a very courageous thing for Jonathan to say. This shows Jonathan’s loyalty at a very difficult time. Psalm 15 brilliantly describes the amazing self-control that Jonathan showed. Jonathan honoured his father to the end, however he would not stand for any injustice. His loyalty to David was to his own hurt. This verse probably gives us a more amazing insight into Jonathan’s attitude than any other. Jonathan asks two perfectly reasonable questions, “what has he done?” and “why should he be slain?” Saul has no answer for his son.

V 33 “And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.”

As tends to be the reaction of people in this position, Saul resorts to violence. Saul’s emotion has become so strong against David that he even hates his own son. In all of this, we find Jonathan’s response completely devoid of self. This made him realise that his father really did want to slay David! Shouldn’t he be more worried about his own immediate safety? He was so absorbed in helping David that as he very nearly loses his life, his first thought is of David and David’s safety and well-being. This is the spirit of Christ. Christ says in John 15:18, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.” The “me” in this verse is shown as Christ (David) and the “you” is speaking of the disciples (Jonathan).

V 34 “So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.”

Rotherham translates Jonathan’s reaction as rising up “in a glow of anger”.

### **‘He did eat no meat’**

Implies that Jonathan got up and walked out from his father’s presence. He did not retaliate. He must have stood up with his face glowing in anger, looked across at his father and walked out, taking his anger with him. Proverbs 14:7

says “Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceives not in him the lips of knowledge.” Jesus himself “when he was reviled, reviled not again” I Peter 2:23. The anger of Saul was hopelessly uncontrolled and unreasonable, but in contrast, the anger of Jonathan was carefully managed and self-controlled. Paul says in Eph 4:26, “Be ye angry, and sin not.” Prov 14:29 says, “He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.” This is a good exemplar of the characters of both of Jonathan and Saul.

#### V 35-40 – Jonathan and the bow

V 35-37 “And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him. And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, Is not the arrow beyond thee?”

A little lad would not be suspicious of the actions of Jonathan, giving him the most confidence that he was safe and alone when the time came to speak to David. This whole exercise gave Jonathan plenty of time to have a good look around and determine whether or not he was being watched.

### **‘Is not the arrow beyond thee?’**

This was the agreed statement discussed with David in v22. In this intense moment it would be clear to David that any hope of reconciliation with Saul was now lost.

V 38 “And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan’s lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master.”

### **‘Make speed, haste, stay not’**

Jonathan is really emphasising the seriousness of the situation. It is quite possible that this is also directed to David, to tell him to hurry, that there was no time to hang about. It was imperative for him to hide.

V 39 “But the lad knew not anything: only Jonathan and David knew the matter.”

### **‘Only Jonathan and David’**

Only these two knew of this. True friends learn the secret of trust. True friendship is based on trust and depends on it. You cannot have a good friend unless you can keep secrets, and unless you keep your word.

V 40 “And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry [them] to the city.”

After having found out Saul’s intent to kill David, Jonathan in this section, goes ‘in the morning’ to tell David of this fact. David’s trust in Jonathan has not been unfounded, in that Jonathan brings David the reality of his own father’s hate to him. This is a massive turning point in the relationship between David & Jonathan and Jonathan & Saul. Such is Jonathan’s faith that he chooses his friend’s good rather than his own.

Lesson for us:

Trust is paramount on this occasion as Jonathan could have had David at his mercy but he chooses instead to uphold their covenant, despite the massive pressure from his father. Cp. Prov 11:13; 17:9.

## V 41-42 – Departing words

V 41 “And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded.”

### **‘As soon as the lad was gone’**

Until now, Jonathan has been watching other people, hence the bow and arrows for protection. Now that he is satisfied that no one is watching, he gives his weapons to the boy and sends him away. Then “as soon” as he had gone, David arose from his hiding place as it had been agreed in v19. David firstly bowed himself three times in acknowledgment of his friend.

### **‘David exceeded’**

They kiss one another and weep until David breaks down with uncontrollable weeping. He stands there next to the forest embracing his friend, the one who shares the same life as him. The one who he loves. David is unable to speak. Jonathan then speaks for David and he gives words of comfort that only a true friend can give.

