JOEL AND JONATHAN:

OR,

CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO FRIENDSHIP.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS FROM A FATHER TO HIS SON.

Written for the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, and revised by the Committee of Publication.

BOSTON:

MASSACHUSETTS SABBATH SCHOOL SOCIETY,
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DAVID AND JONATHAN.

LETTER I.

My dear Son,

You have read the history of David and Jonathan, in the Bible, with great interest. You will not be unwilling to review it, and to consider some truths suggested by it, and connected with it.

It does not appear from the Bible, that Jonathan became acquainted with David till the time of the battle with Goliath. When David was going to fight with the Philistine, Saul asked Abner who he was. Abner told him he did not know. When David returned from the fight, Abner brought him to Saul. Saul asked him whose son he was, and he told him. It appears that Saul held a long conversation
with him, and that Jonathan was present. We are not told what the conversation was about, but it must have been very interesting, for it made a deep impression on the mind of Jonathan. It is said that “when David had made an end of speaking unto Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and he loved him as his own soul.”

Saul took David home with him, and would not let him return to his father's house. The attachment which was formed by Jonathan for David, and which was returned by him, did not decay when they came to live together, and to know each other better. They entered into a solemn league and covenant of friendship. Jonathan took off his robe and gave it to David, and also his armor. This was to show his great regard for him, and to do him honor.

The brevity of the account of the origin of Jonathan's affection for David, would lead us to suppose that it was of very sud-
den growth. But we must remember, that we are not informed of all the circumstances which may have contributed to it. However sudden it may have been, it was not founded upon caprice. There were good and sufficient reasons why Jonathan should thus have his soul knit to the soul of David. Let us see what, it is probable, some of these reasons were.

In the first place, I think Jonathan must have been struck with admiration of David’s courage. Let us consider it for a moment. The two hostile armies lay over against each other, and for forty days the giant had come out and challenged the Israelites to send a man to fight with him. He offered to stake the fortune of the war on the issue of the battle. But no one could be found in all the army of Israel, who was willing to go and fight the champion of the enemy. There were Saul’s greatest captains, and bravest soldiers, but they were all afraid. But now, a stripling, who comes from the sheepfold to bring refreshment to
his brethren, offers to go and meet this champion. "Let no man's heart fail him, because of fear," said he to Saul, "thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." When Saul makes some objection on account of his youth, he answers it, by very modestly giving an account of his victory over a lion, and a bear, which victory he ascribes to God, in whose strength he would go against the Philistine. And when Saul gives his consent, he refused to wear the armor to which he was not accustomed, but takes a sling and five smooth stones from the brook, and hastens to meet the terrible foe, before whom the mighty men of war were afraid. In this he showed the greatest courage. Jonathan must have admired it. This would naturally predispose him to regard David with favor.
LETTER II.

My dear Son,

Another thing that awakened the admiration and love of Jonathan for David, was the fact that he was influenced by lofty motives, in undertaking to fight the Philistine. Most men perform daring exploits that they may get a great name, or secure a great reward. David seems to have been influenced chiefly by a desire to promote the honor of his country, and the glory of God. He may have had some regard to the rewards offered by Saul to the man who should kill Goliath; but to take away the reproach from Israel, and to punish the insult offered to God by defying his armies, were his chief motives. These were good and lofty motives.

But there was another thing about David which probably influenced Jonathan more than all other things. It was his piety, his confidence in God. He had regard to God
in every thing. He was indignant that Goliath should defy the armies of God. It was God who delivered him from the paw of the lion, and of the bear. God would deliver him from the Philistine. "He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." Jonathan was a pious man himself, and loved him in whom he saw evidence of piety.

Again, David was a very warm, affectionate, tender-hearted man. There is nothing, indeed, in the account of the rise of the friendship between him and Jonathan, which authorizes the remark; yet the subsequent life of David fully confirms it; and doubtless he gave indications of this disposition when Jonathan first saw him.

In considering the causes of Jonathan's love for David, I must not omit the Providence of God. God had determined that David should be king over Israel after the death of Saul. He knew he would be exposed to danger from the enmity of Saul, that he would need assistance and sympa-
thy in the trials through which he was to pass. God therefore raised up a friend for him in the king's house,—one who should know all the purposes of the king; and who from his disposition should be fully capable of sympathizing with his friend.

Thus God ever raises up the means for the accomplishment of his purposes. He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. When a man walks in the way God has appointed him, he often finds friends raised up for him, where he least expected it.

