



Today we're continuing our study in the life of Solomon, which we've called The Wisest Fool. Remember, David is old and so he's passing on the throne to his son Solomon. In chapter 1 we saw how David's eldest son, Adonijah, tried to usurp the throne but he was unsuccessful. The main theme of chapter 2 is the firm establishment of Solomon's kingdom. You can see this clearly by several statements the writer makes throughout this chapter. In v. 12 he says, *"So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David, and his rule was firmly established."* Then in v. 24 Solomon himself says, *"...as surely as the Lord lives—he who has established me securely on the throne of my father David..."* And finally at the end of the chapter the writer says, *"The kingdom was now established in Solomon's hands."* That word "established" is important because years earlier God used it three times when he promised David his dynasty would last forever. God had said to David, *"I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom...I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."* (2 Sam 7:12, 13).

No doubt, this is what old King David wants for his son. But he also knows for that to happen Solomon will have to be a certain kind of man. He'll have to stay committed to certain things. This is what's on David's mind as he addresses Solomon on his death bed at the start of chapter 2.

In the Bible, leaders typically exhort their successors at the time of their departure. Jacob blessed his twelve sons. Moses exhorted Joshua. Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission. Paul exhorted Timothy to fight the good fight.

In these verses we have the words of David, a dying man, to his son. It's a very intimate scene. David knows his time has come. He says in v. 2 *"I am about to go the way of all the earth."* What a poignant reminder that this is the fate of each and every one of us. No one gets a pass. And it's good to just pause and ask ourselves, "What would I say? What would I want to pass on to my son or daughter in those final moments of my earthly life? What would I want them to remember?"

David, of course, was a godly man. He was far from perfect; he made some huge mistakes, but he was always known as a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14). So David's last words are very instructive not only to Solomon but to us. What will it mean for Solomon and for us to be a man or a woman after God's own heart?

Live a Life of Courageous Faith

"I am about to go the way of all the earth... So be strong and show yourself a man" (v. 2).

The first thing he says is to live a life of courageous faith. This is an expression that was often used by soldiers to encourage each other before battle. When Moses was about to die, he said to Joshua, *"Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you"* (Josh 31:23). David says something similar: *"Be strong. Act like a man."* The idea is Solomon would have some battles to fight and he'd better man up! He'd more than likely been sheltered growing up as the King's son, but the task he was about to take on wasn't for the pampered; it was for warriors.

So what would Solomon do with this? The idea here wasn't for Solomon to go out and pump iron. It wasn't for him to go out and chug a six pack of beer. It wasn't for him to go out and watch *Gladiator* and *Braveheart*. It wasn't for him to eat some raw meat. Solomon knew his father David was a man who understood that our strength is in the Lord. In Psalm 21:1 he prayed, *"The king rejoices in your strength, LORD. How great is his joy in the victories you give!"* Then in Psalm 28:7 he declared, *"The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me."* David had experienced that. It was in God's strength he defeated Goliath and endured the attacks of Saul.

Let me ask you, are standing in courage and faith because of God's strength? This applies to boys and girls, women and men, old and young. As long as we're alive, we'll have battles to fight. Most often, we'll feel totally inadequate to win them. Do you ever feel like, "I'm overwhelmed. I can't do this"? But that can be a good thing if in your inadequacy you turn to the Lord and allow him to strengthen you. For me I find most often the battle is in my own heart and mind. It's a battle over whether I'll continue to trust God and believe his promises despite everything I see around me to the contrary. In those times when you feel like giving up or giving in, remember the words, *"Be strong; act like a man."*

Walk in Obedience to God

"...observe what the Lord your God requires: Walk in obedience to him, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and regulations, as written in the Law of Moses" (v. 3).

