

Jonathan 5

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[0 : 0 0] Now as we continue then our progress with the character study of the life and witness of Prince Jonathan, we see in this portion that we read, we missed out quite a bit in the middle because otherwise the reading would be even longer, but we see here something of the ways in which Jonathan both shows forth in one sense God's attitude to us, what our attitude should be to the Lord, the faithfulness of the loyal servant, even when the world seeks to compel him to choose, and finally the way in which by giving his friendship and covenant love to his friend David, he diminishes not his father's royal kingship, the only person who stands to lose is himself.

He is as it were giving out of himself, just as Christ our Lord emptied himself and took the form of a servant, but we'll come to that. First of all then in this chapter 20 we see in a sense Jonathan behaving towards David or having the attitude towards David, which in a sense the Lord could be said to have to us.

We are, most of us at some point in our lives, frightened, anxious, worried, if not actually about the direct threat to our lives, then certainly worried about our futures.

As David comes to Jonathan saying, look what have I done, why is this happening to me? And sometimes perhaps with greater reason, we might say, or with less innocence, greater reason to expect trouble, we might say to the Lord, what have I done, why are these bad things happening to me?

And of course the Lord would have far more reason to cause unpleasant providences to befall us than Saul ever had to seek the life or the harm of David.

[2 : 1 9] But we come in a state of fear, a state of anxiety, and Jonathan here, as the Prince of Israel, reflects something of the Lord's attitude to us.

Because he says, look, nothing's going to happen without me knowing about it. And when we come to the Lord in our distress and in our weakness, we might perhaps recognize that this would be his still, small voice to us.

Nothing is going to happen to you without me knowing about it first. Nothing takes God by surprise. Nothing catches him out.

And this is the message that Jonathan, in the position of royal power, is able to give to David, the fugitive at this stage. Almost an outlaw, we might say, that he is at this stage.

Not quite at the outlaw stage, but certainly going in fear of his life. Jonathan is able to say, nothing will happen without my knowing about it.

[3 : 1 9] My father will do nothing, either great or small, but that he will show it me. And why should my father hide this thing from you? It is not so. And of course, David has his own explanation.

He just doesn't want to upset you. He knows that you're fond of me, I'm fond of you. And if anything bad happens to me, well, he thinks you'll be upset. So that's why he's keeping it from you. And then Jonathan again comes back to David in a way that perhaps the Lord, if he would listen, might be sometimes trying to speak to us.

Whatsoever thy soul desire, I will even do it for thee. Now, God isn't in the business of writing his blank checks, but rather he might say to us legitimately, what is it you're asking me for?

What is it you want me to do? And sometimes, well, maybe you're not like this, but I know myself plenty of times, you come to the Lord with your moans and groans and problems and difficulties.

And sometimes there's no one in the quietness that he says, well, what would you like me to do?

Ask me for what it is you want. Ask me for the help that you want. And sometimes we can't, we don't articulate that we want the Lord to do this or that and the next thing, or we're asking for his help with this particular problem.

[4 : 35] We're just having a moment. We're just offloading our hurts or our anxieties or our fears. And sometimes it's all mixed up in a big sort of chaotic smamash.

And we're just sort of, as it were, lying on the psychiatrist's couch. We're just pouring it all out to the Lord. And we're not necessarily saying, Lord, this is what I need. I need you to help me with this and this and this.

And sometimes in the midst of all the chaos, when the Lord has just let us pour it all out, that is sometimes what the still small voice might be coming back to us with.

Okay, you've said your piece now. I've got all power in heaven and earth. What is it you want me to do? And sometimes we just want all the stress and all the hassle just to go away.

But it's not all just going to go away. But the reason it's all building up and swirling around is because there are particular things that may be weighing in upon us. And the Lord is able to put his finger on one of the biggest stress causers and the big levers of stress and the big reasons for burdens.

[5 : 42] And sometimes he wants us to stop and think and ask for the particular thing that he is able to do. It's not quite the case of whatsoever thy soul desire.

I will even do it for thee. But I do suggest to you in all reverence that often the Lord is far more ready to do as we would ask if only we would ask.

