

¹² Then Jonathan said to David: "By the LORD, the God of Israel, I will surely sound out my father by this time the day after tomorrow! If he is favorably disposed toward you, will I not send you word and let you know? ¹³ But if my father is inclined to harm you, may the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away safely. May the LORD be with you as he has been with my father. ¹⁴ But show me unfailing kindness (hesed) like that of the LORD as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, ¹⁵ 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." ¹⁶ So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD call David's enemies to account." ¹⁷ And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love (ahav) for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.

Dear beloved of God,

For Christians I think it is one of the toughest situations we face. It's having to choose between two people we love. Do you tell the parent of your friend, that your friend is doing something wrong? You don't want to lose their friendship and trust, but you want them to be safe too. What about your buddy at work who is cheating the company. It hurts the bottom line and that could mean your job, but you don't want to lose your friendship either. Another parent comes to you and tells you your child has been bullying another child in his class. Do you reject it outright and defend your child?

Because we live in a sinful world and we have a sinful flesh, we will have these moral dilemmas. We know how the world deals with these things: "Mind your own business," and "My kid would never do something like that." But how do Christians treat such moral dilemmas?

1

Jonathan certainly had a moral dilemma. Jonathan loved his father, Saul, the king of Israel. He was not only a faithful son, he was a faithful subject of his king. Being his eldest son, Jonathan, by rights, would be the next king of Israel. This is the man who raised him and loved him, who probably taught him his faith.

David was his best friend. David had served both his King and his Lord faithfully. He had slain Goliath when all of the others soldiers, including Jonathan himself, had been afraid. He had soothed Jonathan's father's with music, when the weight and cares of his position had caused him distress. One more important fact: Despite the fact that Jonathan was the firstborn son of Saul, the Lord had anointed David as the next king of Israel.

His dilemma? David came to Jonathan and told him that King Saul, Jonathan's father, had tried to kill him. David told him he had had to run for his life because Saul not only tried to pin him to a wall with a spear, but had sent soldiers to kill him.

(12-13a, 16-17) *¹² Then Jonathan said to David: "By the LORD, the God of Israel, I will surely sound out my father by this time the day after tomorrow! If he is favorably disposed toward you, will I not send you word and let you know? ¹³ But if my father is inclined to harm you, may the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away safely.... ¹⁶ So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD call David's enemies to account." ¹⁷ And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.*

Jonathan couldn't believe it! He loved and respected his father, but he loved David as his own brother. What should he do? Should he believe such a report? Was blood thicker than water? Should he just pass it off and say there was nothing he could do?

What Jonathan did is something that encourages us in our Christian lives, something we can truly learn and put into practice. Jonathan loved them both as he loved himself. Here are a couple of ways that he did that:

1. Jonathan took the words and actions of both Saul and David in the kindest possible way. Jonathan was not going to simply ignore David's concern, nor was he going to listen to this kind of talk about his father. So Jonathan promised to look into the situation out of respect for his father, his friend, and his Lord. Jonathan spoke in reassuring ways to his father and his friend to bring peace.
2. Jonathan was willing to do the right thing, whatever it was. Jonathan promised David that, if what he said was true he would do all he could to protect David from harm, warning David about further harm that might come his way or telling his father, that what he was doing was wrong.

Moral dilemmas will always be difficult for us. The key to overcoming them? Love others as you love yourself. Love takes effort, lots of effort. It is rarely the easy way to do things. In fact, it is usually the hardest way to do things. Love as you love yourself.

2

What we have seen so far is courageous and loving, but it is the type of thing that even any moral person can do. There are atheists in the world who would see the wisdom in acting this way. Jonathan was no atheist, however. (13b-15) *May the LORD be with you as he has been with my father. ¹⁴ But show me unfailing kindness like that of the LORD as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, ¹⁵ 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.*"

Jonathan was certainly a good man and a man who truly knew the meaning of words like respect, loyalty, faithfulness, and obedience. But what made Jonathan's actions uncommon and truly loving is something far different than anything we have discussed so far.

Jonathan did these things because he knew the *unfailing kindness of the LORD*. Jonathan knew that for all of his moral acts, he was still a man who failed on a daily basis. There were days that he didn't feel particularly loving or act particularly loving. He didn't always take people's words and actions in the kindest possible way. There were times when he acted selfishly with only his own interests in mind or in the interests of people he loved more than others.

But Jonathan also knew the LORD. He knew that his God was so faithful to his promises, that he would always find acceptance and forgiveness before his LORD. The New Testament word for this unfailing kindness? Grace. Jonathan knew and was motivated by the grace of God.

That grace led him to recognize that God's will for him and for David was greater than his own personal preference. He recognizes that David will be the next king, because the LORD said he would. He loved like God loved him.

That love is the same love that you and I experience. The love of Jesus never fails. His love is so strong that even when people fall away from the faith, and then come back to faith, we don't need to baptize them again. Why? Because God's love never fails. This is the love your God has shown to you.

Love like God loves you.