

Surpassing the Love of Women

Call to Worship: Psalm 63

1st Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:1-18:4

2nd Scripture: 2 Samuel 1:17-27

Introduction

One of the most profound and awe-inspiring relationships displayed in all the Old Testament is the relationship that existed between David and Jonathan (King Saul's son). And the circumstances surrounding this relationship, considering the fact that King Saul was seeking to unjustly Kill David, and Jonathan would have been next in line for the throne, all the more solidify the fact that this relationship was exemplary and meant to be pondered and viewed through a New Covenant lens. There was something so supernatural about this relationship, that the unregenerate cannot even process it. The best the unbeliever can come up with, is that David and Jonathan must have been gay, which is utterly absurd, but understandable, coming from those who cannot possibly grasp the shared love that exists between Christ and His people.

Three times, in the Book of 1 Samuel (twice, in our first Scripture reading), we are told that Jonathan loved David "as his own soul." And here in our main text, as David mourns the death of Jonathan, he states, "I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been very pleasant to me; Your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women."

This morning, I want to get to the very bottom and root of this love, with the hope of laying hold of its profound substance and translating it into the love that exists between Christ and His church. And brethren, I hope that it penetrates our hearts with great fervor, leading us to examine ourselves, and to ensure that our love for Christ is still kindled, and that, we have not lost our first love. And for you, non-Christian, I hope you might get even a taste of the elation that comes to all who have been united to Christ by faith. For, until you come to see just how far your sin has driven you away from God, and just how glorious and great a sacrifice, Christ has made to reconcile sinners to God, you will never understand the profound joy that comes with being an object of the love of Christ. Indeed, it is life! Or, better yet, as the Psalmist put it from our Call to worship, "His lovingkindness is better than life!"

I. Jonathan's Love for David

What was it that brought Jonathan to the point that we are told (in two different places) that he loved David as his own soul? Well, if we go back to the first time we are told this, which is found in our first Scripture reading, I believe we can discover the answer to this question.

Immediately following David's defeat of Goliath in 1 Samuel 17, we find Jonathan coming to meet David in Chapter 18. And Jonathan's actions there are very telling. Let's just reread the first four verses of Chapter 18 again, so as to bring out some key facts which can help us identify the foundation, upon which, their strong friendship was built.

"Now when [David] had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt" (1 Samuel 18:1-4).

And so, as Saul speaks with David, and finds out where David is from, with the intention of ultimately making David the leader over his army, Jonathan is waiting to approach David himself. And before even speaking a word to David, his soul is already knit to David's, indicating very clearly that David's actions are what captured the heart of Jonathan, overwhelming him with a deep love for this young teen, who had showed such great faith, courage, and love for the people of God. Now, the actions of Jonathan, following a covenant he had made with David, are tremendous evidences which affirmed the great love and respect he had had for David. Remember, Jonathan is the oldest son of the king of Israel, and the presumed heir to the throne. And so, what then does Jonathan do?

First, He disrobes himself of his own princely robe; a robe that would have clearly distinguished him from all of the other soldiers, indicating that he was the king's son. And then, he gives it to David. Then, he also gives David his own armor, his own sword, his own bow and his own belt. Now, what was Jonathan doing by these profound gestures? He was humbling himself, and honoring David as the bravest warrior, worthy of the succession to the throne. In other words, even now, Jonathan was indicting that David ought to be given what by human right ought to have belonged to Jonathan. Can you imagine someone doing this? All throughout

history, you have individuals fighting tooth and nail, and murdering countless people, so as to secure the throne for themselves. Power has always been a coveted desire of mankind. Even in Israel, you can read through First and Second Kings and Chronicles and see how such heinous sins were committed as a means of securing the throne. Indeed, look at the extent that Saul, himself, had gone, to keep David from securing the throne. David did nothing but serve Saul to the fullest, and yet, Saul, being jealous of him, wanted (and sought) to kill him. And even amongst David's own sons, for that matter, we see this kind of contention. And yet, Jonathan turns all of his dignity over to David. And brethren, we have to see that this is absolutely unnatural. It's unheard of to the natural man. Because, to do this, you would have to take away from yourself; you would have to humble yourself and strip yourself of all of the glory that can easily come your way, only to hand it over to another; and in this case, a very young man, at that.

Now, the question that is begged is this: What is it that compelled Jonathan to do this? Why is there the repeated statement given in this text, saying that Jonathan loved David as his own soul, which was affirmed by these actions? Well again, consider closely what David had just done. It is not simply the case that David was braver than every single soul that existed in the Israelite army, but two other realities pop out of the events surrounding David's slaying of the giant, as well:

1) In defeating the giant, David delivered Israel from the oppression and rule of the Philistines. For a long time, Goliath had been put forth as the Philistine champion, challenging any Israelite to face him. And whoever should win the battle, it would automatically lead to the utter defeat and submission of their enemy. The Philistines were Israel's greatest enemies at this time. But, not a single Israelite was willing to step up to fight Goliath. Jonathan was a great and brave warrior, who had taken great risks before, but he himself was unwilling to step out on this occasion. The tall, handsome and broad shouldered King Saul was unwilling to step out to face the giant. And so, Israel was on the verge of utter defeat and collapse, as no one would face the giant. Time was running out.