If only we would come to him not only with a list of complaints or a pouring out of our burdens or saying, Oh Lord, this is wrong. This is against me. Why is this happening? And so I would rather say, Lord, I've got a problem with this.

This is the thing that I need your help with. This is the real problem. This is the thing I'm frightened about. And I really need your help because I can't do any more than I've done. Come to the Lord with your particular requests, your particular burdens.

When you've poured out all your problems, there's nothing wrong with doing that. Take them to the Lord. That's the place to take them. But when you've poured it all out, then be ready to ask for what it is that you think you need.

[6 : 51] Sometimes he might direct you by his spirit to something particular to ask. But ask because far more powerful than Prince Jonathan here is the Lord of heaven and earth.

Jesus Christ, he says, all power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Whatsoever thy soul desire, what is it your soul really needs, ask it of me.

And Jesus says to his disciples, you know, ask. Your joy may be full. Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name. Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and the door shall be opened up to you.

So when one says here, Jonathan is reflecting the Lord's attitude to us. David is at this stage in his career the one on the back foot.

He is the one who is in a weak position. He is the one who is helpless. Jonathan is both loyal to Saul but also loyal to his friend. And he bridges that divide, being the son of his father but the friend of David.

[7 : 52] Just as Christ is the ultimate goal between me. The only intermediate between God and man. And here it is who both listens to our complaints but is ready to say, what is it you would ask of me?

Secondly, we see as we move on through the chapter, we see that Jonathan is in his attitude to David and his behaviour toward David.

He is also in a sense reflecting how we are meant to be toward God. How we are meant to be toward Christ. Particularly if, you know, when they go out into the field and Jonathan then takes this oath upon himself.

Or it might be a vow. We'd say it's probably a vow. But it's directed to the Lord. In verse 12. O Lord God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about tomorrow any time of the third day, there be good toward David.

And I then say, not unto thee. In other words, David. And show it thee the Lord. Do so and much more to Jonathan. He is addressing the Lord. He is making a vow to the Lord in the presence of David.

[8 : 58] But he is doing so. He is devoting himself to David at this time when there is nothing in David which can do Jonathan any material good.

Jonathan is much older, as we established last time around. Jonathan is almost certainly at least in his 40s. David is probably in his late teens.

They are more like father and son age or uncle and nephew. They are not simply colleagues of the same age or lads that are much the same sort of age bracket at all.

Or friends of a similar kind of age group. No. There is a full generation and more between these two. And Jonathan is solemn and he is serious about his love for David in a covenant sense.

But he has nothing to gain by it at this stage. It is almost as though Jonathan has something of an insight by God's grace into the glory that David shall inherit.

[9 : 57] That David shall end up with. Because he is very much concerned when he says, Thou shalt not only while yet I live show me the kindness of the Lord that I die not.

But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house forever. No, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David. Every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant in the house of David saying, Let the Lord even require it at the hand of David's enemies.

There isn't even a hint here that Jonathan thinks that he himself will inherit the throne. Not a whisper of it. It is all about David's future.

It is all about David's glory and the power that he will inherit. And just that he will show kindness to Jonathan and to Jonathan's descendants when the time comes.

But at the moment the boot seems completely on the other foot. There is nothing to be gained for Jonathan in terms of helping David. All he's going to do is annoy his father.

[11 : 00] There is nothing to recommend David's cause to Jonathan. Other than this covenant love which he has for him. Now, this in a sense of course is how we are called upon to be with Christ.

Who hath believed our report, Isaiah says, chapter 53. And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall go up before him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground.

He hath no form nor comeliness. And when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men.

A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from him. He was despised and we esteemed him not. Anybody who wanted to get on in Saul's court when David came along would turn their face away.

Anybody for whom David asked a favour other than Jonathan saying, sorry, I'd like to help you but no way am I going to upset the king. No, the politics of the day was David is persona non grata.

[12 : 09] If you want to get on with the king, if you want to get on in the court, if you want a good job, if you want a good position, you don't involve yourself with David. That's just troubling.

