

# KOINONIA KONNECTION

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## **FORSAKING THE SHEEP TO TAKE UP THE SWORD: THOUGHTS ON BOYS BECOMING MEN**

*"Why did you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness?" -1 Samuel 17:28*

So said David's big brother Eliab to the future king when the young man came to the scene of battle with Goliath and the Philistine foes. So far, David's life had been rather routine, not dissimilar to the pattern which many of our sons experience. As a child under his father's roof, and the youngest at that, his was a life of obedience and learning through observation. He was not a soldier, nor a leader, nor an initiator of family policy, but a simple shepherd boy with chores to do and sheep to watch. For years he had patterned his labor and life-habits after the commands of his father and the example of his brothers. Such is the lot of a young boy's life. But on that memorable day David would set aside his place as the humble, obedient runt of the litter in order to take upon himself the sober (and bloody) mantle of manhood. Exit David the shepherd, David the half-pint, David the child. Enter David the warlord, David the husband, David the king!

How exciting to witness this important moment of transformation in David's life! And how indicative is that moment for what should be the experience of every boy! Now, true enough, not every man can point to some all-meaningful, explosive moment in his lifetime which served as the tangible doorway to full manhood. Yet, even if it occurred unnoticed over time, the

transformation still came about (or, at least it should have...sadly, for many it never does).

As I meditate upon the narrative of 1 Samuel 17, I am struck with how certain of its elements serve as a paradigm (image) for boys who are becoming men. By no means is this the primary theological intent of the passage. If I were preaching this text, my title wouldn't be "A Coming of Age Story" or some such thing. Yet, Scripture is delightfully rich. Sometimes things strike us on the periphery that really get us thinking.

I want us to note, to begin with, the great King David's beginnings...the humble conditions under which the Legend was born (by "legend" I do not mean "myth"). As was typical of the kind of inglorious assignments David likely received, Jesse asks his youngest son to serve as delivery boy (v. 17). Aside from delivering some bread and cheese, he was to bring back word to Dad as to how the boys were doing. Not a very auspicious beginning for the "Man After God's Own Heart." Rather than being a Participant, David's legend begins with him serving as a Watcher. No battle lines and shining armor for Israel's coming king. Rather, we find him laboring as the Chief Bottle Washer for Papa Jesse's Catering Service.

As I considered this, I thought to myself, "Isn't that where all boys begin?" Our son asks to help us fix the electrical socket. Our son wants to assist with changing the leaky tire. He wants to go up on the roof with us to clean out the gutters. The answer we give him is so common that we probably give no thought as to its deeper significance: "You just watch, son."

*There is much that our sons aren't able to do. And so, they watch. They watch and learn to emulate us so that in the future they might be those who are "doing" while they tell their own sons to "just watch." Then, as I thought on this idea further, I concluded that this principle involves not just the "little things" of manhood (light sockets, tires, and clogged gutters), but the "majors" too, like spiritual headship, courage, and personal honor. No matter the issue, there is our little Watcher, observing what we do and how we do it; learning either sloth or diligence, honor or dishonor, honesty or thievery, courage or cowardice.*

*I recall a film I viewed several years ago. The main character was a local sheriff who was caught between a rock and a hard place as far as the responsibilities of his job were concerned. On the one hand, he felt pressure to close the beaches for which he was responsible because a shark attack had occurred and there was fear of a repeat occurrence. On the other hand, the city fathers were pressing him to keep the beaches open in order not to demolish the tidy profits typical for the summer tourist season. As he sat at his kitchen table thinking the matter over with furrowed brow, he stirred his hands nervously. First, he made a little pyramid with his fingers. Then, he clenched his hands together. Then he unclenched them. Clench. Unclench. Pyramid. Clench. Unclench. Pyramid. In the midst of his nervous finger fidgeting, he looked over at his smiling little boy who was sitting at the table with him, and low and behold if the little fellow wasn't copying what his Daddy was doing exactly: Clench... unclench... pyramid. Clench... unclench... pyramid. It was a revelation.*

