

A TRUE FRIEND

“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” (Prov 17:17)

Jonathan and David were true friends. Their love and loyalty never failed. Adversity did not drive them apart. In fact, it brought them closer together and made them like brothers.

David was the youngest son in the family of Jesse. Jonathan was the oldest son in the family of Saul. Both had expectations of being king. David expected to be king because he was anointed to be king by Samuel. Jonathan expected to be king because he was the oldest son and heir apparent of his father's throne. They should have been rivals and enemies, but they were not!

Both of these men were courageous warriors. David distinguished himself by killing Goliath (1 Sam. 17). Jonathan distinguished himself by singlehandedly attacking the Philistines at Micmash (1 Sam. 14).

The first meeting recorded in Scriptures between these two men is in 1 Sam. 18:1: **“After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself.”** This “instant bonding” was solidified by three different covenants which grew out of their friendship:

(1) **“And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.” (1 Sam 18:3-4)**

(2) Later Jonathan promised to protect David from his father and 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 to account.” And Jonathan made David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.” (1 Sam 20:14-17)**

(3) Still another covenant is described with these words: **“And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him to find strength in God. “Don't be afraid,” he said. “My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You shall be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this.” The two of them made a covenant before the LORD. Then Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh.” (1 Sam 23:16-18)**

A friend loves at all times! David and Jonathan were friends when everything was going well. They were also friends when things were not going well. As the Scriptures say; their adversity made them like brothers. In fact, it was during the tough times that their friendship was the most important. David once said to Jonathan: **“as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death.” (1 Sam 20:3)**. Ironically, however, it was Jonathan who died first. When David heard about his death he composed a “lament” and ordered that it be taught to the men of Judah (See 2 Sam. 1:17 - 27). That sad song contains this beautiful tribute to a fallen friend: **“I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women.” (2 Sam 1:26)**

Joseph Scriven was a young man in Ireland whose bride accidentally drowned on the evening before their wedding. He wanted to be a cadet but poor health prevented him from doing so. He moved to Canada and devoted himself to the cause of the poor and needy. Once more he became engaged, but again his bride died before their wedding day. During his life of sacrificial service he found one friend who stuck to him closer than a brother and who never left him or forsook him. Out of the crucible of his own personal experience he wrote these beautiful words that have become one of the most famous hymns of all time: “What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer”. In recognition of his service to others a monument was erected in his honor at Port Hope, Ontario.

May you also, as Joseph Scriven, find a friend in Jesus!