V 42 “And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.”

### **‘And Jonathan said to David’**

Characteristically, it is Jonathan that takes charge of the situation not knowing if they will meet again.

### **‘Go in peace’**

Jonathan tell David to “Go in peace” (Shalom), reminding David that there is something much greater for them to look forward to. God willing, they would enjoy eternal peace in the kingdom together. They would always be together because God was at the centre of their relationship.

**‘And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.’**

This last section contains a heart-breaking goodbye between David and Jonathan; each expecting they will not see each other again. David continues to show his respect and thankfulness for Jonathan through his act of bowing, even though he was to be the next king. David arose and Jonathan went into the city. It seems that Jonathan stood and watched David walk away. Jonathan probably had the more difficult path to face. He had to return to the courts of his father and maintain his loyalty to him, despite the very hostile circumstances. It shows that true friendship is unaffected by changes in circumstances.

Lesson for us:

True friendship survives in whatever circumstances. “A friend is a friend at all times, it is for adversity that a brother is born” Prov 17:17. The development of this friendship in a time of adversity is a powerful and remarkable example for us to follow.

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# CHAPTER EIGHT

I Samuel 21 – 23 David flees from Saul –  
Betrayal and Escape to the Wilderness



After the emotional farewell between David and Jonathan, David flees to Nob to see Ahimelech the priest. David, in his distress, tells a lie to Ahimelech stating that he was on the king's business, and that he should tell no one of his visit. At David's request, the priest gave David the bread from the Table of Shewbread, as he had no other bread available. He also sought a weapon and was given the sword of Goliath the Philistine. He then fled to live amongst the enemy, where, for fear of Achish, the king of Gath, he pretended to be mad. Achish did not want a man who appeared mad, so David departed and escaped to the cave of Adullam.

When news of David's presence came, his family joined him, along with all those who were discontented, in debt or distressed, from under the rulership of king Saul. These 400 men formed the basis of David's Ecclesia; which looked to him for leadership and encouragement.

How would we have responded to a trial such as this, when our primary concern is first for our own life, yet we have been burdened with the daily responsibility of providing for these 400 bitter men? How would we have been an example to them, and tried to lift their minds and educate them in the ways of God as did David?

David takes his family down to Moab where he seeks the king's protection for them until he could return once this trial was over. He then returns to his men in the hold at Adullam, where the prophet Gad advises David to leave the hold. So David departs to the forest of Hareth.

When Saul hears of David's presence, in a fit of childish and selfish anger he asks his Benjamite kinsmen why they were conspiring against him! They were hiding from him the fact that his son Jonathan had made an agreement with David. He asked why none of them felt sorry for him, when his own son had stirred up David against him. Doeg the Edomite, one of Saul's servants, who happened to have witnessed David's conversation with Ahimelech, reported this to Saul. When Saul heard of this, he demanded his men to slay the entire priesthood, but they refused to touch Yahweh's priests. Doeg, however, fell upon them and slew them all, except for Abiathar who escaped to David.

David hears that the Philistines have attacked Keilah, a city of Judah, and he enquires of Yahweh whether he should go up and smite the Philistines. David is told to go up, but his men fear being open to attack from Saul. David enquires of Yahweh again and is given the same answer and is told that Yahweh will deliver the Philistines into his hand. David wins the battle against the Philistines, and saved the city, when Abiathar, who escaped and fled to David, reported what Saul had done.

Saul meanwhile hears that David is in Keilah and calls the people to war, to go down to Keilah and besiege David. David hears of this and asks Abiathar to bring the ephod. He then uses this to ask Yahweh whether the men of Keilah would deliver him up to Saul. He is told by Yahweh that they would deliver him up to Saul. He is told by Yahweh that they would betray him, so he and his growing band of men (now 600), escaped to a wood in the wilderness of Ziph.

