

Loyalty Tested, part 1

2 Samuel 15:13-23

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 10-20-2013

Introduction

BBC did a story on a man in China who died at the age of 68, and whose dog kept vigil at his grave and would not leave no matter how many people tried to coax the dog away. Right around the same time, a guy in California fell off a 200-foot cliff and died. His daughter searched for him for eight days, finally discovering that their dog Roxy had been guarding the body for those eight days without food or water. Incredible faithful. It took many attempts before the daughter could get that dog to leave her owner.¹

Why is it that when you think of loyalty and faithfulness, the first thing that comes to my mind is not a human, but a dog? You can think of dozens of dog stories like that (Hachiko, Lady, Dorado, and others). Now, I can also think about some humans who have been incredibly loyal, but it doesn't seem to come as naturally to humans as it does to dogs. Maybe its just because dogs are not as intelligent, but I don't think so.

Back in chapter 2, I gave an introduction to the subject of loyalty. And we saw there that loyalty is not an option for the Christian. God calls all Christians to a life of covenant loyalty. The Hebrew word *chesed* means steadfast love, steadfast mercy, or loyalty, and the Hebrew word *emeth* means faithfulness or steadfastness. But both have this concept of covenant loyalty at their root. And since it is at the heart of the *covenant*, true loyalty is a product of God's grace, not something we produce on our own. And since it is *covenant* loyalty, it needs to be defined by Scripture and limited by Scripture, and when it is not, we saw how loyalty becomes idolatry. We don't imitate dogs in blind loyalty; we obey the covenant Scriptures. But the biggest thrust of that previous sermon was not so much to put off idolatrous loyalty (though we did talk about that) but the challenge to put on godly loyalty wherever God calls for it. So I'm not going to repeat what we said back then. Instead, I am going to build on it.

In Proverbs 19:22 God says, "That which is desired in a man is loyalty." God desires husbands and wives to be loyal to each other. Not just putting up with each other, but covenant loyalty. But here is the issue: when severe testings come, your loyalty will be tested as to whether it is God-

¹ <http://www.care2.com/causes/two-stories-of-loyal-friends-and-proof-nobody-loves-you-like-a-dog.html>

given or a counterfeit loyalty that any pagan could have. Acts describes the testing of loyalty to the brethren under persecution and trials. And there are tests of every form of loyalty. Even God's loyalty to us gets tested. We didn't talk about that last time. But every time we sin against God and are unloyal to Him, His loyalty to us is tested. Will He remain loyal to His covenant promises to us? We don't deserve it. Yet amazingly, Psalm 103:17 says, "**But the chesed** [the loyalty, covenant faithfulness, steadfast love, etc.] **of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him.**" That is the ultimate expression of loyalty that has been tested and proved.

And that is the subject of the sermon this morning. All the rest of chapter 15 and the first 19 verses of chapter 16 deal with this subject of loyalty tested – loyalty to God, loyalty to David, loyalty to a cause. I have isolated at least 18 tests of that loyalty in these two chapters, and we are just going to look at the first ten today.

I. Loyalty tested when a leaders popularity is waning (v. 13)

The first test of loyalty that we see in this chapter is when popularity is waning. Will your pledged covenant loyalty stand up when others criticize you for it or try to pull you away from it? Will your loyalty stand up when you are in the minority getting shouted down, or when you appear to be the lone voice? Verse 13:

2Sam. 15:13 Now a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom."

This messenger obviously was planning to be loyal to David. He may have been one of the two hundred men in verse 11 who went along innocently not knowing anything. But somehow he was present and had witnessed first hand how all Israel seemed to be going with Absalom, and he ran as fast as he could to bring the message to David. Despite the peer pressure of the crowds around him, despite the fact that he was siding with a minority, despite the fact that this messenger knew that he was probably being loyal to a hopeless cause, this messenger quickly went to David to report what was happening. And if he hadn't done it, David would probably have been dead.

