

## **Psalm 31 – Covenant Confidence and Covenant Faithfulness**

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*Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

### **INTRODUCTION – Covenant**

One of the major themes that the Psalms keep bringing us back to over and over is *covenant*. Today, we will spend a good bit of our time thinking about the idea of covenant, and what that has to do with faith, with belonging to Jesus Christ.

Covenant, to many, is probably one of those words that you've heard before, but you're not entirely sure exactly what it means. It probably sounds like an old word, or a religious word, but what exactly it means might be a bit foggy to you.

It's really not that complicated of a concept. At its most basic it just means a legally structured relationship – or a legally structured agreement to take on certain privileges and duties towards one another. "I will be *this* to you, and fulfill *these* duties, and you will be *that* to me and fulfil *those* duties."

In the ancient world, kings would often enter into covenants with each other. A king of a small city with a small army would covenant with a king of a big city with a big army. "I will be loyal to you and pay tribute, and you will be a protector to me, and send the army when those guys over there try to steal my cows again."

Marriage is probably the most obvious form of a covenant in modern life. "I will be a husband to you and fulfil the duties of a husband, and you will be a wife to me and fulfil the duties of a wife."

And this is the basic difference between falling in love, and getting married. Falling in love – which is great – is all about your feelings. And you can fall out of love just as easily as you fell in. But marriage is a covenant. There's something solid, something objective that your feelings just don't change.

On the days when you're really in love with your wife – things are just going well – you're not any more married. And on the days where things are just prickly – you can hardly look at each other without getting into a fight – you are not any less married.

There's a thick covenant reality that just isn't touched by the ups and downs of your feelings.

Belonging to Christ is the same way. One of the reasons that it's hard for us to really get and really appreciate what the Bible says about justification, and assurance, is that we aren't accustomed to thinking of our faith in covenant terms.

In other words, we think about getting saved like falling in love, and not like getting married.

So, because of that, we think about peace with God, we think about assurance, more in terms of feelings than in terms of covenant reality, covenant substance.

Faith, like being in love, tends to ebb and flow. You'll have high highs, where everywhere you look you see God's kindness, you see God's mercy towards you in Christ. And you'll have lows, seasons where God's word seems locked up, and where everywhere you look you see your sin and doubts.

But in the highs, you're no more saved, and in the lows, you aren't any less. If you belong to God through repentance and faith, then you have entered into a covenant with God, where he has become your God, and you have become a part of his people. So in the highs, you belong to him, and in the lows he belongs to you.

And the thing about covenant is that it actually makes the feelings stronger and more stable. That feeling of falling in love is able to get deeper and stronger in the context of a marriage covenant. When you take away the anxiety and doubts apart from covenant, love can actually take root and flourish. It's the same way with peace and joy in faith. God's covenant actually creates the safe and structured environment that those feelings need to take root and flourish.

In this Psalm, we're going to see David in the middle of one of his lows. Things are rough for David. He's sick and weak. He's drowning in his own sin. His enemies are prospering, and his friends are abandoning him. It's a low point. And yet, in the middle of it, he finds hope and comfort in the objective, substantive promises of God's covenant with him.

This Psalm doesn't really have neat and tidy little divisions, but there are four basic movements of this Psalm. Here's my sentence to sum up the basic lesson from this Psalm. *Covenant confidence, in the face of the storms of life, gives us covenant hope, and should produce covenant faithfulness.*

And that's my four divisions for this text. In verses 1-8 we'll learn something about covenant confidence. In verses 9-13 we'll see the storms going on in David's life. In verses 14-22 we'll see David's covenant hope. Then in verses 23-24 we'll see David's application, a call to covenant faithfulness – God will uphold his side of the covenant, he will be your God in every circumstance, so we need to live like his people.

## I – Covenant Confidence

For this first movement, I just want you to see the basic foundation he is laying here. Woven through this section he's asking for deliverance, but I want you to notice two major threads. First, notice how David is asking God to fulfill his side of the covenant, and second notice how David is pointing to how he fulfills his own side of the covenant.

