

**“KINDRED SPIRITS”**  
**READ 1 Samuel 19:1 - 20:42**

We’re coming up on that time of year when change begins to push its way into our lives. Time has changed, days are shorter; our shopping habits change with Christmas coming; our priorities change as our “to do” is growing; and for many, there’s the feeling of stress that you’ll never get everything done on time to meet all the social and family events on the calendar.

Babies may like to be changed, but it seems the older we get, the more we resist it. There’s comfort in having some things permanent . . . to have some security. But I’ve walked with the Lord long enough to know that the only thing constant on earth is change, and that the only true security is found in Jesus Christ and His scriptural assurance of eternal life. “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) That will never change.

In our last lesson, David had killed the giant Goliath; won the hearts of the people with his military victories; felt the sting of Saul not keeping his promise regarding his daughter, Merah’s, hand in marriage, yet finding himself in great favor with two of Saul’s other children – another daughter, Michal (whom he would marry) and a son, Jonathan, who, like David, had a heart that also trusted God. (We read about him in chapter 14:6-12.) Last week chapter 18:29-30 closed with these words:

“Saul became still more afraid of him (David), and he remained his enemy the rest of his days. The Philistine commanders continued to go out to battle, and as often as they did, David met with more success than the rest of Saul’s officers, and his name became well known.”

As we survey the last days of David’s life at Saul’s court, we’re aware of the swirl of changes and resulting stress that would drive him from **elevation to exile**. Let’s look at:

1. Jonathan’s intervention (the importance of friends);
2. Michal’s warning (the value of loyalty);
3. Samuel’s ministry (the protection of the Lord);
4. Jonathan’s friendship (the character of *hesed* love); and
5. David’s covenant (the security of a love relationship).

### **First: Jonathan’s intervention (the importance of friends)**

Under the guise of a “dowry” for the hand of Michal, Saul sent David into battle with the Philistines expecting full well that he’d be killed. This was a win-win situation for Saul . . . he’d promoted a man popular with the people (good PR), and the Philistines would solve his problem of how to kill David (good riddance). But the plan backfired when David was overwhelmingly victorious and Saul was forced to make good on his promise. Saul’s anger and jealousy festered to a point that it was no longer just an evil desire of his heart, but he spoke openly

both to Jonathan and to the men of his court. David, he said, must be put to death!

We can imagine that Jonathan could hardly believe his ears – this was (dare we say it?) insane. So warning David to lay low (so to speak), Jonathan tried to reason his father. “David hasn’t harmed you. The Lord won the victory for Israel and you were glad. Why do wrong and kill an innocent man for no reason?” So Saul listened, agreed with an oath not to kill David, and David returned to court. Sounds simple, doesn’t it?

Certainly there are times when we need an intermediary – a friend to speak on our behalf when situations in life are intolerable. Have you ever been on either end of that experience? Either being the one desperately desiring a restoration of relationship, or the friend who stands in the gap trying to facilitate the restoration? As the friend it can be painful, can’t it? You care for both parties . . . you want peace between them . . . you pray you’ll say the right thing or bring the right catalyst to effect healing.

The fact that David went back to court, back into service in Saul’s army, back to playing the harp for a man who no doubt gazed at him with dark eyes of anger, I think shows the character of a man after God’s own heart . . . a man of forgiveness. I don’t think David was ignorant or blind as he interacted with Saul. He may have forgiven, but he was human . . . and we humans don’t quickly forget.

As for Jonathan he was probably elated, as any of us would be, to have our father and our best friend reunited. He and David could enjoy the openness of friendship publicly and as you may know first hand, friendship is strengthened when it has endured tough times together.

Samuel Coleridge wrote a poem titled “Youth and Age” with the line, “Friendship is a sheltering tree.” That’s a wonderful word picture. Friends are those whose lives are like branches. They provide shade; they provide refuge from the demanding, irritating and searing rays of the hot sun. You can find comfort in them. You can find strength near them. They are tree-like in that they bear fruit that provides nourishment and encouragement. Isn’t it interesting that when something occurs in your life and you are alone, you pick up the phone and call a friend? You want to connect with someone else.

