

Letter to the Chalmers church family Friday 5th June

For us all, lockdown is beginning to take its toll. Over the past few days, Rog, Jay, Jonny, Scott, Iain (from Redeemer), Davi and I have been studying 1 Samuel as part of our internal training and in preparation for a preaching series in the autumn. It is a rich Bible book and we are excited about preaching it. Among its many lessons is the absolute, absolute confidence we can have in the Lord's promises.

Here is a poignant moment in a dark period in David's life.

¹⁴ David stayed in the wilderness strongholds and in the hills of the Desert of Ziph. Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands. ¹⁵ While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. ¹⁶ And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. ¹⁷ "Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this." ¹⁸ The two of them made a covenant before the Lord. Then Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh. (1 Samuel 23:14-18)

David is wearied by Saul's relentless pursuit to take his life (vv14-15). Humanly speaking, there was no way through this. David was very low. Saul's son, Jonathan (whose name means 'given by God'), was a devoted friend to David. He went to David and helped him find strength in the Lord (v16), literally put his hand into the Lord's hand. Notice that Jonathan can but 'help'. The strength David needed was from the Lord. Jonathan knew that. So, how could he best help David? By reminding him of the Lord's promise (v17). To use the language of Ephesians, by speaking the truth in love.

Jonathan and David renewed their covenant of fellowship then parted (v18). This was to be the last time the two of them met in person on earth. Jonathan would soon die in battle at his father's side.

How encouraged David must have been by Jonathan's friendship and care. Certainly. But even more important was the help David knew from the Lord *as a result* of Jonathan speaking the truth in love to him. Reflecting on these events, David wrote these words, not recalling Jonathan's visit (encouraging as that would have been) but remembering his Lord, where his help comes from.

**Behold, God is my helper;
the Lord is the upholder of my life.
(Psalm 54:4)**

I often think of the Getty song, *Christ will hold me fast*. It's not us holding on to the Lord. He is holding on to us.

**When I fear my faith will fail,
Christ will hold me fast...**

**He will hold me fast,
He will hold me fast;
For my Saviour loves me so,
He will hold me fast.**

In these difficult days when, like David, we are weary, the best help we can give one another is speaking the truth in love. Let's keep on doing that, selflessly and lovingly, sharing the Lord's promises from his Word with one another.

Christ will hold us fast.

With love in Him, Robin