

The Life of David

David's Death

1 Kings 2:1-11

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Scripture

Today we conclude our study of "The Life of David."

This is our 57th lesson on the life of David. David became God's king of his kingdom on earth. He ruled well for a time but, sadly, fell into sin. His kingdom declined but God had promised that his kingdom would last forever (*cf.* 2 Samuel 7:16). In our last lesson, David had Solomon crowned as king to succeed him. Today, we learn about David's charge to Solomon and his death.

Let's read about David's death in 1 Kings 2:1-11:

¹When David's time to die drew near, he commanded Solomon his son, saying, ²"I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man, ³and keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, ⁴that the Lord may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'

⁵"Moreover, you also know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, how he dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel, Abner the son of Ner, and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed, avenging in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting the blood of war on the belt around his waist and on the sandals on his feet. ⁶Act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to Sheol in peace. ⁷But deal loyally with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table, for with such loyalty they met me when I fled from Absalom your brother. ⁸And there is also with you Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim,

who cursed me with a grievous curse on the day when I went to Mahanaim. But when he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the Lord, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' ⁹ Now therefore do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man. You will know what you ought to do to him, and you shall bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol."

¹⁰ Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. ¹¹ And the time that David reigned over Israel was forty years. He reigned seven years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. (1 Kings 2:1-11)

Introduction

John Piper's father was an evangelist. He pressed the claim of the gospel upon his audience, often using stories. Piper writes:

For me as a boy, one of the most gripping illustrations my fiery father used was the story of a man converted in old age. The church had prayed for this man for decades. He was hard and resistant. But this time, for some reason, he showed up when my father was preaching. At the end of the service, during a hymn, to everyone's amazement he came and took my father's hand. They sat down together on the front pew of the church as the people were dismissed. God opened his heart to the Gospel of Christ, and he was saved from his sins and given eternal life. But that did not stop him from sobbing and saying, as the tears ran down his wrinkled face – and what an impact it made on me to hear my father say this through his own tears – "I've wasted it! I've wasted it!"¹

Piper goes on to write that this story prompted him – more than any other story – to live a life that counted. He did not want to waste his life.

As David came to the end of his life, he told his son Solomon

¹ John Piper, *Don't Waste Your Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 12.

how to live his life in such a way that it would not be wasted. He told Solomon how to make his life count. Let's learn about this by working our way from back to front through today's text.

Lesson

First Kings 2:1-11 teaches us to make our lives count.

Let's use the following outline:

1. Remember That All People Die (2:10-11)
2. Act Wisely in Kingdom Matters (2:5-9)
3. Live By God's Word (2:1-4)

I. Remember That All People Die (2:10-11)

First, to make our lives count, remember that all people die.

We read in verses 10-11, **“Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. And the time that David reigned over Israel was forty years. He reigned seven years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem.”** In 1983, I visited Jerusalem and went to a place that was called “King David's Tomb” just outside the Zion Gate of Jerusalem's Old City. I have since learned that the site I visited was not the actual burial place of King David, since its location was outside the **city of David** at the time of his death. It was just another tourist attraction!

Nevertheless, David **was buried in the city of David**. About a millennia later, Paul preached at the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia. During his sermon, he said, “For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption” (Acts 13:36). David did what God had called him to do. But then he died, and his body decayed. Paul went on to say, “but he whom God raised up did not see corruption” (Acts 13:37). Paul was referring to David's Greater Son Jesus who died but was raised back to life on the third

day. His body did not decay and see corruption. Jesus is the king who now rules forever on David's throne.

David's death is a reminder to us that all people die. I am going to die. You are going to die. We are all going to die (unless Jesus returns before our death).

Although we are all going to die, we don't know when that will be. My Dad worked in the gold mines in South Africa as a young man and contracted what was called "miner's lung disease." I was about six years old at the time, and Dad was told that he would die before I turned twenty years old. Dad outlived the doctor's prediction by thirty-seven years! And then he died at the age of eighty-three.

About three weeks ago, a pastoral colleague told me that the day before his pre-school director called him to tell him that a three-year old boy in their pre-school had just died from drowning.

Whether eighty-three years old, or three years old, or however old we are right now, to make our lives count, we need to remember that all people die. No-one escapes death.