Such were some of the causes which made Jonathan the friend of David. Now my son, you wish to have friends. You wish for the esteem of all who know you, and you wish for some intimate friends,—friends who will love you very ardently. In order to this, you must possess certain qualities of character; and then you will be sure to have friends. These qualities of character do not come by chance, but are the result of careful cultivation. You must
possess the qualities which were possessed by David. But perhaps you may say, I cannot be like David in many things. There is no war, and no giant for me to show my courage in fighting. That is all true. Blessed be God that we are not engaged in war; and if we should be, it is not probable that our enemies will have giants to fight their battles for them. But there is a war in which we are all interested, and in which we must all fight, till we get our discharge. It is a war against sin,—against principalities and powers. There is room for the exercise of great courage, and daring, in this war; and if you show good courage here, you will not only gain the admiration and favor of men, but of angels and of God.

It often requires a good deal of courage not to be afraid of doing right. I have seen boys do what they knew to be wrong, through mere cowardice. They were afraid wicked boys would laugh at them if they did right.
I once saw a boy, however, that showed good courage. It was after school, and the boys were going to skate on a mill pond. The water was very deep, and there were holes in the ice, so that it was dangerous to skate there. Joseph's mother told him he must not go there with the boys. So when all the boys started off for the pond, he stood still and looked after them. He wished to go, but he had no thought of disobeying his mother. "Are you not coming Jo?" said one.

"No."

"Why not?"

"Mother told me not to."

"Oh,—before I would be afraid of my mother."

"Come along, you coward you," said another.

"I'm not a coward, for I am not afraid to do right," and he walked towards him in the midst of hooting and laughter.

There was true courage. This is the kind of courage you can acquire, and you
will have frequent occasion to use it. The public opinion of children and of men, often runs in favor of what is wrong, and to stand against it, often requires more courage than to stand against the ranks of the enemy in battle. Let this resolution be graven upon your heart. "I will never be afraid to do what is right."

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LETTER III.

My dear Son,

In regard to the next thing which we considered in the case of David, namely, pure and lofty motives, you certainly can imitate him. I do not say it will be easy for you to imitate him; for to do right in this fallen world, will always be a work of some difficulty.

There was nothing peculiar in the case of David in this respect. You, like him,
may govern your conduct at all times, by pure and lofty motives; by so doing you will gain the respect and esteem of all virtuous men. This is not the sole or principal reason why you should aim at purity and elevation of motives.

Now do you ask, How shall I begin to form the habit of governing my conduct by pure motives? Well, in the first place, you must examine your motives. Many persons never think any thing about the motives of their actions. They do what they please, and never inquire whether their motives are good or bad, mean or lofty. And there are others, who, through want of careful attention, deceive themselves, and think they are influenced by good motives, when they are not. Thus some persons give away money, and think they do it from benevolent motives, when the real motive is the desire of praise, the desire of being called liberal. Often ask yourself in view of what you have done, why did I do this? and if you find the motive to be an
unworthy one, you must resolve never to be governed by it again. For example,— Suppose you have been kind to some poor ragged boy you have met with. You ask yourself, why did I treat the boy kindly? You find that you did not do it out of pity and benevolence, but that you might be praised for it; that some one might say, 'what a kind-hearted boy that is.' You see in this case, that the motive is selfish and wrong. God will never reward such an action. In his sight it is hypocrisy; and he will punish it as such.

There was a boy who had received twenty-five cents on a holiday, and had permission to go to a neighboring village. On his way he met with a distressed family, and his feelings became so much interested that he gave them his twenty-five cents, and did without spending money. He was influenced by compassion, a good motive. When his father heard of his conduct, he was so pleased, that he gave him half a dollar. The next time the boy met with
an object of charity, he gave assistance in hope that when he should tell his father, he should receive more than he gave. This you see, was a selfish motive.

The first rule by which you are to judge of your motives is this, *Is it right?* If it is not right, you of course must not act from it. The next rule that I would suggest is this,—Should I be willing to have this motive known? If you should be unwilling to have it known, you may be sure it is not a lofty one.

Remember that God can see into your heart, that he knows the real motives of all your actions.

This purity of motive, sincerity of soul, cannot be acquired without great care, and help from on high. Very often should you offer the prayer of David, "Create within me a clean heart, O God." Persons who attain it, will always have friends. People know that they can be depended upon. They know that they can trust their professions.
LETTER IV.