I Sam 23 v 15-18 – Jonathan & David’s Final Reunion and Covenant

V 15 “And David saw that Saul was come up out to seek his life and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood”

David had gained about 200 men since he first went to the cave of Adullam. See v13 – cp ch. 2:1-2. Although David now had a small army of 600 men, Saul continued his daily search for him, which ended up being the 17<sup>th</sup> of 21 attempts to slay David.

**‘and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood’**

Ziph lay to the south of Hebron along the edge of the wilderness of Judea.

V 16 “And Jonathan Saul’s son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God”

**‘And Jonathan Saul’s son arose’**

Despite the fact that David was hidden in the wood, Jonathan knows exactly where he is. This visit suggests that after Saul’s words in chapter 22v8, Saul had become estranged from his son, perhaps regarding him as a conspirator with David. This also emphasises the protection of God over David – Jonathan could

easily find his friend, but Saul could not, even after many days of searching v14, 16-18.

### **‘and strengthened his hand in God’**

Jonathan goes to David in the wood and he strengthens his hand in God. Here we have Jonathan actively seeking out David. He is powerless to help but he turns to the one who can help to strengthen his friend. Here we have another example of true friendship – a true friend actively seeks out their companion in trouble. When they find them they strengthen their hand in God.

This was an expression of Jonathan’s strong conviction that Yahweh was with David and that his rise to king was inevitable. It would have had a powerful effect on the mind of David and encouraged him greatly.

This encouragement to be strong was also given by men who were passing over the responsibility to others, such as, Moses to Joshua - Deut 3:28, 31:7, 23; Moses to Israel - Deut 31:6; God to Joshua - Josh 1:6,9; Joshua to Israel - Josh 10:25; David to Solomon - I Chron 28:2; Hezekiah to Israel - II Chron 32:7 and Paul to Timothy - II Tim 2:1. We are also commanded to be strong Eph 6:10 and strengthen others Isa 35:3-4.

From this encouragement, David was able in I Sam 30:6 to strengthen his own hand in God, and in II Sam 2:7, David is able to strengthen, or encourage as the word means, the whole nation.

V 17 “And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee: and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee: and that also Saul my father knoweth.”

We have a contrast between the hand of David being strengthened in verse 16 and the hand of Saul that will not find David in v 17. David will be king over Israel and Jonathan, Saul’s son, will be next to David when he is king over the land. This is Jonathan’s personal kingdom vision that he shares with his friend.

God was obviously protecting and hiding David. Jonathan calms David’s distressed mind, by reminding him of God’s promise that he would be king. He does not come to David with sympathy or pity, but comes to him with a clear

vision, to take him beyond the present pain to the glory of the future and encouragement to hold fast Heb 12:1-3; Prov 29:18; 2 Cor 4:17-18.

Lesson for us:

How do we encourage those that are going through a difficult time and what hope do we provide them?

**‘And I shall be next unto thee’**

Jonathan was willing to recognise the will of God in the choice of David as king and he was content to take second place to his friend.

V 18 “And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.”

**‘And they two made a covenant before the LORD’**

The two men then reaffirm their covenant in the wood. The covenant is made between the two of them and is before Yahweh. This is the last time that these two men will see each other in this life and so they make a covenant together before Yahweh and they each go their separate ways. They are strengthened with their vision of the kingdom - a vision of the time when David will be king ruling over Yahweh’s inheritance and when Jonathan will be next unto him in the land.

**‘and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.’**

This is the last time that these two men meet this side of God’s coming kingdom. Jonathan is shortly to be slain upon the mountains of Gilboa in battle against the Philistines.



# CHAPTER NINE

I Sam 31 – A Tragic End

## V 1-13 – The death of Saul and his sons

As we have seen in chapter 23, Jonathan found David in the forest and strengthened him and they renewed their covenant to each other. This is the last time that these two friends saw each other. Jonathan leaves to go back to his father and David flees. It is not until I Sam 31 that we read of the death of Jonathan as he loyally defended his father on the slopes of Mount Gilboa.

V 1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa.

