

Title: Strengthened in God

Text: 1 Sam 23: 14-18

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1 Samuel 23: 14: And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand. 15: And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood.

This was an extremely hard time for David. He was in a mountain in the wilderness a fugitive, a hunted man, abiding in strongholds, sleeping in caves with a rock for his pillow. He had nothing to eat. He was so troubled in spirit that he could not eat—which is a true fast. His men looked to him and he knew he was responsible for them to God. But now he has led them into the wilderness. What a heavy weight to know the blood of these men is on him.

Imagine the burden of knowing Saul with 3000 soldiers is hunting you every day. You are the sole target of a king and his army. Saul and his soldiers represent the many enemies of Christ and his people. He represents the devil and his children. Saul represents our sin-nature, our sins, our fears and unbelief. “Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand.” God delivered him not into Saul’s hand. Oh, thank God for his sovereign, protecting hand. Also, God sent him an angel, a messenger to strengthen David.

1 Samuel 23: 16: And Jonathan Saul’s son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.

Subject: Strengthened in God

Proposition: Having suffered as a Man—experiencing God the Father’s faithfulness and mercy, our Lord Jesus not only saved his people from our sins, but he also continually strengthens us by his faithfulness and mercy in all our suffering in this life.

Not only does Christ not deliver us not into the hand of the enemy, but he also comes and strengthens our hand in God. By this, Christ grows us to be faithful to him and merciful to one another.

A TYPE OF CHRIST

In David we see a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. David was God’s anointed King though it did not appear so now. But Saul knew and sought to kill him. The same was true of the Son of God when he walked this earth in human flesh. He was King from birth. Therefore, the devil and sinful men sought Christ’s life continually because God saves in a way that appears to carnal sight as utter foolishness.

Isaiah 53: 1: Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? 2: For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire him. 3: He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Like Saul sought to kill David, at his birth, Herod tried to kill our King Jesus. But God delivered him not into his hand. Like Saul's 3000 soldiers, the Pharisee's and the religious host sought Christ's life every day. But God delivered him not into [their] hand.

John 7:30: Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.

To David God sent an angel—a messenger—who strengthened him. So it was with our King David. Our Savior was in the wilderness tempted of the devil 40 days and 40 nights. Afterward, having resisted in perfect holy faith toward God as representative of his people,

Matthew 4: 11: Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

In the garden of Gethsemane, his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death.

Luke 22:43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

The enemy finally laid hold of Christ. But only because our sovereign Savior willingly permitted it. But he said to the soldiers "Take me and let these, my people, go." Why did Christ suffer so?

Hebrews 2:17: Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. 18: For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

David's suffering was how God made him a merciful and faithful king over political Israel. So was Christ's suffering. But it was not only to consecrate him King of God's spiritual Israel but that he might be our merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God. Through Christ sufferings on the cross, Christ made reconciliation for the sins of his people by his blood.

2 Corinthians 5: 19: God was in Christ reconciling his people unto himself, not imputing our trespasses to us...21: For he hath made him sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him

And by his sufferings he experienced the weakness of our flesh that he might have compassion on his suffering people

Hebrews 5:1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: 2: Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity

It might appear to carnal sight that God was against David because of his suffering. But God ordained David's suffering to make David a faithful and merciful king over political Israel. Sinners think God the Father was against Christ because he was crucified on the cross. But it is how Christ honored God's justice and justified his chosen people. It is how God consecrated Christ a faithful and just King over his spiritual Israel.

Isaiah 53: 4: Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5: But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Now Christ our King is seated in the throne of heaven. Our faithful and merciful High Priest sanctifies our suffering that he might grow us to trust him more and grow us to be merciful to one another like he is to us.

FAITHFULNESS AND MERCY

We see Christ's faithfulness and mercy toward his people. Looking at David as a man we see God's faithfulness and mercy to him. David in himself is a sinner saved by grace. Right now he is weak and fearful and doubting. We see the life of a believer in David—our life.

