

## Loyalty

### 2 Samuel 2:1-11

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 7-8-2012

#### **Introduction – definition: “faithfulness to a person, country, group, or cause.”**

Last year I used Babe Ruth to illustrate one of the dimensions of the mutual ministry that God calls us to. But I think the same story illustrates a kind of loyalty that a kid had to his hero. As you may remember, Babe Ruth was playing rather poorly in one of his last full major league games. He had fumbled the ball, had thrown it badly, and in one inning alone his errors were responsible for most of the five runs scored by Cincinnati. It was humiliating. As Babe walked off the field after the third out and headed toward the dugout, he was understandably dejected. A crescendo of yelling and booing erupted from the bleachers. It seemed like all of his fans had turned against him. Just then a boy jumped over the railing onto the playing field and with tears of sympathy streaming down his face, the boy threw his arms around the legs of his hero. And I won't tell the rest of the story, because it illustrates a different truth. But there was a boy who was not fickle in his devotion. He was loyal to Babe Ruth through thick and through thin - and especially here through the thin times. And I believe that true loyalty is about as rare today as that boy's loyalty was in that crowd.

There are of course various kinds of loyalty and degrees of loyalty, but let's start at the most basic level. Social analysts have pointed out that loyalty is not a strong suit for most Americans on almost any level. For example, where people used to be loyal to a neighborhood grocery store, grocery stores struggle to keep any degree of customer loyalty. Where Protestants were loyal to a denomination or to a local church, loyalty to a church is almost non-existent. And people have analyzed the same phenomenon in politics, patriotism, marriage, employer-employee relations.

Now, I will be the first to say that there have been some benefits from this lack of loyalty in certain areas of life (so it's not all bad), but Americans have for the most part been robbed of a covenant concept that made Christian civilization incredibly rich during the first twelve centuries. Where has it gone? I found it interesting that the topic of loyalty is almost non-existent in sermon, in illustrations, in the books in my library, or in other resources that I tend to look at. And yet, based on the readings I have done

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in older authors, it is obviously an incredibly important topic. What does loyalty mean? What are the limits to loyalty? What are the benefits? How do we develop loyalty when we don't have it?

One commentary pointed out that the central theme to this whole passage is loyalty. I didn't see it at first, even though the Hebrew word for loyalty is there, but the more I read and re-read this passage, the more I realized that loyalty really is at least one central theme, if not *the* central theme. And before we dig into the passage, it might help if I define the term. Loyalty is faithfulness to a person, country, group, or cause. It is faithfulness to a person, country, group, or cause.

Some translations translate the act of the men of Jabesh Gilead in verse 5 as loyalty. For example, the ESV translates it, "**David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead and said to them, 'May you be blessed by the LORD, because you showed this loyalty to Saul your lord and buried him.'**" Others translate it as "**you showed this act of faithfulness.**" The Hebrew word is "Chesed," which means steadfast loyalty, steadfast faithfulness, steadfast love, and a number of other nuances that are really hard to translate into English. When it does refer to kindness or mercy, it is kindness that flows because of some kind of commitment. The commitment aspect is key. Jenni Westerman says, "According to Glueck, *hesed* does not refer to a spontaneous, ultimately unmotivated kindness, but to a mode of behavior that arises from a relationship defined by rights and obligations (husband-wife, parent-child, prince-subjects). When *hesed* is attributed to God, it concerns the realization of the promises inherent in the covenant." And because there are various nuances to this term that go beyond loyalty, we will be focusing on one central nuance: loyalty or faithfulness to a person, country, group, or cause.

And this is a virtue that the Bible says every Christian should exhibit. Proverbs 19:22 says, "**That which is desired in a man is loyalty...**" (Amp). God wants loyalty. When husbands and wives are loyal to each other, God is honored. And the Bible speaks positively of many forms of loyalty – the Psalms speak of loyalty to truth, Acts 2:42 speaks of loyalty to the local fellowship of believers that you are in covenant with, Proverbs 19 speaks of loyalty to parents, several passages speak of loyalty to a good king, or to a good country.