In these 8 verses he is saying in effect, I am your covenant subject, and you are my covenant God, so be my covenant God. To put it in the marriage metaphor again, he's saying, you are a faithful husband, and I am a faithful wife, so I know that you will do what a faithful husband is supposed to do here.

First, notice there in verse 1, "**In you, O Lord, do I take refuge.**" This is faith language. This is the same as if he had said, "I have put my faith in you." Different cultures and different eras in the church have used different language, but they are all more or less saying the same thing.

I trusted in Christ. I put my faith in Christ. I believed on the Lord for salvation. I invited Jesus into my heart. I surrendered to Christ. I started following Jesus. All of these are trying to get at the same basic idea of faith. Some are better than others, but they're all getting at the same idea. For David, he says, in the Lord I take refuge.

He isn't appealing to works, he isn't appealing to ritual or ceremony. He's appealing to faith. I have trusted you.

Whether Old Testament or New, the one condition to become a part of the covenant is *faith*. God saves you by faith. God becomes your God by faith. So, this is where David starts – I put my faith in you, I belong to you, so save me!

Then, driving the point even deeper, in the same verse he says, "**in your righteousness deliver me!**" Notice what he's saying! This is some audacious language. He's not saying, "in your mercy, would you be so kind as to deliver me," but "in your righteousness, do what is just and right and deliver me!" If it weren't for God's covenant commitments to his people, this would be absolutely presumptuous, almost blasphemous. "Your righteousness requires that you do this for me."

What he's saying is, I have put my faith in you, I have become yours and you have become my God, now, I'm in trouble, so rescue your sheep, be the good shepherd that you are.

Then notice verse 2, "**be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me.**" Then verse 3, "**for you are my rock and my fortress.**"

Note that. You *are* my rock and fortress – a certain covenantal, objective relationship – so be my rock and my fortress. You are my rock, so be my rock. You are my God, so be my God in this moment.

Notice that last part of verse 3. "**For your name's sake you lead me and guide me.**" Does that sound familiar? That's Psalm 23:3, "**He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.**" Here he's referencing that Psalm – "**The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want,**" to again draw our attention to godly covenant

confidence. Through faith I know that God is my shepherd, so things look bad now, but I know I shall not want. The good shepherd takes care of his sheep.

Then verse 5, “**Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.**”

There’s a humility here. Notice this. When David is asking God to basically hold up his end – in your righteousness deliver me – David is not dictating to God exactly what that needs to look like. While David is asking God to hold up his end, he is also committing himself to holding up his end – I belong to you, I’m yours, do as you please with me.

He commits his spirit to God, he yields his life and his future to God. He knows that God will uphold his end of the covenant, he will deliver him, even if it doesn’t look the way that David would have chosen.

You have redeemed me, you have brought me into your covenant of life, I belong to you, you are my God, you will not abandon me, so I yield myself over to you. I receive whatever you have for me in this and through this.

A part of God being your God, of being in this covenant, is yielding to his will. His will for your life, his will for your circumstances.

You can only say, “**in your righteousness deliver me**” if you can also say, “**into your hands I commit my spirit.**”

If you can’t say, “**into your hands I commit my spirit,**” then you have no right to say, “**in your righteousness deliver me.**”

Ok, now we come to verse 6. “**I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols, but I trust in the Lord.**”

Ok. This verse is likely a little troubling to you. If you have a growing Christian sensibility, this is likely a disturbing verse for you. There’s something in this verse that should bother you a little bit. As you are growing in your love and knowledge of the Lord, you should be bothered by any mention of idolatry.

Ok, what’s the hard thing in this verse? For our age, the hard thing about this verse is the fact that David says that he hates idolaters.

What do we do with this? Is he confessing sin here? Or is this a godly and righteous attitude? This is a godly and righteous attitude.