My dear Son,

The next thing we noticed in the case of David was his piety. Men may have courage, and generous motives to some extent without piety, but those qualities will always be found in a higher degree in connection with it.

At what time David became pious we are not informed. Probably when he was quite young. When he was somewhere between fifteen and twenty years of age, God chose him to be king over Israel, and sent the prophet Samuel to anoint him. From that day forwards the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. He had large measures of grace, and made rapid progress in religion. His religion seems to have been the most prominent thing about him. It is often said of him in the Scriptures, "The Lord was with him."

Now, my son, there is nothing to hinder
you from becoming pious now, nothing but your own wicked heart. You have all the advantages you could desire,—greater ones perhaps than David had. From your infancy, you have been taught of God, and you are surrounded by pious teachers and friends. You have precious promises held out to you in the word of God. Oh that you would remember your Creator in the days of your youth; Oh, that it might be said of you as of David, "the Lord was with him." When the Lord is with one, he can never be alone, he can never suffer for lack of friends.

I desire above every thing else to see you pious, and eminently so. In order to become eminent in piety, you must begin young. You must fear the Lord in your youth, before the heart has become hardened, and the habits of sin become strong.

We said that David was a warm, affectionate, tender-hearted man. The possession of such a disposition will always make one beloved. There is a great difference in
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this respect, in the nature of different persons. Some have, by nature, more feeling than others. But all have the elements of kind feeling, which they can cultivate and increase. You, my son, are not without kind and affectionate feelings. You must cherish them, that they may abound more and more in your heart. Do you ask how shall I cultivate them? I reply, in the first place, guard against all unkind, angry feelings. If you give way to these, better feelings will decay, just as if you suffer the weeds to grow in your garden, the flowers will fail to grow. But you may say, 'I can't help feeling cross and angry sometimes.' I will tell you what to do then. You can help speaking and acting in a cross manner. When you feel cross, be sure you take great pains to speak pleasantly, and to act kindly. Your words and actions are surely within your power. Now if you always pursue this course, and never give way to passion, you will overcome it. It will be subdued, just as fire,
when it is smothered for a long time goes out.

Do you say, 'I can't always feel as I wish to. Sometimes I don't feel cross, and I don't feel very affectionate towards others:' Well, if you will always be careful to act kindly towards them, you will soon come to feel kindly. By always treating everybody kindly, you will come to feel kindly towards everybody. This is the way to cultivate a warm and affectionate disposition. By so doing, you will obey the law of God, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."
LETTER V.

My dear Son,

There is not a great deal said about Jonathan in the Bible; much less than there is about David. But from what there is said respecting him, we are led to form an exalted opinion of his character. There is abundant proof that he was a pious man. The fact that he was pious amid the temptations of the court, and in view of his father's wicked example, speaks a great deal in his favor.

Those children who belong to pious families, have great advantages over those who are not thus favored. You must remember this, and remember that where much is given, much will be required.

Some boys think they would be christians if they had any body to help them; but their parents are not pious, nor their brothers and sisters: all these things are against them, and they think this forms a
pretty good excuse. Such should look at the example of Jonathan. He was in circumstances far less favorable. In the court of a king there are a great many temptations which are not to be found elsewhere. His father was a very wicked man. God had departed from him, and given him over. Yet amid all these disadvantages, Jonathan was a very pious young man.

He must have been by nature, of a very generous disposition. After the battle in which Goliath was slain, the women of all the cities of Israel came out to meet Saul, and "they answered one another as they played, and said, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," they thus ascribed to David higher praises than they did to Saul. This made Saul very angry, and caused him to look upon David with envy and jealousy ever after. Now most sons would have sympathized with their father in such a case; they would have resented the setting up of a youth above their father, as an indignity to
the whole family. But Jonathan had no such feelings. He knew that David had deserved more than any other man, and he was willing he should have the highest praises, even at the expense of his own family.