And David, the short teenager, who was too small and frail to put on Saul's armor, stepped up to the plate, with nothing but a sling and a few stones, and boldly slayed the giant.

David was the great deliverer of God's people. David had conquered the greatest foe of the Israelites, rescuing them from certain death and perpetual slavery. David was their deliverer!

2) David exhibited a tremendous faith in his God, and this deeply impressed Jonathan. This is especially seen when David spoke to Saul before the fight, and then when David had exchanged words with the giant as they were preparing to fight. [Read 1 Samuel 17:31-47].

And so, I believe that it was the fact that David had delivered the Israelites from out of the hands of the Philistines, along with the great faith that he had in his God when doing so, which had greatly impressed Jonathan, leading him to love David as his own soul. And the irony of this is, that in a short time after this, Saul comes to hate (and grow jealous of) David, leading him to move in the very opposite direction of his son, Jonathan, seeking to kill David, rather than give him his due honor. And the whole time, even at the very risk of his own life, Jonathan does all that he can to defend and protect David. Such was the great love that he had for him!

Within the context of King Saul unjustly pursuing the life of David, let us just read through a few verses that further reveal the great love and commitment that Jonathan had for David. [1 Samuel 19:1-7; In response to Saul's second attempt - 1 Samuel 20; In response to Saul's further attempts - 1 Samuel 23:14-18].

All in all, we find Jonathan serving to defend, protect and encourage David, throughout the entire time that his father was unjustly pursuing him. Neither the entire glory of the kingdom nor the pressures of his own father (the king), were able to rend Jonathan's heart from David's. There was a supernatural bond which kept them together, and which no man could break.

And then, of course, in the song that David had written, following the death of Jonathan, we find those profound and precious words, where David describes Jonathan as one who was a brother to him, and whose love was wonderful, surpassing the love of women. What a profound statement! What greater love could there ever be (in this life) than the love that exists between a man and his own wife? Where can one find a greater measure of intimacy and a deeper sense of love than that which exists in the glorious union of a man and a woman in holy matrimony? Well, we've seen it here. And I want to suggest to you that this kind of a relationship is meant to reflect a very real love that exists today, which the world cannot possibly understand; the love that exists between Christ and His church! No, David and Jonathan were not gay. Saying such a

thing grossly distorts the glory of all that is portrayed here. A “gay” love is an ungodly love; an unnatural distortion of God’s design for male and female creatures, never for a moment to be compared to what we have seen in these precious texts. This is a divinely instilled love, which indeed goes beyond even the intimate love that exists between a man and a woman, as precious as such love can and ought to be. Let us then consider what we have gone over, from a New Covenant vantage point, as we behold the love that exists between Christ and His church, as reflected in the love that had existed between Jonathan and David.

II. Surpassing the Love of Women

In Ephesians Chapter 3, the Apostle Paul prays for the Ephesians, that they might be able to “comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length an depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” What is Paul implying by this portion of his prayer? He is firmly stating that the love of Christ, and especially *for us*, is something that is beyond the understanding, reaching dimensions that are so large that we could never exhaust its reach in any single direction. It is that which is at the very root and foundation of all that he has just revealed in the first three Chapters of Ephesians, concerning the glorious working of God, in the unfolding of His glorious plan of redemption, of which, you and I are part, no thanks to anything that we ourselves have done to enter into it. You see, brethren, we are the objects of so great a love, a supernatural and divine love; and this love is so great that we are called to spend our entire lives delving deeper and deeper into it. And Paul has an end in mind, when he prays in this way. He knows that such a journey will lead to being filled with the fullness of God, enabling us to obey every vital command given in Chapters 4-6. And what then does this entail? Namely, that the love of Christ actually serves to empower His people to do anything and everything, even unto the expense of their own lives, to return that love by serving Him and His glorious purposes in the building of His church. Christ’s love is powerful! The Spirit of God actually has to empower us just to grasp greater depths of it, so that, we will drink from its fountain, and by that means, give our lives wholly over to the service of Christ! We must be “strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,” unto this end!

Now, what does this have to do with Jonathan and David? Well, come back with me for a moment, in your minds, as we consider the acts of David which triggered Jonathan's love for him. You see, David's actions changed Jonathan on that occasion, when he slew Goliath, leading Jonathan to empty himself of all self-worth and glory, and to hand over all that was his by natural right, to David. Jonathan was compelled unto an action that would have been unheard of before. Whatever he was; whatever he thought he was, no longer meant anything to him. He turned it all over to David, acknowledging him as the rightful heir to Israel's throne. David's great faith in God, and his willingness to deliver the people of God, as one who by all rights, wasn't even responsible to do so (David was just a teen, shepherd boy, there to provide food for the soldiers — he was no soldier), greatly impacted and changed Jonathan forever.

