

Series: Shepherd, Poet, Fugitive, King - The Life of David
1 Samuel 23:15-18 – Strengthened in the Lord / Ryan Patty / 1.28.24

Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 20:16-17; 24b-34 (CSB)

1 Samuel 23 is where we will be this morning, I invite you to go ahead and turn there.

There is a word, a Biblical word, that is vital for us to know as Christians. And while this word is important, it's not often thought of by believers. We need to take it out of our mental reserves so to speak. It's a word that delves us a little bit deeper into theology and while it can be debated, the substance is vital for us to know.

Because it is a word that reminds us, assures us, of truth. It provides certainty in life, when we feel like there is none, it gives us a foundation to rest on when we feel like we are on shaky ground. This is a word that speaks of promise. A word that grounds our very faith. Do you know the Word I'm describing?

Covenant. The word is covenant. This Word I would argue forms the backbone of God's storyline. It is how he enters into relationship with his people, and as you and I are a part of the new covenant it is how we enter into relationship with him as well. Because a covenant, very simply put, is a promise. An oath. A binding agreement. For those who like specific definitions, Gordon Hugenberger's is brief and clear "A Covenant, in its normal sense, is an elected, as opposed to natural, relationship of obligation under oath."

And when we look at Scripture, we see different kinds. We see covenants of Clan or Tribal alliances, we see personal agreements (I won't do this, you won't do that), we see national legal agreements, and marriage covenants, where we get our understanding of a marriage covenant today. And most of all we see God initiated covenants, the major covenants of the Bible; these serve as the backbone of God's redemptive plan. I would argue for one at

creation, and then the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and finally the new covenant that you and I experience today. A right understanding of the covenants is vital to how we understand God's relationship to His people.

I bet you never expected to hear a sermon opening on covenants... And so this morning is slightly different. Jeff asked if I would be willing to take a smaller chunk from chapter 23 and flesh out some of the instructions for us on what it means to have friendship and relationship with one another here. I often find God's timing of these things so perfect as Pastor Patrick and Justin Oliver are discussing a theology of friendship with the youth right now, even last week in the adult community group I sat in on Gabe Lowe was teaching us from Hebrews 3 and what it means to have accountability and to care for one another in community, and in God's perfect timing I'm hitting on this today. And so I hope to do that. I want us to think of Christian friendship, membership in the church, and encouraging one another in the faith all from this section of 1 Samuel 23. Because our focus today is on the last type of covenant from the Bible that I didn't mention. A covenant of loyalty.

So before jumping into 1 Samuel 23, verse 15 (and because of my long opening that's still going). Allow me to set the scene. David has been hiding out, living in caves, and constantly fleeing Saul's various pursuits. And we have seen in chapter 20 that Jonathan and David initiated a covenant of friendship or loyalty. They are committed to one another, and further in the language as we will see Jonathan is committed and knows that David will be king. That's big.

- And Saul is on a massive downward spiral. After hurling a spear at David, he now hurls the spear at his Son, he curses him, and in chapter 22 we saw his increasing paranoia and his horrific slaughter of the priests. It just keeps getting worse...
- And at this point, I think David has to be at his lowest of lows.

He's got to be wondering, "what in the world, God?" You had your prophet come and anoint me, but what is happening... You said I'd be king but this is nuts. I'm living in caves, I'm chased by a madman, I'm destitute. And then chapter 23 and David's interactions with Keilah. He provides deliverance to them! Saves them from the Philistines, and then inquires as to the Lord about whether they will give him up, and God says yes! These countrymen of yours will betray you and give you over. That's their thankfulness for delivering them.

Then if you look ahead to v. 19, the Ziphites go to Saul and rat him out to them! David can't catch a break. He's at one of his lowest points...

I realize we are not even one full month into 2024, but the same I know is true of some of you. This year has been hard, unforeseen betrayal, disappointing circumstances, family relationship fracturing, and you are wondering, could this year get any worse? I already feel at my lowest! Well, let us learn from this friendship of Jonathan and David this morning, and may it encourage weary hearts.