God chose David, anointed him king, made him triumph over the giant. God chose his people and called us to Christ and in Christ we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. But then Saul rose up and it seems as though David forgot that Christ was his stronghold. David leaned to his own understanding. He left God's prophet and walked in his own strength for a while. Is that not me? Is that not you, believer? But once again the Lord brought him to the end of himself, granted him repentance and faith to wait on the Lord's name and David triumphed over the enemy. Yet, here David is again in the wilderness. Saul is hunting him every day and David is weak, fearful, troubled. That went on until the day David died. So it is in each one God preserves in Christ.

Still, Christ is our merciful, faithful King and High Priest. He has experienced the weakness of our flesh. Our Redeemer knows we are dust. Christ has experienced being strengthened by God's angel. And Christ is that Angel to his people. He is that Friend that sticks closer than a brother who comes to us in our weakness and strengthens us.

Often Christ does it the way he does in our text. The Lord sent an angel—a messenger. It was Jonathan, David's friend. Jonathan is an example of a believer who, at this time, is strong in faith. Today, you, believer, may be the one weak who is strengthened by your brother. Tomorrow it may be you who is strong and able to strengthen your weak brother. This is one reason God unites his people together. It is that we might love as brethren.

Jonathan was Saul's son. Jonathan was in line to inherit the throne. We were like Jonathan while under the power of the devil. We thought ourselves in line for the throne, thinking ourselves kings. But then God revealed David to Jonathan. God revealed Christ, our David to us.

1 Samuel 18:1 And it came to pass,...the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul....3: Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. 4: And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that *was* upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

When the Spirit of God reveals Christ, bringing us into the covenant of grace, our heart is knit with Christ in love. He makes us willing to be stripped that Christ might have all the glory as the Lord our Righteousness, our King! By this Christ knits our hearts together with our brethren even as Jonathan and David.

Later, Saul tempted Jonathan to betray David, saying that after Saul killed David then Jonathan could be king one day (1 Sam 20: 30-33). That is how the devil beguiled Eve in the garden. The devil wants us to usurp Christ's throne—"I will ascend up on high, I will be as the most High God!" The devil would have us slay our brethren rather than strengthen them. But Jonathan defended David. Since he did so, Saul cast a javelin at him—his own son! So Saul was against Jonathan almost as much as David. That gives us some insight into what Jonathan did in going to David. Jonathan risked his life to go to David in the wilderness. But the grace and love of God in Christ makes his saints stand with Christ despite the rejection of men.

Hebrews 13: 12: Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. 13: Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. 14: For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

So Jonathan is an example of a believer strengthened by the Lord. He is going to David who is his weak, fearful brother. One way Christ strengthens us when we are weak is using a brother who Christ has strengthened—"And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God." That is what Christ teaches us to do to our weak brethren.

Isaiah 35:3: Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. 4: Say to them *that are* of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *even* God *with* a recompence; he will come and save you

Isaiah 40: 1: Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2: Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

Every so many years someone rises up causing ripples through the churches by saying the preaching of Christ and him crucified is not enough. We need more sermons focused on works. They label us antinomian. They loath this "light bread." They want to hear messages focusing on the flesh. Oh, we preach mortification of the flesh. But turning believers to mind themselves is not how God does it. The power is Christ, the Strength is Christ. It is by hearing of Christ's mighty works that the Spirit strengthens us in the Lord. That is how the Lord gets the glory for strengthening our inner man and keeping sin from having the dominion over us. It is by setting our affection on Christ above, not on things on the earth.

So Jonathan did not point David to his sin in occasioning the death of those 85 priests. He did not tell him that Saul had 3000 soldiers pursuing David and what David should do to save himself. Jonathan strengthened David in the Lord by reminding David of what God had done and shall do according to God's covenant promise. By that word, the LORD strengthened David and the LORD got the glory. Jonathan knew God had dealt with David and brought him down. He saw David weak. So he obeyed the word of the Lord. He knew the compassion and mercy of God toward him therefore it made him have compassion and mercy on David. Therefore, he strengthened his hand in the Lord, saying, "Fear not..."