*The next day the sheriff closed the beaches.*

*Does this frighten you, men? It ought to. It's terrifying to think that we have someone watching us so closely...but we do. Whether we're making anxious architecture with our hands or caving in to greedy civic leaders, our*

*boys copy whatever Daddy does. And what's even more dreadful is that our little Watcher will one day become a Participant. The "gopher" who once beamed at the privilege of holding our screwdriver will go forth to become a king. And what kind of king will he be? Will he be a Dark Lord or will he become Peter the Magnificent? We fathers have a great deal to say about that. It's so important that we give the Watcher something marvelous to watch. I don't mean that we perform for our sons, as though we put on a mask different from our true selves for their benefit. No, rather than perform let us conform. Our little Watchers need to see a king in action. What better way to provide that image than to be conformed ourselves to the image of our Kingly Christ?*

*Remember, however, that the Watcher won't watch forever. Right now it's our job to face the Giant. But before we know it, it will be his turn. We have to learn to expect this change in position which seems to come all too early...we need to drive it into our minds and theirs. Men are ultimately called to be Giant-Killers. Every single one of us. Your son was born a man. Ergo, he's called to be a Giant-Killer. Knowing this, we have to prepare him to meet Goliath.*

*Jehovah often honors his people in different ways, depending upon what their particular calling in life is. Girls and women He honors with the privilege of spiritual and physical protection. Whether they are protected by their fathers, their brothers, their husbands, or their Sessions, if they are obedient to the Lord they will always enjoy this "honor" given to the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3:7). On the other hand, the man has a different honor. Ours is the honor of leadership. Leadership makes us the particular targets of our dark enemy. When the knight stands toe to toe with the dragon in order to protect the maiden, he gets the lion's share of tooth, claw, and fire. This, gentlemen, is a great honor. But it's also a great burden. Knights get scorched. Thus, it is our burdensome duty to*  
*-continued on back cover*

# **FAMILIES IN FOCUS**

## **THE WONDER OF ADOPTION**



*We, who are parents by receiving our children through the hand of God in the biological method, often fail to appreciate the wonder of adoption. We need to remember to be humbly thankful to the Lord for His good gifts to us and to demonstrate that thanksgiving in the sober commitment to raising our children to be the children of God. But we must also remember that there are couples who do not have children, but not because they have adopted the selfish pleasure seeking life view of a secular, materialistic culture. Rather, these people would love to be able to have children but in the providence of God are unable to them. This burden that is placed on them can become overwhelming and debilitating to them apart from gracious, divine strengthening. It is natural to have children in the sense of the created order that God has made, and therefore to experience the inability to have them becomes a source of grief and of the emptiness of being unfulfilled. We who have experienced the birthing of our children should never take it for granted and certainly never boast as though it were our achievement, success or superiority (1 Corinthians 4:7).*

*While some couples do receive children after a more or less lengthy wait, many never do. These couples need to learn to rest in the wisdom, power, and goodness of God even though He for unexplained reasons has withheld this from them. There are however other ways that these couples may share in the joys of childrearing.*

*First, there is the privilege and joy of being an instrument in the hand of God for the nurture and rearing of the children of the covenant community. In practical terms, this can mean being a Sunday school teacher or also an*

*education institution teacher. Involvement in the lives of the children can be achieved through involvement in the lives of families and the sharing of ones gifts within families that have particular needs. These can be gifts of time, provisions for material needs or medical help.*

*Secondly, there can be for the believer, the opportunity to seek broader community involvement with the express purpose of seeking to win the souls of children to Christ. These people would seek to bring the Word of God and the gospel of Christ to bear upon the lives of children who otherwise would not hear this.*

*Perhaps we have come to think too little about this. Our family lives are busy, particularly if we have many children. Our typical complaint is that we do not spend enough time with our own children, let alone spending time with the children of others. Two things are necessary to remember. One, God holds us accountable for how we prioritize our time and second, in the church, the covenant community, we have a responsibility to one another and to our children. We must remember also that God's goal with childrearing is the raising of a godly seed (Malachi 2:15). It is this vision that should shape the childless couple's view of family as well and it is here that the Lord permits them to share in the joys that God brings to the church. "Sing, O barren, You who have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, You who have not labored with child! For more are the children of the desolate Than the children of the married woman," says the LORD. Enlarge the place of your tent, And let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; Do not spare; Lengthen your cords, And strengthen your*

stakes (Isaiah 54:1-2ff). God will make the joy of those who seek Christ's kingdom greater than the joy of those who merely have physical offspring.

