

## Patrons of the Kingdom of God

1 Chronicles 11:10

Do you know that as believers we are all agents of the kingdom of God on earth? In Colossians 1:13 the Apostle Paul said of Christ: *“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.”* Although one day the Kingdom of God will be fully realized on earth when Jesus comes to reign, until then Jesus reigns in the heart of every believer.

As citizens and agents of the kingdom of God, our main mission on this earth is not to advance a political party. Exercising our civic duty has its place. But if we are going to make a difference for Christ in this world, it must be unmistakably clear that our allegiance is not to the kingdoms of this world, but to the kingdom of God.

Regarding how many Christians today seem to be more passionate about advancing a political party than they are advancing the kingdom of God, Jim Cymbala writes:

“There is no record of the early apostles trying to improve the Roman Empire or any province within it. God is not interested in building up or promoting a specific country. He’s intent on building his church. Jesus declared that only his followers are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Democrats or liberals or progressives aren’t the salt. Republicans or conservatives or libertarians aren’t the light. Christians are. Our orders are not to curry favor with kings or presidents but to carry the message of Christ to everyone. Believers around the world should be patriotic, but not in the way that phrase is generally understood. Patriotism may seem admirable, but Christians aren’t citizens of America, Korea, Ghana, or Argentina first. Our nationality is not our home country if we believe in God’s Word: *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”* (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Peter reminds us that we make up God's "holy nation," while Paul tells us that "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). All nations have unfortunate histories riddled with...problems. But our holy nation has a king over it named Jesus! Although his people of every race and ethnicity are scattered over the whole earth, we alone make up the one holy nation God is building, the nation he cherishes."

Now because the allegiances of many Christians are divided, the church is not only suffering from an identity crisis, the intolerance of our political institutions has also infected the church with the same venom. Consequently, the church is more divided today than ever.

The bible is clear, in order for Christians to be credible ambassadors of the Kingdom of God, not only must there be no doubt where our allegiance lies, our allegiance to Christ must be manifested in the love and loyalty that we demonstrate to one another. A commitment to Christ is a commitment to Christians.

**Main idea:** Kingdom patrons give selfless and sacrificial support to each other so that they can be all they are called to be in Christ.

This morning we are going to examine three characteristics about kingdom patrons, which King David and his mighty men demonstrated in support of each other and to established his kingdom.

## **1. Kingdom Patrons Serve with Committed Lives**

The first characteristic we want to see is that kingdom patrons serve with committed lives. After recording how David's reign was being established, we read in 1 Chronicles 11:9, "*And David became greater and greater, for the Lord of hosts was with him*" (1 Chronicles 11:9).

It's important to note that according to bible prophecy, David's throne and kingdom would be established forever (2 Sam. 7:16). This is true because Jesus, who in His incarnation descended from David, will one day sit upon his throne to rule and reign forever.

In Luke chapter one, the angel Gabriel prophesied to Mary, *“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.<sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,<sup>33</sup> and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end”* (Luke 1:31-33). So, the throne and kingdom of David was a foretaste of Christ’s coming kingdom.

Now although in our text David’s kingdom, with God’s support, was expanding in power and influence, David wasn’t a one-man army. He also had the strong support of mighty men who had committed their lives to establishing his throne.

First Chronicles 11 and 2 Samuel 7 both give us a list and a record of David’s mighty men and their exploits. The fact that God in His word highlights these mighty men and lists their names tells us that if God took notice of them so should we. The qualities they exhibited in their support of David so he could fulfill God’s calling as King of Israel are worthy of emulating.

Beginning in verse 10 we read: *“Now these are the chiefs of David’s mighty men, who gave him strong support in his kingdom, together with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the Lord concerning Israel”* (1 Chronicles 11:10).

Who were these mighty men who gave David such strong support and where did they come from? After being anointed King and before David actually began his reign, Saul became bitterly jealous of David because he received great honor and praise from his people for his great military victories. During this time, these mighty men joined David in the wilderness where he fled to escape Saul’s murderous jealousy.

We read in 1 Samuel 22:2, *“And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him. And he became commander over them. And there were with him about four hundred men”* (1 Samuel 22:2). These men that joined David were not considered mighty men at the time. They

were not men of nobility, wealth or prestige. Rather, they were men who, under the reign of Saul, experienced hard times, and as a result were distressed, discouraged and defeated.

We don't know if the hard times they experienced were the result of bad decisions or circumstances beyond their control. But what we do know is that in their times of distress, they did make at least one good faith decision, namely to commit their lives to establish and advance the kingdom of David.

Because of this decision to join David, these misfits would become mighty men. And they became mighty men because by joining themselves with the newly anointed King, they were joining with God and His kingdom agenda. Overtime time these outcasts of society became overcomers for the kingdom fighting the battles of the Lord alongside the rightful King.