1 Samuel 23:15-18 – 15 David was in the Wilderness of Ziph in Horesh when he saw that Saul had come out to take his life. 16 Then Saul's son Jonathan came to David in Horesh and encouraged him in his faith in God, 17 saying, "Don't be afraid, for my father Saul will never lay a hand on you. You yourself will be king over Israel, and I'll be your second-in-command. Even my father Saul knows it is true." 18 Then the two of them made a covenant in the Lord's presence. Afterward, David remained in Horesh, while Jonathan went home.

This morning, as we look at this covenant renewal, this covenant of loyalty between two friends here, I want to draw out 4 practical truths for us to consider. And I hope that these spur us on in our friendships in the church and outside the church, and challenge us on what it means to have Christian community. But before I do that, let me

briefly address something, and I feel anger that I even have to do it. I want to address the recent phenomenon amongst certain Biblical scholars, some so-called pastors, and others in the church at large, and that's the idea that Jonathan and David weren't just friends, but that in some way this text is actually condoning homosexuality since Jonathan "loved David as he loved himself."

- Simply put, that is a twisting of the text to make it mean something that would have been appalling to the writer of 1 Samuel. A nation or country is often defined by what it is against, what their laws are, and clearly the Mosaic law expounds on what it means for a man to lie with a man. There is a clear punishment for that. And even further back, when we look at creation, God sets the foundation of man and woman together. That is his created order and that is what we see the entirety of Scripture attest to, and even further that is how a society flourishes. The covenantal union of marriage is a God designed and intended relationship that points to the glorious union of Christ and His church. When you seek to unravel what happened at creation then you will fail to understand the rest of Scriptures.

But I would like to ask this question: What does it say about us as a culture and society that we have lost the concept, and seek to even change the definitions, for having close friendships of the same-sex. What does that say about us? How does that further drive loneliness and individualism? How does that further play into the cultural agenda at work today? Listen, biblically speaking, practically speaking, even God-intended relationally speaking, same-sex friendships (male friendships with other males, and female friendships with other females), deep friendships are a gift from God. Our culture is seeking to redefine what it means to be masculine or feminine and ultimately erase those traits. But healthy masculine relationships for men is a must, and healthy feminine relationships for women are a must.

We cannot buy the lie that just because those things exist or we experience deep friendship with another guy or a gal with a gal, we cannot buy the lie that somehow that lends itself to homosexuality. What in the world? Is that really the leap we want to make from this text or just generally in life?

I have a guy who is like a brother to me, Laura introduces him as my brother, I tell my kids he's their uncle, He lived with my family for a time because of difficult home circumstances, and our friendship spans almost 20 years now and I know in a small way the relationship that is described here between Jonathan and David. I can say I love him, because I do. And I understand that to be perfectly masculine. He has been there for me time and time again, although we don't physically see each other that much, when we are together the conversation picks up like it never ended. We played sports together growing up, we hung out a ton, and later on we have encouraged one another in our faith, and so I truly do love him. It is a deep friendship.

- **Further, some of you were in the military,** and you talk with or listen to those who went on deployments together or served for a long time together and you see the camaraderie, the friendship, the love that forms one another. That is a good and healthy thing. They often say, I loved him like a brother.
 - Listen, I refuse to give an inch to any semblance of argument that tries to co-opt what is taking place here for some God-forsaken agenda. And so those who do that with this text fundamentally misunderstand what is happening. And so it's infuriating to me, especially as someone who deals often with youth and sees the nonsense that the culture wants to push on them, that if they have close friendships with the same sex then that must mean maybe they're gay or maybe they bi, or they're

questioning, or they should be open to these idea. Nonsense. That is a lie straight from hell. God created us to be in fellowship with him and with one another, and yes sin distorts that, but we were created to have friendship that is rooted in God with one another, and what we see here with David and Jonathan is just that: true and deep friendship built on the foundation of their faith in God.