What is David doing here? Why does he even bring this up? Remember what he’s doing. He’s laying out his case that he is a faithful covenant partner with God. Essentially what he’s saying is that he knows what team he’s on, and he’s not looking for a reversable jersey. He knows that idolaters are enemies of God, so they are his enemies too.

There are two basic reasons that this verse is hard for us today. The first reason is that we live in a very conflict averse age.

The spirit of the age of pluralism and political correctness has trained us to be more bothered by strong language denouncing evil than by evil itself. We’re more bothered that David would so strongly denounce idolatry than by idolatry itself. We wish he had said, ‘I have some hesitations about pluralism’ instead of “I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols.”

The problem with this fear of open conflict is that by insisting on soft language for hard sins we end up giving cover for wickedness. Wolves in sheep’s clothing need to be treated like wolves, not sheep.

Historically, Jesus, the Apostles, and the church have not been shy about using hard words for hard sins.

In Luke 13:32 Jesus calls king Herod a fox – not a compliment. In Matthew 23:33 Jesus calls the Pharisees “**You serpents, you brood of vipers.**” Which, given Genesis 3, he’s calling them sons of the devil.

Then, just this past Friday, at the men’s Bible Study, we were looking at Galatians 1:6-9. There, Paul uses no uncertain language about those who preach a false gospel. Verse 8, “**Let him be accursed.**” Then, to make sure that we know he means it, in verse 9 he repeats himself, “**Let him be accursed.**”

In the early church, pastors and theologians were not shy about strongly denouncing the heretics. The Reformers were not shy about their thoughts on the Pope and his bishops.

So, the first reason this verse is hard for us is simply that we've been trained to not like hard words towards sin.

But the second reason is that we tend to have an overly simplistic approach to love and hate. We tend to think of them as these monolithic, simple emotive experiences.

The Bible just pushes us towards a more complex reality.

Jesus tells us to "love our enemies," Matthew 5:44.

But he also tells us to hate our parents, children, and wife. Luke 14:26.

In the Old Testament, God tells us that God hates the wicked, Psalm 11:5.

And yet, in Ezekiel 33:11 God says, "**I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.**" God wants the wicked to repent. God wants the wicked to be saved.

So, what do we do with all this? How should we *feel* about evil? And how should we *feel* about those who have given themselves over to evil?

Well, one simple way to think of it is what Paul says in Ephesians 5:1, "**Be imitators of God, as beloved children.**"

So, we should love like God loves. We should pray for our enemies, we should pray for the wicked, and be generous towards them, and earnestly desire good for them and that they should repent and be saved.

And we should hate like God hates. Psalm 97:10, "**You who love the Lord, hate evil.**" We shouldn't make excuses for sin, or give it kind of a "well that's your truth" kind of shrug. We should strongly oppose those who promote sin and try to make room for it in society or the church. We can't pretend like God doesn't have enemies. James 4 tells us that to be friends with the world is to be an enemy of God. You need to know what team you're on.

Charles Spurgeon says this really well, commenting on this verse. He says,

[David] was a good hater, for he hated only those who hated good. Of this hatred he is not ashamed, but he sets it forth as a virtue to which he would have the Lord bear testimony. To love all men with benevolence is our duty; but to love any wicked man with complacency would be a crime. **[Benevolence = I want good for you; complacency = I delight in you]** To hate a man for his own sake, or for any evil done to us, would be wrong; but to hate a man because he is the foe of all goodness and the enemy of all righteousness, is nothing more nor less than an obligation. The more we love God the more indignant shall we grow with those who refuse him their affection.<sup>1</sup>

So, what David is saying here is, I know what team I'm on. I have no interest in compromising with the spirit of the age, with the spirit of pluralism and pseudo-tolerance that works as a cover for evil. God's enemies are my enemies. I love my enemies, but I don't pretend I don't have them.