Adoption is also a method whereby couples may raise children and in the context of a Christian home, adoption becomes a wonderful picture, or expression, of gospel grace. Perhaps it would be of help to look at adoption from a spiritual perspective in order to appreciate the beauty of the adoption of children.

"Adoption, as the term clearly implies, is an act of transfer from an alien family into the family of God Himself." (Redemption Accomplished and Applied) It means that those who are not the children of God by nature become by adoption the children of God. Those who were once children of wrath, of darkness and even children of Satan become the sons and daughters of God, through Jesus, who becomes their elder brother. As with

human adoption, so adoption into the family of God is a legal act. The moment that a sinner is united to Christ by faith, that moment he is received into the family of God and it is at that moment complete and entire, never to be improved upon. All that God is and that He does for His people, He is and does for the sinner who believes in Jesus. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power (the right) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12) "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Galatians 4:4) Adoption is a scriptural matter that believers do well to meditate upon. It is a

not only gracious but it is a legal matter. It is God, who cannot lie, who has adopted His people. It is a matter of assurance for the believer, for when God has given His covenant word, nothing can oppose His purposes.

We need to note that the children by adoption are children by a legal right rather than being children by nature. This is true in human families and it is true in the family of God. It is Jesus Christ alone who is the Son of God by nature, being one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. And though men by creation may be called children of God ("Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God." Luke 3:38; "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring'."

Acts 17:28), yet they are not children of God by nature ("Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh,

fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others..." Ephesians 2:3; "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." John 8:44) It is through God's uniting a sinner to Christ that the sinner comes into the family of God and that by God's rich and sovereign grace. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will..." Ephesians 1:5

To be continued

-by Bill Kroesbergen

As with human adoption, so adoption into the family of God is a legal act.

## YOUTH CORNER - ANSWERS

1. Shepherd 2. Jesse 3. Bethlehem Judah 4. Three  
5. Phillistines 6. Goliath 7. God 8. No 9. Sling and  
stone 10. Goliath's own sword

# **YOUTH'S CORNER**    **DAVID AND GOLIATH**

David was the youngest of eight brothers. His job was to look after his father's sheep. David loved God, and put his trust in Him as he cared for the sheep, even when wild animals tried to attack them. Then when David faced the giant Goliath in the battle, he trusted God to help him, as he always had. Here is a quiz about this story, which you can find in your Bible in 1 Samuel Chapter 17. Read the chapter and answer the questions. When you're done, check the answers on page 4 of this newsletter.

1. What work did David do for his father?
2. What was the name of David's father?
3. Where did they live?
4. How many of David's brothers were in Saul's army?
5. Who were they fighting against?
6. What was the name of their champion?
7. Whom did David say would help him?
8. Did David wear Saul's armour?
9. What did David use to knock down the great warrior?
10. What did David use to cut off Goliath's head?



## **MISSION SPOTLIGHT** **PROCLAIMING THE SAVIOUR**

The disciples had been imprisoned. And after they were miraculously released, by an angel, they were again arrested and brought before the council. When Gamaliel urged caution in dealing with them, the Apostles were beaten and released. But, although they were commanded not to "speak in the name of Jesus", they could not give up the activity to which they had been called by the Son of God. "Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42). Why could they not give up? Why could they not stop speaking in the name of Jesus? Many reasons might be given, but let us focus on five related themes, which were at the centre of their message.

