

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic.,
3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 14B
FIRST SAMUEL
CHAPTER 20**

INTRODUCTION

A friend in need is a friend indeed. Nothing illustrates this truth more than the friendship between David and Jonathan. Their friendship was deep and strong, the one who was in a better and more privileged position helped the other. Their friendship did not negate that they could have a difference in opinion. Initially, Jonathan did not believe David that his father was bent on killing him. When David insisted, Jonathan gave the undertaking that he would find out for himself. In other words it was not blind loyalty. Such friendships are great blessings.

COMMENTARY

Saul's Wickedness Exposed

— 20: 1-8

David left Naioth in Ramah and looked for Jonathan. Jonathan had earlier brought about reconciliation between his father and David (19:4-7) but it was short lived. Saul still persisted in killing David. David now sought clarification from Jonathan. He asked Jonathan (20:1b): "*What*

have I done? What is mine iniquity? What is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?" Jonathan did not believe David. He said that his father would never do such a thing because he would have told him all matters whether great or small. But David reasoned that Saul did not want to tell Jonathan because he knew that David was his very close friend and thus did not want to grieve him. David swore in the name of the LORD that he spoke the truth and that there was only one step between him and death. Then Jonathan assured David that he would do whatever he asked of him. In this Jonathan showed that his loyalty was more towards David than to his father.

David expressed concern for his life that the New Moon Festival would be celebrated the next day. David's presence was expected as in previous occasions. But for this occasion he would not go and sit with the king. He would request leave of absence so that he could go to Bethlehem for the yearly sacrifice for all his family. In the meantime, he would hide himself in the field for three days. If Saul was agreeable, then David would be safe. But if Saul was angry, then that would confirm that he was bent on killing him. David asked Jonathan to do him the favour of observing Saul's response. However, David said that if he was the offending party, then he asked that Jonathan kill him. There was no

need to bring him to his father (20:8). Jonathan assured David that he would never do that. If he knew that his father was determined to kill David, he would inform him. David wanted to know who would bring the message to him.

Jonathan's difficult choice

— 20: 9-23

Jonathan then took David to the open field. There he swore to David in the name of the LORD God of Israel that he would tell David if his father, Saul, was kind to David or that he was determined to kill him. And if it was the latter, Jonathan promised David that he would ensure the safety of his departure (20:13). Jonathan also asked David to promise that he would treat him kindly and protect him and his family. Jonathan continued that the LORD would destroy all of David's enemies. He was not aware that David's most terrible enemy at that moment was his father. It appeared that neither did Jonathan see David as a threat to his father, nor why his father would want to kill him. Jonathan insisted that David swear again because he loved him as his own soul. Once again, Jonathan demonstrated his love and loyalty to David at a great cost. Jonathan was the son of a king but he was even willing to surrender his own right to succeed his father in order that David could be pre-eminent.

Jonathan expressed that David would be missed at the banquet for

his seat would be empty. He instructed David that after three days he should hide himself by the stone Ezel (Hebrew, *departure*). He would shoot three arrows by the side of the stone and send a lad to retrieve them. If he expressly said to the lad: "Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them," it meant that everything was fine. But if he said to the lad: "Behold the arrows are beyond thee," it meant that he should go away with the blessings of the LORD (20:21, 22). Jonathan reminded David of the covenant they had made.

A painful dialogue between father and son — 20: 24-34

On the day of the New Moon Festival, king Saul took his seat. Abner, Saul's chief army commander, sat on one side of him but on the other side, David's seat was empty. Saul said nothing because he thought that David did not attend because he was ceremonially unclean. But on the second day when David was again absent, he asked his son Jonathan why David did not come to the feast the day before as well as that day. Jonathan gave him the reason as requested by David. On hearing this, Saul was very angry towards Jonathan. He used the strongest words: "Thou son of the perverse rebellious *woman*". This is a Hebraic idiomatic phrase to mean "You are a perverse rebel." The phrase "*to thine own confusion*" literally means to

your own shame. The phrase “*and unto the confusion of thy mother’s nakedness*” means that his mother would feel ashamed and disgraced by giving birth to such a son. Saul then continued and told his son that as long as David was alive, his [Jonathan’s] kingship and kingdom would not be established. Saul was very angry for two reasons, the first was Jonathan’s deep friendship with David, and the other was his “utter stupidity”. Saul demanded that Jonathan bring David to him for he must surely die. Jonathan innocently asked his father, “Why slay David? What has he done?” On hearing this, Saul by now consumed with anger, grabbed a javelin and cast it at Jonathan to kill him. Finally, Jonathan was convinced that his father was determined to kill David. Jonathan became very angry, probably not because his father had tried to kill him but because he had treated David so shamefully and had accused him of treason. It was unbearable for him. He left the banquet and did not eat at all. He grieved for David because his father had done him shame. Jonathan probably experienced for the first time in his life the terrible temper and anger of his father.

David & Jonathan Bid Each Other Farewell — 20: 35-42

Jonathan kept his appointment with David. He went to the field with a lad. As pre-arranged, he shot the arrow and called out to the lad, “Is

not the arrow beyond thee?” That was the signal that David was in great danger. Jonathan continued and said, “Make speed. Make haste, stay not.” The lad did not know anything. Jonathan sent the lad to the city. He wanted a last opportunity to see David and bid him goodbye. As soon as the lad was gone, David emerged from his hiding place. He fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times paying homage to the son of the king. They kissed one another and wept. Jonathan blessed David. He reiterated the bond that they had pledged to one another in the name of the LORD. He reassured that the LORD would be between them and their descendants for ever. They then parted. Jonathan went back to the city.

PRACTICAL VALUE

One lesson stands out very vividly. If the Lord God is with you, there is nothing to fear. Some say that it is easier said than done. Indeed, being human, fear is one of the most dilapidating forces. But God who knows our fear can strengthen us when we learn to lean and trust in Him for courage to do His will. He promises to protect and bless His children from those who harbour ill feelings and harm towards them. What we need to know is: Is God with me!

AMEN.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: 1 Samuel 19:1-17; Philippians 1:20, 21; 3:8.

TUESDAY: 1 Samuel 19:18-24; Jonah 2:9; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

WEDNESDAY: 1 Samuel 20:1-23; Romans 16:3-8,

THURSDAY: 1 Samuel 20:24-34; Luke 14:25, 26.

FRIDAY: 1 Samuel 20:35-42; John 16:33.

Analysis:

Text	Practical Value
1 Samuel 20:1-23	
1 Samuel 20:24-34	
1 Samuel 20:35-42	

Discussion Questions

1. How did Jonathan further show his love for David?

2. How did Michal show her love for David?

3. What were the further evidences that Saul was a hypocrite?

4. By what means were Saul's attempts to destroy David foiled?

5. What excuse did Saul give to Jonathan to have David killed? What was Jonathan's response? Does Saul's reason justify killing David?

6. What factors firmly bind the friendship between Jonathan and David?
