

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 And David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand. ¹⁵ David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. ¹⁶ And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God. ¹⁷ And he said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also knows this." ¹⁸ And the two of them made a covenant before the LORD. David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home. (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 strengthened his hand in God (v16), literally put his hand into the Lord's hand. Notice that Jonathan can only '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, sharing the Lord's promises from his Word with one another. Let's keep on doing that, selflessly and lovingly, one to the other.

Christ will hold us fast. Always and forever.

With love in Him, Robin