Again, many persons in Jonathan's place, would have been envious on another account. Jonathan himself had a high reputation for bravery. Probably he was regarded as the bravest young man in the army. On one occasion he went alone, or attended by his armor bearer only, and attacked and put to flight the whole army of the enemy. But now he is cast into the shade through the greater brilliancy of David's exploit. Everybody is praising David. David is the bravest young man in the nation. Most persons in Jonathan's place would have been a little envious. But not so with Jonathan. He was the first to do full justice to David's merits, and to give him his heart, and no shade of envy seems ever to have crossed his mind.
Now this is an excellency of character which I hope you will take great pains to attain. Be sure that you never suffer yourself to envy the reputation or the possessions of another. Cheerfully give to others all the credit they deserve. Do not seek to lessen it, in the least. If your class mate learns faster than you, freely acknowledge it, and do not attempt to explain it away, and to lessen his merit, by saying he has had better advantages. If he writes a better composition than you do, give it all the praise it deserves. There is no meaner passion than envy. There is none which renders its possessor more unhappy. Do you ask how can I help it? You must consider how unreasonable and mean and wicked it is. You must watch the workings of your mind very narrowly, that you may discover the beginnings of the evil, and nip it in the bud. If you suspect yourself of a tendency to envy any one, be very careful to do full justice to that person's merit, and to keep watch for all suitable
occasions for doing so. By thus resisting the demon of envy, he will flee from you. By pursuing a course of conduct directly the reverse of what envy would dictate, you will overcome it.

You will overcome it, just in the way a boy I once knew overcome his dislike for another boy. There was a boy whom he disliked, he could not tell why. The boy had never done him any harm, nor was he a bad boy. Well, he had to meet him every day at school, and you know it is not pleasant to meet those one dislikes. He became convinced that his dislike was unreasonable and wrong. A kind friend showed him how to overcome it. He always took care to speak pleasantly to that boy. He watched for opportunities of showing him kindness. It was hard work at first, but by persevering, by always speaking pleasantly to him, and doing him good, as he had opportunity, he entirely overcame his dislike, and at length they became warm friends. If need be, go thou and do likewise.
LETTER VI.

My dear Son,

Saul we have seen, was a very different character from Jonathan. He was envious of David, and looked upon him with an evil eye. He watched all his conduct narrowly, and was disposed to put the worst construction upon it. But David was so upright and prudent, that he could find nothing against him. "He behaved himself wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him," and "all Israel and all Judah loved David." But Saul's jealousy was not lessened. Indeed it increased, as all vicious passions do by indulgence. Not only so, but it led Saul to entertain the most cruel enmity towards David. So high did this enmity rise, that he ordered Jonathan and his servants to kill David.

When Saul first began to be envious of David, he did not suppose that he was
indulging a passion that would make a murderer of him. But so it was. Before God he was guilty of murder. And so, my son, if you indulge any wicked passion, you cannot tell where it will lead you. Some who have been hung for robbery have confessed they began by stealing a pin, or an apple, or some trifling thing.

Before this time, it was doubtless known to Jonathan that David had been anointed to the throne. David's ingenuous nature would not conceal the important fact from his dearest friend. One would think this would be likely to put an end to their friendship. Jonathan was heir to the throne. He expected to be king when his father should die. Great power and riches would then be his. But here is one who has a claim to the throne, though he is no relation of the king. He is to receive the power and riches of the king, and Jonathan is to lose both. Here is a man that is to exclude him and his children,—to reduce them to the condition of subjects. How
would most men regard such a rival? They would look upon him with hatred. They would feel friendship for him no longer. But not so with Jonathan. The knowledge of the fact made no difference with his affection. He loved David just as well as ever. Jealousy and hatred finds no place in his heart. He was willing that his friend should be higher than he. It was God's will that David should have the kingdom; he had not a word to say. He could cordially submit to the Divine will. What a noble man! How few have lived in this world, who would have acted like him.

When Saul speaks to him to kill David, he does not obey. He knows that neither as king, or father, has he a right to command what is wrong. Now some would not have hesitated to cut off a dangerous rival, and to excuse himself, by saying, he was bound to obey the orders of the king. Others would have let the servants kill him, and then have said, we had nothing
to do with it. These servants did in obedience to their master. We neither advised it, nor aided in any way. Jonathan might have done so, and nobody would have blamed him. But this was not in accordance with Jonathan's ideas of duty. He acts like a true friend, and a religious man. He informs David of his danger, and arranges the means for his escape, if he shall fail to move Saul from his purpose?

He then goes to Saul, and reminds him how kindly David had treated him. He begs him not to return evil for good. He then reminds him of David's public services, of the dangers he had encountered for the sake of Israel. He pleaded his cause so eloquently, that an impression was made on the rugged mind of Saul, and he swore, "as the Lord liveth he shall not be slain."

