

David and Adonijah: The Self-Appointed King

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David: A Matter of the Heart

By Dr. Paul Tripp

Bible Text: 1 Kings 1:1-10

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Paul Tripp Ministries

7214 Frankford Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19135

Website: www.paultripp.com

Online Sermons: <http://www.sermonaudio.com/paultripp>

I was just weary. Weary of the day by day by day by day by day by day responsibility. I had awakened that morning knowing that I needed to have an important conversation with my son. I had spent the day thinking and praying about the conversation, rehearsing my words, anticipating his. That evening, I walked into his room and began to have that conversation. Somewhere in that late night conversation, he said something dismissive or disrespectful to me and I got angry, said things that I never intended to say. By the time the conversation was over, Luella, my wife, had already gone to bed. I walked into that dark room. I sat on the edge of my bed, weary and defeated. Maybe I prayed that night the most purely theological prayer I've ever prayed, three words repeated again and again. "Jesus, help me. Jesus, help me. Jesus, help me."

Are you weary? Are there times you feel like checking out, giving up, quitting? Do you debate the commitments that you've made? Do you question your ability to endure? I would like you to turn to that passage that is in your order of worship or on page, what is the page here? 279 in the church Bible, and this passage really forces upon us these two words. The first word is the word commitment. A commitment is a fixed and unalterable decision. A fixed and unalterable decision. Everybody's life is shaped by some kind of a commitment. The second word is perseverance. What is perseverance? Perseverance is long-term faithfulness to the commitments that you have made that does not take a break and does not look for a way of escape. Perseverance is faithfulness to the commitment you've made that does not take a break or look for way of escape.

God had called King David, called him to a life of faithfulness to his purpose, faithfulness that would go beyond even the vision that David had for what it meant to be king, faithfulness that was really engaged in the long-term vision that this kingdom would be a kingdom that would never end. We find David in 1 Kings, now an old man, weak and infirm. The indication from this passage is that David was bedridden. If you would want to talk to David, you would have to come to his bedside. He gave orders from his bed. And yet even in this moment, David is called by God to persevere, to stay committed, to be faithful to God's call upon him, God's purposes for him, to engage himself in a vision much grander than the borders of his own life and the borders of his own kingdom. Now I've got to say it as your pastor, God has called you to the same kind of commitment. When you committed yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, you committed

yourself to something vastly bigger than you. The borders of your life must not be shrunk down to the borders of your life because now the borders of your living, the borders of your commitment are as expansive as the grand and eternal purposes of the kingdom of God. You believe that you have been attached to the most important thing in the universe. It is the grand and glorious history-encompassing history-shaping work of redemption.

And yet commitment is hard. We see that even in the weirdness of these first few verses. I was wondering as I sat listening to Dan read these, what you were thinking as these verses were read. Let me read them again. "Now King David was old and advanced in years. And although they covered him with clothes, he could not get warm." What a picture of life in a fallen world. We get old. Our bodies begin to shut down. They don't do the things that they were designed to do, even weakness to the point of not being able to stay warm. What a picture.

"Therefore his servants said to him, 'Let a young woman be sought for my lord the king, and let her wait on the king and be in his service. Let her lie in your arms, that my lord the king may be warm.'" You ought to be saying about this point, "What?" I just said it for you so that you don't need to disturb your neighbor.

"So they sought for a beautiful young woman." Now this is even further confusing to me. If the idea is warmth, why did she need to be beautiful? You should be asking these questions.

"So they sought for a beautiful young woman throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king. The young woman was very beautiful, and she was of service to the king and attended to him, but the king knew her not." Interesting little detail at the end. Now you should step back from this passage and say, "What in the world is going on here? Where is this procedure in Leviticus? And what is actually going on here?" I was concerned as I read commentaries on this passage for the many commentary, I can't say this word, biblical scholars who work to somehow sanitize this little practice that you have here, somehow to make it look acceptable and okay, and I think this pack practice, if you actually research it, is rooted in something that is positively not okay. There was a philosophy in the pagan cultures around Israel that when an old man would become weak and infirm, the way to return his vitality to him was to bring him a young virgin and if he's able to have sexual relationships with her, he would receive from her her vitality and be strengthened. Wow. I think you have here one of those shocking examples in the life of David, we've seen it in David's polygamy, of the powerful, invasive influence of the surrounding culture. This is exactly in Deuteronomy the thing that God warned Israel against. You will go into the promised land, you will do commerce with these people, you will marry their daughters, and you will end up serving their idols. This is the anointed King of Israel and we should be startled at the picture that is displayed in these verses.

