

Title: The Cost of Covenant
Scripture: 1 Samuel 20:18-34
Series: God, the True King!

1. Introduction:

- a. Our last two sermons have explored the meaning of covenant.
 - i. In sermon number 1, we learned there is divine certainty in our covenant with God.
 1. Amid our most difficult times, we can run to God and receive his everlasting mercy, God's *hessed*.
 - ii. In sermon number 2, we learned there is divine faithfulness in our covenant with God.
 1. God will always be faithful to His people.
 - iii. Today, in sermon number 3, we will learn that there is a divine cost in our covenant with God. In other words, discipleship requires complete surrender to the cause of Christ.

2. Verses 18-26: The Setting: Then Jonathan said to him, "Tomorrow is the new moon, and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty. (19) On the third day go down quickly to the place where you hid yourself when the matter was in hand, and remain beside the stone heap. (20) And I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I shot at a mark. (21) And behold, I will send the boy, saying, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you, take them,' then you are to

come, for, as the LORD lives, it is safe for you and there is no danger. (22) But if I say to the youth, ‘Look, the arrows are beyond you,’ then go, for the LORD has sent you away. (23) And as for the matter of which you and I have spoken, behold, the LORD is between you and me forever.” (24) So David hid himself in the field. And when the new moon came, the king sat down to eat food. (25) The king sat on his seat, as at other times, on the seat by the wall. Jonathan sat opposite, and Abner sat by Saul's side, but David's place was empty. (26) Yet Saul did not say anything that day, for he thought, “Something has happened to him. He is not clean; surely he is not clean.”

- a. In this portion of Scripture, we are privy to the scene around the table. It is a typical monthly celebration but Saul, unknown to Jonathan, has atypical motives.
 - i. He is waiting for David that he might kill him.
- b. Everyone that was supposed to be at the celebration has gathered, but David is conspicuously absent. Saul, bidding his time and reasoning that somehow David must be unclean, excuses David’s failure to appear.
 - i. Saul understood that if David was anything, he was a keeper of Scripture. Scripture commanded anyone unclean to abstain from any food sacrificed to the Lord. We read about the law of uncleanness in **Leviticus 7:20** but the person who eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of the LORD's peace offerings while an uncleanness is on him, that person shall be cut off from his people.
 1. Therefore, Saul decides to kill David on the second day of the feast.

- c. When David is absent on the second day, Saul immediately explodes into a fit of rage.
 - i. The sad episode begins with David's place being empty and ends with Jonathan's place empty.
 - 1. Saul will alienate anyone who serves and loves the Lord. This is the tragic outcome of disobedience. We become isolated from both God and His people.
 - d. The key focus of this passage is found in verse 23, where Jonathan says to David, **“the matter of which you and I have spoken, behold, the LORD is between you and me forever.”**
 - i. We learn from this passage that the covenant between David and Jonathan was unbreakable because the Lord **was between** both men.
 - 1. If the covenant between both men is sure, how much greater surety do the saints of God enjoy? They not only have God as a witness of the covenant, but it is God the initiates, maintains and completes the covenant.
 - a. In other words, we only have a relationship with God because of what God has done.
3. Verses 27: Saul's Question: But on the second day, the day after the new moon, David's place was empty. And Saul said to Jonathan his son, “Why has not the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?”

- a. Saul, suspicious of everyone, assumes that Jonathan would know the whereabouts of David. After all, Saul had seen a willingness in Jonathan to elevate David to the position that God had previously ordained. Jonathan and everyone else knew that God had chosen David.
 - i. Saul hates David for the same reason for which Jonathan loves him. David is God's chosen man.
 - ii. Saul is secretly harboring rage against his son. Saul is offended by Jonathan's willingness to give up the throne.

4. Verses 28 and 29: Jonathan's Response: Jonathan answered Saul, "David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem. (29) He said, 'Let me go, for our clan holds a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to be there. So now, if I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away and see my brothers.' For this reason he has not come to the king's table."

- a. Jonathan issues a response to Saul's inquiry. He will test his father's intention, but he does so with a lie. The Bible does not condone Jonathan's false statements. Unfortunately, even godly men sin. The Bible is simply reporting the facts of the events.
 - i. Here we have an excellent place to stop and consider certain truths about ourselves. Because of the remnant of the flesh that remains within us, we are prone to act wickedly.
 - 1. We would do well to heed the warning of our Lord in **Matthew 26:41** Watch and pray

that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

5. Verses 30 and 31: Saul's Anger: Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said to him, “You son of a perverse, rebellious woman, do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? (31) For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established. Therefore send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die.”

a. **Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said to him, “You son of a perverse, rebellious woman.**

i. The wrathful person most often makes himself known by the things that come from the mouth. Saul hurls insults and vulgarities at Jonathan. Saul's response, although mild sounding to our modern ears, is full of profanities. In front of the royal court, Saul degrades and humiliates Jonathan.

