

# Jonathan and His Times

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There is a remarkable similarity between Jonathan in the Old Testament and Barnabas in the New. Both were gracious and affectionate; both were signally used of God in their day; but both manifested deplorable weakness in a moment of crisis. Barnabas broke with Paul, special vessel of the Spirit in his time; and Jonathan parted with David, Jehovah's choice for the throne of Israel. In both cases, natural affection was the snare; Barnabas could not give up John Mark, and Jonathan could not give up Saul.

The break-down of these truly excellent saints is recorded for our instruction. Perhaps there is nothing that so hinders full loyalty to Christ as natural affection. We find it so difficult to give Him the place of absolute supremacy in our hearts and lives. Levi is specially commended in Deuteronomy 33: 8-11 because in the day of the golden calf he "said unto his father and mother I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren nor knew his own children." In Luke 14: 26, the Lord Jesus points out a similar path for all who would be His disciples. The natural must be subservient to the spiritual if we would follow Him. The rejected One — our God in "the likeness of sinful flesh" laid it down emphatically, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me *is not worthy of Me.*" (Matt. 10: 37) What a test for our hearts!

Jonathan — "*Jehovah hath given*" (as real a gift from God to Israel as Paul to the Church) — came forward at a very evil time in Israel. The King of the people's choice was already a failure, The very enemy that he was specially appointed to save Israel from (1 Sam. 9: 16) was oppressing the nation sorely. The people had everywhere been disarmed (the King and his son being alone permitted to keep their swords), and even the black smiths' shops were closed by order of the Philistines lest they should forge weapons. God's time had not yet come for David to be brought upon the scene, and the whole position seemed utterly hopeless. The awfulness of this will only be realised as we remember that Israel was God's chosen people for the blessing and guidance of all the nations upon earth. They had become utterly degraded and impotent by unfaithfulness to God. Is there any picture here of the

present forlorn and powerless condition of the Church of God?

But God is never without resource. In every emergency He has His man. So Jonathan was raised up, that fair flower which God caused to blossom in the wilderness of Israel at that sorrowful moment" (Darby). His story may be divided into three parts thus: —

1. His relation to Jehovah.
2. His relation to David.
3. His relation to Saul.

The second part covers the largest space in the inspired record. In 1 Samuel 14: he so acquitted himself that the people declared "he hath wrought with God this day" (verse 45). It is a great thing to work *with* God, and it must not be confounded with working *for* God: To work *with* God is to have His mind for the moment, so that the worker moves as God moves, and along the line that He marks out. We see this illustrated in the Acts of the Apostles, and it is the secret of spiritual success. Such discernment is the fruit of exercise of heart before God. It cannot be acquired otherwise.

Jonathan was distressed by the condition of things in Israel. We doubt not prayer was behind it when he said to his armour-bearer one day. "Come and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison that is on the other side." It was a step of faith. Two men with but one sword between them, marching out to attack a powerful foe, encamped on craggy heights, practically inaccessible!

## "HE TOLD NOT HIS FATHER"

There was no real wish to hide anything, but men who have no faith themselves are apt to discourage and hinder those who have. David would certainly never have gone down into the Valley of Elah had he paid heed to Saul (1 Sam. 17: 33) It was better to have the co-operation of a lowly soul such as the unnamed armour-bearer, if possessed of like faith, than the sanction and support of a monarch who had no faith at all. Saul had the forms of religion about him. Jehovah's priest was there, wearing an ephod, and the ark was not far away. But What is the value of forms if power is lacking? The past and present history of Christendom is a sufficient answer.

Be it be noted that both Jonathan and his armour-bearer were

## YOUNG MEN

We are apt to connect conspicuous faith with age and experience. But Scripture abounds with extraordinary faith in young men. David wrote the majority of his Psalms before he attained the age of thirty; Daniel and his pious companions were still in their youth when they made their stand for God, Elihu gave utterance to sounder wisdom than Job's more venerable friends, and of Timothy Paul was able to say, I have no man who will naturally care for your state . . . ye know the proof of him," etc. (Phil. 2.). We would therefore encourage younger brethren to exercise themselves spiritually about the condition of things around them, and also concerning the deep deep need. They may then be prepared to say with Isaiah, "Here am I, send me" Isa 6: 8). The only person expressly called "a man of God" in the New Testament was the comparatively youthful Timothy (1 Tim. 6: 11). Yet he was a timid, sensitive character, not unlike Jeremiah in an earlier day. But grace knows how to strengthen and make bold the one whose heart is right towards God, and who yearns to be used of Him.