I read a quip somewhere – “I’m the kind of friend you can depend on. I’ll be there when I need you.”

### **Second: Michal’s warning (the value of loyalty)**

Do any of you plan to make mashed potatoes for Thanksgiving dinner? You know from experience that if you have the pot boiling and the lid on with the fire low, it just keeps cooking evenly. But did you ever turn the fire up high to give it a good start or try to hurry the process with high heat? What happens? It boils over and leaves a messy stove to clean up. That’s a picture of uncontrolled anger.

Vs. 19 says, “While David was playing the harp, Saul tried to pin him to the wall with his spear, but David eluded him as Saul drove the spear into the wall. That night David made good his escape.” Who knows, maybe he was playing the tune to “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.” At any rate, there was nothing wrong with David’s reflexes. He could read Saul’s moods, I’m sure, and based on previous experience when Saul had done this twice before, I’d think he would have kept a wary eye on Saul since he was hired to play, in essence, to calm Saul when he felt troubled.

Also Michal was probably aware of her father’s moods and in on the court gossip about when and where to give Saul a wide berth. If you’ve lived with an anger prone person, you know when it’s best to tiptoe. Well, David made it home and we can imagine he clung to his wife, shaken by the ordeal and told her the whole story. Her reaction? “You’ve got to get out of here! You’ll be killed. What can I do to help?” David’s reaction? First thing I’ve got to do is pray. Psalm 59 has a sub-heading declaring David wrote this when Saul had sent men to watch David’s house in order to kill him. Let me read Psalm 59:

“Deliver me from my enemies, O God; protect me from those who rise up against me. Deliver me from evildoers and save me from bloodthirsty men.

“See how they lie in wait for me! Fierce men conspire against me for no offense or sin of mine, O Lord. I have done no wrong, yet they

are ready to attack me. Arise to help me; look on my plight! O Lord God Almighty, the God of Israel, rouse yourself to punish all the nations; show no mercy to wicked traitors.

“They return at evening snarling like dogs, and prowl about the city. See what they spew from their mouths – they spew out words from their lips and say, ‘Who can hear us?’ But you, O Lord, laugh at them; you scoff at all those nations.

“O my Strength, I watch for you; you, O God, are my fortress, my loving God.

“God will go before me and will let me gloat over those who slander me. But do not kill them, O Lord our shield, or my people will forget. In your might make them wander about and bring them down. For the sins of their mouths, for the words of their lips, let them be caught in their pride. For the curses and lies they utter consume them in wrath, consume them till they are no more. Then it will be known to the ends of the earth that God rules over Jacob.

“They return at evening, snarling like dogs, and prowl about the city. They wander about for food and howl if not satisfied. But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble.

“O my Strength, I sing praise to you; you, O God, are my fortress, my loving God.”

That's a prayer that expresses both David's distress at the peril he faces, and his dependence on God for deliverance.

Well, we all read the story. Whoever came up with the plan, David made good his escape out the window. But what we have to admire is the loyalty of Michal as she delayed the assassins by claiming David was ill and putting a teraphim (or an idol) on the sleeping pallet. When Saul demanded the pallet be brought to him so he could kill David, she knew what would carry weight with her father and told him that she had only complied in the escape plan because David threatened her life. Saul was angered by her duplicity, but nonetheless he took her back into his household.

The story presents us with two ethical dilemmas. When/or is it ever okay to tell a lie? And secondly, what was an idol doing in the house?

As to the ethics of the lie, I read volumes in the commentaries and I direct you to them. I love the answer a little boy gave his mother when she asked, "What is a lie, honey?" He said, "Mother, a lie is an abomination to the Lord, but a very present help in time of need." Suffice it to say, when life/death is at stake, WWII persecution of the Jews as an example – dire, dire circumstances, God has to know the thoughts and intents of the heart and you have to live with your conscience and the consequences. We can only note that there is no condemnation in this Scripture for Michael's actions.