Now I would counsel you, don't be too hard on David because in doing that, the reason you can be hard on David is because you're separating yourself from the issue that is revealed in this passage. These things again are written for our example and our

instruction so that we would not error in the way that God's people of old did. Who of us would say this evening that we have been free of the influence of culture? No, we are not supposed to be a secret order of the saints. We are not supposed to live in fear of the world. We are not supposed to live in monastic distance from the surrounding culture. In fact, the call of Christ to us is to be in the world, not of the world. The call of Christ is for us to be a transforming influence on the culture, to be an acculturating influence. And yet there is evidence that we have been acculturated. There are many people who are commenting on the huge debt load that the members of the body of Christ are carrying, that the size of that debt prevents the church of Jesus Christ from doing things, from resourcing things, from investing in things that it otherwise could. Could it be that we have been more influenced by the materialism of the surrounding culture? Could it be that we've accepted that definition of need that does not really need, it's want? Could it be that our closets are too full? Our houses are too big?

I want to be honest with you, there are other things that shock me. I have been very, very concerned. Luella and I have discussed this many times with the amount of young people in the church of Jesus Christ not yet married, who have been sexually active. Couples approaching marriage who have actually lived with one another before marriage. Where did that come from? I'm afraid that we expose our minds in the huge entertainment structure around us to things that we should not meditate on. You cannot argue that they do not influence you in some way. Maybe the edge of our consciences have been worn down by the repeated exposure to things that God says are wrong. Are you holding on to your commitment to a godly, obedient life and to your call to be salt and light in a dark and corrupt world? Is that commitment perseverant? Or are you being acculturated?

Look at verse 5. "Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, 'I will be king.' Rather self-appointed. "And he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him." Maybe he got that from his older stepbrother Absalom. "His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, 'Why have you done thus and so?'" Very interesting. It's another area where David must persevere. He must persevere to defend the kingdom that God had entrusted in his care even to the end. How sad this is. Old man, now bedridden, and his son sees this as a moment of advantage, his father is weak and appoints himself the king. The attacks didn't end because this man was an old man.

As I was reading this passage, I was thinking of Revelation 7 where the saints are ushered in to eternity and they weep their way into eternity because the war goes on, the attacks go on, the temptation goes on, the suffering goes on. And there's this beautiful moment where God rises from his throne and he, the passage says he dries the tears of God's people because they needn't weep anymore because the work of redemption has been accomplished. Maybe that's the final act of redemption for God, to dry the tears of his people.

I think there's a wonderful warning in this passage of a particular place where it is tempting to grow weary, tempting to let down your guard, tempting to give in. Notice verse 6, a very interesting side comment. All of these comments are preserved for us by a

wise God who knows our hearts. Listen, you don't have a comprehensive history in scripture. You have a redemptively selective history. And this aside is more than an aside. It's a great warning to us. Talking of David, it says, "His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, 'Why have you done thus and so?'" What an interesting parenting comment. Adonijah was a happy child because his father just never got in the way. Parents, I think we need to reflect once more on the children that God has placed in our care. We need to reflect once more on the fact that we are agents of the authority of God. We are by our exercise of authority, not only to define the nature of God's world, but the nature of God himself. We, in our parenting, must picture his law and his grace, his faithfulness and his patience, his persevering commitment to our welfare.

You must reflect on the deep and abiding spiritual struggle of your child. You have given birth to a child who has the DNA of sin in him and in her. And the DNA of sin is selfishness. Jesus came that those who live would no longer live for themselves. What was the first sin about? Autonomy and self-sufficiency. It was a quest for Adam and Eve to be in the position that God and God alone should be in. Your children have God-like intentions. They want to rule. They want to set their own agenda. They want to be indulged. They will carry with them shocking entitlement. Seldom will a young child say when he's been told, no, "Thank you, dear father of mine, how much I need your authority. I'm a shockingly idolatrous child." It's amazing to be in a mall or a grocery store and watch a four-year-old child with his hands on his hips and his jaw set arguing with somebody who's lived 40 years longer than him, who is three times the size of him. What is he thinking? He's thinking, "I am the Lord."