True loyalty does not care what the multitude thinks. It stays steadfast because the Scripture calls for steadfast loyalty. And you might think that it would be easy for you to be that messenger. But it is tougher than you think to do the right thing when the crowd is hell-bent on doing something different. It takes real loyalty to truth to stand up in City Council and tell

them that what they are doing is wrong – especially when you know that the media is going to paint you poorly. It takes loyalty to truth, loyalty to constitution, and loyalty to country to testify before the Unicameral against ungodly homosexual bills and get savaged and abused by Ernie Chambers. He has tried to humiliate me in front of the TV camera. In fact, it is almost guaranteed that if you oppose one of his bills, he is going to attempt to humiliate you. But when you are willing to take stands despite the crowd booing you, and despite their standing against you, it is a good sign that you have passed the first test of loyalty – the unpopularity test.

On the other hand, if you give in to peer pressure easily, your loyalty will fail you when the pressures of their opinions start squeezing you. You need to memorize Galatians 1:10, which says, “If I still sought to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.” You need to master the principles articulated in the book by Welch, *When People Are Big and God is Small*. This is a huge area of failure for many people. And the reason is that all of us want to be liked, but God’s call to loyalty means that there will be times when you can’t be both liked and loyal. This messenger was going to lose friends in that crowd that he had just run from. He obviously had friends there. They invited him. But he did what was right.

II. Loyalty tested when life becomes inconvenient and uncomfortable (vv. 14-15)

The second test of loyalty is the inconvenience and discomfort test. Look at verses 14-15:

2Sam. 15:14 So David said to all his servants who *were* with him at Jerusalem, “Arise, and let us flee, or we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword.”

Absalom wasn’t too far away, so they didn’t have time to even pack up much of anything. They had to choose to instantly run with David or to stick with Absalom. Verse 15:

2Sam. 15:15 And the king’s servants said to the king, “*We are your servants, ready to do whatever my lord the king commands.*”

They were in effect saying, “Whatever comes, we are going to be loyal. We fully understand that we are leaving the comforts of life and will lose everything. We understand the inconvenience of living out in the fields. In fact, we realize that we might have to leave the country. We are willing to leave it all in order to be loyal to you.” That is a willingness to face discomfort and inconvenience.

Some husbands and wives are willing to be loyal to each other so long as everything is going to be hunky dory, but if it looks like there will be too much hardship, too much picking up of their cross and following Christ, too much having to be cheerful in the face of bad things, they will bail. They will expose the reality that their loyalty is man-made and man-defined, not supernatural and Scripture-defined. How many wives bail because their husbands don't live up to the expectations of every book on manhood that comes along? You women should stop reading books about how wonderful your husband is supposed to be, and do more reading on what God's Word says about your own responsibilities. These books that paint the perfect man have sowed discontent in the hearts of many women and eroded their loyalty. That's not what Scripture does. Scripture preaches to women in 1 Peter 3 and says that you must have covenant loyalty even if you have an unreasonable, unbelieving husband who is disobedient to the Word and disagrees with you on most issues. It paints loyalty in a worst-case scenario.

The Scripture paints the same picture for men (the word "likewise"), commanding them to dwell with their imperfect wives and to love their imperfect wives even if their wives are disobedient to the faith. Proverbs says that it might feel better to live in the wilderness than to dwell with a contentious wife, but the Scripture doesn't give that option. How many husbands have bailed because their wives don't measure up to the fantasies that our culture presents before their eyes. They might think that they could face any hardship in the military. In fact, some of them might have the illusion that they could make great Navy Seals. But they are not willing to be Navy Seals in their marriage, their church, and their culture. The least bit of inconvenience and they bail on faithfulness to their covenant vows.

In the movie, *Catch Me If You Can*, which was based on a real life story, the young man is devastated by his mom's unfaithfulness. She realizes that due to financial hardships that her husband was facing, that she would not be able to continue to enjoy the lifestyle that she used to enjoy, and because of hardships she divorced him and married another man. It was inconvenience that tested her loyalty.