And brethren, is this not reflective of that which has happened to us, when, by grace, we were brought into the church of the redeemed through the deliverance we were given in Christ? Our lives were radically changed, were they not! We were born again! We came to the end of ourselves; the old man died, and a new man arose with Christ! And something so profound has taken place, which only increases and grows stronger and stronger the longer we walk with Christ. Everything that once meant anything to us; all of the glory that we sought for ourselves in this life; every pearl that we had stored up in this world, we had willingly delivered over to the feet of Christ, had we not? We became servants of this blessed Savior, and we delighted in doing so. We handed over our own robes, our own wills, our own desires, our own armor and weaponry, and gladly embraced the will of Christ as our own! We became, and are increasingly becoming, consumed with His glory! Our eyes have been opened to the wonders of His profound love for us, and the power of that profound love toward us, has changed us! It has made us lovers of Christ and of God! Indeed, as the Psalmist stated, His lovingkindness became better than life to us! And as we have been periodically taken to witness the utter natural corruption of our own hearts and souls, terrified by the reality of what we are by nature, only to look up and see the welcoming, loving arms of Christ ever around us, we have been overwhelmed and consumed by a love that surpasses the love of women! We have seen the unflinching, unwavering, unchanging love of God directed toward us, in spite of us, in spite of His holy nature, laying hold of us fully, perfectly and completely, and we are blown away that

our eternal God and Creator actually loves us in this way! And when we try to make sense of it, we can't. We only know that it is real and true and sincere, and we have the cross to prove that! Yes, the Goliath of our sin, which has left the people of God without hope, was conquered and thrust down; beheaded and utterly defeated, not by a wooden sling and a stone, but by a wooden cross and three nails! When we were without hope; when we were without love for God and only full of hate; when we were without strength, Christ died for us! Christ died for the ungodly! And He revealed Himself to us, and took our hearts captive, didn't He? And now our hearts are knit to His, and the more we know Him; the more we travel down the paths that take us through the dimensions of His love, the more we love Him as Jonathan loved David... even more than Father or mother or brother or sister or son or daughter or wife or husband or self.

And when we consider His unwavering and faithful commitment to the Father; when we see His own faith, which led Him to welcome the incarnation, a full obedient life to God and all of the horror surrounding His cross; when we look beyond this earthly veil and get a profound glimpse of divine, inter-Trinitarian love, eternally rooted in the God who "is love," it brings everything we value in this world into a proper perspective, and we are willing to lay it all down to lay hold of just that! God becomes our all, and we are willing to let go of everything, just to know, love and serve Him!

II. Conclusive Thoughts

1) I've said in the past, and I want to reiterate it again this morning. I know for a fact that before the Lord saved me, I never loved a single soul, other than myself. And when the Lord saved me, this reality terrified me. And I believe that the Lord showed me this, not as a means of tormenting me, but so that, for one, I would know that whatever measure of love I would have going forward, came only from Him, in total. And secondly, as I began to pray fervently for the Lord to form in me, what I knew was never there before, when He did such a gracious work in me, my appreciation of His great love for me would increase exponentially, thereby, fueling and increasing my love for Him. I still don't have a perfect love, but there's a heck of a lot more in me now, of that which never existed before. I have the genuine desire to give my all to Christ

and to His people. The Lord has given me something akin to what Jonathan had for David, but directed toward Christ, and this is what drives me to want to love and do His people good.

Brethren, let me leave this final exhortation with you for this morning. You are where you are today; you are here among the people of God, delighting in God and offering Him praise; you are bound for heaven where you will experience a joy like none other, completely and entirely by the grace of God, and because He set His love upon you from before the foundation of the world. Our lives belong to Him now, don't they? And isn't that a wonderful joy and *our* great privilege? It's an honor to love and serve and adore Christ, isn't it? God has created and designed us for His glory, and He has redeemed us from the curse of our sin, which has separated us from Him. Brethren, we exist in a time and space that exist, all by and for God. We are living creatures because God decided to give us life. And His Son took on flesh, and entered and became part of this creation for the purpose of redeeming us and bringing us to God. That is life, itself... to know God and His Son, Jesus Christ. He stepped into the valley of Elah, to battle our sin, and to defeat it (and to cut its head off) by His own suffering and death. What are we unwilling to shed for His glory? Is there any other response to the *Son* of David than the response exhibited by Jonathan to David? And that, all the more? If I can appeal to you with even one great plea, before we head off to TN, it's this. Brethren, live for Him; live for Him who died for you. And fight every day, to get even a little taste of His amazing and profound love for you!

2) If you are not in Christ this morning, oh that you could only see the glory of what you are missing. It may seem so corny and small to you, as it did to me, before God opened my blind eyes, but there is no more wondrous delight; there is no greater joy than to experience the love of Christ, which surpasses the love of women. The love of Christ far, far exceeds any temporal joy that you might get out of the things that are molded from this earth. I wish everyone in this entire room would experience the reality of God's special, relational love for even a moment. For then, you would go and sell all that you have, to lay hold of that one pearl of great price!

Oh friend, your sin is what blinds you! Your sin is what presently separates you from relating to the living God. But, God has done something about that. He sent His Son to die for

sinner. His wrath has been appeased, your sin can be forever removed. But, come to Him; cry out to Him; speak to Him, believe into His Son, and be saved! You will never, ever regret it!

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Ephesians 3:14-21