

Introduction: Great JOY comes from God's covenant love. *** Covenant is a key word and concept that permeates God's Word from *Genesis* to *Revelation*. But, I would estimate that fewer than one in twenty people on the street could give an adequate definition of covenant; and, sadly, fewer than one in five confessing Christians. *** The first time the word 'covenant' is used is when God calls Noah before the flood and asks him to build an ark. When Noah obeys, Yahweh – the covenant God – gives him more instructions (Genesis 6:18-7:1). After the flood destroyed the earth, God again addresses Noah, and makes a covenant with him and his descendants. He says He will never again destroy everything in a flood (Genesis 9:8-17). Then Yahweh made a covenant with Abraham. First, He would give the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants (Genesis 15:18-21). Then, He would make Abraham the father of many nations in an everlasting covenant, with circumcision as the mark of the covenant (Genesis 17:1-21). *** At the foot of Mount Sinai, after Yahweh delivered over one million Israelites from four hundred years of bondage in Egypt, He made a covenant with the descendants of Israel through Moses (Exodus 19:1-9). Most of the second half of *Exodus* and all of *Leviticus* give the details of this covenant. In the early sixth century before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Yahweh spoke to Jeremiah about a new covenant of grace He would make with Israel (Jeremiah 31:31-34). *** At the last Passover Jesus celebrated with His apostles, He said He was now initiating this new covenant, and it was in His 'blood': When He sacrificially offered His sinless and perfect life over to death to pay in Himself the death penalty we all deserve to pay because of our sins (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20). The Gospels are the bridge between the Sinai Covenant and the Covenant of the Cross. Luke, the historian, presents this better than the rest. In his opening chapter, he quotes from the prophecy Zechariah gave at the birth of his son, John the Baptizer: Praise Adonai, God of Israel ... He has raised up a horn of salvation in the house of David ... mercy to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant (Luke 1:67-79). *** We are ready for the basic definition of a covenant. It is a mutual, voluntary agreement between two parties in which each pledges to always act in the best interest of the other party, even if it results in harm to either party. It is stronger than the bonds of friendship or family. And it stands in stark contrast to a legal contract. *** The strongest covenant is the one God initiated for His people. It has been amended many times in human history, but its essence has never changed. The almighty covenant God is the creator and ruler over everything and everyone. In His great love for His creation, especially people, He graciously bestows blessings on those who enter into His covenant in exchange for their total dedication to Him. *** In today's story, we see how the covenant Jonathan made with David (1 Samuel 18:1-4) is a foreshadowing of the new covenant Jesus instituted at His first coming or advent. Whoever will trust and obey Him in His church will receive forgiveness and new life. *** Our portion of David's psalm tells of the love of the covenant God to those obeying Him from generation to generation. We will also hear God's great delight in those who return to Him after being disciplined.

I. David expresses concern for his life to Jonathan; Jonathan shows his covenant kindness to David by accepting his plan, and saying how he will communicate the results to David. (1 Samuel 20:1-17)

- A. David expresses his concern for his life to Jonathan, who does not know his father's evil intentions; and, Jonathan shows covenant love to David. (*Verses 1-9*)
1. Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah and came and said before Jonathan: What have I done? And what is my iniquity? And what is my sin before thy father that he seeks my soul (life)? (*Verse 1*)
David's perplexity: David pours out his heart before his covenant friend, confused over what he could have done to Saul to deserve death.
 2. And he said to him: Far from true! Thou will not die; my father does nothing, great or small, without disclosing it to me; why would my father hide this matter from me? This is not so. (*Verse 2*)
Jonathan and Saul: Jonathan is convinced he still has a good relationship with his father. He will soon learn otherwise.
 3. David swore again: Thy father surely knows I have found favor in thine eyes; he said (to himself): This will not be known to Jonathan, lest he be grieved; nevertheless, as Yahweh lives, and thy soul lives, that a step (is) between me and death. (*Verse 3*)
David's dread: David uses the strongest language he can to try to get Jonathan to understand his father's evil intentions for David!
 4. Jonathan said to David: Whatever thou will say (from) thy soul (life), I will do it for thee. (*Verse 4*)
Jonathan's devotion: This is the heart of the story. When confronted by a desperate request from his covenant friend, Jonathan pledges to do for David whatever he requests for the sake of the relationship.

Application: It is my hope that all who are hearing this message have a covenant friend as close to them as Jonathan was to David so they may experience God's JOY in Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

5. David said to Jonathan: Behold! New moon (is) tomorrow; indeed, I should sit with the king to eat; let me go to hide in the field until the third evening; if thy father misses me, say: David earnestly asked of me to run to Bethlehem for the yearly sacrifice for all his family; if he says good, peace to thy servant; but, if his anger is strongly kindled, thou must know he has determined evil. (*Verses 5-7*)

David's plan: David has good plan to discover if Saul's heart toward David is good or evil.

6. Do kindness with thy servant, because in a covenant of Yahweh thou brought thy servant with thee; if is in me iniquity, thou must slay me thyself; and, unto thy father, why for this will thou bring me? (*Verse 8*)

Covenant love: David reminds Jonathan of the covenant of love (kindness) they made with each other.

He humbly says that if he deserves death, the one who initiated the covenant may slay him.

7. Jonathan said: Far from true! Because if I surely knew evil was determined by my father to come on thee, and not this I will tell thee? (*Verse 9*)

Protect: Jonathan says if he knew his father meant to kill David, he would warn him and do all he could to protect his covenant friend David.