When you young people fight against the incredible fleshly urges that you feel at your age, you need to ask yourself if you have a loyalty to God, and loyalty to your parents, and loyalty to the covenant pledges of purity and honor that you have made in church. I sometimes see undermining of parental desires in the way some of you young people relate to each other, and you are not modeling faithfulness. What about you young men when it comes to pornography? Does your loyalty to God's standards for purity

make you resist sin even in the face of pain, discomfort, and inconvenience, or do you give up the fight at the least discomfort that you feel in battle? Hebrews 12:4 says, “In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.” He’s not telling you to commit suicide. That’s the easy way out. He is saying the opposite. He is using a metaphor of a soldier. He is saying, “What kind of a spiritual soldier are you? You turn and run at the least sign of discomfort. You surrender to sin before you have even engaged the enemy! Where are the wounds to prove that you have truly fought against sin? Where are the skinned knuckles? Where’s the evidence that you are going to be loyal even if it means suffering? These men passed that test. They were loyal despite hardship.

You may remember the 1989 earthquake in Armenia that flattened the nation and killed 30,000 people. When I watched that, I saw a remarkable illustration of parental loyalty. It was a devastating earthquake. Moments after the earthquake stopped, a father raced to an elementary school to save his son. When he arrived he saw that the building had been leveled. It was completely leveled. Looking at the massive piles of rubble, he remembered a promise that he had given to his son: “No matter what happens, I’ll always be there for you.” And driven by that promise, he quickly found the area closest to his son’s room and began to pull back the debris. Other parents arrived and began sobbing for their children. One man told him, “It’s too late. You know they are dead. You can’t help.” Even a police officer encouraged him to give up. But he refused. For 38 hours straight (without sleep or breaking for food) he feverishly pulled rubble back, and finally when he moved a large piece of concrete, he thought he heard his son’s voice. He cried out, “Arman! Arman!” And his son replied, “Dad, it’s me!” Then the boy added these priceless words: “I told the other kids not to worry. I told them if you were alive, you’d save me, and when you saved me, they’d be saved, too. Because you promised, ‘No matter what, I’ll always be there for you.’”

That’s loyalty and love that pushed him through. Do you keep your promises no matter what inconvenience there might be? If not, I would urge you to repent and to ask God to help you reevaluate every area of your life where loyalty has been slipping. Measure it by this test.

III. Loyalty tested during absence (vv. 16-17)

The third test of loyalty is absence. Verses 16-17:

2Sam. 15:16 Then the king went out with all his household after him. But the king left ten women, concubines, to keep the house.

2Sam. 15:17 And the king went out with all the people after him, and stopped at the outskirts.

David probably thought that his concubine wives were safe. And by the way, a concubine was a kind of wife. She was a wife by contract and not by covenant. She had no dowry and no rights of inheritance, but she was a kind of wife. So don't think of concubines as mistresses. They were not mistresses. Though it was a sin to be married to more than one wife and to be married to concubines, it was not a crime, whereas having a mistress would have been a crime. They are quite different things. So, because they were married to David, he probably felt they were safe taking care of his stuff. Surely Absalom would have the decency to respect them. We find in the next chapter that he didn't. He precluded negotiations by sleeping with those women, and thus making the pagan claim of succession. But David didn't know that Absalom would be that low. But here were ten concubine wives that would experience absence from David.

And loyalty is often tested when there is no one around. Loyalty is tested by computer porn, since no one can see you. They are absent. They are not there in the room with you. Loyalty is tested when you are on trips. Loyalty is tested so frequently by absence that I don't buy the slogan, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." It can, but it can also make the heart to wander. And in such circumstances, only you can know if you are truly loyal.

J. C. Jones visited the violinist Benno Rubinoff. And during the conversation he said that when he was not on tour he practiced some eight hours a day, and when on the road he often rehearsed between concerts. And Jones asked him why he would practice between concerts when the concerts themselves were keeping him in practice. He patiently replied,

Well, I strive for perfection. I doubt if my audience would know the difference if I lightened up on rehearsals, but I would. Music is my life. Music is in my heart. I must always give my best.²

And I thought that one sentence was very significant – "I doubt if my audience would know the difference if I lightened up on rehearsals, but I would." And I would add, "And God would." If you have that sort of attitude in your calling, it is likely that you will be loyal even when everyone is absent.

