

1 Samuel 20:1-42 | “Now That’s Love!”

Preached on March 6, 2022 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel 20, as we continue in this Old Testament book. *[pause]*

Have you ever seen love between two people, and thought, “Now that’s love!” *[pause]*

B.B. Warfield was a scholar and eminent theologian at Princeton from the late 1800’s to early 1900’s.

Shortly after he got married, he and his wife got caught in a terrible thunderstorm in Germany.

Because of this event, his wife experienced severe nervous trauma, which affected her greatly throughout the rest of her life.

In fact, towards the end of her life, she became essentially an invalid, who was bedridden.

Yet throughout their whole marriage of 39 years, B.B. Warfield took great care of his wife, reading to her every day, and it’s said that he would rarely leave his wife for more than 2 hours at a time.¹ *[pause]*

How could someone do that?

How could someone show such steadfast love to someone else for 39 years, even though he had to put so much effort into caring for his wife, not getting much in return? *[pauseeee]*

There’s something about a story like that that draws us in, as we deeply admire it.

The reason why we admire it is because deep down we know that true love is actually *steadfast* love.

It’s love that not only says a promise, but love that lives out the promise of “in sickness and in health...until death do us part,” like B.B. Warfield demonstrated. *[pauseeeee]*

That’s the theme of today’s story from the Bible - steadfast, loyal love.

Let’s see the story for ourselves. [READ VERSES 1-17.] *(pause)*

If you remember from last week, Saul had attempted many times to try to kill David, but none of them worked.

Now David is on the run, and he goes to his trusty friend, Jonathan. *[pause]*

David asks Jonathan what he did that Saul keeps trying to murder him, but Jonathan doesn’t believe David.

¹ Zaspel, Fred. “Annie Pearce Kinkead (Mrs. B.B.) Warfield.” Credo Magazine, 25 Apr. 2013, https://credomag.com/2013/04/annie-pearce-kinkead-mrs-b-b-warfield/#_edn1.

Jonathan believes that his father would tell him, if he's trying to kill David, for Saul tells him everything.

But David knows what he's experienced, and also points out that Saul knows about their close friendship, so he wouldn't tell Jonathan if he was going to kill David. *[pause]*

Finally, Jonathan is willing to listen and says, "Whatever you say, I will do for you." *[pause]*

So in order to prove Saul's evil intentions, David comes up with a plan.

David will skip out on the new moon festival, hide somewhere, and through Saul's response to David's absence, it will prove one way or the other. *[pauseeee]*

After this, David and Jonathan go out into the field, and what we find are promises made to each other.

Jonathan promises to tell David how Saul responds to David's absence, and in this way, protect David.

And then requests a promise from David -- he asks for his life and his family's lives to be spared once David becomes king. *[pause]*

You see, in those days, the normal cultural thing to do in a kingdom was to kill off the whole family of the previous king, so that there was no threat to the throne from the previous king's line.

So Jonathan is thinking ahead and securing the safety of himself and his family when David comes to power. *[pause]*

David agrees to this and they reaffirm their covenant together out of love. *[pauseeeee]*

So the story goes back to the plan, and the plan is set to figure out Saul's true intentions, but there's one thing missing: David somehow has to hear how Saul responds.

So Jonathan comes up with a great, covert method of communicating with David.

David will be hiding beside a stone heap, Jonathan will shoot 3 arrows to the side of it, and Jonathan will send a young boy to get the arrows.

If Jonathan tells the boy that the arrows are on his side, then that means there's no danger.

But if Jonathan tells the boy that the arrows are beyond him, then that's the sign that the Lord is sending David away, for there's danger to David's life. *[pauseeeee]*

So the plan is set, and all that's left is seeing what happens.

The story now takes us to the king's table, where Saul, Jonathan, and Abner are there, celebrating the new moon feast, but David's seat is empty. *[pause]*

The first day, Saul just chalks David's absence up to being ceremonially unclean, but the second day's absence gets Saul wondering.

Saul asks Jonathan where David is and Jonathan tells him that David requested to go to his hometown for a sacrifice.

But just listen to how Saul responds in verses 30-34. [READ VERSES.]

Saul is mad because he knows that Jonathan is trying to protect David, and so he lashes out at Jonathan.

He tries to heap guilt and shame on Jonathan for what he's done, and tells him to bring David so that he can kill him. [pause]

Jonathan once again attempts to intervene for David and explains that he's innocent and what does Jonathan get in return for this? A spear thrown at him.

That doesn't make sense, for Saul just said that Jonathan's future kingship was in jeopardy with David, yet now he's throwing a spear at him. [pause]

And after this spear throw, the text says, "So Jonathan knew that his father was determined to put David to death."

And after all that we have seen, we are like, "Ya think?!"