1. There is a Saviour. The Apostles had been sent out to address those who, in common with all the rest of mankind, needed to be delivered from the power of sin and from its consequences. All mankind fell in Adam and, throughout their lives, they have gone on adding sin to sin. They are alienated from God, and the solemn fact is: "They that are far from [Him] shall perish" (Ps 73:27) - unless they are delivered by a Saviour who can truly meet their needs.

And the Apostles were indeed able to proclaim a Saviour who could exactly meet these needs. They knew that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). They had known Him personally; they had seen His wonderful works of healing bodily afflictions - and, still more gloriously, they had watched as He healed sinners of their spiritual diseases. They knew that, though He was no longer physically present with them, Christ's power to save was still the same. And as, from the Day of Pentecost onwards, they pointed their hearers to the One who had died, they did so in the full confidence that He had indeed made atonement for guilty, rebellious sinners.

2. He is an appointed Saviour. Here was no self-appointed religious leader, or someone who had achieved influence because a group of human beings had recognised his abilities and had thrust him to the forefront. No, here was One who had been set apart from all eternity by God Himself to deliver sinners from their sins. The basis of the authority of Jesus Christ as

redeemer is that God "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14). There can therefore be no other saviour; there can be no other way of escape from the guilt and power of sin. We dare receive no other doctrines but those He has set before us; we dare follow no other religion. Although He had been rejected by the people, it was God who had raised Him up; therefore, as Peter expressed the matter so plainly: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Christ was the Saviour appointed by God, and the Apostles had been appointed to proclaim Him to the whole world. They recognised, as did Paul - soon to be added to their number - that there is "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim 2:5f). Recognising their appointment, they could not give up bearing testimony to this God-appointed Saviour. And, what is more, they must faithfully proclaim the message they had been given; they had no right to modify even its details to suit the spirit of their time. They had the attitude which led Paul to tell the Galatians: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:8).

Equally, those who listen to these messengers ought to recognise their authority, which is implied in the term ambassadors. All God-sent preachers come in the name of the King of heaven; as they address their hearers, they may use the words of Paul: "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20). Thus hearers have no more right to reject this call than if it came directly from heaven - even if it is delivered by those who are not apostles but have been called in another generation to preach the same gospel to their contemporaries.

3. He is a living Saviour. The Apostles proclaimed a Saviour who had died, One who

had offered Himself "the just for the unjust" so that sinners might be reconciled to God. But that was not the end; death could not hold Him; He rose again on the third day. So Peter proclaimed: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:30, 31) - and not only to Israel but to sinners throughout the world. He has ascended to heaven, where He reigns in glory, administering the kingdom of God and distributing the benefits He purchased by His death. And these blessings of repentance and forgiveness come to sinners particularly through the preaching of the gospel - the truth concerning a living Saviour.

Christ's resurrection declared that His sacrifice had been accepted. It was a token from heaven that the Father was well pleased with the whole work of redemption. It was, in effect an echo of the words heard at His baptism and again at His transfiguration: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". This was the Saviour the Apostles were preaching: One whose power to save was abundantly clear. They were under His living authority and had no right to turn back from the work He had given them, but they knew too that not even a hair of their head could be damaged unless He allowed it.

4. He is an effective Saviour. No one has come to Him and found Him unable to save - no matter how far away from God they were, no matter how deep in sin. The assurance is given: "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Heb 7:25). Everyone who came to Him for bodily healing, while He was on earth, was made completely well; His power was always perfectly sufficient. Likewise, all have been saved who have obeyed the call to look to the Saviour, and so it will always be.

This is no merely-human saviour; He is also God - the eternal Son of God, who took our nature. But He is now exalted, and Paul explained the certainty of a complete salvation, for those who come to God through Christ as Mediator, by

adding: "He ever liveth to make intercession for them". And it was Paul who expressed such entire confidence in the message that he had been commissioned to bring to sinners, and in the Holy Spirit through whom that message is applied: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom 1:16). A preacher with that conviction would never give up.