So this morning, now after my second opening, I want us to see 4 practical truths that teach us about relationships, loyalty, and friendship. My prayer is that we would all grow from it.

1. The Need for Christian Fellowship

I primed the pump on this a little bit, but the reality is that we were created to be in fellowship with one another. To have relationship with God and with our fellow man. This comes through in marriage and as I have said it comes through in friendship. And what you see in the NT and the building of the church is that this new covenant community, brought about by the blood of Christ and united to Him, is to be different, is to be sacrificial, and it is to be dependent upon one another.

The NT metaphor of the body makes this clear. We need one another. We need Christian fellowship and camaraderie. We need relationships that are rooted in God first and foremost. Practically speaking, this is why we practice membership here at CCC. Building off of this covenant of loyalty in 1 Samuel, combining with the NT language of being members of one another, caring for one another, loving, serving, forgiving, bearing with one another, it's clear that a covenantal community is what we are to be living out. And it's clear from the NT as well that they had a clear understanding of who was a part of this community and who was not. And so membership, where you covenant together with one another, where you voluntarily submit to your local church elders, where you take the step of covenanting

and where the elders understand who they will give an account for, all lends itself to this idea.

- And this covenanting together ultimately begins with our main gathering, the most important thing you can be involved in in the life of the church. The most important thing you can be involved in as a Christian family. It's what Christians have done for 2,000 years, assemble together. And then it fleshes out into our classes and groups, our seminars and talks, our one-on-one discipling relationships that exist. The Christian life is not meant to be lived, dare I say it can't be lived, as a siloed off Christian. That is foreign to the NT church and to the covenant in which we belong.

And so here in 1 Samuel 23, David in his lowest point, in his wondering if what God said is actually true, needed the fellowship, the encouragement, the loyalty of Jonathan. From a human perspective, we can wonder what would have happened if he didn't have it. Would he have given up? Would he have taken matters into his own hands? Would he have been Saul 2.0? And at the perfect timing, under God's sovereignty, the Lord sends Jonathan. Think of it like this: God's sustaining grace for David, the grace that he needed to stay strong in the circumstances, comes to him through the form of friendship, through Jonathan. How often have you been sustained in the faith by a close Christian friend, who came to you at just the right time...

And so maybe you're here and you're not a Christian and either you have questions about us, or you're just checking it out. For many years Christianity outside the church was viewed as a type of social club, something to boost your social standing. This guy is active in business, he has a great family, and he's a church man. Just another notch in the pedigree belt. Thankfully that is fast dissolving. When societal beliefs buck up against true Christian conviction, and the conviction of the Christian is not changed, well then trust me there is

not a boost of any sort in social standing for the Christian. **I think that's a healthy refining that is happening for the church.** But what I want to say to the unbeliever is that we are not just a social club in here, in fact many of us apart from this church wouldn't have much in common, might not even hang out with one another, and dare I say (gasp) get annoyed with one another.

But every Christian here would confess this: That they are a sinner by nature and by choice and that this sin is an affront to the one Holy God of the universe. And that through God's Word they have come to see that they stand under the wrath and judgment of God and yet the good news that we as Christians confess and trust in is that God did something about our problem. He sent his Son, Jesus, to take our place under his wrath and to die the death we deserved.. And praise God he didn't stay dead but rose again. That reality *affects everything about us now*. How we live, how we think, how we spend money, how we vote, how we use our time, what sacrifices we make; everything. That truth affects everything, and so this community, this church, that Christ said he would build, is the covenantal community that we need. That's what it means to belong to a church and to be a Christian. Social standing can fly out the window as far as I'm concerned. My brothers and sisters, we need one another. So don't forsake the assembly of the saints, don't run from deep discipling relationships, and don't hide from Godly friendship. We need one another.

And in these relationships, what should characterize them? What should be the foundation of them? This is where we jump back into 1 Samuel and see how Jonathan demonstrates this.