² Jones, G. C. (1986). *1000 illustrations for preaching and teaching* (p. 75). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

When I was working as a janitor in a hospital, I had to clean rooms that nobody had been in all day. They were just as clean as when I had cleaned that room the day before. Other workers told me to just skip the room. But my contract called for mopping those floors every day. And so I mopped. But I was tempted not to move every piece of furniture and not to move the trash can (as I was supposed to) and instead to mop quickly around the trash can. But I knew that my loyalty to God and to my contracted relationship with my boss meant that I needed to move the furniture and clean underneath – even though nobody would know. (And it was actually a sterilizing fluid.) And because the contract called for it, I moved the furniture, and cleaned under the empty trashcan. And lo and behold, one day I noticed a little torn piece of paper under the trashcan that hadn't been there the day before. My boss had put it there to test my loyalty. And because I was loyal even when no one was present, I quickly rose through the ranks in terms of responsibility.

So I put that third point before you: how do you do when your loyalty is tested by absence? Do you act exactly the same way whether people see you or do not see you? That's what supernatural loyalty would do. And there is only one place you can get such loyalty – from Jesus. It is a product of God's grace, free for the asking. But it takes blood, sweat, and tears to actually implement it. But it is free for the asking.

IV. Loyalty tested by ethnic differences (v. 18a)

Fourth, loyalty can also be tested by things like ethnic differences. The first part of verse 18 says,

Then all his servants passed before him; and all the Cherethites, all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites...

The Bible mentions the nation of the Cherethites as one of the Philistine tribes or at least in some way closely connected with the Philistines. But most think that they were a Philistine tribe. They were a nation that David had previously fought against. Most scholars believe the Pelethites were also Philistines. And certainly the Gittites were Philistines from the city of Gath. These were converts to God when David lived at Ziklag, and they became very devout followers of God and were very loyal to David.

It's interesting how first generation converts to Christianity are sometimes more zealous for the cause of Christ than those (like Absalom) who have grown up in the Christian faith. It doesn't have to be that way, but I have noticed that it often is. But I believe it often is that way because those

who have grown up in the Christian faith assume too much and their parents assume too much. The kids are not challenged in this area of heart loyalty and heart faithfulness.

But there's another application of this point, and that is prejudices and Christian conflict with humanistic loyalties. With David's annihilation of the Philistines in earlier decades, it is fascinating that these Philistines would have followed David in the first place. Obviously their loyalty to God trumped racial prejudice and their loyalty to God trumped any negative feelings they may have had concerning David's destruction of their fellow countrymen. They must have known that they all deserved such destruction, but they pled for mercy from God. And once they put their faith in Christ, David was just as committed to them as they were to David. That loyalty was not poisoned by racial differences. Obviously that decision of loyalty had been made decades before.

But it does bring up the whole issue of how racial tensions can prejudice us against God's mandate of loyalty. I was very troubled when I traveled to India and saw how many high caste churches would have nothing to do with Christians from the lower castes. In fact, they would kick a low caste Dalit Christian out of the church building if he would ever dare to enter. I was horrified that the culture of the caste system had been adopted by the Indian church. But as I thought about it I realize that in America we are just as bad at allowing culture to trump loyalty to what the Bible demands. But back to India, the exceptions to that rule are so striking that when Christians from the Dalit castes and the highest classes actually fellowship together it stands as one of the greatest testimonies of loyalty to Christ that I can think of.

But it is sad how frequently humanistic barriers continue to be barriers even within the church. And they don't have to be racial barriers – they can be political party barriers. I've been in churches where you would not be welcome if you were not a Republican. Of course, I have been in black churches where you would be looked down on if you *were* a Republican.

The racial animosity in the African country of Rwanda with Tutsis being butchered by Hutus, and later Hutus being killed by Tutsis sparked the same hatred between the Christians of each ethnic race that you saw among non-Christians. Their loyalty to race trumped their loyalty to Christ, and you had Christians killing Christians. But there were remarkable exceptions. It's a shame that the beautiful movie on Rwanda that came out a few years ago wasn't more explicit on the Christian connection that the hotel manager had.

It's a great movie, but it leaves out too much. There were Christians on both sides who protected Christians from both sides because their loyalties to Christ trumped loyalty to race. And I think that movie illustrated that so well. The only hint you got that this was a Christian loyalty was the cross necklace that you saw momentarily. It was very subtle.