Ok, moving on. Look at verses 7 and 8 there. Notice here how he closes out this opening plea with a statement of his covenant confidence. He boldly asks God to help him, verse one, "**in your righteousness deliver me.**" But then here he simply states his confidence that God will in fact deliver him, verse 7, "**I will rejoice.**" He's saying, please fulfill your covenant promises – I know you will fulfill your covenant promises. This is what it means to 'ask in faith.' I don't know how you will deliver me, or what it will look like, but I know that you are not a capricious, changing God. You will be faithful to your covenant promises, so please be faithful to your covenant promises!

God isn't favorable one moment, and angry the next. He doesn't just save us out of Egypt to kill us in the desert. We saw this last week, "**his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime,**" (Psalm 30:5).

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<sup>1</sup> Spurgeon, Treasury of David, 265.

For those who have come through that door of conversion, God's favor isn't some up and down thing. Once you have peace with God through faith in Christ, you have God's favor forever. "You have delivered me before, I know you will do it again."

This is really important. You need to understand this. Christian. Your objective, covenant peace with God, his favor towards you in Jesus Christ, is not as fickle as your feelings.

On your good days, you have his favor in Christ. On your bad days, you have his favor in Christ.

Ok, so that's the first section, verses 1-8. David is laying out his basic confidence that God should and will deliver him. He's pointing to the real covenant between he and God. I am in your covenant – I have taken refuge in you – it's so important that he starts there – I believe, I have faith, save me. He says, I commit my spirit to you, I'm yours, I'm not half in, half out. And he even says I hate those who violate this covenant – I know what team I'm on.

And importantly he points to the fact that God is a faithful covenant partner. You are my rock and fortress, you lead me, you rescue me, you have redeemed me, I will rejoice in your steadfast love, you have set my feet in a broad place.

He's appealing to the covenant, and God's covenant faithfulness to plead with God for his covenant faithfulness. It is an earnest, desperate plea, but a confident and hopeful plea.

## II – The Storms

Ok, in the next section, verses 9 through 13, we'll see the storms that David is facing. Here is basically where David lays out his present situation.

There's really no consensus about what exactly David has in mind when he is writing this, about exactly what circumstances he's talking about. And frankly, that's kind of helpful. It's easy to get so distracted by how a Psalm relates to David's life that we forget to ask how it relates to our own life.

But notice this, he just covers the waterfront of issues here. He's in distress and grief, to the point that it isn't just affecting his soul, but his body also (verse 9). He goes around all day staring out the window sighing. He's losing energy and strength. He's usually a vigorous and energetic guy, but now, he can hardly even get off the couch (verse 10).

Have you ever been so broken-hearted that you've been unable to eat, or sleep? Have you ever been so distressed that you were getting physical symptoms? Here's a Psalm for you.

But then notice that he's not seeing himself as just a victim here. Why is his strength failing? Verse ten, "**Because of my iniquity.**" My sin. He's in distress about something, anxious about something, he's grieving something, and he's crushed by the weight of his own sin.

Then notice 11, not only are circumstances and his own conscience causing distress, but the people around him are making life miserable. His enemies are opposing him, but even his own neighbors and friends are starting to pull away.

David is in a bad spot.

Are there people who are opposing you, frustrating your plans? Are there people spreading rumors about you? Are there people even just telling true things about you, that you wish they wouldn't be spreading around? Are your friends backing away from you for one reason or another? Here's a Psalm for you.

David is in a bad spot.

Here's the big thing you need to notice here. If David based his confidence before the Lord on his feelings, he wouldn't have much of any reason to hope here, would he? He's feeling pain, sorrow, guilt, and shame. What does he have to give him confidence and hope before the Lord? Covenant confidence. God is his God, not because of anything David does or feels, but because of God's own faithfulness. God belongs to David, and David belongs to God.

If God is your refuge in Christ, he will never reject you, no matter what you may be feeling.

### III – Covenant Hope

Ok, then roll right into the next section. Look at verses 14-22.