Jonathan is the glorious assumption.

When there is nothing to recommend David on earth in the present day. Jonathan has this glimpse of future glory. There is nothing to be gained for him here.

But there is everything to be gained for his descendants and for the future. And this is in a sense what we are called upon to enter into in our relationship with Christ.

We can't even see him at all. With the physical eye, let alone do we see a human being who is despised and rejected of men. But the cause of Christ is certainly despised and rejected of men.

It is certainly that which is reviled, that which is discriminated against, that which is persecuted.

There is nothing to be gained by anyone anywhere in the world by becoming a divine Christian, by becoming a believing Christian.

[13 : 14] Acknowledging that this is what guides their decision making. If you were to say that in public, in the British parliamentary system, then you would certainly be regarded as, well, he can't really be that reliable, can he?

I mean, who's making his decisions for him? Is it God or is it the electorate? As though somehow, you know, we've been mad. You know, we've been insane if you think these things. You're probably bigoted. You can't represent your constituents and so on.

Despite the fact that anybody who's elected under any party ticket anywhere is in one sense only going to represent those who share their political views. How are they going to represent those of the opposite political view?

How are they going to work for them? They'll say, oh, well, of course I'll work for all my constituents. But if it were a Christian saying that, I'd say, oh, no, you can't possibly represent all of your constituents. You only represent a few that are like you.

You see, it's such a discriminated against belief and faith and position. There is no form or comeliness. There is nothing whatsoever to be gained in this present day.

[14:19] For those who are in covenant love with the son of David, it is a future hope in which they trust. They are investing in future blessing.

There is nothing for them to gain in the present hour. Quite the opposite. But rather, Jonathan is expressing, he is, if you like, personifying the way that the believer ought to be toward Christ.

He is trusting and believing in what the Lord has promised with regard to David. Just as we trust and believe in what the Lord promises with regard to the son of David.

You see, Saul wants David dead. And Jesus, of course, says to his disciples, they shall put you out of the synagogues, yea, the time cometh. And whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God's service.

He will think he's being a better Jew, a better Israelite, a better servant of God, if he puts one of these pesky Christians to death. And you'll still get people nowadays who think that they are showing how tolerant they are, how open-minded, how good they are if they are anti-Christian.

[15:39] They think that they must be the very epitome of tolerance and open-mindedness. But all they do is they show that they are the opposite. Jesus, of course, himself said in Matthew 25, remember, as much as you've done it, I don't want to be least to lose my sentence, you've done it to me.

Whatever is being done or happening with regard to Christ, the son of David, in our present day is being stored up for the future.

Jonathan here is storing up blessing for his descendants. He is storing up a blessing for the future because he is putting his trust in the one in whom, as yet, there is nothing to be gained by doing so. And there is no material or worldly gain to anyone in following Christ. But the rewards of the future are immense.

And we either trust and believe that those rewards are real, that that truth, that covenant love will not fail, or we don't. Jonathan, of course, is able to do so partly because he has the Lord constantly before his face.

[16:55] See how much we've seen in the past as well, in his fighting and in his courage and now in his covenant relationship with David, how much the Lord is at the forefront of his mind and of his thoughts.

Jesus, of course, said, the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master and the servant as his Lord.

If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? So David is reviled, and as we'll see in a minute there, Jonathan too is reviled because he insists on being the friend of David.

He puts his trust in future blessing. There's a third element though as well, and that is that Saul, in the bit that we didn't read, that if we take it as part of our sort of lesson for tonight, where after David doesn't appear at the feast of the new moon and Saul just lets it go the first day, and then the second day, the second day of the month, David's place was empty, Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meet neither yesterday nor today? Verse 27.

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 of the sacrifice and the city, and my brother he hath commanded me to be there.

[18:18] And now if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brother. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table. Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse, rebellious woman, do not I note that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?

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

And Jonathan answered Saul his father and said, And wherefore shall he be slain? What have he done? And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him, whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.

So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger and did not meet the second day of the month. For he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame. Now you see that the way in

which Saul is really kind of almost becoming unhinged now in his hatred of David.