As to the idol, some say it was just an ornate statue you'd find in the home of the rich and didn't carry any religious significance to David; or, as with the story in Genesis 31 of Rachael and Jacob, maybe David didn't know it existed; or, it may have been a spoils of war that David had received – again with no religious significance to him. Fact was, it was there, and it served a purpose to delay detection and allow David to escape.

### **Third: Samuel's ministry (the protection of the Lord)**

David fled to Samuel at Ramah, about three miles away. The prophet was probably in bed when David knocked on the door. The story was quickly told and Samuel believed they would be safer in Naioth – the buildings that comprise the schools of the prophets. He took David to the compound on the adjoining hill and there was a place where David could have his faith strengthened, seek counsel as to what he should do, find comfort in his time of trouble, enjoy fellowship and prayer, and through Samuel it was most likely where he would learn the Lord's will.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is a powerful thing. We, as Christians, enjoy the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and know full well what He does to minister to us, He convicts us of sin, and helps to conform us into the likeness of Christ. Our charismatic brethren have a strong emphasis on the outpouring of the Spirit – I don't want to get sidetracked into that. The point is, however, in our Scripture today the Holy Spirit overpowered not only the contingencies sent to bring back

David by sweeping them into the praise and worship of God, but even Saul himself was likewise overpowered by the Holy Spirit and he continued on up the hill telling forth the praises of God. When he reached the summit, he stripped off his armor, fell to the ground and remained there all day and the entire night, giving David ample time to again make good his escape.

Somewhat chastened by what had happened, Saul returned to Gibeah in the morning and perhaps even expected David to return and things to go on as usual.

When we read of accounts like this that are hard to explain – men bent on murder suddenly stopped in their tracks and turned to praising God or falling prostrate unable to move from the Holy Spirit’s presence – it just reminds us that we serve an enormously powerful and BIG God. Even though He does not change, He can bring about big change. We’ve all been a witness to that. Here He protected David, He humbled Saul, and whichever of those we need in our lives right now, He is able to do that for us.

#### **Fourth: Jonathan’s friendship (the character of *hesed* love)**

Still fearful and still desiring some answer that made sense, the fugitive David made his way back to Jonathan with the age-old question, “Why? What have I done?” It must have been hard for Jonathan to admit to himself that his father was truly serious about killing David and his reaction was, “Whatever you want me to do, I’ll do.”

There is a word in Scripture that you may be familiar with – *hesed*. When it is used in the Old Testament it is translated variously as “loyalty, faithfulness, kindness, love, mercy,” etc. It can have either human or divine features, since it is used to characterize God’s relationship with humans or human relationships with each other. It is by simple definition –looking out for the best interest of the other party. In most of the 246 uses of *hesed*, it refers to God’s life-sustaining grace that makes it possible for us to have a relationship to Him. It is the essence of the covenant and, in the case of Israel, assumes a mutual commitment on their part that required faithful service and obedience.

The concept of *hesed* in human relationships is frequently something someone does or performs. It’s genuine, concrete expression of the underlying attitudes through one’s actions that express or “show kindness to someone.” It is always looking out for the best interests of another.

David and Jonathan were of “one soul,” “kindred spirits.” We can appreciate that in our Christian friends, can’t we? The New Testament gives us Scriptures like these:

“All the believers (in Jerusalem) were one in heart and mind.”

Acts 4:32

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Jesus Christ, so that with

one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 15:5

“Be of one mind.” 2 Corinthians 13:11

“Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.” Philippians 2:2

“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.” Romans 12:10

“Love one another deeply, with all your hearts.” 1 Peter 1:22

In Jesus Christ we have the potential for true and lasting friendships that can never be equaled on the earth because the focus is first of all on God and then on each other.

Years ago I went to Taiwan to visit my friend Rosemary with whom I had a heshed relationship. She needed me and I went. While I was there, I was asked to lead a Bible study with some Christians ladies I’d never met, speaking a language I couldn’t understand (they understood my English), and living in an Asian culture that was very foreign to me. Yet, it was a marvelous experience. We were drawn together and able to share deeply because of our bond in Jesus Christ. One lady insisted that I “autograph” her Bible. I can’t tell you how hard that was for me to do. But their hunger for God’s Word was so real. Because of God’s heshed grace we connect intimately with Christians anywhere we go in the world, don’t we?