It wouldn't be that surprising if after what he just said he wrote something kind of halting and hesitating. But this is triumphant. This is hope, and confidence. This is incredible.

In 9-13 he says, "things are really bad for me, and it's at least partially my own fault." Then in 14 he comes in with a truck-load of covenant hope flowing out of covenant confidence. Fourteen, "**I trust in you, O LORD; I say, 'you are my God.'**" Again, this is covenant language. It's not you are God, but you are *my* God. This would be like someone saying, 'but I know you will come through for me, for I say, 'you are my husband.'" There's covenant confidence there that produces covenant hope.

Fifteen, "**My times are in your hand.**" Again, humble, receiving dependence. My times are in your hand. My life is in your hand. My days are in your hand. You give, you take away. You open, you shut. You turn me one way, then the other.

This is more than just a statement of fact. This isn't just a resignation to God's power. This is a humble reception, an obedient receiving of the times that God has for you. Again, you can only say, "**you are my God**," if you're willing to say, "**my times are in your hand.**"

Ok, now, I need to zoom in a bit on verse 16. It's really important that you notice this.

Verse 16, "**Make your face shine on your servant; save me in your steadfast love!**" Again, this is covenant language. David is quoting from one of the most covenantally loaded passages in the Old Testament. This comes from Numbers chapter 6. It might be helpful to flip there if you can.

Numbers 6:22-27 says, "<sup>22</sup>**The Lord spoke to Moses, saying,** <sup>23</sup>**"Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel:** [Ok, pause. Aaron and his sons are the priesthood. So, this is a priestly, covenant mediator blessing]. **you shall say to them,**

<sup>24</sup>**The Lord bless you and keep you;**

<sup>25</sup>**the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;**

<sup>26</sup>**the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.**

<sup>27</sup>**So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them."**

Notice that last part, "so shall they put *my name* upon the people of Israel." This is covenant. This is what happens when a wife takes her new husband's name. There is covenant pledge happening. I give you my name, I receive your name. I am yours, you are mine. This is what's going on with the third commandment by the way – don't take the name of the Lord your God in vain. Don't be flippant or trite about this covenant bond.

What's the point? David is not just appealing to abstract principles, or even to the nature of God considered in the abstract. David is pleading for help on the firm foundation of God's covenant promises to his covenant people. It's not, "you are the omnipotent, unchanging, God, so please deliver me." But it's "you have put your name on me, I belong to you, so please deliver me." It's not, "you are God, so please help." It's, "you are *my* God, so please help."

Then notice verse 19, we catch a glimpse of what it looks like to be a faithful covenant partner to God. "**How abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you.**"

Then last, look at verses 21 and 22. Here, I think this is really interesting, David seems to lay out his own testimony in how he has grown in covenant confidence over the years. Notice 22, "**I had said in my alarm, I am cut off from your sight.**" It seems like David is looking back on another time when he was in trouble, and he apparently didn't have very robust covenant confidence. He thought that God had abandoned him, had forsaken him. So, he's basically saying, 'this time is like the last time, it looks bad, but it's looked bad before, and God has always delivered me.'

I find this encouraging. David, apparently, has matured. There was an earlier time in his life when he would have panicked, lost hope. Maybe his hope and peace was rooted in his circumstances and his feelings. But over time, and through experience, he has come to trust God's covenant promises more and more. It takes time and practice – apparently – to learn to trust God.

Here's the summary of what we've seen so far. David is in a tight spot, apparently the wheels are just falling off in life. He's miserable, he's stuck in sin, people are opposing him and lying about him, and his friends are abandoning him. But in the face of all of it, David finds covenant hope resting on top of covenant confidence. You are my God, and through faith I belong to you, so I am fully confident that you will deliver me.

#### IV – Covenant Faithfulness

So, most of this Psalm is basically an encouragement. You might be in a tight spot, but if you belong to God by faith – if you take refuge in God through Christ – then take heart. Find hope not in your feelings, but in God's covenant faithfulness. If God is your God in Christ, he will be your God in your life.

