

Introduction:

- *"One day near Horesh, David received the news that Saul was on the way to Ziph to search for him and kill him. **Jonathan went to find David and encouraged him to stay strong in his faith in God.** "Don't be afraid," Jonathan reassured him. "My father will never find you! You are going to be the king of Israel, and I will be next to you, as my father, Saul, is well aware." So the two of them renewed their solemn pact before the Lord. Then Jonathan returned home, while David stayed at Horesh." (1 Samuel 23:15-18, NLT) The NKJV says, "**Strengthened his hand in God.**"*
- Prayer Target: ninjas from the basement.
- Why do we need friends in our lives? Because of passages like these: *"**But the one who endures to the end will be saved.**"* (Matthew 24:13, NLT) Sounds like a rough road. If I have to persevere to the end...chances are I will need some encouragement to make it.
 - David had heard from God that he would be king but everything in the natural said, "NO!"
 - *"**Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. You must warn each other every day, while it is still "today," so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God. For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ.**"* (Hebrews 3:12-14, NLT)
- There are four things we can learn from this passage:

I. Everyone Needs A Solid Friend

- A. The strongest most anointed leaders need encouragement. IE. Jesus had 12. Among them were 3. And among them was 1.
 1. Never think that leaders do not need encouragement. I personally think they need it the most.
 2. Encouragement in the faith is not just for new Christians.
 3. We never outgrow the need for encouragement.
- B. David was a man after God's own heart and yet he needed encouragement.
 1. He was a warrior.
 2. He was a strategist.
 3. He was stronger and better than Jonathan.
 4. He was anointed to be king. And Jonathan goes to encourage him.
- C. Listen to what Charles Spurgeon, author of *Utmost for My Highest*, had to say. *"Some years ago, I was the subject of fearful depression of spirit. Various troublous events had happened to me; I was also unwell, and my heart sank within me. Out of the depths I was forced to cry unto the Lord. Just before I went away to Mentone for rest, I suffered greatly in body, but far more in soul, for my spirit was over whelmed."* (Autobiography, vol. 2, p. 415)
- D. We need daily encouragement in the Lord! All of us.

II. Effective Friendship Takes Effort

- A. Effective friendship takes effort. You can't encourage your friends just because you think of them. If you are going to strengthen someone else in the Lord you have to be purposeful and active about doing it. *"Jonathan went to find David..."*

- B. What could happen in the church if we woke up everyday with a plan to strengthen a friend!?!
 - 1. Jonathan just did not happen to be in the neighborhood and see David.
 - 2. He went out looking for the man who could not be found...by Saul. Amazing how God helps those who set out to encourage others.
 - 3. *"The mark of Christian maturity is that you build into your life the intention and the occasions to strengthen someone's hand in God."* John Piper
 - a) "Build into your life." It takes time to do this. And it takes thoughtfulness.
 - b) Be creative on all occasions.
- C. We should form friendships for Jesus Christ. (Piper thought) How would our friendships differ if we build them for Him and not for ourselves. O' how the purpose of friends would change and O' how deep they would become.
- D. Think about it...making a conscious effort to point a friend to Jesus. It is how we keep centered in life...looking to the Author and Finisher of our faith.

III. The Encouragement Is In God

- A. *"Stay strong in your faith in God."* We are to be strong in God not in ourselves. This is the whole purpose of Christian friendship...to point each other to Christ. That is where real strength is found.
- B. This is the real anchor for the soul! *"So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. This hope is a **strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls**. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary."* (Hebrews 6:18-19, NLT)
- C. The only way you can really help is to say or do something that causes me to depend on God.
 - 1. A radical 'God centeredness' in all we do that is what we are after!
 - 2. IE. I was with a group of people recently and I instructed them to share a challenge you are facing in life and let the others share a scripture to strengthen you. Sound easy? It wasn't! Everyone had a story but no one would share a scripture. I had to keep redirecting the exercise. Finally someone share a scripture and the whole exercise changed. It suddenly had life, it felt clean, and we were actually strengthening each other.
- D. The encouragement is God. Jonathan understood this regarding his friend David.

IV. The Power Is In The Promise

- A. Jonathan was there to remind David of what God had promised.
 - 1. "Do not be afraid." Sometimes there is a long distance between the reality of where you currently stand and the fulfillment of the promise.
 - 2. "My father will not find you." He was saying that God will keep you. You are in good hands.
- B. The promise: You will be king! This is God's plan not yours!
- C. I am not like my father. I want what God wants! Therefore, *"I will be by your side."* Jonathan was in line to be king but he understood anointing and that David was the king.

1. I am sure Jonathan told David the story once again of how Samuel anoint him, David, as king over Israel.
2. The Life is in the Word! So speak it one to another. May our faith...
 - a) Rest on His word.
 - b) Be strengthened in His word

Conclusion:

- A mark of Christian friend is that they intentionally strengthen your faith/hand in God.
- They point you to Christ at all times.
- They are by your side helping you step into what God has prepared.