He wants David at the feast so that he can throw a spear at him, so that he can have a murder apostle. What makes him so angry is David has escaped out of his hands.

[19 : 32] And Jonathan he sees as complicit in this, not without some justification. And when he gives him this insult, thou son of a perverse, rebellious woman, he's not really so much casting aspersions on his own wife's fidelity.

And if you have the authorised version, you'll see that the word woman is in italics. That means that it's not part of the original Hebrew, not part of the original translation. It's putting in by the translators to sort of fill out the sentence more.

That you could understand, is thou son of a perverse rebellion? And in the Hebraism or the Eastern kind of culture, to describe somebody as a son of something bad was to accentuate the insult.

Because it was to imply, not only are you evil yourself, but you are from a long line of evil. How much more are you addicted to it?

It's born into your very blood because you're a son of whatever the bad thing may be. And he's saying, thou son of a perverse, rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion?

[20 : 42] Now that might, depending on how you understand it, almost imply as though Saul were kind of feeding the sexual innuendo here, as though there was something going on between them.

Unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness. But no commentator really takes that seriously, as I suggest to you. What it implies, rather, this, again, this is a Hebraism, thy mother's nakedness. It's a reference to the conception process. And if you read through Leviticus and so on, it's constant references. You won't uncover so-and-so's nakedness because she's near-kind to you.

You don't uncover your father's wife's nakedness because it's like your father's nakedness and so on. And it's really about not drawing near to somebody for the process of conception.

For that intimacy which is intended by God simply to be between a man and his wife. So when it says, to the confusion of thy mother's nakedness, it means that you are conceived by your mother and me, a virtuous woman, but the way that you are turning in rebellion against me, anyone would think that there was no virtue, no royal blood in you at all.

[21 : 53] You must be born of illegitimacy. You must surely be the result of some illicit relationship because no son of mine, no prince of the royal blood would ever seek to behave in this way.

The confusion of thy mother's nakedness, thine own confusion, you're undermining your own position as a prince of Israel. You are behaving as no son of mine, no prince of the blood royal should ever behave.

This is unnatural. Jonathan, you're showing yourself to be in rebellion against me and against your own royal house. Anyone would think you must be illegitimate.

Anyone would think you can't possibly be my son. That is really the sense to the idea. It's not really implying anything between the two of David and Jonathan at all.

But rather, as long as the son of Jesse live upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. You see here, Jonathan is being compelled to choose.

[22 : 58] And rather than choosing between his father and David, he seeks and strives to be loyal to both. Now, it is partly the oldest sort of trick in the book of the devil to try to drive a wedge between the believer and their responsibilities and their responsibilities and duties to the civil powers upon earth, to whom they do all duties and responsibilities, and God in heaven.

These two are not contradictory. They are rather complementary. If, for example, one is a true believing Christian soul, then you will in fact be a more loyal and diligent and faithful citizen of whatever country you belong to.

You will be the most diligent, faithful, law-abiding citizen. You will pray for the magistrates and the kings and rulers over you, whether you like them or not. You'll pay your taxes on time.

You'll pay your bills. You'll be law-abiding. You'll be faithful. Well, you'll be the nearest thing to model citizens that they could ask for. And yet, regime after regime across the world always feels threatened by its Christian citizenry because they recognize a God other than the state, other than the party, other than the king or the president, or whoever it may be.

They recognize another God. And they want them to choose. They say, well, it's either your God or it's loyalty to the state. It's either the party or it's your God.

[24 : 34] It's either the flag or it's your God. It's either Caesar or it's your God. And they seek to compel a choice. Jonathan epitomizes the earth. The perfect loyalty.

Loyalty to the ultimate authority to God and loyalty, likewise, to the earthly civil magistrate. His loyalty to his father Saul is without question.

But at the same time, he maintains his loyalty and his friendship of the Lord's anointed. The world will constantly try to make you choose between God and faithful citizenry.

It is not a choice you should ever feel is necessary. But rather, you are made a better citizen by being a more faithful Christian.