There are several things here in the example of Jonathan which I wish to commend to your imitation,—or rather there are several duties suggested which I would urge you to perform.
First, you should never do wrong because it is commanded or recommended by those in authority. The authority of God is higher than all other authority. We ought to obey God rather than man.

Second, you should always prevent others from doing evil if it is in your power. A great deal of good can be done in this way.

Third, we should intercede with the King of kings for our friends. This is one of the duties and privileges of friendship. One of the chief advantages of pious friends, is to have faithful intercessors at a throne of grace. Young persons should seek to make to themselves pious friends on this account, that they may have persons to pray for them, that they may be good and useful. I knew two young men who set out in life at the same time. Both were professors of religion. One sought the acquaintance of men of influence, that he might have their aid. The other sought the acquaintance of Christians, that he might have their prayers.
He esteemed the friendship of a poor praying woman higher than the friendship of a governor. Their success in life has been very different. One failed in all he undertook, and made shipwreck of character. The other has led a life of usefulness and honor.

LETTER VII.

My dear Son,

Notwithstanding Saul’s solemn oath that David should not be slain, he soon after makes an attempt upon his life, by casting a javelin at him as he was playing on the harp to relieve the malady with which Saul was afflicted by the evil spirit. The oaths of the wicked are not to be relied upon, the promise of the Lord standeth sure.

That this assault upon David was not
the effect of a sudden fit of lunacy, but was in pursuance of a fixed design to take his life, appears from the fact that his house was watched with the purpose of slaying him in the morning, and that he escaped through the artifice of his wife. He was thus obliged to flee from his family and home in order to save his life.

He knew where to go for sympathy in the time of trial. He went to his faithful friend, and made his complaint. Jonathan could not believe that his father was so far gone in wickedness that he should violate his oath. He assured David that his life was not in danger, that his father would not do any thing without his knowledge. David told him that as his father knew of their friendship, he would be led to conceal his purpose of mischief from Jonathan, "lest he be grieved;" and repeats in affecting manner his assertion that his life was in great danger. "Truly as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death."
Jonathan though still unwilling to believe that his father could be so base, sympathized with his friend, and offers to do for him whatever he desired.

Now had David been of a suspicious temper, he might have reasoned in this way. Jonathan is not willing to give up the prospect of a throne, and he is willing I should be removed out of his way. He must know all his father's designs, though he denies that any harm is intended me.

But David was not of a suspicious temper. He was frank and confiding. He was worthy of the affection which Jonathan felt towards him. When Jonathan said he was not in danger, he was sure Saul had kept him in ignorance of his wicked purpose.

Nothing, my son, is so necessary to the continuance of friendship, as a frank and confiding spirit. Guard with great care against a suspicious temper. Never suppose your friend has treated you amiss, unless there is most abundant evidence.
Never suspect him guilty of improper motives. The breath of suspicion is deadly to friendship. It is far better to be imposed upon, than to entertain unjust suspicions.

The friends fixed upon a plan by which they should discover the purpose of Saul. The account of this plan is given in the twentieth chapter of the first book of Samuel. They also agreed upon the manner in which the result should be communicated to David. The plan for testing Saul’s state of mind with respect to David was this. Jonathan was to give David leave to go to Bethlehem, at a time when his absence from the table would certainly be noticed by Saul. When inquiry should be made by him, his purpose would be determined by the manner in which he should receive the reply.

Previous to their separation, the friends renewed their covenant of friendship with solemn prayer. Jonathan caused David to swear that he would be kind to himself and to his family forever.
When the king inquired why David was absent from the table, Jonathan told him he had given him permission to go to Bethlehem to a family sacrifice. Upon this Saul became very angry, and called him a rebel and a fool, or made use of language to him which amounted to the same thing, and ordered him to send and fetch him, for says he, "he shall surely die." Jonathan begins to remonstrate, and to assert his innocence. "Wherefore shall he be slain, for what hath he done?" The answer was such as the wicked often give when arguments are offered which they cannot answer. He cast a javelin at him to smite him. Jonathan then arose from the table, very angry, and not without cause. It does not appear that he uttered any passionate or reproachful language to his father; there is such a thing as being angry and sinning not. Though he had been abused and insulted, his thoughts are with his friend; "he was grieved for David."
Jonathan was now convinced that his father's determination was to destroy David. How it must have grieved him to be obliged to feel that one so near to him as his father, was so abandoned of God! And how sad he must have felt at the thought of parting from the friend that he loved as his own soul!