II. Act Wisely in Kingdom Matters (2:5-9)

Second, to make our lives count, act wisely in kingdom matters.

Before he died, David gave Solomon instructions about the kingdom. He told Solomon about three individuals whose actions from many years earlier needed to be addressed. In verse 6a, David said to his son, **"Act therefore according to your wisdom."** For Solomon to make his life count, he needed to act wisely.

David told Solomon to punish two of the three individuals, and to reward the third individual. Some people say that David's attitude toward the two who were to be punished seemed petty and beneath him as king. However, David was acting in his role as God's king on earth. An attack on him was an attack on God. Thus

it was a reminder to all people that God will punish those who attack him or his representative on earth.

So, the first person to be punished was Joab. We read David saying in verses 5-6, **“Moreover, you also know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, how he dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel, Abner the son of Ner, and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed, avenging in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting the blood of war on the belt around his waist and on the sandals on his feet. Act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to Sheol in peace.”** Joab was the Commanding General of David’s army. At times, he was fiercely loyal to David. But, he was also brutal in opposing anyone he saw as a threat to David. Joab unnecessarily killed Abner and Amasa. David may be faulted, and perhaps should be faulted, for not taking action against Joab at the time. Nevertheless, he now instructed Solomon to deal with Joab. Just days earlier, Joab had supported Solomon’s brother Adonijah in seeking the crown for himself. So, Joab could no longer to be trusted to be loyal to Solomon.

The second person to be punished was Shimei. We read David saying verses 8-9, **“And there is also with you Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a grievous curse on the day when I went to Mahanaim. But when he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the Lord, saying, ‘I will not put you to death with the sword.’ Now therefore do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man. You will know what you ought to do to him, and you shall bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol.”** Many years earlier, David’s son Absalom staged a coup against his father. While David was fleeing from Jerusalem, Shimei cursed David. But David did not punish Shimei at that time. However, Shimei had cursed the Lord’s anointed and that is a very serious offense. It was up to Solomon to punish Shimei.

The third individual David mentioned was Barzillai who was to receive a reward. We read David saying in verse 7, **“But deal loyally with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table, for with such loyalty they met me when I fled from Absalom your brother.”** After Absalom had been killed, David returned to Jerusalem. During his return, Barzillai met David and provided him with provisions. Barzillai’s loyalty to David during a time of deep discouragement was so encouraging to David. Even though Barzillai’s servant was rewarded by David, David wanted to be sure that Barzillai’s loyalty was not forgotten.

It seems to me that David’s instructions to Solomon regarding these three men had to do with his government of God’s kingdom. Those who had violated God’s statutes were to be punished. And those who had been loyal to God’s leaders were to be rewarded. Though David may not have acted consistently toward those loyal and disloyal to God’s leader, he wanted Solomon to act wisely in kingdom matters.

We act wisely in kingdom matters when we apply God’s word in a consistent manner towards others. As parents, we must act consistently with each of our children. We must not treat some with favor and others with disfavor. When my wife and I adopted our son, we had to appear before a judge in order to finalize the adoption. I held our natural-born daughter, who was about thirty months older than her about-to-be-adopted younger brother. The judge went through matters related to the identity of my wife and me. Then, he gave us a rather stern lecture that we were to treat our adopted son in the same way as our natural-born daughter. In the eyes of the law, there was no difference between the two. Similarly, God wants us to act consistently toward others.

So, to make our lives count, we must remember that all people die and that we must act wisely in kingdom matters.

III. Live By God's Word (2:1-4)

And third, to make our lives count, live by God's word.

We come now to the most important part of this lesson. Many people don't know when they are going to die. They may die unexpectedly. David, however, had an opportunity to give final words of instruction to his son Solomon. What would you say if you had an opportunity to give your final words?

About two weeks ago, I received a letter dated March 1, 2021 from Luis Palau, the eighty-six year old world-renowned evangelist who died ten days later. His letter began with these words, "Dear Freddy, More than likely, this is the last letter you will ever receive from me. If the doctors are right, I'm days away from glory. And I feel it. All medication stopped. At home with Pat, on palliative care. Family close by. It's just a matter of days. My time on earth is done."²

Again, I ask: What would you say if you had an opportunity to give your final words?