And of course the pattern for loyalty comes from God Himself. He is the one that we are imitating. The members of the Trinity are loyal to each other, and that we can understand. But what is amazing is that God is loyal

to those in covenant with Him, even though they are sinners, and even though we fail Him so many times. Psalm 103:17 says, “**But the chesed** [the loyalty, covenant faithfulness, steadfast love, etc.] **of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him.**” That is the ultimate expression of loyalty. God is not fickle, and fickle could be the opposite of loyalty. And because God is the fountain of loyalty to His covenant people, He commands us not only to be loyal to him (1 Kings 8:61), but also says in Matthew 6:24 that we shouldn’t have mixed loyalties to humans – we need to have God’s kind of loyalty in our relationships with each other – especially our covenant relationships. So with that as a background, let’s dig into the passage.

## I. **Genuine Loyalty (vv. 1-7)**

### *A. Started first with loyalty to God (v. 1; contrast with 2 Sam. 3:9)*

#### **1. David’s loyalty to God was illustrated in seeking God’s guidance and following it, even when it was hard**

One of the first things that distinguished David’s godly loyalty from Abner’s fake loyalty was that loyalty to God trumped everything else for David. Verse 1:

**2Samuel 2:1 It happened after this that David inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?” And the LORD said to him, “Go up.” David said, “Where shall I go up?” And He said, “To Hebron.”**

David’s loyalty to God was illustrated in seeking God’s guidance and following it, even when it was hard. If God had wanted David to stay in Ziklag and wait a couple more years to be king, David would have done it. But when David sought God’s guidance, God told him to go up to Hebron. Though David wasn’t sure of what he might expect from Judah, he went. All through the book of 1 Samuel David showed that his loyalties to God came first.

#### **2. David’s loyalty to God meant that his loyalty to Saul had its limits**

Second, David’s loyalty to God meant that his loyalty to Saul had its limits. Now, one of the strange things that we saw in 1 Samuel was that David *was* loyal to Saul, and he wanted to remain loyal to Saul. It was Saul who made that impossible. David’s fleeing from Saul was one expression of the New Testament principle that “we ought to obey God rather than man.” So there are limits on loyalty to a political party, a country, a church, or to any person. I think that is a key thing that we learn from the life of David.

But before I leave that point, I want to caution you not to take that one too far. In the twenty-first century we tend to focus on the limits to our loyalty and say, “If my Saul messes up, I’m out of here.” Your Saul might be a wife, or husband, or parent, or elder, or church, or a politician. And I would simply remind you that for years before David fled, he remained loyal to Saul despite slander, verbal abuse, broken promises, and a host of other problems. It was only when Saul made it impossible to stick around and survive that David fled. And even then David said, “**know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand...**” (1 Sam. 24:11). And in chapter 26 he protested that he had done everything in his power to be faithful. Can we honestly say the same about our covenant relationships? Or is our “loyalty” always in jeopardy of being quickly lost?

### **3. David’s loyalty to God strengthened his loyalty to undeserving Israel**

But the third thing that I see about David’s faithfulness to God is that it enabled him to be loyal to Israel and care for Israel despite the fact that Israel had let him down. It is really our relationship to God that transforms our relationships to others. It is really our loyalty to God that helps us to see clearly how to have godly loyalty to others. And so loyalty to God is a key to the rest of the sermon.

And yet Christians lack loyalty to God on every level. This lack of loyalty starts right at Genesis 1. The moment science questions six-day creationism evangelicals show their loyalty to so-called science far more than they do to God’s Word. That’s why they have twisted Genesis 1 almost beyond recognition trying to harmonize it with their evolutionary heroes. But Jesus said that you cannot serve two masters or be loyal to both. Loyalty to God’s word has to be primary over any other loyalty.