Remember, David became greater and greater because the Lord was with him. God was at work in the life of David and in the men that gave him strong support. In other words, these men were not just naturally skilled warriors. God's hand was upon them to make David king according to the word of the Lord.

What a picture this is of how, according to the New Testament, the kingdom of God operates today. In 1 Corinthians 1:26, Paul explained, *“For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup> God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,<sup>29</sup> so that no human being might boast in the presence of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

In his book, *Fan the flame*, Jim Cymbala writes, “God doesn't use church growth formulas or marketing programs or branding or other clever techniques and methods to bring about his kingdom on earth.

He uses people. He uses simple people, frail people. Why? Because that's all he has!"

Like David's mighty men, all believers have been spiritually transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God. And this transfer does more than assure us that we are going to heaven when we die. All believers through the Spirit are also being transformed into mighty warriors capable of achieving naturally impossible victories by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. (Dr. Kurai Chitima).

But I'm afraid that many believers are not achieving these victories because they're so entangled with the affairs of this life, that they have no time for God. They are not living out the command of Jesus to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, which Jesus promised that when we do, He will provide all that we need (Matthew 6:33).

What does it mean to seek first the kingdom of God? It doesn't mean that we put God on top of a list that we check off and then go on to the next thing. To understand what it means to seek first the kingdom of God, it's helpful that we view the kingdom as a rule more so than a realm, and as a person more so than a place.

In other words, to seek first the kingdom of God is to seek for His rule and His reign to be established first in our lives and then in the lives of those in our circles of influence through the gospel. To seek first the kingdom of God means that we don't compartmentalize our faith—we don't just worship God on Sunday. We seek Him to be Lord over every area of our lives. We don't wake up in the morning, give God our own plans and ask him to bless them. Rather, we acknowledge His greatness and surrender our lives to Him to use us to fulfill His plans. To seek first the kingdom of God means to depend on His insight, power and authority so that we might join Him where He's working.

Remember that when David's men joined with him, although he was anointed king, he had not yet taken the throne. In fact, Saul, and the political establishment opposed him and conspired to kill him.

Similarly, Jesus Christ is the Sovereign King over all of mankind, yet He is not honored as King in this world. During His earthy ministry and to this very day He is despised and rejected by men. But, as David's mighty men willingly joined him in the wilderness and shared in his rejection, devoted followers of Jesus join Him outside the camp and experience rejection, ridicule and reproach for the cause of Christ (Hebrews 13:13).

We join Him and His cause knowing that we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us and laid down His life for us. Knowing His love and the victory that is already ours in Christ, we commit our lives to our Savior and to one another with the assurance that God will be with us and His Spirit will help us.

This brings us to our second point; Kingdom patrons serve with courageous loyalty.

## **2. Kingdom Patrons Serve with Courageous Loyalty**

After explaining that David's mighty men gave him strong support in his kingdom, the word of God gives us examples of the brave loyalty they displayed in giving David that strong support. Once again, these men didn't just serve David in times of prosperity. They stood by his side and supported him in hard times.

As 1 Chronicles 12:1 indicates, they came to David not when his kingdom was established, but when he was a fugitive, not when he was sitting on a throne in a palace, but when he was hiding out in caves.

It's important to note that these men were not only loyal to David, they were also loyal to the cause of establishing his kingdom according to the word of the Lord. David's faith and devotion to God no doubt gained him favor and popularity with his people.

But I want to suggest to you that the loyalty that they gave to David was not just about David the man. And it was not rooted in self-fish ambition. Rather, their loyalty was inspired by God.

Notice that while men were coming to David before he was established as King, we read in 1 Chronicles 12:16: *“And some of the men of Benjamin and Judah came to the stronghold to David. David went out to meet them and said to them, “If you have come to me in friendship to help me, my heart will be joined to you; but if to betray me to my adversaries, although there is no wrong in my hands, then may the God of our fathers see and rebuke you.” Then the Spirit clothed Amasai, chief of the thirty, and he said, “We are yours, O David, and with you, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, and peace to your helpers! For your God helps you.” Then David received them and made them officers of his troops”* (1 Chronicles 12:16-18).

We clearly see here that Amasai’s pledge of loyalty to David was given in the Spirit and not in the flesh. I want to suggest to you also that the mighty men kept their pledge of loyalty to David because, like David, they were also helped by God.

How many of you know, in order for our marriages and our churches to thrive, which God’s word says are to reflect God’s covenant faithfulness to us, we must possess the same Holy Spirit inspired loyalty that we see in David’s mighty men. But sadly in this “me” generation” and consumer oriented culture, God inspired loyalty is waning.