It couldn't have been more clear to anybody after Saul's response. [pauseeee]

After finding out his father's evil desires, Jonathan grieves over David, and then goes to communicate with David the next day.

Jonathan does everything according to plan.

The arrows are shot, the boy is sent to retrieve them, and Jonathan says, "Is not the arrow beyond you," communicating danger to David.

Then the boy is sent home, and Jonathan sees a chance to say "Goodbye" to David before he leaves.

So they meet, kiss each other, and weep.

Eventually, Jonathan tells David to "Go in peace," because of their covenant between them, and they both depart. [pauseeee]

What a sad story, right?

David has to become a fugitive and David and Jonathan can no longer see each other.

Yet even though it's a sad story, it's also a story showing steadfast love between two friends, and that's what the story is really emphasizing. *[pause]*

The love that we see in this passage is not shallow, empty love.

It's steadfast love and steadfast love is love that endures; it's love that is loyal and faithful.

It's when someone shows unfailing kindness to another person. *[pause]*

There's a certain durability, persistence, and stability to it.

And through an extreme situation, the love that David and Jonathan have for each is tried and tested...

Would Jonathan love David, even if it cost him his kingdom, his relationship with his father, and risked his own life?

Would David love and trust the king's son to come through and spare him?

The answer is, "Yes," because their love was *steadfast love*. *[pauseeee]*

David and Jonathan's friendship is a shining example of the love that we ought to have for one another. *[pause]*

So often friendships are made and broken at the drop of a hat, and are made and broken whenever it's convenient.

So often people make or break their friendships based on what they are getting out of the relationship.

People say, "They hurt me once, I'm no longer their friend." *[pauseeee]*

And then if you think about it, social media makes it seem like we have more friends than we actually do.

But think about most of those friends on social media: isn't it more of a shallow friendship?

For when you think about some of those "friends", you realize that, "I know them and they know me, but I've never really talked to them much in person."

It feels like you have hundreds of friends, yet why do you still feel so lonely?

I'm not saying they aren't true friendships, all that I'm saying is, would most of those friendships really make it through a David and Jonathan, 1st Samuel 20 trial? *[pauseeee]*

What we long for is steadfast love in our friendships, but do *you* show steadfast love to others?

We like to point the fingers at everyone else, but are we showing love to others? *[pauseeee]*

We should show love to others, but what's the motivation?

Steadfast love for others....

A. Flows out of God's steadfast love for us. (the motivation)

The steadfast love that both David and Jonathan show in their friendship is based on and flows out of the steadfast love of God for them.

In fact, the Hebrew word used in verses 8, 14, and 15 is the same one used for God's steadfast love in Exodus 34:6, when he talks about the kind of God that He is. *[pauseeee]*

David and Jonathan were men of faith, who delighted in the love of God for them.

Since they experienced and were astonished by God's love, they could then show that love to each other.

That's why Jonathan tells David, "Show me the steadfast love of the Lord." *[pauseeee]*

Throughout the Bible, it makes it clear that our love for others flows out of God's love for us. *[pause]*

We know love because Christ laid down his life for us, so we ought to lay down our lives for others.

And Christ commands us to, "love one another as I have loved you."² *[pauseeeee]*

When you stand amazed at the love of Christ for you, you want to show that love to others.

How could we not be loving, when God was so loving to us?

We didn't deserve anything, yet God showed his love for us in that, "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

We were enemies of God, yet through Christ, we have been reconciled to Him.³

Now's that love! *[pauseeeee]*

If you are ever lacking in love towards others, reflect upon what Christ has done for you.

How can you be mean to others, if you are thinking about the kindness of the Lord towards you?

How can you be unfaithful, when you remember the faithfulness of God amidst your own unfaithfulness? *[pauseeee]*

That's the power of the love of God.

² 1 John 3:16 & John 15:12.

³ Romans 5:8-10.

It not only impacts a heart, but it flows through our hearts, out towards others in love.

What better motivation to love another person than the sacrificial love of Christ for us? *[pause]*
Steadfast love for others also....

B. Mirrors God's steadfast love for us. (the characteristics)

So get this: our love for others is not only *motivated* by God's love, but it also *mirrors* God's love. *[pause]*

Think about what a mirror does - it reflects - so also, our love should reflect God's love. *[pause]*

Jonathan says to David, "Show me the steadfast love of the Lord."

The love that Jonathan longed for was not some shallow, superficial love - he longed for the steadfast love of the Lord shown through David. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus tells us to love one another *as* he loved us.⁴

We don't love people how we want, and in the way that we want.

We love others in ways that mirror God's love because, as the Bible shows us, that's what true love is.

"God is love."⁵ *[pauseeee]*

Our culture loves love, but its love will always fall short of true love, if it is not in alignment with how God loves us. *[pause]*

Is true love really approving of all things that a person does, even if they are against God's Word?