He goes to the field where David was to conceal himself, and makes the concerted signal, which informs David that Saul is unrelenting. When the lad who accompanied Jonathan had retired, there was nothing to render an interview dangerous. They probably supposed they then met for the last time during the life of Saul. The interview was a very sad one, "they kissed one another, and wept one with another, till David exceeded." Well might he weep, for he was to be separated from all he loved, and to become an outcast and wanderer in the land. Jonathan at length dismisses David, reminding him of the solemn oath they had taken to be forever friends.
LETTER VIII.

My dear Son,

After the interview just mentioned, the friends appear to have had one, and only one interview more. When David was concealed in the wilderness of Ziph, and Saul was in search of him, Jonathan seized the opportunity of Saul's absence, to visit his friend. The account given is very brief. "And Jonathan, Saul's son arose, and went to David in the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him 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 Saul my father knoweth. And they two made a covenant before the Lord; and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house."

We see here the constancy of Jonathan's friendship. David is a fugitive, and a wanderer, yet Jonathan is as faithful to him as when he was surrounded by the
splendors of the court, and was the theme of praise and flattery. The same magnan-
imous spirit which we have before noticed is apparent. "Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next to thee." But the great object of his visit was to strengthen David's hand in God, that is to strengthen his faith in the divine promises, and his confidence in the divine protection, to promote his growth in piety. This should be the chief end in view, when friends meet together. They should strive to do each other good spiritually. They should aim at this, much more than to assist them in worldly business, and promote their happiness in earthly things.

Their interview closed with a solemn religious act. They made a covenant before the Lord. They parted to meet no more on earth. They doubtless both cherished the hope of enjoying each other's society at some future time. Probably they did not expect it, during the life of Saul; but when David should be on the throne, then would their
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happiness compensate for what they suffered now. And the wisdom of man would say that such ought to be the result; that friends so faithful ought to be rewarded by years of peace and joy in each other's society. But divine wisdom judged otherwise. The friends were not to realize their hopes on earth. They were to meet before the throne of God.

Not long after this meeting, Jonathan fell in battle with the Philistines, upon Mount Gilboa. Saul and three of his sons fell in that battle. Jonathan fell by the hand of the enemy; but Saul's end was in keeping with his life, he died by his own hand. When he was sore wounded by the Philistine archers, he calls on his faithful armor bearer to slay him, lest he should fall into the hands of the Philistines. His armor bearer refuses to do so, and Saul falls on his own sword.

Perhaps, my son, thoughts like the following may come into your mind, in view of this portion of sacred history. Why was it that so good a man as Jonathan met
such an end? Why was he not preserved by that God whom he served so faithfully, to be a comfort to that friend whom he loved so well? The answer is contained in the words of Christ. "Even so father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." God saw that it was best that Jonathan should die as he did. It was according to the decree of infinite wisdom and goodness.

We must not set up our wisdom in opposition to God's, any more than we must set up our wills in opposition to His. We must never in our most secret thoughts, say that what He has done, is not well. When we cannot see the wisdom or the justice of his works, we must still be sure that they are wise and just. With our weak minds we cannot expect to understand all the ways of God. You cannot understand all the reasons of your father's conduct, and yet you have confidence that it is right and proper. Much more are you unable to understand the reasons of the infinite God,—and much more should you have confidence that He is just and true in all his ways.
LETTER IX.

My dear Son,

I now wish to call your attention to a very interesting trait in the character of David. It is illustrated in the fact, that he mourned for Saul, as well as for Jonathan. Any man who was capable of the least feeling would have mourned for such a friend as Jonathan. But few would feel any sorrow for the death of such an enemy as Saul was to David! But David could love his enemies, and weep over their calamities. He was of a very forgiving spirit. Cruelly and unjustly as Saul had treated him, he could forgive it all. When Saul was no more, he remembered only his kindness to him. In the beautiful elegy that he wrote on the death of Saul and Jonathan, he mentions only his merits. He speaks of his valor and his strength, of his kindness towards Jonathan, and his good deeds to the daughters of Israel.

This trait of character I hope you will
take the greatest pains to acquire. Cherish a forgiving spirit. Never bear unkindness or hatred towards any human being. If a person has injured you, and they make acknowledgment, forgive them. If they will not make acknowledgment, forgive them for Christ's sake. We are taught to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." We are not allowed to ask to be forgiven, any further than we forgive others. Again, it is expressly said by the Son of God, "For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses." Many, I doubt not, suppose they are forgiven, when they are not; they have not forgiven others. We who daily and hourly need forgiveness, shall we not give it to others?

