

Look Back, Move On

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1 Chronicles 22

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Our Favourite Bible Characters

Well Brothers and Sisters, we've taken our theme for the exhortation from the first reading for today and we're thinking about the end of David's life. And I think it's fair to say that we've all got a favourite scriptural character, and as youngsters we might have considered some of them to be our heroes of the Bible. Amongst my favourites, the man that we've been reading about during the last month. David, was one of mine.

Aspects of David

We study the life of David a lot don't we, and we know him as several things: as a shepherd boy, an animal wrestler, a giant slayer, a fugitive, a leader of men, a warrior, a true companion, a musician, a poet, a husband, a father and a king, and I don't think there's a more heroic, and yet more human character in the whole of Scripture.

We've read of the boy becoming a man, we've read of how the shepherd became a king, we've followed David with his great successes and his worrying defeats. We've seen him when he gleamed with the glory of righteousness and we've seen that glory tarnished haven't we, by a devastating sin. We've watched David as he enjoyed the many blessings of God, and we've watched him as he endured the consequences of his sins. His life has challenged us because there are so many parallels aren't there between his experience and ours, and I think we can certainly identify with the man David.

Well, in our readings from First of Chronicles during this coming week, we find David at the end of life's trial. He's making preparations for the temple that he so desperately wanted to build, but wasn't allowed to. He's about 70 years old here, he packed so much into his life didn't he, he reigned as king for 40 years and is about to hand over to the next generation. Before he does pass away, David has some last words for those who have gathered around him, and we will read of those later in the week. And I think that those last words of David, in them we can see what occupied his thoughts as he reached the end of his life. In his last

words we read of quite a dignified ending to a life pleasing to the Lord, so pleasing in fact that he was considered a God's friend. How wonderful, and incredible title to have.

David's Last Words

So for our thoughts this morning, before we partake of the emblems, I think it would be good for us to examine those last words of the old King. In them we're going to encounter some characteristics that should mark the end of our *own* lives and reflect maybe the legacy that we leave for others. So let's follow the record in 1 Chronicles, mainly in verse 28 and 29. David lets us know that the last days of his life were filled with thoughts of a dream that he knew would never be fulfilled. He'd wanted to build a temple for the Lord, but God said no to David's dream, telling him instead that David's son, Solomon, the next king, *he* would build the temple. This has been quite a disappointment to David, and evidently it was a disappointment that lingered until the day of his death. But David didn't allow the Lord's 'no' to derail him.

David gathered the necessary materials to build the temple so that his son, Solomon, would have what he needed when the time came. In David here we see a man who died with an unfulfilled dream still in his heart. But David didn't look back on what God had *not* allowed him to do, with some form of anger, instead he looked back on what God *had* allowed him to do, he dwelt on the positive things that had happened in his life. He tells us that God had chosen him to be king. God had picked David, the youngest son of an unknown family, to be king over his people Israel. God had blessed him greatly, promising to establish his kingdom forever. David rejoices that God had chosen his son Solomon for a very special relationship. So instead of focusing on what God had not done in his life or will, and will not allow him to do in the future, David reflected on what God had done in his life. And, I think this is an attitude that we should all have, whatever stage in life we're at.

If we're not careful, we could come to the end of our lives quite bitter, quite disillusioned and disappointed because we did not get to see the fulfilment of our dream. As we get older, it becomes clearer with every passing year that some of our dreams aren't going to come to pass. What do we do with those shattered dreams? We could become bitter because God had said 'no' to our dream or has given us some particular challenges to overcome in our lives, or we could look back with joy, *joy*, thankful for the things that he *did* bring into our lives. And I suppose that it all boils down to who we believe had the best plan in the first place, and our lives are lead aren't they.

Bitterness vs God's Sovereignty

We can sit around and grumble and moan about what we did not get, or we can thank him for what we did get. We can blame him for what we think we missed out on, or we can rejoice in what he has brought into our lives. It comes to a matter of sovereignty. Who is God in our lives? Us or God? If we are the masters of our own destiny, then we can't blame God for any unfulfilled dreams. We've got no one to blame but ourselves, but if God is the lord of our life then we have to thank him for what he has done because he has brought into our lives the things that were best for us. Romans 8 has some good words here, I'll read

them to you:

“for those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh. But those who live according to the Spirit of things of the Spirit. For to be carnal minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit. If indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his.”

Sobering words there from the Apostle Paul.

So what kind of shattered dreams are you and I looking back on today? Maybe we want more from our marriage? Maybe we wanted our children to accomplish certain things? Maybe we wanted to obtain certain goals in our working life? Maybe we're a little disappointed in our financial situation? Maybe we had big plans and goals for our lives, but none of them had been achieved? And today we might be in a stage in our life when we realised that those things will never be fulfilled. So what does that do to you and do to me? How does that make us feel? Are we *content* with where God has brought us in life? Or are we a little bitter that things have not turned out like *we* planned them? The Scriptures tell us that the best thing to do with the past and it's broken dreams is a course to let them go, and thank God for where He has brought us and what He has done in and through our life.

The Apostle Paul again has a lesson of contentment, Philippians 4:

“not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learnt in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased and I know how to abound, everywhere and in all things have I learnt both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”

I'm sure that he never dreamt he would die like he did, but he was content to allow the Lord to have His way. Are you? Am I.