No doubt David recognized the fact that Jonathan was going to receive enormous pressure, and perhaps retaliation, from his father when

it was discovered he had helped David. But the hesed relationship not only asks, but it is overwhelmingly gratified to give in time of need.

The feast of the New Moon was the next day and Jonathan accepted the challenge of testing his father's true feelings. David would stay away and if his presence was missed, Saul would be told he was visiting his family. And you know what happened. Saul got so angry at David's absence, that he not only cursed Jonathan, but threw his spear again – luckily missing Jonathan as he had David. The truth had been confirmed.

Vs. 34 says, “Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the month he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of David.” Can you feel his pain? But Jonathan must do what he must do – send his dearest friend away, in essence forever, from his side.

### **Fifth: David's covenant (the security of a love relationship)**

We don't want to pass up these important verses in our lesson this week. 1 Samuel 20:14-17 Jonathan said, “But show me unfailing kindness like that of the Lord as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family – not even when the Lord has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth.” So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David saying, “May the Lord call David's enemies into account.” And

Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.

Now Jonathan may have been the son of a king, but he knew that Saul's heirs would not come to the throne . . . that was David's destiny. The usual practice of a new monarch in those days was to completely annihilate the family of the previous regime, and looking ahead Jonathan wanted protection for his family. This was a covenant of hesed love, a covenant that gives security because of the character of those who enter into it.

Out in the field was a stone called Ezel. Some commentators said that meant "the stone that shapes, or the stone that shows the way, or even the stone of departure." David Redpath termed it, "the stone of David's destiny." Driven by all the pressure of circumstances, David was brought to the place where he saw that the decision was not in his hands. Picture David standing by the stone . . . waiting. From a distance he sees his dear friend coming out, the boy with him. David watches tensely as the arrow in flight arches over him, landing beyond him.

What was the message of the arrow to his heart? He knew that a strong and noble friend had stood in the breach. He knew that the danger was imminent. He knew that human love often suffers separation. He knew the Lord was sending him away. If he lingered now he would lose his life, the crown and everything that God had for him. Every prop upon which he had leaned was taken away from him;

now he must stand alone. Before him lay the rugged mountains and dark valleys, with no promise of relief from the pressure; behind him was the comfort of friendship, of human love, of home, of perhaps reconciliation with Saul and restoration to a position of honor. Now ahead lay nothing – but God!

Perhaps you're in a place where you feel that God has shot his arrow beyond you. Perhaps you're in the midst of being extracted from your "security." A crown to place at the foot of Jesus is God's purpose for you; a cross is God's path for you; faith is God's plan for you.

These kindred spirits, these friends hugged and kissed and wept. And our Scripture closes with these words, "Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace," for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the Lord saying, "The Lord is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever." And then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.

The security of that love and covenant would display itself in 2 Samuel as we'll read the story of David's future mercy to Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth.

I spoke about the stress of change we all feel as it invades our personal lives. Just think about how much has changed in your life over the past five years; how many major changes have taken place. You can't live in Southern California and not feel the fast pace our society lives in. Sometimes the wilderness is what we need to reorder our

priorities . . . to get our focus back on God and what HE (not us) is able to do. To reinforce that we are stronger than we think we are – He will never give us more than we can handle. David the hero would become David the hunted. He had to give up a lot of things . . . but he didn't give up on God.

V. Raymond Edman in his book titled In Quietness and Confidence helps us put our own changes and challenges in perspective.

He writes:

First, He brought me here, it is by His will I am in this strait place: in that fact I will rest.

Next, He will keep me here in His love, and give me the grace to behave as His child.

Then, He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me lessons He intends for me to learn, and working in me the grace He means to bestow.

Last, in His good time He can bring me out again - how and when He knows.

Let me say I am here,

- (1) By God's appointment
- (2) In His keeping
- (3) Under His training
- (4) For His time.

Let's pray.