1. Saul's tongue is an example of the accursed tongue described in **James 3:6** And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.

b. In Saul's eyes, Jonathan's willingness to abdicate the throne of Israel and the power it represents is idiotic.

- i. **Commentary**: The rulers of this age understand neither the wisdom nor the power of God. Saul was no exception...Saul could not understand how Jonathan could put Yahweh's servant (David), Yahweh's word (the rejection of Saul's line and the promise of kingship to David), and Yahweh's kingdom first, even though Jonathan was officially next in line for the throne.
- ii. But Jonathan emptied himself of pride, power, and position to serve God and God's purpose. In this, Jonathan exemplifies the character of Christ Himself.
 - 1. **Philippians 2:7** but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.
 - a. Likewise, Jonathan emptied himself to serve God's chosen redeemer.
- c. Again we run into **Matthew 6:33A** But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...
 - i. For Jonathan, this was a reality. This is the reason why Saul could not understand Jonathan. This is why Saul considered his son to be dim-witted and dense.
 - 1. He thought his son foolish for quickly relinquishing what he viewed as being something priceless. How could his son give up wealth, place, prestige, and power?
 - a. The answer to this question is that Jonathan was seeking a better kingdom.
 - i. Moses is also an example of this truth. We read in **Hebrews**

11:24-26 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, (25) choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. (26) He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

- ii. **Matthew 13:44** “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

d. Beloved, pay close attention to Saul’s words in verse 31. **For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established.**

- i. Saul’s message is simple and worldly. Jonathan, David must die to protect “**you and your kingdom.**”
- ii. However, Jonathan was not concerned with “**you and your kingdom.**” Jonathan was moved to seek the kingdom of God. Jonathan was bound to the covenant that he had made.
- iii. Beloved, here is the crux of our sermon. Jonathan would remain faithful to God by being

faithful to the covenant with God's chosen redeemer, no matter the personal cost.

1. Jonathan's determination to serve God would cost him his relationship with his father.

a. It is always true that serving God's chosen redeemer, in our case serving Jesus Christ, will come at a price. This truth is prophesied in **Matthew 10:34-37** "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. (35) For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. (36) And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. (37) Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

iv. Jonathan teaches us an important truth.

Commentary: We learn that true life does not consist in securing **you and your kingdom** but in reflection of God's faithfulness in covenant relationships...Jonathan had acknowledged that the kingdom was God's and, therefore, David's, so his life did not need to be centered on his

ambition (what can I get) but on God's providence (what God has given).

1. Life does not consist in achieving your goals but in fulfilling God's goals. Life is not about your glory but His glory.

6. Verses 32: Jonathan's Question: Then Jonathan answered Saul his father, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?"

- a. Upon seeing his father's reaction and understanding his purpose, Jonathan, as he had done before, appeals to Saul's sense of right and wrong. He demands that his father give him a biblical reason for killing David.

7. Verses 33: Saul's Response: But Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him. So Jonathan knew that his father was determined to put David to death.

- a. Unlike the first time, Saul is no longer willing to live by God's Word. This has been his constant problem. He was always inconsistent in his obedience.
- b. Jonathan demanded an answer, and he received it at the point of a spear. Saul answers Jonathan by trying to kill him as well.
 - i. Inconsistency in obedience leads to all sorts of evil.

8. Verse 34: Jonathan's anger: And Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, because his father had disgraced him.

a. Once again, Jonathan demonstrates his godliness for us to consider. Jonathan is angry, but not for the reasons we might think. He is not angry because his father has publicly cursed at him or because his father, in a fit of satanic wrath, has tried to kill him. Jonathan was grieved not for himself but for the honor of God's chosen redeemer. Jonathan was hurt to see his father so treat God's man, David.

i. We have learned much from Jonathan, and we should also learn this.

1. If this life is not about **you and your kingdom** but about seeking **the kingdom of heaven**, we should never be angry at how unbelievers treat us.

a. **1 Peter 3:9** Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

b. Jonathan would continue to serve and love his father. He would not carry a grudge against the man that had tried to kill him. Jonathan will die by his father's side.

ii. Jonathan is angry, but his anger comes from the fact that he is **grieved for David, because his father had disgraced him**. We cannot be quick to be personally offended. However, we should

be quick to love God's chosen redeemer. May our hearts be **grieved** when we see men **disgrace** the name, person, and work of Jesus Christ.

1. **Acts 13:6-10** When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. (7) He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. (8) But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. (9) But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him (10) and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?"
2. May this same zeal for the cause of Christ consume the people of God.

9. Benediction:

- a. **Philippians 3:14** I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Public Reading of Scripture
Philippians 3:12-17