Do you know that God’s purpose for marriage and the church is not first about our happiness but about our holiness? As God designed, Christian churches and marriages are made up of imperfect people who pledge with the help of God to help each-other become more and more like Jesus. Holiness not happiness is the goal. Happiness is the by product of holiness.

But when spouses or church members make their individual happiness the goal, God’s purpose and the power He gives to fulfill it breaks down.

David’s men pledged their lives to him, not first for their happiness, but to selflessly and sacrificially support him with God’s help to be all that

God called him to be. And that meant that they were going to stick with him no matter what the cost.

This brings us to our final point; kingdom patrons serve with costly love.

### **3. Kingdom Patrons Serve with Costly Love**

Notice how David and His men demonstrated their love and loyalty to God and each other. While David was weary from battle, we read beginning in verse 17:

*“And David said longingly, “Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!” Then the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate and took it and brought it to David.” 1 Chronicles 11:17-19*

While David was probably suffering from severe dehydration, he desired that someone would give him water to drink from the well of Bethlehem, which was behind enemy lines. Knowing that David needed water, 3 mighty men broke through those enemy lines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem, and brought it to David. These mighty men, in support of David, were willing to risk their lives to provide for the God-appointed shepherd of Israel.

And, notice also the heart of David toward these men. After they brought him the water he longed for, the bible says, *“But David would not drink it. He poured it out to the Lord and said, “Far be it from me before my God that I should do this. Shall I drink the lifeblood of these men? For at the risk of their lives they brought it.” Therefore he would not drink it. These things did the three mighty men” (1 Chronicles 11:18b-19).*

Although David needed and appreciated the strong support that these mighty men willingly gave him, he didn't feel worthy of it. And in this instance, when they brought him the water, David poured it out as an offering of worship to the Lord.



At first glance, it may appear that their efforts were wasted. But that was not the case. Their act of loyalty and love for David was so significant to him that he honored their loyalty and love by pouring out the water, which would have quenched his thirst, as a precious offering to the Lord. Truly their Spirit inspired love and loyalty for David, and his cause was an act of worship to God.

I want to further suggest to you that by not quenching his thirst, David was also demonstrating that his body was a living sacrifice to God poured out in service and worship to Him. David wasn't a prima-donna. Rather, he was a servant leader who had displayed time and time again that he was willing to risk his own life to shepherd God's people. Now it's this kind of courageous loyalty and costly love that must characterize the church of God today. Jesus said, *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you"* (John 15:12). To be a healthy church and advance the kingdom of Christ, we must in the power of the Holy Spirit give sacrificial support to each other and build up one another in love (Ephesians 4:15-16).

A few weeks ago I cited a recent Barna poll which found that 42% of pastors have seriously thought about quitting ministry in the last year. According to the survey Barna used, the following results are the top 3 reasons pastors cited as the main factors behind their desire to call it quits:

1. The immense stress of the job (56%)
2. Feeling lonely and isolated (43%)
3. Current political divisions (38%)

I am not one to blame every negative thing that happens, including our own failures, on the devil. However, you can be certain that the enemy fiercely opposes the ministry of pastors. It's not because they are more valuable than any other saint, but by virtue of their position and influence, they are a strategic target of the enemy. They need our fervent prayers and God dependent support.

While closing out his letter to the believers in Rome, the Apostle Paul writes, *“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.”* (Romans 16:1-4)

In this passage, Paul gives us a glimpse into how some mature Christians in his day related to each other in the church to the glory of Christ. For example, he referred to Phoebe as a servant of the church and a patron to many, including Paul himself. A patron is someone who gives dedicated support to others. As biblical Christians, we do not look to saints in heaven to serve and support us. Rather, we should be going before the throne of God and seeking His direction and grace to be patron saints to each other. In doing so, we will not only receive extraordinary grace to give extraordinary support to one another, but we will demonstrate an otherworldly love and become living proof of our living Savior before a watching world.

What does Christlike patronage look like? Christlike patronage gives selfless and sacrificial support to others so that they can be all they are called to be in Christ. (Philippians 2:3-11).

## **Conclusion**

O brothers and sisters, God is waiting to give strong support to those whose hearts are devoted to Him and His cause (Matthew 28:18-20). He will back up His gospel agents with all the resources that only Heaven can give and nothing in this world can overcome. Jesus, with divine love and loyalty, laid down His life for us and 3 days later arose from the dead so that we can trust Him to forgive our sins, to be with us, and to never forsake us in this life and forevermore. O may we reflect God’s loyal love as we seek first the kingdom of God, and depend upon the Spirit of God to give extraordinary love and loyalty to one another so that we might be all that He called us to be to the glory of Christ our King.