But he ends it with an exhortation. He ends it with a couple of points of application for us – here's how you need to live!

Essentially, he's saying, ok, here are 22 verses of encouragement to remember the many ways that God is a faithful covenant partner to you. Now, here are two verses to end on about how you need to be a faithful covenant partner to God. He is yours – and here's what that looks like. But also you are his – and here's what that should look like.

This all presupposes faith. Notice that he says, "**All you his saints**" there in verse 23. So, he's not saying, here's how you get into the covenant. He's saying, since you are in the covenant, saints, here's what you need to do.

You get in through faith, you stay in through faith, but true saving faith is the kind of faith that leads to obedience. This is the easiest way to tell the difference between faith and presumption. Faith leads to a real desire to grow in godliness, to grow in practical obedience. Presumption does not, presumption leads to apathy.

So here, in 23 and 24, he gives us two exhortations, two instructions, two applications. One: Love the Lord. And two: be strong and courageous.

Verse 23, "**Love the Lord, all you his saints! The Lord preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.**"

Ok, here we see a command – love the Lord – followed by an explanation. The phrase "the Lord preserves the faithful" explains what he means by "love the Lord" and the phrase, "acts in pride" is a contrast. Acting in pride is the opposite of loving the Lord.

Basically, what he's saying here is "be a faithful covenant partner." Since God is a loving husband, be a respectful wife. Since God is a good Father, be obedient children. Since God is a faithful king, be loyal subjects. Since God is faithful to his covenant commitments, be faithful to your covenant commitments.

So, one way we might get tripped up here is by taking an overly sentimental approach to love. Loving God has a ton to do with how you feel towards God, but it goes far beyond that. Jesus teaches us that our love for God will always express itself as obedience to God.

John 14:21. He says, "**whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.**" He even applies the same idea to himself ten verses later, John 14:31, "**But I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.**"

So, what does it look like to love God? Obedience from the heart.

Not cynical obedience. Not servile obedience. Not manipulative obedience trying to get God to give you something by obeying. Not self-righteous obedience. But genuine believing obedience from the heart. Obedience like a good son to a good father.

And that means repenting obedience. Obedience that doesn't pretend to be perfect obedience. Obedience in the shadow of the cross. It's "ah man, I messed up again. Jesus, please forgive me. Holy Spirit, please help me put this sin to death" obedience.

So, this is the contrast that David sets up to explain love for God. God preserves the faithful, but repays the proud. And the proud here are basically the presumptuous. Those who want all the blessings of the covenant, but none of the obligations. They want God to be their God, but they don't want to obey him. They want God to be a loving husband, but they don't want to be a respectful wife. They want God to be a protecting Father, but they don't want to be an obedient son.

Then for the second exhortation, look at verse 24, "**Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD.**"

Earlier we saw David reference Psalm 23 and Numbers 6. Here David is referencing Joshua 1. Joshua was the leader who followed up Moses. After Moses led the people to the very border of the promised land, Joshua was tasked with leading the people in and conquering the land.

So, in Joshua chapter 1, verses 5 and 6, God says to Joshua, "**Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.**" [there is covenant confidence] <sup>6</sup>"**Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.**"

So, in the face of massive cities to be taken, and massive armies to be defeated, God says to Joshua, be strong and courageous. Do the thing I have commanded you to do, and don't let the ridiculous odds scare you and make you shrink back.

**"Wait for the Lord."** Don't look to your own strength to save the day. Don't look for your own ingenuity to save the day. Wait for the Lord. Faithfully do the thing that he has called you to do, and wait for the Lord to fulfill his promises and purposes.

What I love about this Joshua reference is the battle plan that God gives Joshua a few chapters later. The first city that they needed to conquer was Jericho. God gave Joshua very specific instructions for how they were going to take Jericho. Basically, take the army, and just walk around the city a few times. Then, have the priests blow their trumpets. And the walls will collapse.