But racial tensions in a country can often be a test of where our true loyalties lie. Any number of illustrations could be given from the American War Between the States, black and white prejudice here in modern America, Kinism in modern Reformed churches, loyalty to party, or to government schools, etc. And this verse here stands as a rebuke to such prejudices. That's false loyalty. I think the love that David and these three Philistine groups had for each other is a great illustration of at least one facet of the Good Samaritan story that Jesus told. Make sure that nothing defined by humanism trumps loyalty to God's covenant relationships.

V. Loyalty tested by time (v. 18b)

The second half of verse 18 gives another test of loyalty. Does it stand the test of time? It says,

six hundred men who had followed him from Gath, passed before the king.

Well, that's twenty-nine years ago. That's a long time to be devoted to each other. But loyalty that flows from God's throne is not diminished by time or by circumstances. It is a faithfulness or steadfastness in duty (as the Hebrew word *emeth* denotes) and a steadfast loyalty and love (as the Hebrew word *chesed* denotes). And so the question comes, "How steadfast are you over time? How faithful?"

You might think you are fairly faithful, but it might be good to measure your faithfulness to family, church, and Bible by other areas of your life. If your car starts once every four tries, is it a reliable car? If you skip work once a week, are you a reliable employee? What about if you deliberately skip work once a month? If your refrigerator stops working for a day or two every now and then, and then starts up again, is it a faithful fridge? I don't think you would say, "Oh, well. It works once in a while." We need to be pressing into constant faithfulness for a lifetime in our marriage, in our devotions, and in every other area that God calls us to loyal faithfulness. And if we had that God-given loyalty, over time our marriages would grow deeper and deeper, our relationships at church would mature, our satisfaction with work would increase, not diminish.

VI. Loyalty tested by permission to go back (vv. 19-20)

The sixth test of loyalty comes when someone gives us permission to not be loyal; when they themselves think it's OK to give up on faithfulness. Verses 19-20:

2Sam. 15:19 Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why are you also going with us? Return and remain with the king. For you *are* a foreigner and also an exile from your own place.

2Sam. 15:20 In fact, you came *only* yesterday. Should I make you wander up and down with us today, since I go I know not where? Return, and take your brethren back. Mercy and truth *be* with you."

David is giving him permission to stay with Absalom. It's a very generous gesture on the part of David. In effect he was saying, "You really don't owe me allegiance. The men who have switched sides to Absalom do owe me allegiance, but you don't." Yet Ittai remarkably chooses to take sides with David. So there is yet another Philistine who has newly joined forces with David who is not doing it for fame, for advancement, for victory. He is doing it because he is convinced that God is for David.

William Wilberforce was given permission to quit his fight against the ungodly slave trade many, many times. These were well-wishers who thought that he was ruining his chances for advancement, or who were convinced that he would never win and was wasting his time. But he remained loyal to his calling and he saw slavery ended before he died.

It's much easier to break loyalty to your marriage when your spouse wants out too, and he or she gives you permission. "Go ahead. You file for divorce." Sometimes those words are said in anger, but the D word should never be on the lips of Christians. Using that D word as a threat should be akin to blasphemy. In fact God calls any lack of loyalty in marriage vows blasphemy - "the word of God is blasphemed." It certainly violates the heart of the covenant.

It's easier for a child to break loyalty to his parents when he knows his parents are tired of saying "No" and their tiredness makes them passive. Some of you young people push the limits because you know that the adults are tired of calling you on it. Their passivity is a test of your heart loyalty. Just because they haven't said "No" for the second or third time does not mean that you don't know what their wishes are. And the rest of you young people – take note of the other young people who push the boundaries. Unless they repent of their lack of respect for boundaries that parents have

set and unless they repent of their lack of loyalty, they are not potential spouses. They should be off your radar. They have growing up to do.