5. He is a willing Saviour. He has never turned away one sinner who came to Him. He has made it clear: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Paul and Silas had no need to hesitate when the Philippian jailer asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They could answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31), and they could speak in this way with the perfect certainty that, if the jailor would only believe, the Saviour would most willingly receive him. So it was proved in his case, and so also in the case of every sinner who has sought salvation in the way God has appointed.

When the leper came to the Saviour pleading, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean", Christ assured him: "I will [that is, I am willing]; be thou clean". And we are told that "immediately his leprosy was cleansed" (Matt 8:2,3). That was bodily healing, but the Apostles could think back to what they had seen their Master do, on this and so many other occasions, and feel encouraged to go on proclaiming the gospel. They could do so in the assurance that Christ, by then exalted to the right hand of power, was just as willing to heal souls. And preachers today, though they do not have the miraculous powers of the Apostles or their inspiration, may go on with the same encouragement, for the One who sits on the right hand of power is unchanged in His willingness to heal.

As we draw to a conclusion, we must be clear that this is the Saviour who is to be proclaimed today to an unbelieving world in spite of how readily they dismiss the message as not worthy of their attention. Without taking the least pains to examine the facts revealed in the Bible, most

people very easily assume that there is no beauty in Christ that would make them desire Him. What they very much need is that the Holy Spirit would be poured out so that they would see the beauty of the Saviour and flee to Him as the God-appointed, ever-living Saviour who is altogether willing to save all that come to Him - and who is also perfectly able to save them to the uttermost. What reason then for preachers of the gospel to continue with their work! There is no reason why they should become despondent even in the face of the varying forms of twenty-first-century opposition to the message of the gospel. And what reason for all God's children to be earnest in prayer! Let them pray the Lord of the harvest to send a multitude of labourers into the harvest today. And let them pray that He would greatly bless the work of those whom does send out, so that there would be an abundant harvest.

The words of Archibald Alexander are just as relevant today as when he addressed a gathering of his former students in Philadelphia in 1834: "Most assuredly, if the world is to be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea, if all nations are to be given to Christ as His inheritance, if all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest, then the ingathering of souls in all former seasons is nothing more than the first-fruits of the glorious harvest which is yet future. God's arm is not shortened that it cannot save; the Word has lost nothing of its energy and the residue of the Spirit is with Him. Why then are we so unbelieving and so easily discouraged, as though Zion would never arise; as though the fulness of the Gentiles would never come in; as though the promise would never be fulfilled, that all Israel shall be saved?"

Just as surely as the Apostles were not to stop proclaiming the gospel, so today's preachers must persevere in their work. The authority of Christ, who sent them, is unchanged; the gospel is the same, and the encouragements are as sure as ever. And let those who listen to the gospel be thankful for their privileges; let them take care not to "neglect so great salvation".

-by Kenneth D. Macleod

**FORSAKING THE SHEEP  
TO TAKE UP THE SWORD:  
THOUGHTS ON BOYS BECOMING MEN**  
(continued from inside front cover)

prepare our sons to be burned in the line of duty. And sometimes the noble knight dies. Therefore, it is our terrible obligation to instruct our sons in the art of dying well.

The natural accompaniment to this rather sobering line of thought is that we also have the privilege of teaching our little battle lords to fight. We accomplish this not only by personal example, but also by exposing our boys to training and experience. From birth we indoctrinate our sons in the principles of leadership, sacrifice, and personal honor before men and God. We back up this verbal instruction with opportunities for them to "test their mettle" so to speak. We make it a point for them to hone their creativity, their intellect, their spirit of servanthood, and certainly their leadership. These are the "bears and lions" (v.34) of our sons' preparation, so that when the Giant finally arrives, our

boy is the last man standing. The challenges and dangers of family life, church conflict, personal holiness, the wayward woman, even persecution find their training ground in the early years of a boy's development. The man he will become tomorrow takes shape through the experiences of the boy today.

Says young David, "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God." (v.36) Why had David come down, Eliab? Originally, to deliver some cheese. But the one who came as a delivery boy would leave as a lord of battle, not to mention your future king.

Spirit of God, make kings and lords of battle out of our sons.

-by Pastor Ludt

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