I'm serious. And parents, God the Father is our example. Hebrews 12 says that the one the father doesn't discipline is not his son. He's faithful to discipline so that he will produce a harvest of righteousness. Listen parents, your discipline is not meant to be punitive. You don't discipline your child because he's messed up your day and you have the right to mete out your anger against him. You discipline your child because you want that child to begin to embrace the depth of his sin and therefore the depth of his need and therefore hunger for the Lord Jesus Christ and begin in hunger for Christ to commit himself to a righteous life that is lived for the glory of the God that he once wanted to replace. Now you will get weary and it's very tempting to make your day easier by making your child happy by withdrawing your authority. Isn't it interesting, isn't it interesting that the treason of Adonijah against his father is connected to the way he was indulged as a child. Are you committed as a parent to persevere? Remember, your Lord will not call you to do a task without enabling you to do it.

Well, if you look at verse 11 and following, the report comes to David that Adonijah is after his throne and in verse 28, we see David's response. "Then King David answered, 'Call Bathsheba to me.' So she came into the king's presence and stood before the king. And the king swore, saying, 'As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my soul out of every adversity, as I swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel, saying, "Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place," even so will I do this day.'" I want you to think about this with me. David must persevere in defending the throne of David and the house of David, even though God had promised that his kingdom

would be without end. Now there's theology that you need to understand here. God's unshakable sovereign purpose does not remove you from his call to responsibility. In God's sovereignty, he not only ordains the end of things, he ordains the means to the end. God accomplishes his sovereign purpose through the true validity of the decisions of the secondary agent. There's the theology. Your decisions are part of God's expediting of his sovereign plan. It is never a question of is it the sovereignty of God or the responsibility of man, it's always both/and. They work in cooperation with one another.

You see this in very significant moments in scripture when Paul is on that ship in the storm. He says two things to the people there. No one will be lost. And then he says, if you jump ship, you will be lost. What's true? Yes, both of those things because God ordains not only the end, but the means to the end. The Bible says that Jesus was offered up to the cross by the decisions of evil men according to the foreordained plan of God. We must never hold the sovereign promises of the Lord in a way that removes us from the call to godly activity, godly commitment, and godly perseverance. And even to the end, even though David is very close to his death, even though God has promised that his kingdom would be without end, David is not relieved of responsibility. He must act to deliver that kingdom to his son Solomon.

You can never hold the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in a way that diminishes his call to obedience. We see that powerfully illustrated here. David is not relieved, although God has made an unshakable promise. God has called you to perseverance but how does he hold you? He holds you through the means of your prayer, through the means of your Bible study, through the means of grace of the church of Jesus Christ, through the means of fellowship, through the means of attendance to worship, through the means of humble confession. Those are all part of the way that God has ordained to keep you to the end. God's sure promises are not a call to passivity. God's sure promises are actually a powerful call to faithfulness.

Well, once again, it is impossible to consider this king without considering the King of kings. Jesus came to earth and subjected himself to the same ravages of the fall that David was facing, physical suffering, personal attack, a myriad temptations. Jesus was perfectly committed. He was perfectly obedient. He was perseverant even through death, the ravages of death on a cross. And he was righteous for us because we do not have the capacity to keep the law perfectly and his righteousness as we come to him by faith is given over unto our account. So we stand positionally before God as righteous and so we can come in our unfaithfulness, we can come with our lack of commitment, we can come in our passivity, we can stand in unholiness before a holy God and not be afraid of his wrath because our punishment has been covered by Christ and we can say, "Jesus, help me! Jesus, help me! Jesus, help me!" We can say, "I've been so tempted by the surrounding culture. I want to be salt and light, but I see the evidence of its temptation. I get weary and there are times I take the easy way out. I don't persevere. And what God has called me to in my marriage, in my friendships, at my university, at my work, in areas of ministry, relationship to my children, there are times when I say to myself God's sovereign, I don't have to worry, and I hold that truth in a way that's not true. And so I come once more, all perfect King, and I rest in your righteousness and I pray, draw my

heart ever closer to you. Give me a love for your way. Give me a love for your kingdom. Give me a heart that perseveres."

I would leave you with these words this evening: come to the well of unmerited favor, stretch out your hand, fill your cup to the brim. Jesus is such a compassionate Savior. Draw from the grace that flows freely from him. Come to the Savior, the God of salvation. God has provided an end to sin's strife. Why will you suffer the Lord's condemnation? Take the free gift, the water of life. In Jesus' name, Amen.