But we could apply this point to discouragement over a good task. When you really want to quit, it becomes easier to quit when others give you permission. In other words, when they say or think, "I understand. I would give up too." President Andrew Jackson was not that way. All his life people encouraged him to give in. And he refused to do so in his early life and he refused to in the presidency. The devotional, *Our Daily Bread*, recorded one such story. It says,

One of Jackson's friends said, "Why, Jim Brown, who lived right down the pike from Jackson, was not only smarter but he could throw Andy three times out of four in a wrestling match. But look where Andy is now." Another friend responded, "How did there happen to be a fourth time? Didn't they usually say three times and out?" "Sure, they were supposed to, but not Andy. He would never admit he was beat -- he would never stay 'throwed.' Jim Brown would get tired, and on the fourth try Andrew Jackson would throw him and be the winner." Picking up on that idea, someone has said, "The thing that counts is not how many times you are 'throwed,' but whether you are willing to stay 'throwed'." We may face setbacks, but we must take courage and go forward in faith. Then, through the Holy Spirit's power we can be the eventual victor over sin and the world. The battle is the Lord's, so there is no excuse for us to stay "throwed"!

And when I read that I thought, "Yes! That's exactly right!" Don't give up simply because people think that it is perfectly acceptable for you to give up. If you are discouraged and tempted to give up on someone or on something that God has called you to, ask God for a fierce loyalty – loyalty to a cause, to a person, to a spouse, to your church vows, to your marriage vows, or to a family member. It's precisely during those times when all your friends tell you, "I perfectly understand if you quit - you ought to get a divorce," that the character of your loyalty is being tested.

VII. Loyalty tested when no benefits are promised (v. 20)

But Ittai's loyalty was not just tested by David's permission. It was tested by the statement of David that he could not promise that it would be worthwhile for Ittai to come with him, and he could not promise him any benefits. Verse 20 again:

2Sam. 15:20 In fact, you came *only* yesterday. Should I make you wander up and down with us today, since I go I know not where? Return, and take your brethren back. Mercy and truth *be* with you."

We all want tangible blessings rather than no reward for our faithfulness. But there are times when loyalty to God dictates losses. For

example, Psalm 15:4 pronounces special blessings upon the one “*who* swears to his own hurt and does not change.” In other words, when he makes a promise, he keeps the promise even though it will mean enormous loss. Any pagan can keep his word if there are benefits to doing so. That doesn’t make you anything special. But the true test of *emeth* faithfulness and *chesed* loyalty is keeping your word when there are zero visible benefits to doing so. Blessing your wife and being faithful to her when she gives nothing in return, or vice versa. No one likes tests, but when we pass them, we receive God’s “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” That’s what I want God to say to me – that I’ve been faithful; that I’ve been loyal.

VIII. Loyalty tested when no conditions are attached (v. 21)

The 18th test is when loyalty is given with no strings attached. Look at the amazing promise in verse 21:

2Sam. 15:21 But Ittai answered the king and said, “As the LORD lives [so he is a believer in Yahweh – “As Yahweh lives”], and as my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also your servant will be.”

Husbands and wives give that kind of unreserved commitment of loyalty to each other when they get married. They answer “I do” to the following pledge: “Do you promise to love and cherish her/him, in sickness and in health, for richer for poorer, for better for worse, and forsaking all others, keep yourself only unto her/him, for so long as you both shall live?” It’s not, “I will cherish her as long as she is nice to me.” Or “I will submit to and honor him if he acts honorably.” It’s to have and to hold, not just, “I will have him, but I sure won’t hold him when he’s going to be like that.” That’s not God-given loyalty. That is the way the world thinks. The *emeth* and *chesed* that flow from God’s throne lift us out of the realm of the possible and into the realm of the supernatural by having Christ live His life through us. Do we do it perfectly? No. That’s why our whole Christian life is a life of repentance and renewed faith, and where there is no repentance and renewed faith, we can question the genuineness of our new nature or of the Holy Spirit’s residence within. God’s Spirit continually pushes our hearts towards *chesed* – *steadfast loyalty, steadfast faithfulness, steadfast mercy*.

And it’s not just in marriage. It’s to our calling. There were many people who tried to talk John G. Paton out of becoming a missionary to the New Hebrides Islands. One old Christian gentleman told Paton, “The Cannibals! You will be eaten by the Cannibals!” To which Paton replied, “Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is

soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms. I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by Cannibals or by worms; and in the Great Day my resurrection body will arise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer.”³ That’s loyalty to Christ with no conditions. And God doesn’t just call missionaries to have that loyalty. He calls all of us to have it. No strings attached - loyalty whatever happens.