Loyalty to God is questioned when times get rough in marriage. People don’t like God’s statement that He hates divorce. When Jesus said, “**what God has joined together, let no man separate,**” He meant it. No man, including the spouse, has the authority to separate married partners or to encourage others to separate them. God’s Word alone can do that. Loyalty to God fizzles as soon as it means tithing. Yet Deuteronomy indicates that we are not loyal at all if we do not tithe. Loyalty to God gets ditched in politics rather routinely. And you could look at a hundred other areas, and if they cause you to cast aside any part of God’s Law Word, God’s Law Word says that you are not loyal to Him. Until we are completely sold out to God,

we will find true loyalty difficult in our other relationships. It is the foundation.

***B. Included loyalty to family (v. 2)***

So David's loyalty started with God and God's revelation. But it also included family. This is point B. Verse 2 says,

**2Samuel 2:2 So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite.**

The only reason he even had two wives to go with him to Hebron at this point was that he was willing to lay down his life for his wives in 1 Samuel 30. Most men would think that those 400 men against the tens of thousands of Amalekites (and some commentators think that it could well have been over one hundred thousand) was suicidal. But despite the odds, he was loyal. But think too of the loyalty that his wives had to have to him. If you think you have tough times being loyal to your husbands, think of all that those women had to go through. Initially they were running from spot to spot as he fled all over the countryside. Talk about the inconvenience of having no place to stay, no stove, no cupboards, no washing machine for the diapers. And during the sixteen months that he was in Ziklag, they never knew if their husband would come back from the raids alive, or whether the Philistines would change their minds and capture them. Those wives went through a lot to be loyal to David. Abigail stuck with him when he took on another wife. I think that would be tough – sharing your husband. The fact that they are still here shows loyalty. And of course, commentaries point out that these two wives had broader connections that probably helped David to be connected in Judah, and so there were family ties that speak to a broader clan loyalty.

***C. As David had been loyal to his men, they in turn were loyal to him (v. 3)***

The third aspect of loyalty was David and his men. Verse 3 says,

**2Samuel 2:3 And David brought up the men who *were* with him, every man with his household. So they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.**

Hebron, high up in the Judean hills, was far enough away from the Philistine conquered territories to enable David to consolidate power without their hindrance. But I want to tie together the loyalty of these men with David. In 1 Samuel 30, their loyalty wavered, didn't it? When they lost everything, they turned on David and were ready to stone him. But David showed such loyalty to them despite their meanness that it inspired a new

loyalty in them. It would have been easy for David to fire these men for having threatened to kill him - especially once he got onto Israel. But loyalty involves forgiveness as well – yes, even forgiveness for the threat of murder. He understood the weakness of their flesh, and the anguish of their hearts, and he realized that their hearts really were loyal, and so he stuck with them. They shouldn't have said what they said, and he wept before God over those words, but he understood that they had had a bad hair day, and he forgave them. It doesn't justify what they did, but he forgave them.

I think of Gladstone's treatment of his statistician. Before William Gladstone became the Prime Minister of England, he was the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He asked the Treasury for certain statistics that he wanted to use to make his budget proposals. And when he got them, he didn't bother to double-check the figures because the statistician who made them had historically always been so accurate. He went before the House of Commons and made his speech, basing his appeal on the incorrect figures that had been given to him. But as soon as his speech was published in the newspaper, the paper exposed the glaring inaccuracies. Mr. Gladstone was understandably very embarrassed by the incident. He went to his office and immediately sent for the statistician who was responsible. The man came full of shame and fear, certain that he was going to lose his job. But instead, Gladstone said,

“I know how much you must be disturbed over what has happened, and I have sent for you to put you at your ease. For a long time you have been engaged in handling the intricacies of the national accounts, and this is the first mistake that you have made. I want to congratulate you, and express to you my keen appreciation.”