First of chronicles 28 and verse 9, David had a time of responsibility, and he speaks to his son Solomon. He realises that the young man standing before him with no real life experience, he is about to shoulder an awesome responsibility. He's untried, he's untested, but he's about to become the king of Israel, he is about to take the reigns of the nation, and David knows that he needs a few words of instruction, and David speaks to Solomon on two levels.

David's First Piece of Advice to Solomon

Firstly, he talks about his relationship with God. Chapter 28 verses 8 and 9:

“Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the Assembly of the Lord and in the hearing of our God, be careful...”

David says,

“seek out all the commandments of the Lord your God that you may possess this good land and leave it as an inheritance for your children after you forever. As

for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father and serve him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind. For the Lord searches all hearts and understands the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you. But..."

the warning,

"if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever."

So David challenges Solomon to know God, to serve God and to seek God. David knows that if Solomon is to be king, and the kind of king he needs to be, he needs to be on God's side, and then he's going to have to develop that intimate relationship with God. He's cautioned to keep his heart and his thought-life, pure. David spoke these words from experience, he knew the blessing of walking with God, and he knew about the pain of turning away. He had the life experience and he was passing this on, therefore, he challenged his Solomon to stay close, and stay clean. These are the kind of traits every godly parent wants to see in the lives of their children, aren't they?

David's Second Piece of Advice to Solomon

Well, secondly, he talks about his reign over the people verses 10 to 21, and in verses 10 to 19, David gives Solomon the plans and the materials for the construction of the temple. He challenges Solomon to get the job done and to do it right. Then David turns his attention to Solomon the king. He speaks of the pressures and the doubts that come along with the title of King, and he reminds Solomon that no matter what the future holds, he can count on the Lord's presence, power and promises, to help him make it through.

What an incredible hope to instil in one's child. They need to know that God will bring them safely through this life. So much of what our children know about God, they learn from their parents. For those of us who are parents, that certainly places an awesome weight of responsibility on our shoulders, to sow that seed in young minds. In chapter 29 verses 2 to 9, David challenges the *people* of Israel to give to the work of the temple. They do so willingly, and when they do, David lifts his voice in a prayer of faith, thanksgiving and supplication. Let's have a look at this prayer for just a moment. Towards the end of his life, David is still praising the Lord. 1 Chronicles 29 verses 10 and 11:

"Therefore, David blessed the Lord before all the assembly, and David said 'blessed are you, Lord God of Israel, our Father forever and ever. Yours, Oh Lord is the greatness the power and the glory, the victory and the Majesty, for all that is in heaven and in Earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, Oh Lord. And you are exalted as head over all...' "

He still has a sweet spirit, he is able to praise the Lord for his grace, his blessings and his sovereign power. Reading on, verse 12:

" 'both riches and honour come from you, and you reign over all, in your hand is power and might, in your hand it is to make great, and to give strength to all. Now therefore, our God, we thank you and praise your glorious Name.' "

He's still amazed at what the Lord has done for him through the years, as the next few verses show. And he's still praying for others, verse 19:

“‘And I give my son Solomon a loyal heart to keep your commandments and your testimonies, and your statutes, to do all these things and to build the temple for which I have made provision.’”

So there David sets a great example for us in his attitude and his manner of service. He sets the example to us that the end of life is not a time to give up, or let up on spiritual disciplines. Not a time to stop praying. As the pressures of life become quite different at this time of life perhaps we have more time for prayerful reflection. The end of life, I think, is a time to draw closer to the Lord.

I think far too many folk have the attitude that they have what they have by their own efforts. I know this is true by so many of my work colleagues. They feel that their success in life has come about by their own abilities. So many folk fail to see the necessity for leaning solely upon the Lord.

Well, David's life concludes not with sadness, but with rejoicing. He leads the congregation in offering worship and praise to the Lord. They celebrate his life and they rejoice in their new king, Solomon. David doesn't go out with a whimper, he goes out with a bang. He leaves this life praising the Lord. I think David's example here shows that the end of life doesn't have to be a sad time and when we come to the end of the road, still close to the Lord, still clinging to the Lord and calling on the Lord, there's no reason for sadness, but there is reason for rejoicing. In this passage it's the dying man who is rejoicing. David seems to have no fear regarding his impending death, he does not seem upset by the fact that his life's journey is about over. Why? Well, because he knows his next waking moment will be at the judgement and the kingdom. That kind of knowledge gives us great comfort, doesn't it?

Lessons from David's Attitude

I don't know about you, but I do find thinking about the end of life a bit morbid. And if I do grow old or contract a life shortening disease, I do wonder how I'm going to deal with it. How will we meet that day? Will we meet it with dread and fear, or like David, will we be able to rejoice in the day of our death. Well with the death of David, an era came to an end. It could be argued that Israel's second king was her best and brightest king. But the lessons we learn from the life of David still speak today. And as we consider the end of David's life, let's also consider the end of our own lives. How do we want to finish the race? Like David, I would like to finish strong. I want to end up remembering his blessings, carrying out my responsibilities, relying on the Lord and rejoicing in Him. I would like to finish like Paul, he said this, 2 Timothy 4:

“‘for I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the Righteous Judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also, that

love his appearing.’ ”

Wonderful, isn't it?

Well, in conclusion, if there are any areas in our life that need to have a little adjustment, this is the time to deal with them. Are there some broken dreams we would like to surrender to God? Are we relying on the Lord as we should? Are we *rejoicing* as the end of our life gets closer? Whatever our answers to these questions, we have an opportunity to put things right. Right now, as we contemplate on the short life of David's greater Son, our Lord Jesus.

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