IX. Loyalty tested when it impacts the family (v. 22)

But Ittai’s loyalty was tested even more in verse 22:

2Sam. 15:22 So David said to Ittai, “Go, and cross over.” Then Ittai the Gittite and all his men and all the little ones who *were* with him crossed over.

He had family with him. He had little ones with him. What’s with that? You can’t risk your family in the cause of Christ, can you? And the answer is that every missionary has had to do so. Every pastor’s family has had to do so. I’ve never mentioned this before, but you may not realize the sacrifices that a pastor’s children have to make. They are always held to a different standard, aren’t they? They are in a glass house with everyone looking at their behavior. They are pushed into far more hospitality than the typical family, far more service in the church, and far more of everything than the typical family. But families are a covenant unit, and they are part of your loyalty commitment to Christ. We fathers need to not only say, “I will be loyal,” but we must also be willing to say, “As for me *and my house*, we will serve the Lord” no matter what. Ittai made that loyalty commitment knowing full well the implications it had for his entire family.

X. Loyalty tested by joining a “losing” cause, giving up all, and following David (v. 23)

The last test of loyalty that we are going to look at today is in verse 23:

2Sam. 15:23 And all the country [and it is literally the countryside, as opposed to city] wept with a loud voice, and all the people crossed over. The king himself also crossed over the Brook Kidron, and all the people crossed over toward the way of the wilderness.

Why did they cry? Because they were not only sad for David, but they were sad for themselves. Loyalty does not mean you won’t experience pain. You will experience pain. They were giving up their homes in the

³ John G. Paton, *Autobiography* (Banner of Truth), p. 56.

countryside to join David. And I've summarized this test in your outlines as being willing to join what is perceived as a "losing" cause, giving up all, and following David.

And in a similar fashion, Christ calls all believers to give up all, to die to self, and to follow Him. He says that you can't even claim to be a true believer if you are not willing to do so. There are quite a number of passages that say that. But let me read Luke 9:23-26.

Luke 9:23 Then He said to *them* all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

Luke 9:24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

Luke 9:25 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?

Luke 9:26 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His *own* glory, and *in His* Father's, and of the holy angels.

He is saying that the true test of whether you are regenerate is by seeing if any of God's loyalty has been transferred to you. If you are His child, you will be in His image. You are going to reflect (at least *faintly*) some of His characteristics. Jesus will be loyal throughout eternity to all of the sheep that the Father has given Him. And His sheep will follow Him and be loyal to Him. This is what separates the sheep and the goats, the wheat and tares – do they persevere? And persevere is one of the translations of *emeth*- faithfulness, perseverance, steadfastness.

In 112 AD, Pliny, the Roman Governor of Bithynia-Pontus (now known as Turkey), wrote a letter to the Emperor Trajan, asking advice for how to deal with Christians. Christianity was a crime, and he explained what he had been doing to ferret out true Christians from those who were falsely accused as Christians. He said that those who were accused of being Christians were given the opportunity to offer incense and wine to the gods of Rome and to curse Christ. So loyal were true Christians, that even this persecutor of Christianity said, "...it is impossible to force those who are real Christians to do so [in other words, to curse Christ or offer incense to idols]." ⁴ so he thought it was a pretty good test. Christians were willing to give up all and even die to remain loyal to Christ.

Conclusion

⁴ http://www.tyrannus.com/pliny_let.html

We are going to stop with that tenth test this morning. But if you have found that you have failed any of these tests, go to the source of true *chesed* and *emeth* and ask God for faithfulness and loyalty to be more and more engendered in your heart. Psalm 32:10 promises that when we approach Him in faith and ask for it, *chesed* shall surround us. In a moment we are going to be singing, “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.” God’s faithfulness is so great that even when we fail Him, 2 Timothy 2:13 says, “He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” Pray that you might receive a God-given loyalty that is not diminished by unpopularity, by discomforts, by knowing that you could get away with it, by cultural prejudices, by time, by the loose expectations of others, by lack of benefits, by the impact that your loyalty might have on your future, or your family, or losing everything for Christ. It is my prayer that none of the tests of life will kill our faithfulness to God’s covenant or any of our covenant relationships. May it be so Lord Jesus. Amen.