Here is what David said to Solomon, in verse 2, **"I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man."** David was saying that he was about to die. He wanted Solomon to be a man. But what does that mean? What does it mean in our culture to be a man?

Some people think that a man is someone who is physically strong. He may be athletic. He may be a warrior. That was certainly true of David.

Other people think that a man is someone who is sexually active with someone other than his wife. Again, David engaged in sexual activity outside the bounds of marriage.

And yet other people think that a man is someone who has built a successful career. David was extremely successful, by any standard of measurement. He expanded his kingdom.

² Letter from Luis Palau, dated March 1, 2021.

Our culture has all kinds of ways of measuring what it means to be a man.

But what David say to his son Solomon? David went on to say in verse 3, **“...and keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn.”** For David, manhood was attained not by physical strength, sexual activity, or a successful career. Manhood was attained by obedience to the word of God. In verses 3 and 4, David used seven different terms to describe the word of God: **“charge,” “ways,” “statutes,” “commandments,” “rules,” “testimonies,” “Law of Moses,”** and **“word.”** Each of these terms has a slightly different emphasis. David’s point to Solomon was that he was to live by the entire word of God. David’s (and Solomon’s) Greater Son Jesus once said, in response to Satan’s temptation to him, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

David went on to tell Solomon the reason he was to obey the word of God was **“that the Lord may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel’ ”** (1 Kings 2:4). This was a conditional promise: *If* David’s sons obeyed God and his word, *then* he would not lack a man on the throne of Israel. Sadly, however, David’s sons did not obey God and his word. The earthly kingdom of David eventually fell.

But God’s word did not fail. God also gave David an unconditional promise. God said to David, “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.... And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure

forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:12, 16). This is the promise that gave us David’s Greater Son Jesus, who is the king forever ruling on David’s throne.

But let us come back to David’s initial words to his son Solomon, when he said to him, **“...and keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn”** (1 Kings 2:3). In effect, David was telling Solomon that to make his life count, he needed to live by God’s word. Solomon would prosper in all that he did and wherever he turned, if he lived by God’s word.

Commentator Philip Ryken concludes, “The same principle holds true today, especially if we define success in biblical terms. People who follow biblical principles will prosper (see Psalm 1:1-3; *cf.* Matthew 7:24–25). This does not mean that we will never suffer, or that every difficulty we face in life is the direct result of our own personal sin. But it does mean that obedience has God’s blessing.”³

In the letter I received from Luis Palau that I mentioned earlier, he went on to say, “God is good. I have no regrets. There is nothing better than serving Him and sharing His Good News Gospel.” Interestingly, he concluded his letter with a verse from a passage in David’s life that we examined just a few weeks ago. It is found in David’s Song of Deliverance in 2 Samuel 22:31, where David says of God, “His way is perfect. His word is flawless.”⁴

So, to make our lives count, we must remember that all people die, we must act wisely in kingdom matters, and we must live by God’s word.

³ Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Kings*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Iain M. Duguid, and Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011), 53.

⁴ Letter from Luis Palau, dated March 1, 2021.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the account of David's death in 1 Kings 2:1-11, let us not waste our lives.

No-one wants to live a wasted life. Everyone wants his or her life to count. The only way to keep yourself from wasting your life and making it count is to live by the word of God.

Phil Ryken gives a wonderful illustration to make this point:

The Christmas before he died, my father-in-law gave each of his three daughters a beautiful leather Bible. I thought it was a little strange at the time, because each of them already owned a Bible – more than one, in fact. Each Bible came with a bookmark, on which he printed his picture and wrote what turned out to be some of his last words. “Lisa,” he wrote to my wife, “I know no better gift to my child than to share God's Word with her. Love to you, Dad.”

Eventually I came to see what my father-in-law was doing: he was giving his last will and testament to his daughters. In doing so, he wanted to give them the best gift he knew, which also happens to be the best gift that David knew. God wants us to have this gift as well – the gift of his Word. If we receive it by faith, the Word of God will make us strong. It will help us become real men and real women. It will keep us from wasting our lives. Indeed, it will save us forever.⁵

⁵ Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Kings*, 55.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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