### **‘the Philistines fought against Israel’**

The word for ‘fought’ means ‘to consume’ or ‘battle.’ The first nation to ‘fight’ against the nation of Israel was Amalek. We see this word come up in Exodus 17:8: “Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.” The Philistines here in chapter 31 display the same attitude as Amalek in fighting against Israel. At the end of this battle Saul will lie wounded on the battle ground only to be slain by an Amalekite.

V 2 And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons.

### **‘And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons’**

So, where is Jonathan in the midst of this battle? He is right beside his father Saul. In I Sam 23v18 we see the last meeting of Jonathan and David: “And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.” David and Jonathan go their separate ways. David is now alone in the wood of Ziph and Jonathan goes to his house. Scripture is making a point. Jonathan has a sense of loyalty to Saul his father and he returns to his house. He will now stand beside his father to the death on the battle ground. You can imagine then the sense of tension that David would feel as he watches the Philistines gather together to battle against the house of Saul. He knows full well that Jonathan, his beloved friend and son of Saul will be with his father in this battle.

### **‘and the Philistines slew Jonathan’**

Scripture is very matter of fact. We see the events of this battle dispassionately recorded. The word for ‘slew’ here in verse two means to ‘strike.’ However, in verse one we read that the men of Israel were ‘slain.’ The word means ‘pierced’ and most probably indicates that these men were thrust through with either spears or arrows. It is a terrible tragedy, that the men of Benjamin, famous for their feats with the bow were slain upon the mountains of Gilboa.

V 3-7 And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers. Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him. So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together. And when the men of Israel that *were* on the other side of the valley, and *they* that *were* on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

V 8 And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa.

In verse eight, on the next morning, the Philistines come to strip the slain and find that Saul and his three sons have fallen in the battle. You can imagine the gloating of the Philistines as they identify these four men. This was the king of Israel and his three sons all who were valiant men and well known by the Philistine host.

V 9-10 “And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish *it in* the house of their idols, and among the people. And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Bethshan.”

In verses nine and ten, they cut off Saul’s head and send their news around the land of Philistia. The Philistines here reverse the events of I Samuel 17 where Saul and the men of Israel had triumphed over the Philistines in slaying their



champion Goliath. Now Saul's head is cut off, just as Goliath's was, and is taken to the house of their God's, just as David took the head of Goliath to Jerusalem. There is a sad contrast between the events of I Sam 17 and I Sam 29-30.

V 11-13 "And when the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul; All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Bethshan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there. And they took their bones, and buried *them* under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days."

When the people of Jabeshgilead heard of it, they went in the night and took down their bodies, burnt them and buried them, and then they fasted seven days.

The loyalty of Jonathan to his father and the respect he showed towards his parent even whilst he did not agree with him are shown in the best light in this series of events. Rather than leave his father because of his foolish choices, Jonathan saw that without him being present, there were few who would try to influence his father for good; so even until the end, Jonathan remained faithfully by his father's side.

In II Sam 1 we read of David's lamentations at the death of his mighty and dear friend Jonathan. It is here also, we read of the extent of their friendship and love for each other.

# CHAPTER TEN

II Samuel 1 – The Song of the Bow

## Activities for Chapter Ten

### Bible Marking

#### **Bible Marking Activity Nine**

Create a table that summarises the principles of true friendship with supporting references. Mark this into your Bible. Hint: the list has been started for you in chapter ten.

### Character Study

#### **Character Study Eight**

Complete a character study on Saul's armour bearer, reconciling the story in I Samuel 31 and II Samuel 1.

### Theme Study

#### **Theme Study Thirteen**

Complete a theme study on the Amalekites and summarise why it was appropriate that Saul was killed by an Amalekite.

## V 17-27 The Song of the Bow

The Song of the Bow is David's lament as he pours out his heart at the loss of his beloved friend Jonathan and his father Saul.

V 17 "And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son."

### **'David lamented'**

We read that David lamented. The word for lamentation means 'to strike a musical note, to chant or to wail.' This is a song of mourning that David sings for Saul and Jonathan his son. The lamentation is for both of them – Jonathan is again linked to Saul as his son. Jonathan has joined with Saul in his death here. There is a strong link between these two men. They are both of the house of Saul and tragically they both share the same fate.