The second thing he says is to walk in obedience to God. There are a couple of ways Solomon would need to apply this. First, he'd need to be obedient to the specific calling God gave him. For Solomon, that was his calling to be king. For us, it's different. But we all have a calling. If you're a husband or a wife, that's a calling. You may have a calling in the church as an elder or a small group leader. Maybe your calling is to serve in student or children's ministries. You may have a calling in your community. We all have a calling as citizens of this country. Maybe you have a calling to pray. We need to be obedient to those callings. I was talking with a guy in our body recently who has chosen to jump back into ministry. He now joins the Men's Fraternity cooking crew and shows up here on Thursday mornings at 4:00 am. He said to me, "I'm always better when I'm serving." That's a great line. God has created us to serve and when we do we're better for it.

But this also meant walking in obedience to the boundaries of God's word. He mentions God's decrees, commands, laws and regulations. These were all written in the law of Moses. As a king, Solomon could never see himself as somehow above those things. He'd be tempted to, but the king of Israel was accountable to another King. And so are we. God has given us his word. His word defines the boundaries within which we're to live our lives. I think of something as simple as Ephesians 4:29, ***"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up..."*** That's very clear but how many of us really take that seriously? Scripture calls us to a radical way of life; a way of life that's in stark contrast to what's around us. God's word should shape your choice of friends, your parenting, your finances, your love life, how you handle aging parents, what you watch on TV and, yes, the very words that come out of your mouth.

Don't forget, David had learned from his own disobedience. Though he was a man after God's own heart, he'd learned the hard way. He'd walked through years of consequences for choices he made. He'd lost two sons because of his disobedience. He knew God's grace and forgiveness, but there's no doubt he had some regrets.

Focus on the Reward

But there would be a reward for obedience. That's the third thing David says to his son: focus on the reward. In the middle of v. 3 he says,

"Do this so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go..."

Solomon, of course, would prosper. He would become the wealthiest man alive. But I think David is thinking about another kind of prosperity. It's not just measured in wealth, but rather in the overall blessing of God.

Remember Solomon would go on to write the book of Proverbs. Proverbs says a lot about the rewards of wisdom and obedience. Consider a favorite passage from Proverbs, ***"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight"*** (Prov 3:5-6). There's a reward spoken of here for trusting God and submitting your life to him—***"he will make your paths straight."*** That means he'll guide you and enable you to follow him. When you prepare a road you smooth out the rough spots and remove the obstacles. This isn't saying that if you obey God your life will be problem free, but the fact is there are a lot of bad things you'll avoid by obeying God. Let's face it, a lot of our issues are brought on by our own poor choices.

So David says to his son, focus on the reward. Think of how much of your life is motivated at some level by the idea of reward. An athlete puts his body through excruciating pain in preparation for competition. Why? At some level he's looking for the rewards of victory. A man or woman gets up early five days a week, fights traffic to get to work, puts in 50-60 hours a week. Why? For the reward of that automatic deposit in his bank account twice a month and perhaps a little financial security in the twilight years. There's something basic about this in all of us. How do we motivate a 9-year-old to clean up his room? How do we motivate a 17-year-old to do her homework? There's always a reward attached.

When I was a kid I'd spend a couple of weeks each summer at a sports camp. We did all kinds of sports. One year I broke the camp record in the shot put. I was thrilled because when you broke a record they painted your name on a big board for everyone to see all year long. So the next year I attended the camp I was excited to see my name up on the board. I got to camp and raced to see my name, but it wasn't there. I was pretty upset. I'm absolutely positive I broke the record. I can still tell you how far I threw the shot put! I'm still pretty upset! My promised glory had been denied.

We live in a fallen world; sometimes the rewards we deserve aren't delivered to us. The good news is God is faithful. At the end of the book of Revelation, the glorified Jesus stands and declares, ***"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me..."*** (Rev. 22:12a). There is a reward for those who follow him and it won't be denied.

Live for God's Kingdom

But in order to enjoy that reward we have to do the next thing: live for God's kingdom. In v. 4 David recalls God's promise to him.

"If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel."

He reminds Solomon here of something that even transcends himself. God promised David he'd always have a descendent on

the throne. That was culminated in the enthronement of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, over the whole universe. David is trying to instill in his son a vision for life that's bigger than himself; a vision that's really multi-generational.