But though David forgave Saul, and mourned for him, yet it was not as he mourned for Jonathan. "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been unto me. Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." We are liable, my son, at any hour to be called
to mourn the loss of our dearest friends. Your father, or your mother, or your sister, or your most intimate friend may be suddenly taken away. How important then, that you do all you can for their happiness, while they are with you. We are sometimes very neglectful, and think we shall have a great many years to show them kindness in, but it may not be. We may have many years to mourn for their loss and over our neglected unkindness.

There was a youth who had a lovely sister who loved him very much, and who always preferred his happiness to her own. He was usually affectionate, but at one time he was led to associate with companions whom she did not approve. She gently reproved him, and tried to induce him to break off from his injurious associates. He would not listen to her, for his new friends as he called them, had taught him that it was not manly to be governed (as they called it) by his sister. Seeing that her influence was vain, she deemed it her duty to inform her father, that his
authority might interpose. Her brother was very angry, and spoke very harshly to her. She was on the point of going to visit her aunt, with whom she was to remain a week. He was so angry that he would not give her the usual affectionate good bye. "Won't you kiss me, brother,"—said she, "perhaps I may never come back." "I don't care whether you ever come back or not." She went away with tears in her eyes. When next that brother saw her, those eyes were closed in death. She was taken suddenly ill, and before her family could reach her, she expired. Oh, how bitterly did that brother mourn over the unkindness of his last speech to her. He did not mean it, but he said it, and its unkindness went to the heart of his sister. He could not ask her forgiveness; she was in her grave.

So treat your friends my dear son, that when you stand by their graves, you will not have to mourn over unkindness, and neglect, which you can never confess or atone for.
LETTER X.

My dear Son,

After the death of Saul, David was made king over Judah, and lived in Hebron; and after the death of Ishbosheth, he became king over Israel. When he was established in the kingdom, he did not forget his covenant with his friend, by which he bound himself to be kind to his family forever. David's own heart led him to inquire, "Is there any yet left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" He was told that there was a son of Jonathan living, and that he was a cripple. David ordered him to be brought into his presence. Mephibosheth, for that was his name, came with fear. Perhaps he did not know of the friendship that had existed between his father and David. Or perhaps he thought that David was like many who forget their friends when they come to power. Perhaps
he thought David meant to put him to death, as he might be regarded as an heir to the throne. But if he made any of these suppositions, he was mistaken. David received and treated him in a manner worthy of the friendship with Jonathan. He gave him all that had belonged to Saul, and assigned him a place at his table, as one of his sons.

My son, never forget those who have shown you kindness, however humble may be their condition. Be not ashamed to express your gratitude and obligation. There are many who forget to be thankful, especially when they have attained a station higher than that of those who showed them kindness. This shows a pride and selfishness, which God looks upon with abhorrence. Do not be like unto them.
LETTER XI.

MY DEAR SON,

You see from the history of David and Jonathan, that there is such a thing as true, disinterested friendship in the world. There are some who deny this, who say that all that appears to be friendship is the result of a refined selfishness. But such are not firm and intelligent believers in the Bible. The Bible furnishes abundant proof that disinterested affection may find a place in the human heart.

The history of the attachment of David and Jonathan, was written for our instruction, and furnishes examples for our imitation. It illustrates the fact that friendship may exist. It illustrates the principles on which it should be formed, and perpetuated, and the advantages resulting from it.

We are bound to love all men,—even our enemies, but this does not forbid the formation of peculiar attachments. We have
a higher authority than that of David. The Saviour, while he loved the whole world, and especially those whom he had chosen, felt a peculiar regard for John. He was the disciple whom Jesus loved; for whom he felt a peculiar attachment. It appears also from the gospel narrative, that he was bound by peculiar ties of friendship to the family of Lazarus.

Much that passes for friendship in this world is hollow. But true friendship does exist. It is a great blessing. It is to be sought on right principles, in the fear of God.

You must choose for your friend one that has correct moral principles and habits. A person who has no regard for religion and right, will never make a true friend. Such persons may be very pleasant in their manners, and profess to be very warm in their attachment to you; yet they are not to be relied upon. He that fears God, and keeps his commandments, can alone be trusted.

But not every one who is truly pious is
fitted to become your intimate friend. Converted souls are sanctified but in part. Some have fewer faults of natural disposition than others. Some are more intelligent than others. Some have warmer hearts than others.