Jonathan and his armour-bearer set out that day with

## A VERY SIMPLE BIT OF REASONING

in their souls. "Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that Jehovah will work for us: for there is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few" (1 Sam. 14: 6). To Jonathan the Philistines, whatever their numbers and prowess, were simply "these uncircumcised," i.e they were men not in relationship with God. On the other hand, Israel was in relationship with God, hence the twice-repeated covenant name "Jehovah." Faith in Jonathan therefore could see no difficulty. If God was not with the Philistines, they had no real power; and if God was indeed with Israel, then almighty Power was at hand, if only there was faith to use it. How charmingly simple is all this! Have we learned the lesson? Do we deplore the lack of power visible in the Church to-day? Is not the Church still the temple of God, and does not the Spirit of God still abide therein? (1 Cor. 3: 16). What do we want more, but just the simple faith to go forward in dependence upon Him?

Jonathan felt, and rightly, that if God was moving, numbers mattered nothing. "There is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few." Gideon accomplished the deliverance of Israel with but three hundred men, furnished, not with weapons, but with pitchers, lamps, and trumpets (Judges 7.). Paul reminds us that neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase" (1 Cor. 3: 7). Two or three humble men, without visible resources, moving about Preaching the Gospel of Christ, were once described as "these that have turned the world upside down" (Acts 17: 6).

Moreover, Jonathan had the consciousness in his soul of his link with the people of God — with Israel. Hence his words in verse 12, "Jehovah hath delivered them into the hand of Israel." We observe the same feature in David when he went forth to encounter the giant, "that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel . . . He will deliver you into *our* hands" (1 Sam. 17: 46-47) In both cases there was no independent action. The faith was indeed their own, but they acted for and with the nation that God owned as His. Saul was utterly destitute of this feeling: hence his words in 1 Samuel 14: 24 — "*mine* enemies." In all our labours and conflicts, let us never forget that we are part of a great divine unity, the body of Christ. The mass of our brethren may possibly be in a spiritually low condition, but they are our brethren nevertheless, and the Church, whatever its state, is still owned of God in the earth. We serve therefore as representing it, and for its edification and blessing.

Jonathan asked God for a sign, and He was graciously pleased to grant it. The two men proposed to discover themselves to the enemy, and if the enemy said, "Tarry until we come to you," they would remain where they were, and see what God would do; but if the enemy said, "Come up unto us," they would accept the call as assurance from God of a complete victory. Let us not miss the lesson of this sign. "Come up unto us" was the language of complacent security. A single boulder would have easily destroyed two men clambering painfully up rugged rocks, yet no boulder was rolled down upon them, so secure did the Philistines feel, and so deep was their contempt for the two. climbers. Nothing is more deadly than a human sense of strength and security; but nothing is more blessed than a spiritual sense of weakness and dependence upon God. Let us cultivate the latter increasingly.

As soon as Jonathan and his armour-bearer reached the top they began to slay, and simultaneously Jehovah caused an earthquake. Panic ensued. The Philistines fled hither and thither, apparently killing one another as they went. Thus did God work for the discomfiture of the insolent foe.

Saul's watchmen reported the commotion, but the king was not in the secret. Neither was the

priest, who at the King's bidding brought thither the ark, and began to inquire of God, receiving however no answer. God was not interested in these religious formalists, but was acting altogether apart from them, as He has frequently done down to our own day.

## SUCCESS INVARIABLY ATTRACTS NUMBERS

Those of God's people who had gone over to the Philistines (the inspired writer calls them in contempt "Hebrews," not "Israelites"), and others who had hid themselves, now turned out to share the victory. Both traitors and cowards were now willing to identify themselves with God's side, now that side was triumphant. It has ever been so; but immeasurably more pleasing to God are the godly minority who cleave to Him, and are willing to accept both reproach and peril for His name's sake. The God-fearing ones of Malachi 3: 16, and "the rest in Thyatira" (Rev. 2: 24) are examples of this.

The remainder of 1 Samuel 14: is rather the story of Saul than of Jonathan. The poor benighted King almost turned the victory into disaster. The meddlesomeness of flesh in divine movements is always to be dreaded. Saul's foolish prohibition of all food until the work was finished led to frightful licence on the part of the people as all unnecessary prohibitions are apt to do. Jonathan had his eyes opened by disobeying his father (for he ate some honey); David says, on the contrary, "the commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalm 19: 8.). This means that true enlightenment is found in the path of obedience to God.

