

• *At precisely the right time God sends a precious friend to help David*

God knows how to send help at the very point where we need it desperately. At precisely the right time God sends a precious friend to help David. The help takes the form of pointing to God. Jonathan encourages David ‘through the LORD.’ The ministry of encouragement consists of knowing how to direct a person’s attention to God and his promises. Jonathan’s encouragement is true and strong. There are five aspects to it, all of which point us to Jesus.

1. There is an appeal to be free from fear

1. **There is an appeal to be free from fear.** Jonathan says ‘*Do not be afraid...*’ ^{□1}.

□1 23:17

• *God never wants us to be fearful of anything except the possibility of losing his fellowship*

Again Jonathan is unconsciously being like Jesus, who was yet to come in the flesh. How often Jesus loved to say ‘Do not be afraid!’ The fact is, God never wants us to be fearful of anything except the possibility of losing his fellowship. The fear of the LORD is the fear of losing God’s fellowship and experiencing God’s chastening. But no other fear is ever to be permitted in the life of a Christian. God says to us ‘*Let the LORD of hosts be your fear*’^{□1} and then you will not need to fear anything else^{□2}. Jonathan knew something of this. He knew that David was likely to be tempted to be afraid. The future looked bleak. His circumstances were painful. David had made big mistakes. Jonathan knew that fear might almost extinguish David’s faith. But he knows it also works the other way round, and so urges David to let faith cast out fear.

□1 see Isaiah 8:13
□2 see Isaiah 8:12

2. There is an assurance of continual rescue

2. **There is an assurance of continual rescue.** Jonathan says ‘*Surely the hand of my father Saul shall not find you.*’ David has been rescued from Saul before. He needs to know that what he has experienced so far is going to continue all the time. God will go on rescuing him. He can just accept the fact and relax in the confidence that God will always be there when Saul is at hand with his threats.

• *But we need to know that God’s rescues will continue*

Often we experience God’s miraculous preservations but somehow think we have been rescued ‘just this once!’ But we need to know that God’s rescues will continue. Paul was once ‘*unbearably crushed*’^{□1} and then was delivered^{□2}. But the deliverance was intended so that Paul might set his hope on the fact that ‘*He who rescued us... will continue to rescue us*’ and that he might know ‘*that he will rescue us yet again.*’ God’s deliverances are not one-off incidents but life-long faithfulness. David must learn to believe it and find ease and continual refreshment in the truth of it. Saul will never succeed.

□1 2 Corinthians 1:8
□2 2 Corinthians 1:10

3. There is an assurance concerning the future

3. **There is an assurance concerning the future.** Jonathan says ‘*you shall be king over Israel, and I shall be second to you.*’ One conflict we often have in the life of faith concerns dark forebodings concerning the future. But David has a good future both in general (God will be with him) and in particular (God’s precise plans will come about). Any doubts that he might have concerning Jonathan also are answered (‘*I shall be second to you*’) which assures David that Jonathan is making no claims upon the throne but also that he will have Jonathan’s active support. Jonathan’s prediction was mistaken; he did not survive the battle in which Saul was killed. But he knew enough to give David the assurance he needed.

• God wants us to feel totally safe concerning the future

God wants us to feel totally safe concerning the future. Nothing will happen to us that is not within his control. But God does not only assure us in general. From time to time he is able to assure us about particular details. It gives great liberty and freedom when we have this kind of knowledge. He is able to give it still.

4. There is an assurance that his enemy already knows his defeat

• Opposition to God's kingdom is never reasonable

4. There is an assurance that his enemy already knows his defeat. Jonathan says 'my father Saul also knows that this is so.'

Despite all of his persistent opposition to David, Saul knew his defeat, and others knew that he knew! But opposition to God's kingdom is never reasonable. Hatred kept Saul going even when he knew there was no hope of success. His hope that God was on his side was pure wishful thinking. Like the devil, Saul 'knew his time was short'. The very violence of Saul was 'kicking against the goads' - like another Saul many years later. Jonathan wants David to see that total victory is virtually a present possession. Nothing more is needed than to steadily persist in faith, remain watchful, and watch as God's victory inevitably and irresistibly takes effect. The Christian is in precisely this situation. Jesus is already king of kings. Soon every knee will bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord. By faith we know it now. In his heart the enemy knows it already. 'The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly'¹.

¹ Romans 16:20

5. There is an assurance of covenant friendship

• Jonathan is like Jesus to David

• His friendship to David cost him a great deal

• Jesus, unlike Jonathan he goes on ministering Jonathan's encouragements to us

5. There is an assurance of covenant friendship. We read 'Then the two of them made a covenant before the LORD'¹. A covenant was a promise made more secure by the taking of an oath. Jonathan is like Jesus to David. He swears never to leave him or forsake him. He has nothing but goodwill towards him.

¹ 23:18

Jonathan was like Jesus in another way. His friendship to David cost him a great deal. For David he laid down his throne. Eventually in the midst of doing God's will he laid down his life and David ruled as a result.

Jesus our heavenly Jonathan also left aside his royal majesty and was willing to lose everything that we might be kings and priests to God. He too literally laid down his life that we might reign. Yet unlike Jonathan he goes on ministering Jonathan's encouragements to us, ever reminding us we need not fear, we shall be always finally rescued, the future is secure, the devil is defeated, and Jesus is keeping his oath that he will never forsake us. This is encouragement indeed!



Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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