Well, you can bet that man appreciated Gladstone, and didn't want to make that mistake again. In fact, it forged a loyalty between them. Over and over David showed that kind of forgiving heart, and it made his men want to lay down their lives for him. Forgiveness is a key to mutual loyalty. So despite a huge sin on the part of his men in 1 Samuel 30, David brought all the men up with him – all of them. And this illustrates an important principle in business that you've got to give loyalty down, if you want loyalty up.

#### ***D. The mutual pledge of loyalty in country (v. 4a)***

Verse 4 illustrates the mutual pledge of loyalty that a king and a country make to each other. It isn't one way. **“Then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.”** That anointing was the symbol of a covenant that was being made between

them and God. When you look in God's law, it was a covenant in which the king pledged loyalty to God and to the people, and in which the people pledged loyalty to God and to the king. And anointing was the symbol of that. And because 1 Chronicles gives inspired commentary on this, we happen to know that they had sincere loyalty to David. 1 Chronicles 12:38 says, "**All these men of war, who could keep ranks, came to Hebron with a loyal heart, to make David king ...**" So that interprets this pledge as a sincere pledge of loyalty.

That is the first hint in this passage that you could be sincerely loyal to Saul and then sincerely loyal to David. And we will look at that in a bit – the need to be loyal to a country even when the country may have its issues and faults. But right now I just want to comment on the importance of loyalty to a country. Americans are so used to criticizing their government that the thought of the people being loyal to the government is often missed. We expect the government and all in office to be loyal to God and to the constitution and to us, but we don't often reciprocate. And I believe loyalty to country is something that we ought to consider. Some of us need to ask God's forgiveness for expecting loyalty to be a one-way street in our nation. We have expected public officials to serve us, but what have we done to encourage and serve them? Loyalty to country. That kind of true loyalty is rare.

### ***E. Expanding invitations to loyalty (v. 4-7)***

#### **1. How are the two loyalties in verse 4 consistent? (v. 4b)**

But then in verses 4-7 we have expanding invitations to loyalty. So loyalty grows. It spreads. You can model loyalty to others, and they can catch the spirit. Eventually all of Israel would pledge loyalty to God and David and David would pledge loyalty to God and people. But look at the small beginnings. The second part of verse 4: "**And they told David, saying, 'The men of Jabesh Gilead were the ones who buried Saul.'**" This phrase shows that the men of Judah didn't consider loyalty to David to be at all inconsistent with previous loyalty to Saul. They themselves had been loyal to Saul. And as we will see in a moment, it didn't seem inconsistent to David either. In fact, the willingness of those men from Jabesh to take such risks *after Saul had died* showed David that these men weren't mercenaries. They were genuinely loyal to Saul and appreciative of the liberties that Saul had given them. Saul had rescued them from having their right eyes being gouged out by the Ammonites and he had rescued them from permanent slavery, and they felt like they owed Saul. His sacrifice for them made them

loyal to Saul. Even these men could understand that. But I think this was a providential test of David. Would David look at this loyalty to Saul from God's perspective? And the text says that he did. But these men of Jabesh Gilead are such a wonderful model of loyalty to us. They were not fickle in their loyalty to their king, even if the king had done some bad things. In effect these men of Judah were saying, "There are some likeminded people way up north. You need to investigate the men of Jabesh Gilead. They are the kind of people that you want to have on your side."

## **2. Did their loyalty to Saul go too far? (v. 4b)**

We are such cynics, we might question that. "How can a Democrat who has now become a Republican ever be loyal? How can a person be any good if they have stayed in a perverted party like that for so long?" But reasons for loyalty can be so complex. There have been solid evangelicals who have not left the incredibly liberal denomination, the PCUSA until last year. And we shake our head and wonder, "How could they endure that? How could they be loyal for so long?" Others came out a decade ago. That's when the "last straw" happened for them. The first churches in the PCA left in the early 70's. And there were people who couldn't stomach the PCUSA many years before that, sort of like the bulk of David's men had left the system before David had. But I bring this point up so that we don't get too judgmental. People with loyal hearts don't want to break that loyalty unless they believe God has called them to do so.