The forms of religion were still acknowledged by the King He built an altar — (the first he ever built to Jehovah), and instructed the priest to inquire of God about the further pursuit of the Philistines. Finding himself divinely ignored, he suspected divine displeasure somewhere; but he was so utterly far from God that the thought never occurred to his mind that he was the offender. How deceitful is flesh!

When the lot was taken, he positively passed sentence of death upon Jonathan! Ignorance and folly could scarcely have gone further. But the common sense of the people revolted against the King's stupidity. "Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid." So the matter ended. Saul went home, and the Philistines got away without further chastisement. The whole chapter is deeply humiliating in its exposure of the helplessness and folly of religious flesh, and withal is blessedly exhilarating in its precious assurance of what God can do with even the feeblest instruments who are right in heart towards Him, and who are able to trust Him wholly.

From this point the history of Jonathan is interwoven with that of David. For some reason he played no part in the valley of Elah, although he appears to have been in the camp of Israel at the time. Was he not at that moment a vessel "meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work"? (2 Tim. 2: 21). It does not at all follow that because a man is ready for God at one time he is ready at another. Faith in the choicest saints fluctuates seriously. We see this in Elijah very distinctly. But the sovereignty of God is the more likely explanation of Jonathan's inactivity in the presence of Goliath. One of the great lessons of the Book of the Acts is that God acts as and when He pleases, using whomsoever He will. His time had come to introduce David to the people; accordingly the lad was brought forth in all the sweet simplicity of his faith, contrasting so completely with the ponderous formality and spiritual deadness of the man of the people's choice.

When David returned from the conflict with the head of the Philistine in his hand, Jonathan's affections went out towards him. David could say of him after his tragic death, "Very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women" (2 Sam. 1: 26).

There is

# NO SUBSTITUTE FOR LOVE.

Nothing that the wit of man can devise can ever take its place. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned" (Cant. 8: 7). Jehovah lamented concerning Israel, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest out after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto Jehovah... Thus saith Jehovah, What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me ... Thou said'st, there is no hope; no; for I have loved strangers, and after them I will go" (Jer. 2: 1-5, 25. In Revelation 2. we hear the Lord's rebuke to Ephesus, "I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love." Works were there; orthodoxy and ecclesiastical order also; but the decay of love spread its dismal blight over them all.

David returning from the slaughter of Goliath is a type of the risen Christ. Only thus does the Christian know Him (2 Cor. 5: 16). In His death He made expiation for our sins; He brought to an end, as before God, the old man of sin and corruption; and He overthrew the might of our every foe. He is now Man exalted in heaven. He who once descended into the lower parts of the earth, has ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things (Eph. 4: 10). Surely our souls are exhilarated as we think of Him thus! Surely our affections follow Him to the place where He has gone! What place can the world hold in the minds and hearts of those who have the blessed knowledge of Him who man rejected *here*, and who is honoured *there*?

## JONATHAN LOVED DAVID

as his own soul, and forthwith gave proof of his love by stripping himself for him. The extent of his surrender is remarkable. "Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle" (1 Sam. 18: 4) It was a great thing to give David his robe and garments, but for a soldier, and a royal prince withal, to yield also his weapons was extraordinary. How great then was the affection of Jonathan for David!

We find Paul in the stripping-room in Philippians 3: If any other person in his day thought he had whereof he might boast in the flesh, he had more. Every natural, racial, religious, and moral advantage was his. But the first sight of the glorified Christ knocked the value out of it all for him for ever. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." It was not the impulsive act of momentary enthusiasm with Paul, but the cool calculation of a man who was learning with God the true value of things both above and below. Paul no more went back upon his first devotion to Christ than Jonathan from his first devotion to David. Both loved their object until life's end. After years of unparalleled suffering and reproach for Christ (and the story may be read in an abbreviated form in 2 Cor. 11.) Paul could say, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him" (Phil 3: 8, 9.)