Certainly not, for Paul says, "Love...does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth."⁶ *[pause]*

You see, steadfast love is love under the Lordship of God. *[pause]*

Did you notice something in this story?

David and Jonathan knew that their covenant friendship was witnessed and seen by the Lord.

They knew that they couldn't just treat each other how they felt like treating them, but God was witness to their love. *[pause]*

⁴ John 15:12.

⁵ 1 John 4:16 (Italics is mine).

⁶ 1 Corinthians 13:6.

They understood that God is not some aloof god, but they were keenly aware of God's Lordship and presence.

They knew that God cared about the way that they loved each other. *[pause]*

This shapes the way we treat each other, doesn't it?

If you know that God is witness to how you treat your spouse, you will be more prone to love them in the right way. *[pauseeee]*

God knows and cares about the way we love others.

Nothing is hidden from His sight.

Though no one else may know how you treat your spouse, or your friends, or those that you meet, God knows. *[pauseeee]*

The way that we love others should also be shaped by God's purposes and plans.

In his love for David, Jonathan desired for God to take vengeance on David's enemies.

And even when Jonathan thinks about David having to leave, he submits to the good will of God by saying that if that happens, "the Lord has sent you away." *[pause]*

True love for a friend is NOT saying, "I want you just to follow your heart and be happy in whatever you want to do."

True love for a friend is to say, "I want God's purposes for your life."

And it's this love that loves others, trusting in the sovereignty of God.

Meaning, if in God's providence, my friend has to move away from me, it's not going to be fun, but I realize that God is in control. *[pauseeee]*

You think it was easy for Jonathan to contemplate David having to leave? Definitely not.

Yet when considering that route, he essentially was saying, "OK, then that means that the Lord has sent you away, David, and I'm going to accept it from God's hand." *[pause]*

That's the kind of love that we ought to be showing to others - love under the Lordship of Christ.

It's love that is truly shaped by God's Word and will.

That means that you are more loving towards others NOT when you let them do whatever they want and approve everything they do...

...But when you point them to the Lord, rest in the sovereignty of God, and desire God's purposes in their life. *[pause]*

It's love that wants the best for the other person, according to God's Word, purposes, and will. *[pauseeee]*

Have you ever said to a friend, "I want God's purposes for your life."

Have you ever encouraged them according to God's Word, or do you encourage them according to what they want to hear? *[pauseeee]*

Steadfast love mirrors God's love by aligning with His purposes and plans, but we see more ways that it mirrors God's love...

We see that love is *selflessly sacrificial*.

That means that loves acts, right?

Love shows itself through concrete actions, and both Jonathan and David are examples of that.

Jonathan didn't just say that he loved David, but he took great risks and showed it by protecting David's life.

It's easy to just say words, but do you actually demonstrate love in your actions? *[pauseeee]*

Jonathan was willing to do anything for David, for he loved him as his own soul. *[pauseeee]*

We quite clearly love ourselves, that's for sure.

But the question is: do we love others *as* we love our own selves?

Meaning, when you consider someone else, do you ever put the amount of effort into loving them as you would yourself?

Quite often the answer is, "No."

We take care of ourselves, make sure that we are comfortable, and do all these things to satisfy ourselves.

But do we put that kind of effort and time into others? *[pause]*

You see, love is costly.

When you're married, you have to give up certain wants and your priorities have to be rearranged.

But selfless sacrificial love is amazing love, for Christ showed us this kind of love. *[pauseeee]*

In all of our relationships with others, we should be servant-minded people willing to sacrifice our interests for the good of others.

Even willing to say, like Jonathan, "Whatever you say, I will do for you." *[pauseeee]*

When you consider the popular way to think about love, it's actually the opposite of this.

They say, "Cut toxic people out of your life."

They say, "Are you happy in the relationship, if not, then leave."

The culture's view of love is not sacrificial, but self-focused.

But Biblical love says, "in humility count others more significant than yourselves."⁷ [pauseeee]

In this story, Jonathan sacrificially risks his life and position to help keep David safe.

In fact, by following through in everything that he did, Jonathan was willingly giving up the throne! [pause]

Even Saul brought this out when he told Jonathan, "as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established."

Yet Jonathan was willing to give it all up out of sacrificial love for another under the Lordship of God.

And through all of this, he preserves David's life, and even after having a spear thrown at him, he's not grieved over the death attempt on his life - he's grieved for his friend. [pauseeeee]

Jonathan is someone who truly sought first the kingdom of God, rather than his own.⁸ [pauseeee]

Talk about a shocking thing!

Biblical love is *counter-cultural*.

In a world full of political power plays, and endeavors to get ahead of the next person, Jonathan's example shines forth as something of great beauty and grace. [pauseeeee]

Our world is likewise full of power plays and fierce competition.

Are we going to join in, and step over people in order to get ahead?