Verse 18 "(Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher.)"

### **'He bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow'**

The words 'the use of' are in italics. It should read – 'he bade them teach the children of Judah the bow'. The RV, the NKJV and Gesenius each have it as 'the song of the bow' and the NIV has 'the men of Judah be taught this lament of the bow'. From this it seems that David has titled the lamentation, "The Bow".

The song is entitled 'Song of the Bow' as it is describing the lives of two Benjamites, Saul and Jonathan. The tribe of Benjamin was famous for their use of the bow and the bow was the weapon of choice for Jonathan. The bow becomes symbolic of the strength of Jonathan and Saul and it is in this event that their weapons and lives perish.

"The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken" Psalm 37v14-15.

It appears that this Song of the Bow was a song that David composed in lament of Saul and Jonathan's death. It is this song which is recorded in the book of the Upright. We have no record of this book of Jashur or 'the Upright' but we do have another scriptural reference to it. As this book was the book of the Upright it would appear that faithful acts from upright men were recorded in it. It is no surprise therefore that this song focuses on Saul and Jonathan as two upright men and makes no reference to David fleeing from Saul or Saul's attempts to slay David. The song does, however, make distinctions between David's relationship with these two men Saul and Jonathan. David had respect for Saul as Yahweh's anointed, but he loved Jonathan.

### **'the men of Judah'**

It is notable that David said to teach this song to the sons of the Judah. While Saul had been slain, David wanted the sons of Judah to know the calibre of Saul's house rather than for them to despise or look down on Saul's house. David was impartial in his reign. In teaching the children of Judah this song, David would be able to influence the sentiment of his men towards the house of Saul and the tribe of Benjamin. After all, these men had fled for their lives and protected David from the wickedness of Saul during his life. They were to realise that David took no pleasure in Saul's death or the death of Saul's house. David displays the same attitude in chapter three at the death of Abner:

"And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people. For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner. And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?" II Sam 3v36-38.

V 19 "The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!"

### **'The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places'**

'Beauty' Strong's # 6643 is the same word translated as 'roe' throughout Deut and in II Sam 2:18 when talking about Asahel, a son of Zeruiah being light of foot like a roe. A roe is like a deer, a sure footed creature that lives in mountainous terrain. David is likening Jonathan to a roe; sure footed. But he

was slain and the roe has lost its footing in its high places and slopes that he is used to.

David describes the beauty of Israel as being slain upon the high places. This is linked to the end of the chapter in verse 25 where we read that Jonathan was slain in his high places. The beauty of Israel in verse 19 is describing not only Jonathan's death but all those of Israel who died that day. David chooses to describe the death of Israel as a beautiful gazelle slain upon the mountains of Gilboa no longer to run across the mountain tops in glory and beauty but lying dead amongst the slain of Israel.

### **'How the mighty are fallen'**

David then exclaims 'how are the mighty fallen!' The word for 'how' is a prolonged form of the word 'how.' "Hooow are the mighty fallen?" David laments. The word is also translated as 'alas' and is the word for the title for the book 'lamentations.' David cannot understand why these great men have been taken away. He asks the same question again in v25 and v28. He cannot see why these mighty men have been lost.

V 20 "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph."

### **'Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon'**

Gath and Askelon are two of the five Philistine cities. Gath was also Goliath's home town I Sam 17:4, and now, instead of it being Goliath's head, it is Saul's head that is taken and sent around the land of the Philistines and published (same word David is now using in v20) in the house of their idols and among the people I Sam 31:9. Even though the Philistines have already published the fact that the mighty had fallen, David would have preferred by far that the Philistines had not been able to use this occasion to demonstrate the apparent superiority of their gods. One of the things that Yahweh hated about the enemies of Israel was their rejoicing at Israel's downfall. We must never take pleasure in someone else's demise, regardless of how they may have treated us personally.

“Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him” Prov 24v17-18.

### **‘Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph’**

David does not want the daughters of the Philistines to start rejoicing over the defeat of Saul, I Sam 18:6-7. When David returned from slaughtering the Philistines the women of the city came out to meet him, singing and dancing. Both Jonathan and David viewed the Philistines as uncircumcised.