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom. 15: 4). Brethren, what have we learned from Jonathan and from Paul. The latter writes appealingly to us all, "Be followers (i.e. imitators) of me" in 1 Corinthians 11: 1, adding, "even as I also am of Christ," and in Philippians 3: 17, "and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an example." Let us review our Christian path. What have we really surrendered for the One we profess to love. What cherished idols have we abandoned for Him? To what extent have we shared His rejection? It was clearly seen that Paul and his fellows were treading a path of loss; they were made "a spectacle (or theatre) unto the

world, and to angels, and to men" (1 Cor. 4: 9). Is it as clearly seen in us? May God by His blessed Spirit exercise our hearts and consciences as to this: —

Oh, let thy life be given,  
Thy years for Him be spent;  
World-fetters all be riven,  
And joy with suffering blent;  
Bring thou thy worthless all,  
Follow thy Saviour's call.

The contrast between the attitude of Saul and Jonathan towards David was very great. The poor jealous king, now frequently plagued with an evil spirit (typical of the last king who will reign in Jerusalem before the great Appearing) hated him, and would destroy him, and even instructed Jonathan as well as his servants to kill David (1 Sam. 19: 1). Jonathan, on his part "delighted much in David." This was the rock upon which father and son split, and the cleavage was irrevocable. In like manner to-day every man's eternal destiny is determined by the attitude of his soul towards the Son of God. "He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God" (John 3: 18) "What think ye of Christ?" is the great question which will either make or break every person to whom it is presented. The rich young ruler of Mark 10 was all that could be desired, morally and otherwise; the difficulty was as to Christ. He did not see sufficient in Him to let all go for His sake.

The cleavage between those to whom Christ is everything, and those to whom He is little or nothing, is indeed most serious. Witness His own words in Luke 12: 51-53: Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth. I tell you, Nay, but division; for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother, etc. Whatever matters of contention there were amongst men before His coming to earth, all have been eclipsed by His coming and rejection. Half-hearted Christians dropped Paul in the hour of his deepest need because they were not prepared to identify themselves with the disgrace and deprivations which came upon him for Christ's sake (2 Tim. 1: 15; 2 Tim. 4: 16-17).

Jonathan was willing to speak up for David. His remonstrance as given in 1 Samuel 19: 4 is deeply touching: "Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good; for he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and Jehovah wrought a great deliverance for all Israel; thou sawest it, and didst rejoice; wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without cause." In these words we can almost bear the Christian speaking up for his Saviour and Lord. The hated one's words and works had been very good, and a great salvation had been wrought for Israel by his hand. Who dare impeach either the words or works of the Son of God, and who can deny that He has wrought for His people "so great salvation"? (Heb. 2: 3). David "put his life in his hand"; our blessed Lord went immeasurably further, for He laid down His life for the sheep. "No one taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power (authority) to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father" (John 10: 18).

Jonathan reminded his father that at the moment of David's Victory over Goliath — "thou sawest it, and didst rejoice." But it was a mere passing emotion; not a vestige of divine sentiment had any

lodgment in his soul. Rocky ground hearers are very emotional, and seem to be filled with divine joy as the wonders of divine grace are set forth, but it quickly passes as the dew before the sun (Matt. 13: 20-21).

It was good that Jonathan should speak up for David, and it is also good that we should be ever ready to speak up for the Lord Jesus; but the weakness of Jonathan lay in the fact that he was not prepared to follow David in his rejection.

He reminds us somewhat of Nicodemus in the New Testament,

## **THE MIDNIGHT TALK**

with the Son of God as recorded in John 3 evidently left its impress upon his soul, for we find him later pleading His cause before the Council in John 7: 50, and bringing down upon his own head the contempt of his fellows. But he was not yet prepared to throw in his lot with the Nazarene, and to share the reproach and shame that came upon Him from day to day. Thank God, Nicodemus shone out brightly at the finish. When all others had fled, boastful Peter doing worse still, Nicodemus proffered his assistance to Joseph of Arimathea for the burial of his Lord. His righteous soul was stung to the quick by the unrighteousness that he had witnessed. Delay was no longer possible; timidity was thrown to the winds; and he allowed it to be seen by all that he loved and honoured the outcast Son of God. Truly, "the last shall be first, and the first last". (Matt. 20: 16)

God is never limited in His resources. Accordingly, He had instruments other than Jonathan for the help of His persecuted servant. Michal by a ruse enabled David to escape when Saul would have murdered him in his bed, and Samuel sheltered him in Naioth when his own home was no longer tenable. When Saul essayed to fetch him thence, the Spirit of God came upon him in a remarkable manner, thus witnessing to the wilful King of the uselessness of waging war with God (1 Sam. 19: 11-24).

