

The Covenant of Friendship, Brotherhood

"As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt." (1 Samuel 18:1-4, ESV)

One could very well read this passage out of context and come to a conclusion that is not true. Let's focus on what it says. Scripture tells us that this is the first of three covenants which Jonathan makes with David. (cf. also 1 Sam. 20:16; 23:18) The premise in these cases are important: Jonathan loved David as his own soul, David also loved Jonathan. These men were brothers in arms, these men were friends. Such an alliance was signified in ancient times, even in medieval times, with a covenant. Abraham made such a covenant with Abimelech to make peace. (Gen. 21:27) As for David and Jonathan, Jonathan was convinced that David's house would replace Saul's house as Israel's royal line, so he made a covenant to spare Saul's house when David's would come to power. (1 Sam. 20:16) Jonathan's father Saul was not pleased by this alliance because he politically feared David. (1 Sam. 22:8) Thus, Jonathan assured David that he had Jonathan's full support. (1 Sam. 23:18)

How do we treat our friends and our brothers, both physical and brethren in Christ? All who have been born into Christ are brethren in Christ, brethren in Christ's covenant. There is no need for us each to make an alliance one with another, to form a faction or a party within the church, we are all already under the same covenant in Christ's blood. If David was expected to come to Jonathan's defense and give his full support under that covenant, how much more should we actively support our brethren in Christ whom Christ died for? (1 Jno. 3:16-17) If David and Jonathan had an unspoken covenant of friendship before they made an official covenant of friendship and brotherhood, how much more should we respect our non-Christian friends so that they may see Christ's light in us that they may desire Christ?

Let us set our minds to be faithful to friends and brethren, not forsaking the covenant. How we treat a brother in Christ is how we treat Christ himself. It's also how we should expect Christ to treat us. (cf. Mat. 7:12) Therefore, "Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart." (Zec. 7:9-10)