

Final Words

1 Kings 2:1-4

Earlier this week as I started thinking about the passage that we are looking at today, I was drawn to re-read some of my sister's emails that she wrote when she was sick ten years ago. As some of you know, Kim suffered with a brain tumor for about a year before she died at the age of 38. During her battle she almost daily wrote a kind of journal of her thoughts and experiences in an email that she would send out. I spent some time this week reading some of her comments from her final days. And once again I found myself moved by them because her words are a reminder of what really matters; what is really important. They were some of her final words and they mattered. They were important.

Today, as we come to our final sermon on the life of David, we are going to look at David's final words to his son Solomon. Over the past number of weeks we have learned a lot about David. We've seen the best in David - his courage and valor in confronting enemies; his intimate friendship with Jonathan; his trusting, vital walk with God; and his life of worship. But we've also seen the worst in David - his sloppiness in following God's instructions when they moved the ark; his quick anger at Nabal; his failure to intervene in family tensions; and of course his moral failings with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah her husband. God in his wisdom has recorded all of this for our instruction. And I think for many of us, we've benefited greatly from this study.

In most of the sermons on the life of David we've covered a lot of material - one or even two chapters at times - but today we are looking at just four verses. We are not looking at a lot of material, but what we are looking at is really important because these are final words. They are important words, for Solomon and ultimately for us as well.

We are looking at 1 Kings 2:1-4. The first thing David tells Solomon is to:

I. Be Strong

*¹ As David's time to die drew near, he charged Solomon his son, saying, ²
"I am going the way of all the earth.*

David doesn't ignore the reality that his time on earth was drawing to an end. He knows that he will soon die and so he calls his son, Solomon, to his side to communicate some final words to him. He says:

Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man.

David knows that Solomon will be faced with some unbelievable difficulties and challenges as the king of Israel in the days ahead. There will be internal challenges. In the first chapter of 1 Kings we read of Adonijah's attempt to crown himself king. So, there will be political enemies with which to deal. It will be Solomon's responsibility to build the temple and all that that means for worship in Israel. He will need to continue to soli-

dify conquered lands and peoples under his rule and develop a government to lead the people. Ruling over this vast kingdom will take tremendous wisdom and leadership. As well, as Solomon comes to power, though many of the surrounding nations were somewhat weak, he will still need to lead with strong and wise statesmanship to confront the challenges from outside the borders of Israel.

To lead effectively, Solomon could not act like a boy. He needed to be a man. He needed to be strong. Though it cannot be determined for sure, most commentators think that he was somewhere around 18-20 years of age. He was young. But if he was going to lead well, he could not be timid or passive or indecisive. He would need to lead, take initiative, be strong. He would need to be a man.

If we read ahead to the next chapter, we gain insight that David knew exactly how his son was feeling and that he needed this point of encouragement. In 1 Kings 3:5, when God says to Solomon, "Ask what you wish me to give you" Solomon responds by saying:

⁷ "And now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸ "And Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who cannot be numbered or counted for multitude.

How did Solomon feel? Like a little child. He looked at the task of leading God's people and he felt insufficient for the task before him. And so what did he ask?

⁹ "So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" (1 Kings 3:7-9)

Solomon understood that he could not be strong and be a man on his own; he knew He needed God to work in his life. And so he asked God to give him what he needed. The ability to be strong and to show himself a man, to be able to lead God's people, was not found in himself; it was found in God.

This is exactly what David had found in his life as well. Remember when he was trying to convince Saul to send him out against Goliath, what he said about killing the lion and the bear? He said,

The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine (1 Sam. 17:37).

It was the Lord who delivered him. It was the Lord who gave him strength. David's greatness wasn't found in himself; it was found in his dependence on God. I think when David tells Solomon to be strong, he must be thinking about the kind of strength that

can only be found in God. If Solomon is going to be up for the task of leading, it will be only found in what God can do in His life.

And you know what? The same is true in our lives. Obviously, none of us have been appointed kings, but we have been entrusted with responsibilities from God. Whether it is the responsibilities of parenthood, or work, or some kind of role or challenge that God has entrusted to you, or a ministry you are involved in, or even the calling to be a witness for Christ, none of us will find the ability to do these things on our own. What we need to be up for these responsibilities, we will only find in God.

The Apostle Paul said it this way in some of his final words to Timothy. Timothy was a young pastor at the church in Ephesus. Paul urged him to *be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*. Be strong. Be a man in that situation. But know that the strength is never found in you; it is found in God alone. This is true for us too.

Well, David goes on and tells Solomon not only to be strong, but also to:

II. Be Obedient

He says:

³ *"And keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn,*

David says that Solomon must *keep the charge of the LORD*. The term, *keep*, means to exercise great care over; it means to give careful attention to something. Solomon was to give careful attention to the charge of walking in God's ways. Walk in God's ways. Keep His statutes. Keep His commandments. Keep His ordinances. Keep His testimonies. Do not fail to do any part of it.