That plan takes a lot of faith. Is that it? Just walk around and blow the trumpet? Is that like the distraction while the tribe of Benjamin digs under the wall? Is that where we're going?

No, just march. Trumpets. That's it.

Ok. Yes, sir.

Jesus said that he will build his church, and that the gates of hell will not prevail against it.<sup>2</sup> Jesus said that when he is lifted up, he will draw all people to himself.<sup>3</sup> Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like leaven that little by little leavens the whole lump.<sup>4</sup> Jesus said all authority belongs to me, so go and make disciples of all nations.<sup>5</sup>

And Jesus has told us how he's going to do all this too.

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 16:18

<sup>3</sup> John 12:32

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 13:33.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 28:18-20.

"Ok," he says, "here's the plan. I want you to gather together every Sunday morning.<sup>6</sup>"

'With our swords?'

"No no, with your Bibles. And I want you to pray.<sup>7</sup> And sing.<sup>8</sup> And listen to sermons.<sup>9</sup> And take the Lord's Supper.<sup>10</sup>"

'Ok, and then we attack?'

"No, then you do it again the next week.<sup>11</sup> And rebuke each other when you sin. Encourage each other throughout the week.<sup>12</sup> Send out some people to go start new churches from time to time.<sup>13</sup> This is how I'm going to conquer the world.<sup>14</sup>"

'Ok, is that it.'

"No, there's more."

'Ok, here we go. Where should we attack first?'

"You should get married.<sup>15</sup>"

'What?'

"You should get married. And have some kids.<sup>16</sup> And bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.<sup>17</sup>"

This is the Lord's big master plan to evangelize the world. This is Jesus' master plan to reach the nations and bring his kingdom to bear on this earth.

It's the church, and the family.

And just like God's battle plan for Joshua, apart from faith, it seems kind of silly. We want something bigger. Something faster. Something flashier. We think we can come up with a better plan or supplement God's plan.

How many people do you think were trying to persuade Joshua to supplement God's plan?

'Ok sure, we'll bring the trumpets. But we should also bring the battering rams. And the shovels to make some siege mounds. God has a good plan, but we can make it better.'

**Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord.**

That doesn't mean, try to come up with a better plan. It means trust God. Invest in the things that he says you should be investing in. Look for meaning in the things that he says are meaningful.

The world says the interesting and the meaningful life is the life that is big and loud and flashy, that has an obvious impact right here and now. But that is not the way Christians should be thinking.

Little by little Jesus has been steadily reaching the nations through the local church and through the family. Through local churches being planted. The gospel being proclaimed. Little communities forming around God's word. Men and women getting married and having babies. Children being taught the basics of the faith on their mom's knee, and around the dinner table.

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<sup>6</sup> John 20:19, 26 ("8 days later" is inclusive, which means the next Sunday), Acts 20:7.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Timothy 2:8.

<sup>8</sup> Colossians 3:16.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Timothy 5:17.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

<sup>11</sup> Hebrews 10:24-25.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:14.

<sup>13</sup> 2 Timothy 2:2.

<sup>14</sup> Revelation 7:9.

<sup>15</sup> Proverbs 18:22.

<sup>16</sup> Genesis 1:28.

<sup>17</sup> Ephesians 6:4.

So, be strong and courageous as you wait for the Lord. Keep marching around those walls. This is God's plan.

Do you want to do something big and meaningful in the world? Do you want to do something big and important for Jesus? Join a church. Get invested at the church. Build up the church.

Get married. Have some babies. Raise them in godly homes, raise them in the church. This is how you can change the world.

Just march. Just trumpets. And wait for the Lord.

Covenant confidence gives us covenant hope which should form and direct us towards covenant faithfulness.

In 1 Corinthians 15:58, the Apostle Paul says, **“Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord, your labor is not in vain.”**