

UNSUNG HEROES

Part 3

“JONATHAN: A Selfless Friend”

1 Samuel 18:1-4

ENGAGING the Audience

Imagine if you will, waking up tomorrow, turning on the national news, and learning that Prince William - the popular heir to England's throne - had abdicated his throne to a no-name blue-collar mill worker.

As the story continues, video shows Prince William, in a rare public display of humility and selflessness, hand over his royal wardrobe, his royal crown, his most cherished belongings, his key to Buckingham Palace, and unlimited access to the royal family's financial holdings.

What would your initial response be?

You and I, along with the collective voice of Great Britain would say, “*Are you CRAZY!*”

We would immediately jump to the worse possible conclusions. What prince in his right mind would transfer his rights to the power, influence, fame, comfort, and wealth of a royal monarchy to a middle-of-the-road, blue-collar taxpayer?

Such an act of selflessness and sacrifice is largely unheard of today. No prince would willingly transfer his royal birthright to an average, run-of-the-mill citizen.

One thing is for sure; if he did, he definitely wouldn't be hailed by the media and the nation as a hero.

Making the CONNECTION

Such an act of selflessness may be largely unheard of in our day and time, but the UNSUNG HERO we are going to study today did exactly what I just described.

In 1 Samuel 18:1-4, we find the extraordinary story of a royal prince named Jonathan and a blue-collar shepherd named David. One is arguably the most popular hero in the entire Bible. The other has been largely assigned to “unsung” status.

Jonathan's father was King Saul, the very first king of Israel. Thus, it was only a matter of time before Jonathan ascended to the kingship of Israel. Jonathan was a shining star and his future was bright. Jonathan was a royal prince who had access to the best of everything - the best education, the best transportation, the best food, the best toys, and the best amenities money could buy. From a human perspective, Jonathan had the world at his fingertips.

David, on the other hand, was the youngest of eight boys. He was a young, blue-collar shepherd who the Bible describes as a “skilled harpist who was a ruddy and handsome man of valor and war.” (1 Sam. 16:12) Up until he killed the Philistine giant Goliath, David lived in relative obscurity. David's claim to fame was being a harpist and armor-bearer in king Saul's court. There was no hope for royal crowns, fame, power, or wealth for David. From a human perspective, David was a nobody.

In many ways, Jonathan and David couldn't have been more different. Yet, amidst their diverse backgrounds and upbringing, Jonathan and David shared two very important qualities.

- First and foremost, Jonathan and David shared a deep passion for God and His glory among the nations.
- Second, Jonathan and David were fearless young men. They both had hearts and souls that possessed amazing courage and valor.

Both of these qualities are seen early on in the lives of Jonathan and David.

JONATHAN

In Jonathan, we first see his passion for God and his amazing courage as a young prince on the battlefield. In 1 Samuel 14, we find Israel at war with the Philistines. King Saul and the army of Israel are on the battlefield and Jonathan is with them. Unbeknownst to King Saul, Prince Jonathan decides he's had enough of the Philistines and their arrogant defiance of God. Jonathan couldn't wait anymore. It was time to fight.

Listen to what the Bible says next...

“Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, ‘Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be that the Lord will work for us, for nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few.’”

“Then Jonathan climbed upon his hands and feet, and his armor-bearer after him. And they fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer killed them after him. And that first strike, which Jonathan and his armor-bearer made, killed about twenty men....” (1 Samuel 14:6, 13-14)

Jonathan was so passionate for the glory of God among the nations that, along with his armor bearer, he fearlessly attacked a garrison of highly skilled and equipped soldiers. Historically, a garrison was an outpost of fifty or more soldiers. Fifty versus two! Those are not the kind of odds you want when running into battle. Odds like that usually result in a swift death. Yet, if God was on his side, the odds meant nothing to Jonathan.

Jonathan loved God and God's people more than anything else. Because of his great love for God, Jonathan was fearless in the face of opposing armies who mocked and attacked God's name and people.

DAVID

In David, we are introduced to his passion for God and his amazing courage in grand fashion.

While serving as a harpist and armor-bearer in King Saul's court, David would go back and forth to see his father Jesse and tend to the family's herd of sheep. One day, Jesse told David to go see his oldest three brothers who were fighting with the Israeli army against the mighty Philistines.

