

April 1

1 Samuel 18 and 19, 20 Psalm 59

Hi all, Lisa Ashton here and welcome back to our April 1st study of David. It is indeed April Fools Day and although some of the topics we will discuss are a little edgy to say the least, I will not try to fool you at all. So let's get it at!

Our readings covered I Samuel 18-20 along with Psalm 59.

Now, the first subject to which we ought to address ourselves today is the remarkable friendship that developed between David and Jonathan, the son of Saul. Jonathan must have been a remarkable man. While it may not have been common knowledge that Samuel had declared that Saul's house would not inherit the throne, and that a new king had actually been anointed by Samuel, it could not have been a total secret either. Jonathan, at some point during the time span covered by chapters 18 and 19, must have become aware of this. Despite David being a threat to Jonathan's throne their friendship never faltered. Even in the midst of tremendous jealousy from Saul and his many efforts to kill David, the two remained dear friends.

Now I need to mention at this point of another take on this friendship between David and Jonathan. There has been some speculation, and perhaps you have heard this, that this friendship is indeed a thinly veiled account of a homosexual relationship. The expression that "Jonathan loved David as he loved himself" seems to be the tip off that gave rise to this view, which, of course, is then used to proclaim God's celebration of homosexual relationships in our culture.

From reading Professor Robert A Gagnon's book "The Bible and Homosexual Practice" I gathered the following points:

- David and Jonathan had in effect become "kin" with all the mutual privileges and obligations that such a relationship entails. The two now relate as brothers not as a romantic couple (see II Sam 1:26)
- The relationship between Jonathan and David cannot be divorced from the context of the royal court: Jonathan is the king's son and rightful heir to the throne; but David is God's apparent choice to lead Israel. The two have formed a deeply personal but nonetheless political alliance.
- Jonathan's act of handing over his robe, armor, and his sword, bow, and belt was not only an extraordinary token of heart-felt commitment to love David as his own soul and to protect him at any personal cost; it was also an act of political investment.
- The farewell kiss has nothing inherently homosexual about it considering Near Eastern society. In fact, looking at the Hebrew words for "kiss", "love" or "soul" used in this passage, there shows no sexual connotations...unlike the same English words used in our places in scripture when a sexual connotation is implied i.e. Song of Solomon.

Lastly, it is always important to interpret scripture with scripture and since there is absolutely no exegetical, historical or theological basis for this view in other parts of the Bible we can say that this story is not supported to endorse same-sex relationships.

In closing our discussion about Jonathan and David, I wanted to comment on their vow at the end of chapter 20. Jonathan, a noble friend, knows that his unwillingness to betray David is costing him any opportunity he might otherwise have to sit upon his father's throne. Jonathan cares more about honor, godliness and friendship than about self, wealth or safety. It costs Jonathan a great deal to keep his covenant with David. It cost him his father's respect and put him in danger of losing his own life. Saul actually tried to kill his own son for collaborating with David. David also kept this covenant, as we shall later see, by remembering his oath and searching out the son of Jonathan, Mephibosheth, and caring for him in his time of trouble at David's own table. We will look at that incident later, but for now perhaps it would be worth noting in advance that, just as David accepted and loved Mephibosheth on account of his covenant with Jonathan, so God has accepted and loved you and me, not because of who we are but because of the covenant He made with Christ.

Next topic to address for the day: Is lying ever justifiable? We see in this passage that Jonathan, David and Michal lied to help save David's life.

In responding to that question, Bill T Arnold of the II Samuel NIV Commentary writes:

"These Biblical characters chose the higher good and are willing to accept the consequences of their choices, even if it puts them at personal risk in order to help an innocent person. Medieval, Christian scholar Thomas Aquinas distinguished three classes of lies: helpful lies of necessity, lies told in jest and malicious lies told to harm another person or to save face. So when is a lie of necessity morally justifiable? Under certain circumstances and rare occasions when it is clear that innocent lives are at stake. In this Biblical ethic, lying and deception are wrong and should be avoided. However, the actions of Jonathan [David] and Michal suggest there are times when believers should choose to accept the guilt of lying to accomplish a higher good, as they believe it is to be defined by God. Thus we recognize deception as always bad but sometimes desirable in extenuating circumstances."

Perhaps this may be a good topic of discussion to have around the dinner table tonight or with your friends over coffee.

Ok, last question to address: What is up with the part about Saul and his guys prophesying?

The last part of chapter 19 is almost as comical as Scripture ever gets, as Saul keeps sending soldiers to the town of Naioth in Ramah. Three times he sends his commandos down to capture David, who is staying under the protection of the old prophet that Saul fears so much. Three times they arrive with the intention of capturing David, and three times they are overpowered by the Spirit of God and end

up prophesying with the prophets. Finally in desperation Saul arrives himself -- afraid though he must have been to once again encounter the fearsome prophet of God -- and the result is the same. Saul arrives, driven by a spirit of hatred and revenge, and the Spirit of God overpowers him and puts him into an ecstatic trance in which he disrobes his outer garments. He wakes up the next day after having laid out all day and night as a public spectacle. He has only succeeded in publicly humiliating himself. Here we see God's divine intervention to fulfill his purposes and render Saul powerless. The closing question in chapter 19, "Is Saul among the prophets?" implies a negative connotation...I think the people are questioning his legitimacy as king of Israel.

Our time is gone for today...and I couldn't even comment on the rare and bizarre price David paid King Saul for his daughter, Michal, in marriage. Regardless if David was too poor to provide a dowry for his wife or not...King Saul demanded a tall order. And David doubled the request!

In closing, we have seen today that because David's life was in danger, he lost many things that were important to him. He lost his job, when he had to flee from his position in Saul's courts. He had to say goodbye to his wife, Michal. He had to leave his time with his spiritual mentor, Samuel. And he had to say farewell to his best friend, Jonathan. Can you believe that? How would you feel if you had to say goodbye to your wife, your mentor and your best friend in a string of close events because someone wanted to kill you? Almost impossible to imagine. Nevertheless, David continued to trust God and we see a great king in the making.

This is Lisa Ashton for today's Aprils Fools Accelerator -- reminding you that God's Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. May it give you the guidance you need today.