But soon the friends met again, and David challenged Jonathan: "What have I done? What is mine iniquity, and what is my sin before thy father that he seeketh my life"! (1 Sam. 20: 1). It was then arranged that David should absent himself from the royal table on a forthcoming special occasion under the pretence of going to Bethlehem to keep a yearly sacrifice with his family, and that Jonathan should report to him what the King said about it. Readers of Holy Scripture are sometimes startled when they read of

## **ACTS OF DUPLICITY**

committed by persons generally commended by the Spirit of God, and they wonder how these things can be. Rahab's falsehood concerning the whereabouts of the spies, and David's conduct in the incident before us are examples. But why need we wonder? Is flesh anything better in the saint than in the sinner? Can any number of years of communion with God improve it, or render the saint less liable to temptation from it? As well expect the Ethiopian to change his skin, or the leopard his spots! The language of the Holy Spirit in Romans 7: 7 is clear and unequivocal as to this. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Its hopeless depravity, and inveterate hostility to all that is of God, is thus declared.

But nothing is further from the mind of the Spirit than to sanction or excuse outbreaks of evil in those who are near to God. Indeed, the very opposite principle is found in Scripture. Thus to Israel of

old Jehovah said: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3: 2); and believers now are warned that if they call Him Father who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, they must pass the time of their sojourning here in fear (1 Peter 1: 17) And the same Epistle tells us that "the time is *come* that judgement must begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4: 17).

## THE SHORTCOMINGS OF SAINTS

both in the Old and New Testament dispensations are recorded because the Spirit of God is a faithful biographer, and would tell us the worst as well as the best about those in whom He is interested, and their sorrowful misdeeds are usually recorded without comment, in order that we may exercise our minds and hearts as we read, and so form a judgement from what we know of Scripture generally, as to what is pleasing to God, and what is not.

Until the great change takes place at the coming of the Lord Jesus, every conceivable evil is possible, even for the most devout. But our shortcomings are immeasurably more serious than those of Rahab, David, and Jonathan, because we have seen God's judgement of flesh in the death of His Son (Rom. 8: 3), and have ourselves professedly accepted His judgement. In the words of the Apostle, "They that are Christ's have crucified. the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5: 24).

To return to Jonathan. He imperilled his life by repeating David's story to the King, for the javelin was hurled at him, as twice before it had been hurled at David (1 Sam. 19: 11). The incident of the arrows which followed need not be detailed here, The breach between Saul and David was now hopeless and final. Deeply moving was the parting between Jonathan and David, "they kissed one another, and wept with one another until David exceeded" (1 Sam. 20: 41). The love was indeed wonderful, but the weak point was serious beyond degree. Jonathan would strip himself for David; he would speak up for him; he would kiss him; but he was not willing to share his rejection. Accordingly the one went whither he could, to the hill-side and the cave, and the other returned to the comforts of the city. But Jonathan finished on the wall of Bethshan, while David ascended the throne!

The paramount question for our souls to-day is this: How far are we prepared to go in our identification with Christ. The true path is clearly indicated for us by the Lord Himself in John 12: 24-26. He, as the true grain of wheat, was about to "fall into the ground and die," for only thus could God's garner be filled. Apart from death, He must remain for ever alone. But we who derive from Him are

## OURSELVES GRAINS OF WHEAT

and we are expected to accept death also. Only thus can we be fruitful for God. "He that loveth his Life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve Me, let him follow Me, and where I am there shall also My servant be, if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour." We accepted death in principle in our Baptism, but have we really accepted it in practice? If so, how comes it that the world's fashions and follies are promptly adopted amongst us as they appear? How can it be explained that some seek the worlds honours, Municipal, Parliamentary, and otherwise. Why the rush of so many to join with the ungodly in Co-operative Societies? And why the wave of militarism that has passed over the Assemblies of God in recent years, due to the influence, not of Holy Scripture, but of the world's inflammatory Press.

The call for a well defined separation rings out clearly enough in the words, "Jesus also, that He

might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13: 12-13). Mark the words. He suffered, not to save His own from Hell (although that is true), but that he might *sanctify them*. He wanted a people who should be absolutely His own, and standing apart from the whole order of things from which He is excluded. This involves reproach," but shall we refuse it. Is He not worthy of the intense devotion of these poor hearts of ours?