Psalms 28:8 The LORD...*is* the saving strength of his anointed.

Isn't that what we need? Isn't that what the Lord uses to strengthen his weak children in faith? It is only the gospel of Christ that God uses to put down our sinful flesh with our doubts and fears while strengthening our inner man in Christ.

Psalms 46:1: God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Christ is our Refuge. Christ is our Strength. Christ is present. Christ is a very present help in trouble. Jonathan turned David from the enemy, from himself, from everything below to Christ above. Jonathan did not make David more fearful by pointing him to Saul and his 3000 soldiers in pursuit of his life.

1 Samuel 23: 17: And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee.

It because the Lord our strength says,

Deuteronomy 31:6: Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he *it is* that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Christ says to his child

Isaiah 41:10: Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Isaiah 41:14 Fear not, thou worm Jacob, *and* ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 43: 1: thus saith the Lord thy God—Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine. 2: When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; 3: For I *am* the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Redeemer...4...I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life....7...I have created [you] for my glory, I have formed [you]; yea, I have made [you]

Jonathan strengthened David with God's immutable promise, and Jonathan strengthened David by his own allegiance to David.

1 Samuel 23: 17:...and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.

Jonathan reminded David of what God had promised—“*thou shalt be king over Israel.*” Brethren, by his blood, Christ has made us kings and priests unto God and even now we shall reign with him on the earth. Jonathan said, “Remember what Christ has made you, David. Thou shalt be king over Israel.”

And Jonathan strengthened David by telling him he was for David. He said, "David, I am here next to you in the wilderness, and if you will have me, “*I shall be next unto thee* when you take the throne.” He is saying, “For the Lord's sake, I am for you David even though my father Saul knows and wants to kill me because of it.” The Lord used that to strengthen David as well. Then they renewed their covenant with each other.

1 Samuel 23: 18: And they two made a covenant before the LORD:

The Lord uses brethren to remind one another we two are in an everlasting covenant of grace in Christ our King—"the new testament in his blood"—"ordered in all things and sure and this is all our salvation." Therefore, brethren are in covenant with each other before the LORD. Though they parted that word was in each other's heart.

1 Samuel 23: 18:...and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.

I think I hear David as he watched Jonathan disappear, thanking God for Jonathan, as he prayed for him. That is what the apostle Paul did for his brother who strengthened him,

2 Timothy 1:16: The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain:

Why does the Lord strengthen us? To strengthen one another with the same consolation of Christ. The Lord told Peter,

Luke 22: [Satan desired to sift you Peter] 32: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

I picture David going back to his men—pointing to the cave, the strong hold, using it as an illustration—saying to his fearful men,

Psalms 125:2: *As* the mountains *are* round about Jerusalem, so the LORD *is* round about his people from henceforth even for ever.

Psalms 34:7: The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

Years later, having experienced Christ's keeping mercies over and over, when Solomon was weak, David strengthened him saying,

1 Chronicles 28:20...Be strong and of good courage, and do: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, *even* my God, *will be* with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.

So God strengthens his people in Christ and by Christ that we might strengthen one another in and by Christ.

In the end each chosen, redeemed, regenerated child of God shall sing David's song. When the Lord delivered him from Saul he wrote,

2 Samuel 22: 18: He delivered me from my strong enemy, *and* from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me. 19: They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay...33: God *is* my strength *and* power: and he maketh my way perfect....50: Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name. 51: *He is* the tower of salvation for his king: and sheweth mercy to his anointed, unto David, and to his seed for evermore.

I pray God use this to strengthen each of my brethren.

Ephesians 6:10: Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might...

2 Timothy 2:1:...be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus...

Amen!