- 1 Sam 14:6 Jonathan when he is about to climb the cliff to fight the garrison
- 1 Sam 17:26, 36 David when he fights Goliath

Verse 21 “Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.

### **‘Ye mountains of Gilboa’**

Upon the mountains of Gilboa is where Saul and Jonathan fell I Sam 31:8. This battle is the only event recorded about Mount Gilboa.

### **‘Let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings’**

David is cursing the land saying that because of this great tragedy there should be no dew, rain or even fields of offerings upon the mountains of Gilboa. Joel 1:9-10 speaks of a land in mourning that is wasted. The dew and the rain are the blessings God sends:

- Deut 32:2 “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass”
- Deut 11:13-17 If Israel hearkened to Yahweh’s commandments to love Yahweh, and to serve Him with all their heart and soul, then He would give them rain in His due season.
- Psa 133:3 “As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.”

**‘For there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil’**

Yahweh says in Deut 33:29 “O Israel who is like unto thee, O people saved by Yahweh, the Shield of thy help, and who is the Sword of thy excellency! And Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.” Saul had cast away Yahweh and now his enemies were treading down his high places. He died like the rest of his army and it was as though he had never been anointed and set apart by Yahweh.

V 22 “From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.”

Verses 22 is in Hebrew parallelism:

From the blood of the slain	The bow of Jonathan turned not back
From the fat of the mighty	The sword of Saul returned not empty

The arrows of Jonathan drew blood and the sword of Saul devoured flesh. David here focuses on the might of these two men. He graciously overlooks the failings of Saul and the differences between these two men. He wants the children of Judah to remember these men for their mighty deeds. David is describing these two mighty warriors in battle.

V 23 “Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.”

**‘Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided’**

The words ‘lovely and pleasant’ here are referring to the relationship between Saul and Jonathan. In their lives they were lovely and pleasant towards each other and in their deaths they were not divided. There was a mutual affection here between father and son. It is borne out in the record with Saul being noted as Jonathan’s father and Jonathan as Saul’s son. Jonathan was loyal and respectful to his father until the very end. In their death they were not divided. Jonathan chose to stand with his father on the day of his death and be associated with his father’s house. But we know that he has a hope of resurrection to life, next to the beloved in the kingdom to come.



Also, notice the emphasis on the past tense. They were not divided, they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. We can hear David grieving for his friend here brothers and sisters as he mourns the loss of these two great men.

**‘They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions’**

The eagle as it swoops down on its prey and snatches it up is the picture David is here painting of Jonathan and Saul.

- Psa 103:5 “Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles.”
- Isa 40:31 “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”
- Hab 1:8 Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.
- Job 9:26 They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.

A lion is full of power, and David likens his friend Jonathan and father, king Saul, to this great beast. He knew the strength of a lion as he had fought one earlier in his life I Sam 17:34-36. Prov 30:30 picks up what David is saying about these two mighty warriors. “A lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any.”

Consider other faithful men who fought lions in Scripture:

- Samson – Judg14:5-6
- Benaiah – II Sam 23:20

V 24 “Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.”

This is in contrast to the daughters of the Philistines v20. These are the same women that had run out singing and dancing at the slaughter of the Philistines in I Sam 18:6. Now David wants the daughters of Israel to remember all that their king, Saul, had done for them and to mourn his loss. To remember him for the good that he did was the way David looked at it and also the way he would teach Israel to look at it too.

V 25 “How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.”

**‘How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!’**

We now have David’s personal grief for his friend. Once again we have the phrase ‘how are the mighty fallen’ but now the phrase is extended with ‘in the midst of the battle.’ The word for ‘midst’ means the centre. David understands Jonathan’s personal involvement in this battle and he knows that Jonathan would have been involved with his father right in the middle of the battle.