The fact that you will certainly become in some measure like your friend, should lead you to choose only such as have great excellence of character. No persons can be intimate without exerting a strong influence over each other. They will catch something of each other’s excellencies and defects. Choose for your friend one whom you would wish to be like. Choose one who is decidedly pious, intelligent, warm-hearted, and prudent.

Be not hasty in your choice. Young people are often very hasty in choosing friends; they love them very much for a time, and think they are excellent friends, but they soon find they are not as faultless as they suppose; they are disappointed, and think they have been deceived;
whereas in truth, they only deceived themselves. They did not take time to learn any thing of the character of the person concerned. They did not found their attachment on any real merit they discovered in him. It was the result of caprice and fancy. Of course it could not be lasting. To have an attachment lasting, it must be based on sterling excellencies in its object. Be slow in giving your confidence, and having given it, be slow in withdrawing it.

Do not expect your friend to be perfect. There is no perfection under the sun. You must expect him to have faults, and you must bear with them, as you expect him to bear with yours. But you must not be blind to his faults. You must not cease to regard that which is wrong, as wrong, because your friend does it.

The intercourse of friends must always be conducted on Christian principles,—which are principles of rectitude and courtesy. If duty be not regarded, the
bond will soon be dissolved. Courteousness must also be attended to. Some young persons think because they are friends, they may neglect the forms of courtesy. This is not wise. They may dispense with the formal politeness which is necessary, where strangers are concerned, but true politeness must not be laid aside. A careless uncourteous manner will certainly lead to decay of feeling.

Friends should always seek to promote each other's improvement, and especially their spiritual improvement. They should be faithful to make known to each other their faults. We are blind often to our own. Those who know us well, should inform us of our faults, and assist us to correct them. And we should always listen to the voice of a friend when he would correct our faults. Faithful are the wounds of a friend.

Friends should often join in social prayer. Peculiar promises are made to those who unite in prayer. "Where two of you agree
on earth, as touching any thing, it shall be done for them, of my Father." Who can so readily agree as intimate friends? How frequently should they unite in prayer, and claim the fulfillment of this promise.

LETTER XII.

My dear Son,

From what I have said in former letters you have seen something of the advantages of friendship, when founded on Christian principles. But every thing in this world is imperfect. All happiness connected with this world has its limitations. And it should be so, for this is not our rest. We are liable to be deceived in our friends, or rather in regard to those whom we suppose to be our friends. Where we have bestowed the treasures of our confidence and affection, the object may prove
treacherous and unworthy. And where this is not the case, where there is reciprocal attachment and fidelity, there are the imperfections incident to humanity, which restrain that fullness of affection which we would have flow forth from our hearts.

We are often deprived of the society of our friends. Dear as they may be to us, our circumstances may require that we spend but a small portion of time in their society. We may be separated for years, and mountains may rise, and ocean roll between us.

Even when present with us, their power to aid us is limited. Much as they may love us, and willing as they may be to serve us, their power is limited. They cannot stay the approach of sickness, nor of death. A thousand events affecting our happiness may occur, over which they have no control.

From all our friends we must at farthest soon be separated by death. So that the purest earthly friendship is but an imperfect source of happiness.
But there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. There is a friendship that is subject to none of these drawbacks. It is the friendship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In him we can never be deceived, for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. In Him there are no imperfections to restrain the outgoings of our affections, for he is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely,—in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

We need never lack the society of this friend. "Lo I am with you always even to the end of the world" is his language, to those who love him,—you need never be lonely, if you have Christ for your friend. You will always have one near you, to whom you can tell your joys and your sorrows, and who will sympathize with you, with a depth and tenderness of sympathy unknown to men.

There are no limits to the power of this friend. He upholdeth all things by the word of his power. Whatsoever he desires
to do for his friends, he is able to do, and he desires to do for them every thing that is for their good.

Death does not separate us from this friend. He is with us in the dark valley of the shadow of death, and when we enter the eternal world, we are admitted to his more intimate friendship. Here is perfect and eternal friendship! What more is wanting to perfect and eternal happiness.

My son, do you not desire to have this friend as your own? He is willing to be your friend,—he has proved his love to you by laying down his life to save you. He offers you his friendship. You have only to repent of your sins and believe in his name. Do not reject his proffered friendship. Your earthly friends may soon fail you. Secure his friendship, and there is nothing in the universe that can destroy your happiness.

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