It is not easy to determine the exact distinction between all of these terms, but the fact that David uses all of these terms highlights the fundamental truth that Solomon must simply be careful to pay attention to all that the LORD has said and to do it. Bottom line . . . he is to do *according to what is written in the law of Moses*.

Solomon must be steeped in the word of God. In it he would find the commandments and teachings that he was to follow. Through it he would discern how to walk in God's ways. Most kings stood above the law, but not Israel's king. Israel's king sat under the word of God. It was not for him to determine how he should live and rule. It was up to God and it was found in the wisdom and guidance that was found *in the law of Moses*.

Over 450 years earlier, Moses had spoken to the people about this before they entered the land. He said in Deuteronomy 17:

¹⁴ "When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,' ¹⁵ you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, . . . ¹⁸ "Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. ¹⁹ "And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, ²⁰ that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left; in order that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.

David is essentially reaffirming what Moses has taught. The only way Solomon would be able to keep the charge of the Lord was if he read it daily. He needed to be immersed in the Word of God. In doing this Moses had said that the king would learn to fear the Lord His God. It is something that he must give careful attention to that he might obey all that God had said.

At the very end of verse 3, David indicates that there is a blessing for walking in God's ways. He says that if Solomon will give careful attention to follow God's ways he will find success. David says do this *that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn*. Solomon's success in his life and in his leadership would be determined by his obedience to this command. David is essentially saying that there are blessings for walking with God.

David had learned the truth of this from both a positive and negative position. For much of his life, he followed God fully. He waited upon the Lord's timing to become king. As king, he more often than not sought the Lord's direction regarding whether he should go up to war or not. He followed God and saw the blessings of obedience. But he had also seen what happened when he didn't follow God right? There was the matter of moving the ark, when they failed to follow God's instructions and Uzzah died. And of course there was his adultery with Bathsheba and the subsequent murder of her husband to cover it up. David saw what happened when he disobeyed. He did not experience God's blessings then. And so, he speaks out of the conviction of his own life experience that it is so much better to follow the Lord completely and in that find success and blessings from the Lord.

One of the blessings for Solomon would be that he would experience the promise of the Davidic Covenant that God had made with David. In verse 4, David says to Solomon that he is to seek to walk in God's ways:

⁴ *so that the LORD may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'*

These words look back to what God had promised David in 2 Samuel 7:12-13 where God had said:

¹² "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

God had made a promise to David to raise up a descendant of his to sit on the throne and to establish the throne of that descendant's kingdom forever. The ultimate fulfillment of this unconditional promise of a king from the line of David who would rule in an every lasting kingdom, of course, is ultimately only fulfilled in Jesus. Though the ultimate promise is unconditional, each individual king must obey God if he is to experience the blessing from God. That is what David charges his son, Solomon. Obey God and you will find success. Obey God and you will find great blessings. This is a truth that is affirmed over and over again in both the Old and New Testaments.

What kinds of blessings come from obedience? It certainly doesn't mean that life will be easy. It wasn't for David. But at the very core, I think the main blessing of a life of obedience is God himself. As we obey Him and walk with Him, we grow in an intimate experience with Him that is like nothing else in this world.

Another blessing is a life of fruitfulness. Jesus said in John 15:5:

⁵ "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

To abide in him is to obey him. If we do that, Jesus says we will bear *much fruit*. I believe this is both the fruit of a godly life. Things like the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23 (love, joy, peace, patience, etc.). But I also think it mean the fruit of changed lives.

Jesus also says a couple of verses later:

⁷ "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.

He is saying there that out of a life of abiding in him, we will enjoy the blessing of a fruitful and effective prayer life. *Ask . . . and it shall be done for you.*

If we would to take some time this morning and have people stand up and talk about the blessings they've experienced in obey God I'm sure the list would be long. Things like:

- Intimate fellowship with God
- Freedom from guilt
- Power for living

- Fellowship with others
- A life spared from destruction and ruin
- Experiencing God's good and perfect will

I could go on, but you get the point. There are blessings in obeying and walking with God.

Obey God. It is worth it. Live according to His Word. Follow Him in every way and experience blessing. And be strong. Be strong in Christ. God has given you things to do in this world. Things that matter for eternity. Find the strength and the wisdom and whatever you need for those things from God. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

We've learned a lot from the life of David these past number of weeks. We've seen an example to be followed in so many ways. We've also seen a number of things in David's life that we are to avoid. David is an amazing person.

In 1 Samuel 13, after King Saul had rebelled against God the prophet Samuel said to him about David, that God had sought him out to be the next king because he was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:13-14). A man after God's own heart. That's David's epitaph.

If we could have stood at the side of this man's bedside as he neared the end of his life to hear his final words, I believe that he would have looked each of us in the eye and with great conviction out of the experiences of his life, he would say to each one of us, "There is nothing better than walking with God. If you will obey Him, He will bless you. Be strong in Him. He's given you important things to do. Be strong. Obey."

Amen.