2. Seek Others Out

When we read of David in verse 15, he is in the wilderness and he knows Saul once more wants to kill him. And what does his loyal friend do? He seeks him out. 16 Then Saul's son Jonathan came to

David in Horesh and encouraged him in his faith in God. He goes to him in his misery. He does not stand from afar and tell him everything will be okay, but he comes to him and ministers to him in his time of need. It takes conscious effort to care for those in our midst, to deepen relationships, and to minister to one another.

What would our church look like with this diligence, with this effort, with this resolve to purposefully do one another spiritual good, to seek them out, to care for them. Now of course you can't do that for every other single person in the church, but you can do it for someone, dare I say you can do it for a few. You can seek those few out and resolve to deepen the relationship, to spur them on in the faith, to pray for them, to model for them, to lovingly correct them when needed. It takes a purposeful effort and resolve to do this. And friendships in the church require this.

At times we can have our blinders on, can't we? We can be so consumed with what we have to get done, with the problems we are facing, with all that life throws at us... **Laura and I** have been talking about this issue this very week. We feel at times like there is never enough time in the week and we can be so easily focused on what we need to get done that we fail to be mindful of others. We can be so focused on ourselves that we fail to be purposeful in noticing others. But here's the reality. Whether it's in the church, outside the church whatever, doesn't matter, here's the truth. Self-devotion, self-focus, is not freedom like our culture says, but slavery. True freedom is found in a life of service to others. Of laying aside our wants and desires and noticing others and lovingly coming to them, meeting them where they are at. It is as Jesus says in Matthew 20:28 concerning himself – “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Fight that urge to have the blinders on, to come to church and immediately leave, to not engage in relationships because of some

fear you have. Fight it. Stay longer and get to know others, jump into a class or small group, explore membership, look for opportunities to serve, put yourself out there. Listen, we are not a program-heavy church. We don't want to make everything in the church a program or exhaust ourselves and exhaust you all by requiring non-stop participation in things that Scripture doesn't prescribe. But we do provide some programs, some structure, some trellis for the vine to be able to grow. And it's a good thing to seek to engage with those things. Pursue others, put yourself out there, Trust me, you're not as weird as you think.

Listen, church will never really be convenient. And the same is true for deep friendships. But let us be diligent in the pursuit of one another and seeking one another's spiritual good. Let us lift up our eyes and get to know others and to come to them where they are. And as we get to know them more and more, this allows that relationship to deepen. Which brings us to point number 3.

3. Encourage Their Faith in God

Verse 16 again - 16 Then Saul's son Jonathan came to David in Horesh and encouraged him in his faith in God.

In a moment we will see specifically how that encouragement takes form, but I'd like to think for a moment on the substance of our conversations and what it means to have Christian friendship. Fundamental to this is the Christian part, as I mentioned earlier, that two or more people have been saved and redeemed through the blood of Christ. David and Jonathan are two men who have a faith in God. And yet, that in no way means that life is easy. As I spelled out, David has been on the run, Jonathan sees his dad in a new light and even had his dad throw a spear at him. No faith in God doesn't mean life will be easy, but it does mean that we have a sure foundation in the midst of the storm. That we trust God who says he is working out all things for our good, and that we know where and who we will

spend eternity with.

But living life in a fallen world, we are to be about the encouragement of one another. Hebrews 3:13 – 13 But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception. Jonathan goes to David and does just that. I'm sure he said more than what is recorded in Scripture here, but definitely not less. And so Jonathan encourages his faith. Are you encourager? Do you lift up and bolster the faith of those around you? Do you do that for your children? These are questions we must ask ourselves in light of this text.

So, be the friend that encourages. I generally am pretty even keel, pretty steady in my emotional temperament (Pastor Daniel). My wife majored in math, and I often joke that I'm the constant and she's the variable. But friends, even those of us who are steady, appreciate and need encouragement... how much more those who are the variables!