When David arrived, he witnessed the unthinkable - his brothers and the Israeli army were cowering in the face of a Philistine giant named Goliath. Each day, as the armies prepared for battle, Goliath would come out to the battle line and mock Israel.

Goliath would say...

“Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us. I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together.”

“When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.” (1 Samuel 17:8-11)

Goliath taunted and mocked Israel. In response, King Saul and Israel stood in awe of Goliath instead of God.

David couldn't believe what he witnessed. So, he goes to King Saul and says...

“Let no man's heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.” (1 Samuel 17:32)

Saul was dismayed, if not humored, by David's bold proclamation. Saul responded...

“You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth.” (vs.33)

Listen carefully to what David said next...

“Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” (vs. 34-37)

After rejecting King Saul's royal armor, David grabbed his handmade slingshot along with five smooth stones and literally ran to the battle line where Goliath stood in defiance. As David stood on the battle line, he warned and condemned Goliath...

“You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, I will strike you down and cut off your head....For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand.”

We all know what happened next. In one precise and anointed swing of his handmade slingshot, David performed the greatest upset in the history of war. A virtually unknown shepherd boy killed a national hero and a decorated war veteran. Not only did David kill Goliath, he cut his head off. Now that's a story Hollywood needs to make into a movie.

Piecing It Together

Now, some of you might be thinking - **“I thought we were talking about Jonathan?”**

We are!

But...in order to understand Jonathan as a hero, we must understand the events that led him to perform one of the most heroic acts in the entire Bible. We must understand what united Jonathan's royal heart to the heart of a shepherd boy. We must understand the passionate and divine connection Jonathan and David experienced. And...we must understand the differences that could have easily kept these two fearless teenagers from becoming friends.

Jonathan was a royal prince who lived under the rule of a kingly father who, at times, rejected God and stood in awe of men. As a result, Jonathan's heart longed for a kindred spirit who was just as passionate for the glory of God as he was. Jonathan longed to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with someone who possessed his unflinching faith in God. Jonathan longed for a friend who possessed a fearless and courageous attitude toward those who mocked and rejected the God of Israel.

When Jonathan watched David slay Goliath, he knew he'd found such a friend - a soul mate.

Jonathan and David were different in so many ways. Yet, what they shared in spirit overshadowed any social differences.

Look at what happened immediately after David triumphed over Goliath.

“As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. And David went out and was successful...” (1 Samuel 18:1-5a)

So...what makes Jonathan an UNSUNG HERO?

Jonathan emphasized the heart of man rather than his social standing!

Think about it for a minute...

Jonathan was a royal prince; David was a simple shepherd. Jonathan's father was famous, powerful, and a king; David's father was just an average Joe. Jonathan was white collar; David was blue collar. Jonathan was a city boy; David was a country boy. Jonathan was educated in a royal palace; David was educated in the fields of Bethlehem. Jonathan had access to servants; David had chores and calloused hands. Jonathan carried a royal sword for his protection; David carried a handmade slingshot. Jonathan had an armor-bearer; David had a shepherd's staff.

To say that Jonathan and David grew up on opposite sides of the track would be a huge understatement. Their backgrounds and upbringings were radically different.

Yet, Jonathan didn't see the social discrepancies that separated he and David. On the contrary, Jonathan looked at David the way God looks at man. Jonathan looked at the heart.

When God instructed Samuel to choose a king that would replace Saul, He warned Samuel...

“Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7)

Jonathan was such a great lover of God and His glory that his eyes didn't see a blue collar, country boy who herded sheep and carried a slingshot. Jonathan saw David the way God sees humans - Jonathan saw David's heart.

Can you see Jesus in Jonathan? I sure can! In some ways, Jonathan is a foreshadow if Jesus Christ.

Think about it for a minute...

Jesus was royalty. In fact, He was the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Jesus Father was (and still is) rich, famous, and the Ruler of nations. Jesus was (and still is) served by heavenly angels. In fact, He commands them to this day. When Jesus comes again, He will be clothed in royal garments and will carry a royal sword.

Yet, in the midst of royal heritage and birthright, when Jesus came and lived on earth as a man, He didn't discriminate based on race, ethnicity, education, socioeconomic standing, profession, or neighborhood. Social standing had no influence on whom Jesus chose to befriend, enjoy meals with, travel with, heal, and save.

Just like Jonathan, Jesus looked beyond social status and peered into the heart of man.

Can I ask you some questions? When you see people...