Jonathan mirrors God: Jonathan is a human mirror into the heart of God for all His faithful servants.

Furthermore, God delights when His people show His love to one another.

God delights when His people pledge mutual love

- B. Jonathan tells David how he will communicate to him the outcome of David's plan after three days. (*Verses 10-17*)
1. David said to Jonathan: Who will tell me; or, what (if) thy father answers cruelly? (*Verse 10*)
Communication: David asks how Jonathan will safely communicate if Saul's heart is severe to him.
 2. Jonathan said to David: Thou must come and we will go out to the field; and, then both of them went out to the field. (*Verse 11*)
Into field: This is not like when Cain was with his brother Abel in a field and slew him (Genesis 4:8). Jonathan is the one loving who is staying (sticking, cleaving) towards David more (closely) than a brother (Proverbs 18:24).
 3. Yahweh, God of Israel, [knows] that when I have searched out my father this time tomorrow, or the third day: Behold! [If he is] good to David, I will send to thee and disclose; thus will Yahweh do to Jonathan, and He will add; but, if it will please my father to do evil to thee, I will disclose to send thee away in peace: Yahweh will be with thee as He was with my father. (*Verses 12-13*)
Three days: Jonathan pledges in the Name of Yahweh, the covenant God, to keep David safe and in peace, by disclosing to David Saul's intentions. He closes declaring Yahweh will be with David!
 4. And thou shall not do to me (only) if I am still alive the steadfast love of Yahweh, and I will not die; and thou will not cut off thy steadfast love from my house (family) forever; and, not when Yahweh cuts off each enemy of David from the face of the earth. (*Verses 14-15*)
Love forever: Jonathan asks David to continue their strong covenant love to his descendants after Jonathan is dead. He will do so many years later (2 Samuel 9).

Homiletical Idea: *God delights when His people pledge mutual kindness throughout generations. (#1)*

5. Then Jonathan made a covenant with the house (family) of David: and Yahweh will require from David's hand (the cutting off of) enemies; and again, Jonathan made David swear by his love to him, for as his own soul, he loved him. (*Verses 16-17*)
Human love: Jonathan has the highest human love possible for David, so he renews their covenant through the generations.

II. David waits in hope for the results of his plan; years later, David describes Yahweh's great love to those who keep His covenant to all generations. (1 Samuel 20:18-23; Psalm 103:17-19)

- A. David waits in hope for the results of his plan, knowing Jonathan will preserve the unity of their covenant. (*1 Samuel 20:18-23*)
1. Then Jonathan said to him: Tomorrow (is) the new moon, and thou missed, for thy seat will be empty; and, (when) thou (stayed) three days, thou will go down quickly and go to the place thou were hidden in the day of the thing and stay beside the stone Ezel (departure). (*Verses 18-19*)
David waits: There is nothing more for David to do than to wait. This is never easy in great difficulty.
 2. Then I, myself, will shoot three arrows beside, as I shot at a mark; behold! I will send the lad (saying): Thou must go and find the arrows; if I say to the lad: behold! The arrows are here from thee, thou must take them; thou must come for peace (is) to thee, and is nothing, as Yahweh lives. (*Verses 20-21*)
Hope: This is the result that Jonathan is hoping will happen for David!
 3. If thus I say to the youth: behold! The arrows are beyond thee: thou must go for Yahweh has sent thee away; and the thing that we spoke: me and thee, behold! Yahweh is between me and thee forever. (*Verses 22-23*)
Likely: This is the likely outcome that David expects: that it is Yahweh's will he flee from Saul.
United in covenant: Still, Jonathan and David are forever united before Yahweh in a covenant of love.

Application: Let us obey Jesus' command to love one another as He loves us (John 13:34-35); then we will be united in Him and each other as His remnant people so He will rejoice over us in love (Zephaniah 3:9-17).

God delights when His people pledge mutual kindness throughout generations

- B. David describes Yahweh's great love and righteousness to those who keep His covenant throughout the generations. (*Psalm 103:17-19*)
1. The covenant love of Yahweh from eternity to eternity on those fearing Him / and His righteousness to children's children. (*Verse 17*)
Yahweh's love: Yahweh's strong love is forever towards all reverentially obeying Him in faith. He gives His righteousness to every generation worshipping Him in the obedience of faith.
 2. To those keeping His covenant / and remembering His precepts to do them. (*Verse 18*)
Covenant keepers: All committed to keep living in accordance with Yahweh's covenant, doing His precepts (statutes or rules) by faith in every generation will experience the joy of His love.

Yahweh loves those who obey Him in faith from generation to generation

Obedience of love: This is the obedience of love to God, and loving-kindness to others, that the prophet said causes God to delight in his people.

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3. Yahweh has established His throne in the heavens / and His Kingdom in all He has ruled. (*Verse 19*)
Eternal King: Yahweh is the eternal King over all He created and His strong love is to all His faithfully obedient subjects!

Application: Let us all determine to know the JOY we may have in Jesus' salvation because He fills us with His LOVE and righteousness so we will pass His LOVE on to the following generation that they may have hope in His wonderful deeds (Psalm 71:14-18).

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Conclusion: David expresses concern for his life to Jonathan. Jonathan shows covenant kindness to David by accepting his plan, and saying how he will communicate the results to David. David waits in hope for the results.

Years later, David describes Yahweh's great love to those who keep His covenant to all generations.

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