**‘O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.’**

David laments for Jonathan and says that he was slain. The word for ‘slain’ means ‘pierced.’ Jonathan was pierced in the battle. This seems to intimate the mode of death. If Jonathan was pierced then it is likely that he died from an arrow wound or similar. The word for ‘high places’ just simply means ‘elevation.’ Jonathan is described early as being like a roe. A roe would be swift upon the rocks of the high places just as David remembers Jonathan the mighty warrior to have been.

V 26 “I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.”

**‘I am distressed for thee’**

David now brings his lament into the present. As he pens and sings these words he is distressed. The word for ‘distressed’ here means ‘to cramp, or be shut up.’ This is describing the physical affect that Jonathan’s death is having upon David.

**‘my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.’**

David describes Jonathan as ‘my brother.’ The word ‘brother’ is used of a close relationship. Jonathan was very pleasant to David. The word ‘very’ means ‘vehemently’ or ‘wholly’ and the word for ‘pleasant’ means ‘to be agreeable.’ It is a related word to ‘pleasant’ in verse 23. The relationship that these two men had was agreeable in every way. We read ‘thy love was wonderful.’ The word for wonderful means to be separate or distinguished. There was

something noticeable about this love that Jonathan had to David. David's love for Jonathan was passing the love of women. There is something unique about this relationship which is characterised by love. David was married to Jonathan's sister Michal – he never had a spiritual relationship with Michal like he had with Jonathan. This is possibly a reference to how Jonathan's love was greater than the love of his sister Michal, David's wife.

The relationship between these two men is absolutely wonderful. It is one of the closest friendships that we are told about in the Bible. Jonathan's love for David is probably only surpassed by Christ's love for us. John 15:13 "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jonathan, although he did not actually die for David, risked his life and was willing to sacrifice everything for him. In Phil 2:3 Paul talks about the love that Jonathan had for David and we need to have for others. "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Jonathan's attitude was – "Yahweh be between me and thee forever." It is no wonder then that David says "thy love to me was wonderful!"

Jonathan was willing to give up all he had for David. His sacrificial love is an example for us all. Things for us to remember for a true friendship to succeed:

- Humility – Esteeming others better than self
- Communication – Strengthening and building that relationship
- Like mindedness in the Word of God - Phil 2:2
- Loyalty
- Trust
- Respect
- Love – I Cor 13

We need friends with these characteristics that will build up and strengthen us. But it starts with us! Solomon talks frequently about the importance of Godly friendships in the Proverbs, for example:

- Prov 17:17 "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity"
- Prov 18:24 "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother"
- Prov 27:17 "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend"

Verse 27 “How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!”

We see the same refrain repeated again: ‘How are the mighty fallen!’ This time David adds ‘and the weapons of war perished. The word for weapons here in verse 27 means ‘something prepared’ therefore an instrument or weapon. This is used of all sorts of instruments that were used from the vessels and instruments of the tabernacle through to weapons of war. It is noteworthy that the slaying of the men is linked to the weapons or vessels perishing. David is using poetic license to describe the people who wielded the weapons as the weapons themselves. Both had perished in the battle. The word for perished means to wander away or to become lost. The implication is that the Philistines have now taken the weapons of these men. This then concludes the lament of David. It is absolute in its finality. The men of Israel have been slain and their weapons have been taken captive by the enemy. David cannot comprehend why such a faithful, loyal, sacrificial, loving friend could be taken in this way. It will not be long though until these two faithful men will once again be reunited.

## Summary of Jonathan's life

This now brings to a close our notes on the man Jonathan. We pray that throughout these notes you have come to gain a deeper appreciation for the man, his friendship with David and the remarkable character that he displayed. Through all of this we have seen a wonderful type played out in Jonathan the friend of David. We can take comfort in the friendship that these two men had, realising in their friendship the relationship that we ought to have with our Lord. These were two men who, with an attitude of likeminded-ness made a covenant of mercy together. Let's remember the faith of Jonathan to overcome the battles of life, the humility of Jonathan to decrease when his friend was to increase, the wisdom of Jonathan to mediate between his father and David and the hope of Jonathan who, although slain upon the mountains of Jezreel will one day rise again to rule with Christ in his kingdom to come.

**'And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect'**

**Hebrews 11v39-40**

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