And so I praise God and I know the other pastor-elders do as well for such an encouraging congregation. That is true of you, CCC. There have been divine appointments in my feelings of inadequacy, of not measuring up, of wondering Lord is this even helping your people, where the Lord sends one of you at just the right time to say exactly what I needed to hear. And so my prayer is that that would be true of us as a congregation, in the midst of living lives of one another. That we would be known for our mutual encouragement.

And Jonathan here, ultimately he points past himself. In his friendship to David, he points to the friendship we have with Christ. Look at how Jesus explains this in John 15:12-17 – 12 "This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I do not call you servants anymore,

because a servant doesn't know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. 17 "This is what I command you: Love one another.

Jonathan points past himself to the friend of sinners, the friendship we have now with our Lord Jesus Christ. Jonathan Edwards the great preacher and theologian said this on his deathbed: "Now where is Jesus of Nazareth, my true and never-failing Friend?" Paul picks up the same idea in 2 Timothy 4:16-17a – 16 At my first defense, no one stood by me, but everyone deserted me. May it not be counted against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me . . ."

He is our friend, and in our encouragement, our love, our pursuit of others we demonstrate and point out to others the friendship of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we be quick to speak about the things of God with one another and to get past shallower conversations to where we can encourage and strengthen one another in the Lord.

Lastly, we have a specific example of what this encouragement in the faith, this strengthening in the faith looks like. Point number 4.

4. Remind Them of What is True

How does Jonathan do this? Let's read verses 16-17.

16 Then Saul's son Jonathan came to David in Horesh and encouraged him in his faith in God, 17 saying, "Don't be afraid, for my father Saul will never lay a hand on you. You yourself will be king over Israel, and I'll be your second-in-command. Even my father Saul knows it is true."

Remember, Jonathan is the heir to the throne. He was next in line

and Saul's family was to have this kingly dynasty. And yet his father, Saul, shows himself not to be the king that God desires for his people. As I said some weeks back, most of us would want to protect ourselves, would want to ensure that even though our father is a wicked king, we might still get the chance to reign and fix things...

But not Jonathan. Jonathan is a man who is faithful to God above all else. And this promise to David, that he would be king, is picked up by Jonathan, its recognized by those in Israel in subtle ways, and it is what the Lord is making happen. And so credit must be given to Jonathan – He is aware of what the Lord is doing and is not opposed to it, but supports it.

But it's Yahweh's chosen King that needs the encouragement, and Jonathan comes to him and his encouragement isn't just empty platitudes, but rooted in the promises of God. You will be King. My father will never lay a hand on you. God is at work in you. Friends, I have talked much about encouragement, and even hit on parts of this, but part of being a faithful and good Christian friend is knowing how to encourage people with God's truth. Reminding them of God's truth. In a world that is constantly preaching lies, wanting us to believe lies, it is our steadfast reminder of what is true, and the God who is truth, to one another that will encourage us.

So don't buy the lie that someone doesn't need your encouragement, or what I often fall prey to "I'm sure they know exactly what I'm going to say so I just shouldn't say it!" Don't do that. It's often in our moments of self-doubt, our struggles, our times of lacking faith, that even though we KNOW God's Word, we need to hear another say it to us clearly for it to break through into the moorings of our heart. Let's not sell ourselves short.

So we remind each other of the truth. We do that as members to one another, we do that in our friendships, we do that in our evangelism as we proclaim the truth, and we do that, especially to a world that

needs truth. Know the promises of God, speak them to one another, and rest in the greatest promise of all – that in Christ you are a new creation, the old is done away with and behold the new has come... and rest in the new covenant that from beginning to end is accomplished because of Christ.

May we be a people who recognize the need for Christian community, who seek others out, encourage them in their faith, and remind them of what is true. That is my prayer for us. Let's pray.

Communion

- Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ
- In light of this sermon, if you are angry with your brother or sister, or have unconfessed or unrepentant sin towards another here, you should refrain and be reconciled before partaking.
- Ask that the Spirit would grow you in a love for others and a willingness to speak God's truth into the lives of others.
- Look to the finished work of Christ.