But it is a complex process of knowing when such a break is authorized by God. Keep in mind that David continued to work for Saul long after Saul was disqualified as king. What's with that? People often hope for change for the better, don't they? Here's how the Declaration of Independence words it: "Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes [and, by the way, I would say the same for churches]; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed." That's wise. But the point is, everybody seems to have a different breaking point. Jonathan, though he perfectly agreed with David's need to flee, did not himself feel like he could make the break yet. And a good case study on this is the Loyalists at the time for the War for American Independence. They felt like they needed to stay loyal to the king of England. Various people switched from being Loyalists to being Revolutionaries at different points, and there were up to 20% of the population that thought the Revolution was too precipitous. Some hung



around, and some emigrated to Canada or Britain. And some weren't even loyalists. They just didn't feel that the time to fight was right. I think the movie, *Patriot*, illustrates that ambivalence quite well. And yet, even though the hero joined the cause reluctantly and slowly, he was still a hero.

### 3. No. God blessed it. (v. 5)

And these men of Jabesh were indeed treated as heroes by God and by David. Verse 5 says,

**2Samuel 2:5** So David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead, and said to them, “*You are blessed of the LORD, for you have shown this kindness* [other translations have, “this loyalty”] *to your lord, to Saul, and have buried him.*”

You are blessed of the Lord. Could you say that to a Daniel, a Shadrach, a Meshach, or an Abednego who served the tyrant Nebuchadnezzar, and served him well? Scripture does. Could you say, “You are blessed of the Lord,” to a Roman Centurion who served the imperialistic army of Rome? Jesus did. And I bring this up to encourage you to be gracious with those who differ from us on political alliances because real life is so much more complex than theory. We know what a Daniel had to do when loyalty to God conflicted with loyalty to Darius. He had to obey God rather than man. We know what a David had to do. And even Jonathan showed that his loyalty to God was greater than his loyalty to his father, Saul. He helped David. Yet all of them gave loyalty to less than ideal figures. And in this they challenge our tendency to perfectionism – well, at least perfectionistic expectations of others; we rarely apply the same standard to ourselves.

Let me go out on a limb here to make this point and say that there were people who tried to maintain integrity in Hitler's army, even though their loyalty put them into incredibly awkward positions. Knowing what we know from hindsight, we have a hard time believing that any good person could have served there. But there were good people – like General Rommel, that I mentioned last week. And some of them had to be incredibly creative to maintain a supreme loyalty to God. SS Gruppenführer Hans Wolf was one such man. He got orders on one wintry day in 1941 to search the house of his own pastor, Martin Kirchschräger. Kirchschräger was a conservative Lutheran pastor who was closely aligned with the Confessing Church that Hitler was targeting. And Hitler targeted them not only because they were fearless in their preaching, but also because of the subversive alliances that they had developed. And Wolf didn't want to be the instrument

of his own pastor's death. So he went to his pastor and warned him that in 2-3 hours he would be returning with some soldiers to search his house, looking for evidence that would send him and his family to the concentration camps. That gave the pastor time to destroy the incriminating documents so that Wolfe and his men could search and find nothing. And apparently Wolf did that with others. So loyalty can be a tricky thing, and it is only as our loyalty to God is supreme that we can navigate the treacherous waters of loyalty to men and to causes.