We saw last week that you and I who call him King are part of this same kingdom. This kingdom is so much bigger than us. And it's not a static thing; it's a living, moving, growing thing. We don't control it, we just kind of jump in for the ride. There's a popular surfing video that captures the immensity of being a part of the kingdom of God. It's of famed surfer Laird Hamilton riding a 65-foot breaker. Like that wave, God's kingdom is enormous beyond our comprehension, and it just keeps going. It's cresting whether we want to ride it or not. If we want to, we soon learn we don't call the shots; we don't control it, it controls us. We just jump on and ride the wave of what God is doing.

We're part of this kingdom. What David is trying to tell Solomon is that kingdom extends to generations to come. The decisions we make don't just impact us, they impact them. Do you have a multi-generational kingdom-sized vision for your life? Your family is a part of that. Your church is a part of that. When you make decisions, don't just think of yourself, or even just your sons and your daughters. Think of **their** sons and daughters, and **their** sons and daughters. What will your family and your church and your community look like in 100 years?

Right here in this chapter we have an example of someone who failed to think beyond his own little kingdom. Remember Adonijah? In chapter 1 we saw how he exalted himself and said **"I will be king."** After David gave Solomon the crown, Solomon granted Adonijah a pardon, but only if he behaved himself. Yet here in chapter 2 he doesn't behave himself. He approaches Bathsheba to convey a special request to Solomon.

"As you know," he said, "the kingdom was mine. All Israel looked to me as their king. But things changed, and the kingdom has gone to my brother; for it has come to him from the Lord. Now I have one request to make of you. Do not refuse me."

"You may make it," she said.

So he continued, "Please ask King Solomon—he will not refuse you—to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife" (verses 15–17).

It's clear Adonijah is still feeling his lumps. He has a huge sense of entitlement and as a consolation prize he believes he deserves Abishag as his wife. Remember, she's the young woman who had been made part of David's harem to keep him warm at night. It's no wonder he's attracted to her—she's the most beautiful woman in Israel! But this is about more than just physical attraction; this is a power play. Back then, to take a king's harem was a way to take his throne.

Adonijah is thinking only about himself; his own little kingdom. One of the signs we're living for our own kingdom is when we

don't get what we want, we believe God owes us something. We have a financial setback, or a health problem, or a failed relationship. Then rather than trusting our King to take care of us, we demand something to make up for what we've lost. "I deserve this," we say, and then we try to grab something for ourselves that God never intended for us to have. Maybe it's another relationship or something we can buy with one click. Instead of letting go of what we want so we can have what God wants to give us, we find a way to take what we want for ourselves.

Solomon saw right through Adonijah's request and pronounced the death sentence on him for high treason. His loyal lieutenant, Benaiah carried it out. So Adonijah, the young man who could see nothing beyond himself and his own desires, comes to a bad end.

Deal Wisely and Decisively with Unfinished Business

But Adonijah was just one of several men Solomon would have to deal with. And this brings us to the last thing David says to his son: deal wisely and decisively with unfinished business. There are three men David tells Solomon about. Two of them would need to be brought to justice. We'll look at them first.

He starts with Joab. He and David go way back. He was the commander of David's army. He was a valiant man, but he was also a violent man. He had also backed Adonijah in his recent attempt to take the throne. Look what David says about him.

"Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me—what he did to the two commanders of Israel's armies, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether. He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime as if in battle, and with that blood he stained the belt around his waist and the sandals on his feet. Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to the grave in peace (verses 5–6).

Jealousy and vengeance were Joab's downfall. They drove him to commit two murders which David recalls here. David feels these were acts that Joab did against him because these were men David felt obligated to protect. He also stressed the bloodguilt of Joab—to kill in peacetime as if in battle amounted to murder. So David tells Solomon to deal with Joab wisely, but decisively. And he does. Verses 26–35 tell how Solomon ordered Benaiah to kill Joab.

"And remember, you have with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, who called down bitter curses on me the day I went to Mahanaim. When he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the Lord: 'I will not put you to death by the sword.' But now, do not consider him innocent. You are a man of wisdom; you will know what to do to him. Bring his gray head down to the grave in blood" (verses 8–9).