## THE LAST MEETING

of David and Jonathan is noted in 1 Samuel 23: 16-18. It took place at an opportune moment. Saul, the man who might have been throneless had not David confronted Goliath, was pursuing him with relentless energy; and the men of Keilah, whom he had recently rescued from the Philistines, were treacherously betraying him. Who could be trusted? To whom could David turn? The ground seemed to quake beneath his feet. Just then, Jonathan, Saul's son, arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. Spiritual fellowship and brotherly sympathy is as refreshing as the dew of heaven. Don't let us look for it, beloved brethren. but let us show it, for many are in need of it. The coming of Titus to Paul in Macedonia was as divinely timed as the coming of Jonathan to David in the wood (2 Cor. 7: 5-6).

The parting of the ways had now come. Jonathan was fully aware of Jehovah's purpose concerning David. So was Saul (1 Sam. 24: 20). So Was Abigail (1 Sam. 25: 30) So were many others (2 Sam. 3: 18). Jonathan, knowing what the issue must be, had already pledged David to show mercy to his seed (1 Sam. 20: 15). This being the position, David might well have said, as his Lord later, "He that is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12: 30). To contend with David was to contend with God. Every man's choice must now be made. Alas, for Jonathan! Much as he loved David, and sincerely though he believed the divine purpose concerning him, he felt unable to follow him. Obadiah would befriend the prophets of Jehovah, but he was not willing to abandon Ahab's palace to share the cave with them (1 Kings 18: 4). Moses, on the contrary, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and he identified himself once for all with the people of God in their poverty and contempt (Heb. 11: 23-27) The Holy Spirit gives his action a meaning and value far greater than Moses ever imagined. He calls it "the reproach of Christ."

We would speak tenderly of such a man as Jonathan. No more attractive figure can be found on the sacred page, and his devotion to David will read its lessons to God's saints while time lasts. But the failure must not be ignored. In the day of Christ all that is divinely excellent in us will be commended and rewarded; and all that is otherwise will be mercifully cast into eternal oblivion. But meanwhile the Spirit records the weaknesses and shortcomings of those who have trodden the path of faith before us, for our present instruction and blessing. The solemn lesson is ever before our eyes that only One has been perfect in all His ways.

We listen now to

## JONATHAN'S LAST WORDS

to David: "Fear not, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee: and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also my father knoweth." The weak points of Jonathan's words are sadly clear. First, he still thought of David as connected with the Saul order of things, i.e., he

would be Saul's successor — Jonathan was wrong in principle in speaking thus. David would be no mere successor to Saul, but the beginning of an absolutely new order. In Psalm 78, which has been called the 'parable of the prodigal nation,' the Saul episode is completely ignored by the inspired writer. The evil and ruin of Israel is traced down to the days of Eli (verse 64); then David and Zion are introduced as Jehovah's resource in grace. One of the most serious blunders of our time is the effort to connect Christ with man's order of things. The world is still regarded by many as mendable, and they would fain bring Christ into the working of it. What is not perceived is that the old man, the world, and the prince of this world (Satan) are all under judgement. The risen Christ is the second man and the Last Adam, the beginning and the head of a new order of things that will never pass away.

Jonathan also erred when he said to David, "I shall be next unto thee." It is those who suffer that will reign (2 Tim. 2: 12). Humbler men than the King's son were destined to be near David in his exaltation; Jonathan was destined to be disgraced to the uttermost. Moreover, was it for him or any other to say in advance who should be next to the new King. Surely that is a matter for the King himself to decide! Zebedee's sons failed similarly when they asked for right and left-hand places in the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 20: 21).

It may be that "I next" had much to do with Jonathan's reluctance to tread a path of reproach and loss. He seemed unwilling to surrender all his dignity for the one he loved. David's band was certainly a motley crowd (1 Sam. 22: 2). Jonathan was not quite prepared to make one with them. Shall we not pray that we may be preserved from a respectable Christianity? To the carnally-minded Corinthians who loved ease and honour here, the Apostle wrote, not without a tinge of sarcasm in his tone: "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst; and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day" (1 Cor. 4: 10-13). It is men of the Paul type whom the Lord will honour in His Kingdom.

It remains to be added that "David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house." Not to the royal camp, not to the ranks of the persecutors of the man of Jehovah's choice, but "to his house."

Psalm 63 fits in here. David is in the wilderness. So many things were lacking there, but he had GOD.