#### **4. No. David recognized it as an asset. (vv. 6-7)**

I tend to side with the men who defected to David way early. I'm just too much of a black and white man. But I can still respect the holdouts who hoped that they could make a difference within the system. And there were men who never compromised their faith or their ethics - men like Jonathan. Loyalty is such a valuable possession that David preferred to honor loyalty rather than to criticize it, even if the loyalty was to Saul. Because of the *chesed* that they had shown Saul in verse 5, verse 6 says "**And now may the LORD show chesed and truth to you. I also will repay you this kindness, because you have done this thing.**"

David was prepared to be loyal to them precisely because they had shown such selfless loyalty to Saul. He saw this as an asset. Verse 7

**2Samuel 2:7 Now therefore, let your hands be strengthened, and be valiant; for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."**

Jabesh Gilead became a part of David's kingdom. It was an inconvenience to them because they were so separated from David's armies, and were so close to the Philistine armies and the armies of Abner. They were kind of in a sea of two enemies. But for them it was a no brainer. Now that Saul was dead, they wanted to pledge their loyalty to some new king. And Scripture didn't require that the new pledge automatically go to a son. So if there was an option, they would pick the godly one and stick with that.

I want you to look at your map to see the significance of this. Jabesh Gilead is way north of Mahanaim, where Ishbosheth had made a capital of his government in exile. That means that there is a powerful city up north that is aligned with David, even though it is far from David's borders. This was a huge benefit to David strategically. And over time, more and more people defected from Abner to David, because a lawful alternative was finally available. So not only did Judah secede lawfully from Israel, but Jabesh-Gilead did. We won't get into the whole subject of secession, but it is

a lawful option for states, and God Himself declared it to be so in 1 Kings 12. So we have looked at all of the complicated dimensions that godly loyalty can take. And we have looked at its limits.

## II. Counterfeit Loyalty (vv. 8-11)

### *A. Notice the “But” (v. 8) – Abner’s loyalty was not godly (see 2 Sam. 3:6-12)*

In contrast to the godly loyalty that we see in David, and in Judah, and in Jabesh Gilead, Abner’s loyalty was hollow. The illegitimacy of the loyalty is only hinted at here. The first hint is the word, “But” at the beginning of verse 8. And even though I believe these verses make that contrast clear, I want to look at the obvious hypocrisy of Abner’s loyalty to Ishbosheth in chapter 3:6-12. We won’t spend a lot of time on it, but let’s begin to read at verse 6:

**2Samuel 3:6 While there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul.**

This shows that Abner was using Ishbosheth only until he could consolidate power and rule himself. Verse 7:

**2Samuel 3:7 Now Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. And Ish-bosheth said to Abner, “Why have you gone in to my father’s concubine?”**

**2Samuel 3:8 Then Abner was very angry over the words of Ish-bosheth and said, “Am I dog’s head of Judah? To this day I keep showing steadfast love [that’s the word “loyalty”] to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not given you into the hand of David. And yet you charge me today with a fault concerning a woman.**

**2Samuel 3:9 God do so to Abner and more also, if I do not accomplish for David what the LORD has sworn to him,**

**2Samuel 3:10 to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba.”**

**2Samuel 3:11 And Ish-bosheth could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him**

**2Samuel 3:12 Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to David, saying, “Whose is the land?” saying *also*, “Make your covenant with me, and indeed my hand *shall be* with you to bring all Israel to you.”**

This is seven years later. In verse 12 Abner offers to join David and hand the kingdom over to him and to be loyal to him. But right off the bat we see a number of reasons why his loyalty was hypocritical. First, Abner clearly knew all along that God had said that David should be the inheritor

of the throne after Saul. He was there when Jonathan publically stated that he wanted David to be the heir. Abner knew the truth. He saw the debates. So Abner has been in direct violation of God's known will for seven years. Unlike David, he was not seeking God's will, and even though he knew God's will, he was clearly violating it – not to mention the sexual violation of Rizpah.

Second, he doesn't have the least bit of respect for David or for Judah. When he says, "**Am I a dog's head of Judah?**" he was using both "dog's head" and "Judah" as derogatory terms. This makes his pretended offer of loyalty to David a false one.

Third, Abner could see the writing on the wall and that his only hope of maintaining a position of power would be to negotiate something with David. So he was forced into pretending loyalty.