Or are we going to live like Jonathan, who out of faith in God and love for David, was willing to lay down his rights for another? [pause]

That's true love.

Love that is so sacrificial that it "does not insist on its own way,"⁹ but lays down its rights for another. [pause]

⁷ Philippians 2:3b.

⁸ See Matthew 6:33.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 13:5.

This is like Christ, who “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”¹⁰

Now that’s love. *[pauseeee]*

When everything in the culture was pushing both Jonathan and David in the opposite way, biblical love goes against the current of culture and shows a deep, steadfast love for another. *[pauseeee]*

Our world is going to say to you, “Just leave him, look at how unhappy you are.”

They will say, “Demand what is yours.”

But true love is selflessly sacrificial. *[pauseeee]*

And this won’t make sense to others, just like it didn’t make sense to Saul how Jonathan could give up his future for David.

In the world’s eyes it won’t be glamorous, but let me tell you, it’s glorious - it’s a beautiful thing. *[pause]*

What’s more beautiful? A friendship that is broken over one issue they had between them and they never talk to each other again?...

Or is it when a friendship goes through problems and issues, yet through it all, they remain faithful to each other, loving each other even amidst those sins against each other, and it grows even stronger? *[pauseeee]*

As Christ died for us, even while we were still sinners¹¹- so we are to mirror that kind of sacrificial, counter-cultural love with others. *[pauseeee]*

We also see that steadfast love is faithful and committed.

David and Jonathan’s friendship is a prime display of that.

No matter what was going on, they were faithful to each other in love because of their commitment. *[pauseeee]*

Love is a choice.

It’s going to take faithfulness and commitment to continue loving someone when it’s not easy, and there’s a lot of sacrifice.

Yet even though it was hard, David and Jonathan chose to love each other, no matter the costs.

¹⁰ Philippians 2:6b-7.

¹¹ See Romans 5:8.

David even points back to the promise that Jonathan made to him, and essentially says, “Deal kindly with me, for you promised.” *[pauseeee]*

Is your love for others faithful and committed love?

Or does your love for others shake every time any hardship arises? *[pauseeeee]*

Not only does steadfast love mirror God’s love, but it brings great results...for it...

C. Brings peace and security. (the result)

When you think about this story, there’s something that is astonishing...

Saul tried to kill David 7 or 8 times, yet where does David go? To Saul’s own son!

How could he do that? How could he feel secure enough to do so?

Because Jonathan’s love for him brought security. *[pause]*

Out of all the chaos of the situation, David felt secure when he went to his friend.

He knew that his friend wouldn’t say, “You’re on your own.”

He knew that his friend wouldn’t turn him into Saul.

He knew his friend would help him, even though he was Saul’s son, for Jonathan was a friend of steadfast love. *[pause]*

In fact, Jonathan had made a covenant with David, and David could rely upon Jonathan to not go against his promise.

Jonathan’s love brought security to David. *[pause]*

Don’t we all desire the security of a loving relationship?

Someone you can count on to not just desert you at the drop of a hat.

Someone who's not going to turn their back on you at the littlest thing, but who you can trust. *[pause]*

And this kind of friendship brings peace.

Jonathan was able to say, “Go in peace,” because of the covenant promises they made to each other.

Though there would be crazy things to happen to David, David could go in peace, knowing his relationship with Jonathan wouldn’t be broken. *[pause]*

This is the beauty of a relationship built on steadfast love - it brings peace and security. *[pause]*

Now that peace and security won't be perfect for we are sinners in relationship together, but that peace and security reflects the perfect peace and security found in a relationship with God.

Because of Christ's death on the Cross and our simple faith in what He has done, we have peace with God.

We are no longer enemies, but children.

There is no longer hostility between us, but we can rest in His arms, and have the security of His love. *[pause]*

As David ran to the one who made a covenant of love with him, so may we run to the Father, who has made a covenant of love with us through Christ's shed blood.

As Jonathan said, we need the steadfast love of the Lord shown to us, that we may not die. *[pause]*

What love of God to send Christ to save sinners! What love of Christ to come down from Heaven and die for us!

This story reminds us to...

Love one another as Christ has loved you!

People long for relationships that last, as they experience marriages that fail, family relationships strained, and friendships broken.

And amidst that, God's commands for steadfast love shine like a lighthouse, showing the way to have relationships that last...

For our love flows out of experiencing the great love of God, and mirrors His love as we interact with others.

This kind of love between people brings peace and security to relationships. *[pauseeee]*

Will you strive to show love to others?

In your friendships, will you be someone who shows steadfast love, and be someone who others can count on and be blessed by?

In your marriage, will you be sacrificial and faithful to your spouse, putting their needs above your own?

Let's love as Christ has loved us, and what amazing love it is!

For as that well-known hymn says, “Amazing love! How can it be, that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?”¹²

¹² Wesley, Charles. “And Can It Be?”. 1738.