- Do you see white versus black?
- Do you see family pedigree?
- Do you see private school versus public school?
- Do you see rich versus poor?
- Do you see white collar versus blue collar?
- Do you see polished versus roughneck?
- Do you see popular versus unpopular?

Listen carefully!

If Jonathan and David were teenagers who lived in Sumter, SC today - they would come from radically different walks of life.

Jonathan would be private schooled; David would probably be homeschooled. Jonathan's dad would be a wealthy man of influence and power in our community; David's dad would be a shift worker at one of the local plants. Jonathan would live in a lavish home in an elite neighborhood; David would live in an average, run-of-the-mill home. Jonathan would hang out at the country club playing golf; David would hang out in the woods hunting and fishing. Jonathan would drive a BMW; David would drive a 4WD pickup truck with a gun rack in the back window. Jonathan would wear Ralph Lauren and Lacoste; David would wear Carhartt and camouflage.

Would you like to become a spiritual hero for the glory of God?

EMPHASIZE the heart of people, not their social status! Look beyond prestige, diplomas, popularity, wealth, clothing preferences, and school attendance and see the heart. That's what Jesus did when he looked at you while hanging on the Cross.

Jonathan was a hero because he refused to see the social differences between he and David. Jonathan was a hero because he looked at the only thing that matters when it comes to relationships - the heart. Jonathan possessed a godly perspective of people - not a worldly perspective.

This isn't the only thing that made Jonathan a hero. In fact, it's not even the primary reason Jonathan is a hero.

The primary reason Jonathan is a hero is this - **Jonathan willingly sacrificed his personal crown for the furtherance of God's plan and God's glory.**

Jonathan was a hero because he was SELFLESS! He was willing to be a part of something far greater than himself - even if it meant forfeiting his future as Israel's king.

Jonathan was passionate about God's plan, not his personal privileges.

Again, the parallel between Jonathan and Jesus Christ is undeniable. Just like Jonathan, Jesus refused to cling to His royal rights and privileges as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Just like Jonathan, Jesus temporarily relinquished certain royal rights and privileges and submitted Himself to the eternal plan of God the Father - the plan to save humanity from their sins. A plan that would cost Jesus His very life.

The Bible says...

"Think of yourselves the way Jesus Christ thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human!" (Philippians 2:5-7)

Would you like to be a spiritual hero for the glory of God?

SACRIFICE your personal crowns, along with your rights and preferences, for the glory of God and His redemptive plan!

Jonathan knew that God's plan for Israel was for David to be king. Jonathan embraced God's redemptive plan, even though, from a worldly perspective, it meant giving up his royal crown, his royal rights, and his royal privileges. That's what Jesus did for you at the Cross.

There's not a person here this morning that isn't clinging, in some way or fashion, to a personal crown. There isn't a person here this morning that doesn't intensely struggle with relinquishing personal rights and privileges for God's greater redemptive plan. By nature, we are selfish, self-centered people who fiercely cling to our rights and privileges.

There's nothing heroic about that kind of living. Living like the world is easy; it's comfortable; it's applauded and encouraged.

Being a spiritual hero demands selflessness. Being a spiritual hero is hard; it's uncomfortable at times; it's counter-cultural and oftentimes mocked. It demands a joyful spirit that willingly elevates God's glory and God's redemptive plan at the expense of our own glory and our own plan.

Be a hero!

CONCLUSION

When it comes to the story of Jonathan and David - David gets all the ink. David is a biblical superhero. In fact, David is arguably the most famous hero in the entire Bible.

Yet, make no mistake about it, Jonathan was definitely a hero too. Jonathan was a hero because he...

- Emphasized the heart of people, not their social status.
- Sacrificed his personal crown for the glory of God and God's redemptive plan for Israel.

In these two ways, Jonathan was a greater spiritual hero than David ever was.

Are you emphasizing the heart of people instead of their social status? Do you see people through God's eyes or the world's eyes? If so, you may very well be missing out on a once-in-a-lifetime friendship. And...you've forgotten how Christ saw you at the Cross.

Are you willing to sacrifice your personal rights and privileges for the greater cause of God - His glory and His redemptive plan? Is there a crown you're clinging to? Is there something in your life that's keeping you from exalting God's glory and His redemptive plan?

Let go! Relinquish your worldly crowns! Quit clinging to a self-centered agenda and start living for the glory of God and His kingdom.

Be a spiritual hero!