And then the whole passage shows that he was using and manipulating Ishbosheth, not being loyal to him at all. But all of this is hinted at in our passage in chapter 2 as well.

***B. Manipulation faking loyalty (vv. 8-10: "took...brought... made")***

Let's read chapter 2, verses 8-10:

**2Samuel 2:8 But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim; 2Samuel 2:9 and he made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, over Benjamin, and over all Israel. 2Samuel 2:10 Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. Only the house of Judah followed David.**

The name places show the territory that he controlled and the phrase "over all Israel" shows that Israelites from the other tribes had fled for refuge from their tribal areas to these places. This was a pretty small geographical area to rule. If you look at your first map, it includes Gad (that's where Gilead was), Benjamin, Ephraim, and one little city up in Issachar. The rest was controlled by the Philistines or by David in the south. It makes Abner's refusal to join with David earlier all the more foolish.

Anyway, on to our subject matter, even though Abner claims to be loyal to Ishbosheth, who is calling all the shots? Who is ruling? It's clearly Abner. And the verbs make that clear. Ishbosheth didn't take Abner as his commander. He didn't move the headquarters. The text says that Abner took Ishbosheth, Abner designated the new capitol, Abner brought him, and

Abner made him king. This was all unilateral. Why did he do that? The people would have suspected something if he just took over. So Abner has to pretend to be serving Ishbosheth. But all along he is manipulating Ishbosheth behind the scenes and faking loyalty.

A Japanese proverb says, “Great treachery looks like loyalty.” And my suspicions are that there are Abners behind the scenes in the Bilderbergers and Trilateral Commission who are pretty much running the show in Washington, DC. And even though the politicians may themselves be manipulated, they in turn manipulate the people. They talk about being servants of the people while blatantly ripping the off public and running roughshod over the Constitution. I’m looking for states who will take their roles as protectors seriously, and who will act like David. I praise the Lord for the ten states that are taking a hardline stand against Obamacare. I think there are many citizens who would be very glad to support those states. We need more interposition. Both David and Jabesh Gilead were engaged in interposition.

***C. The pretense of letting Ishbosheth rule was only kept up for two years (v. 10). For the next five and a half years, it was really Abner who ruled (v. 11 with verses 6-11).***

The last point is simply pulling together some loose historical threads. It says, “The pretense of letting Ishbosheth rule was only kept up for two years (v. 10). For the next five and a half years, it was really Abner who ruled (v. 11 with verses 6-11).” Let’s read the text:

**2Samuel 2:10 Ishbosheth, Saul’s son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. Only the house of Judah followed David.**

**2Samuel 2:11 And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.**

There are commentators who puzzle over how to reconcile Ishbosheth reigning two years, David reigning for seven and a half years in Judah, and yet, chapter 3:12 clearly shows Abner turning Ishbosheth’s government over to David at the end of those seven and half years. The two-year reign of Ishbosheth and the seven and a half year reign of David doesn’t seem to square. Some have tried to reconcile it by saying that for the first five years neither Abner nor Ishbosheth did anything. As far as I am concerned, that is a ridiculous solution. David would have filled that vacuum. Most people simply say that they don’t know how to reconcile it. Some people say that the Scripture is in error here. But if you are loyal to Scripture, you know that

it is truth, and you know that there is a solution. I believe that the easiest way to reconcile this is to say that Abner let Ishbosheth rule for two years while he sought to consolidate power behind the scenes, and once he had consolidated his power, Abner was really the one who ruled for five years and made all the decisions. And that is totally consistent with chapter 3:6, which speaks of Abner strengthening his hold on the house of Saul. It took a while. So there is a period where he is trying to increase his power and there is a period where he has total power. By the end of the first two years, Abner pretty much was able to control Ishbosheth and let him know that he was calling the shots. After two years, Ishbosheth was simply a weak puppet king. And the passage we read earlier was just another example of how Abner really had total power during those later years – he was sleeping even with the concubines, which in pagan nations, was tantamount to saying that he was really the king. But what is weird is that even on that day, Abner still claims to have shown chesed or loyalty to Ishbosheth, when in reality he was using him. He was in effect saying that Ishbosheth should consider himself lucky that he was even a king in name. So I think my explanation perfectly fits all the evidence. So in this passage we have genuine loyalty contrasted with empty loyalty.