And it is part of the witness of being a faithful Christian that you are a loyal and dutiful citizen. It doesn't mean you have to endorse the policies of any ruling party or think that the people that rule over you in tyranny in some countries are not the best thing that could have happened to you.

[25 : 44] But rather, the powers that be are ordained of God. And we seek to be faithful, dutiful, and loyal subjects to them whilst being ultimately giving our loyalty to God.

Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. But unto God the things that are God's.

Jonathan's loyalty to the civil magistrate is perfect loyalty. But at the same time, his friendship for David, the Lord's anointed, is not going to be shaken by her.

Finally, by choosing to continue faithful to David as the friend of David. Not only is he insulted in the same way as David gets insulted.

Is he called for every name under the sun as David is. He is tarred with the same brush as Jesus said. You know, if they call the master Beelzebub, they'll call the servants even worse. And so on. But rather, he recognizes that in giving this perfect loyalty, in giving this perfect friendship, nobody is going to lose except himself.

[26 : 50] He is the one who is emptying himself out. But we see this expressed rather poetically and beautifully at verse 13 here. The Lord do so, and much more to Jonathan.

But if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will show thee and send thee away that thou mayest go in peace. And the Lord be with thee as he hath been with my father.

The Lord be with thee as he hath been with my father. Here's a perfect recognition. Saul is the Lord's anointed. Nothing can take that away from him. He is the king.

God's anointed king. As he hath been with my father. Perhaps in the past rather than the present.

But he is the Lord's anointed. And David also is the Lord's anointed. The king in waiting.

And Jonathan is loyal to both. Without any controversy. Without any failure to be loyal to each.

[27 : 47] There's not a conflict of interests there. The only thing that stands to lose is any claim of his own. What we don't find there is, And as he has been with me.

As I, the prince of Israel, also stand to be the Lord's anointed. No, not a word. No mention of himself. No mention of Jonathan and his future. But as he hath been with my father.

The Lord be with thee as he hath been with my father. He looks ahead to the Lord's anointed of the future. He looks to the present and the past. The Lord's anointed there with his father.

There is no place for his own agrarism. He empties himself out. Just as Christ empties himself out for us.

He made himself of no reputation. He emptied himself and took upon himself the form of a servant. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself.

[28 : 45] And became obedient. Even unto death. Even the death of the cross. What is it that we are called upon to do? If we would inherit true greatness.

It is that we should become the servants of all. That we should be humbled. That we should empty ourselves. Not seek greatness for ourselves.

Not seek position for ourselves. But rather recognize what God has done. And be content with that. To be as nothing in the mirror.

And if we are content to do that. To give up. Nobody is being harmed. If Saul is not being harmed by Jonathan. David is not being harmed by Jonathan. The only thing which is being lessened here. If anything. Is Jonathan's own position. Jonathan's own future. This. He is content. That it should be given up.

[29 : 43] Just as John the Baptist said of Jesus. He must increase. But I must decrease. And this we could say. Well this was inevitable. It was going to happen anyway. Jonathan's not showing any great virtue here.

But there is virtue. In being accepted. In showing the graciousness. And the humility. And the covenant of love.

Which doesn't grudge. An insult. This is Christ like. This is what we are to aspire to. The emptying of ourselves.

That Christ should be great. That the Lord's anointed. Should be exalted. That he must increase.

But I must decrease. And what is it that Jesus said?

If you would be the greatest. In the kingdom of heaven. Then you must be the least here. You must be the servant of all. And although Jonathan may seem like he is diminishing.

[30 : 45] To nothing. What he is actually doing. Is what we are ourselves. And we are ourselves. Invited to do. To become nothing here. But to lay up there by.

For ourselves. To be the greatest. To be the greatest. To be the greatest. That we might be the greatest. In the kingdom of heaven. We must empty ourselves out here.

That thou mayest go in peace. And the Lord be with thee. As he hath been with my father. The Lord's anointed before him. And behind him. And he in the middle.

Content. Simply to fade away. We ourselves. Find our greatest fulfillment. When we die to self. And live. Unto Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.