David also reminded Solomon of another problem person who was still around. David is thinking back to when his son Absalom

had revolted and sent David and his entourage running for his life from Jerusalem. On the way, Shimei came out and pelted David with stones and cursed him. Back then to curse someone was a big deal. Ex 22:28 forbids cursing a ruler. Notice David says he was a Benjamite, which was the tribe Saul was from. No doubt he'd cursed David because he believed David had wrongly stolen the kingship from Saul. Though David later let him off the hook, he's concerned that Shimei might still be a threat to his son. Once again, David says deal wisely with him but don't let him off the hook. His fate is described in in verses 36–45. At first, Solomon confined Shimei to Jerusalem so he could keep him under close watch. But he warned him that if he tried to leave he'd be killed. And sure enough, he did. Three years later two of his slaves escaped and Shimei left Jerusalem to retrieve them. Once again, Solomon condemned him and Benaiah did the dirty work.

These two cases probably seem rather vindictive. David and Solomon seem power hungry and bloodthirsty here. I thought we were supposed to forgive and love our enemies? But life in the ancient world was much more violent than life today. If they had the chance, these two men certainly would have ruined Solomon, not to mention the fact they were guilty of capital crimes according to the Mosaic law. It would have been irresponsible for David not to warn his son about these men, as well as for Solomon to do nothing about it.

We live in a different day. We don't go around executing our enemies, but we're not naive either; we don't pretend everyone is our friend. I think of Paul in a scene similar to this one. He's writing for the last time to Timothy, his young son in the faith. At the end of his letter, he does much the same thing David did here. He warns Timothy about a man named Alexander. He says, ***“Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message”*** (2 Tim 4:14). This is no different than what David did except in the fact that Paul would let the Lord take care of the matter. And the Lord will do that. The Lord loves to show mercy to anyone who repents but to those who don't, judgment will be fierce. To be a man or woman after God's own heart means that you understand that there's real evil out there; there really are evil people who oppose God and his people. We don't just prance through life thinking everyone is wonderful.

But it's not all bad. In between Joab and Shimei David brings up a far happier case—Barzillai. Look what David says about him.

“But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai of Gilead and let them be among those who eat at

your table. They stood by me when I fled from your brother Absalom” (v. 7).

This goes back to that same time when David fled from Jerusalem. Barzillai had shown kindness to David at the lowest point of his career. He'd generously supplied them with needed provisions. David tells Solomon to show Barzillai and his family a similar mercy. His sons were to be allowed to eat at the king's table. This was like a pension for loyal service, which was a custom in those days. Being a person after God's own heart means you remember kindnesses.

Again, I can't help but think of Paul in that letter he wrote to Timothy not long before his execution. He said, ***“May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day!”*** (2 Tim 1:16–18a). That sounds just like David! Do you remember the people who have refreshed you and searched hard for you when you were alone in a dark dungeon like Paul was? Have you thanked them? Have you prayed that the Lord would grant them mercy?

So there are David's last words to his son Solomon. Verse 10 says, ***“Then David rested with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David.”*** The sad thing is that Solomon didn't ultimately heed his father's words. He wouldn't live a life of courageous faith, or walk in obedience to God. He didn't focus on the reward or live for God's kingdom. In the end, he didn't even deal wisely and decisively with unfinished business. And the fact is, none of us have, at least perfectly. But there is another Son of David who did. Jesus did all these things. In the midst of the battle, he lived a life of courageous faith. His obedience to the Father was unblemished. He focused on the reward. Hebrews says, ***“For the joy set before him he endured the cross”*** (Heb 12:2). He lived for the kingdom. He said ***“seek first his kingdom”*** and he did just that. And he dealt decisively with evil not by executing his enemies but by bearing the consequences of their evil in his own body on the cross! The bloodguilt David spoke of, a bloodguilt all of us share, was dealt with by him. The fact is, no one ever “manned up” like Jesus.

So as much as we want to heed these words of a dying man, our hope today isn't in our ability to do all these things. Even David, that great king who was a man after God's own heart, fell far short. Both David and all of us need another man, the God-man, Jesus Christ.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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