## Conclusion

I began the sermon by saying that until we are sold out to God, we will have a difficult time being loyal in our other relationships. In his wonderful book, *Abandoned to Christ*, L.E. Maxwell tells the World War II story of Ruth Mitchell. She was the sister of General Billy Mitchell, and the first foreign woman to ever join the revolutionary death-defying Comitaji of the Belgrade underground. Those heroes were set apart to harass Hitler's forces when and if they crossed the Yugoslav frontiers. Ruth Mitchell was inspired by these men, and when she joined, she was given a vial of poison because no member of the centuries-old Comitaji had ever been captured alive. She watched Pecanec the leader cross her name off the list of those who had applied for membership. And then Pecanec said,

“We just cross your name off, my girl, because we consider you dead when you become one of us. We value our lives as nothing.

That is supreme loyalty to a cause. Well, Jesus said that we must have that kind of commitment to Him. In Luke 14:27 Jesus said, “**And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.**” There are a lot of Christians who aren't really Christians. They have a fake loyalty. And the reason I can be confident in saying that it is fake is that Jesus said, ,

**“And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”** We must take up our cross daily, being prepared to die on it. When you became a Christian, Jesus crossed your name off the roster of volunteers for His army and said, **“For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”** Loyalty to God can be summed up in the words of Pecanec:

“We just cross your name off, my girl, because we consider you dead when you become one of us. We value our lives as nothing.

How do we get this kind of loyalty? By daily consecrating ourselves to God and moment by moment receiving His strength to do the impossible. I have to do this daily. I get on my knees, put my head on the carpet in my office and say, “Lord, please put your foot on my neck. I declare you to be my sovereign Lord, and I gladly give myself to you as your slave. And I ask you for the grace and resources to be faithful to you in thought, word, and action this day.” I have to do it daily, because I know my heart will stray from loyalty. We can only be faithful because God is faithful. God is a loyal, faithful God, and he expects us to imitate His faithfulness. But we can only do it by His grace. Let’s pray.

I charge you to transform your weak and faltering loyalties by daily seeking the strength of Jesus, the supremely loyal one.

# Loyalty

## 2 Samuel 2:1-11

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 7-8-2012



Introduction – definition: “faithfulness to a person, country, group, or

### I. Genuine Loyalty (vv. 1-7)

- A. Started first with loyalty to God (v. 1; contrast with 2 Sam. 3:9)
  1. David’s loyalty to God was illustrated in seeking God’s guidance and following it, even when it was hard
  2. David’s loyalty to God meant that his loyalty to Saul had its limits
  3. David’s loyalty to God strengthened his loyalty to undeserving Israel
- B. Included loyalty to family (v. 2)
- C. As David had been loyal to his men, they in turn were loyal to him (v. 3)
- D. The mutual pledge of loyalty in country (v. 4a)
- E. Expanding invitations to loyalty (v. 4-7)
  1. How are the two loyalties in verse 4 consistent? (v. 4b)
  2. Did their loyalty to Saul go too far? (v. 4b)
  3. No. God blessed it. (v. 5)
  4. No. David recognized it as an asset. (vv. 6-7)



### II. Counterfeit Loyalty (vv. 8-11)

- A. Notice the “But” (v. 8) – Abner’s loyalty was not godly (see 2 Sam. 3:6-12)
- B. Manipulation faking loyalty (vv. 8-10: “took...brought...made”)
- C. The pretense of letting Ishbosheth rule was only kept up for two years (v. 10). For the next five and a half years, it was really Abner who ruled (v. 11 with verses 6-11).



Conclusion

