

1 Kings 1:1-10**A Life of Regrets**

Now King David was old and advanced in years. And although they covered him with clothes, he could not get warm. 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." 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.

Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king." And he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, "Why have you done thus and so?" He was also a very handsome man, and he was born next after Absalom. He conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest. And they followed Adonijah and helped him. But Zadok the priest and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada and Nathan the prophet and Shimei and Rei and David's mighty men were not with Adonijah.

Adonijah sacrificed sheep, oxen, and fattened cattle by the Serpent's Stone, which is beside En-rogel, and he invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the royal officials of Judah, but he did not invite Nathan the prophet or Benaiah or the mighty men or Solomon his brother. – 1 Kings 1:1-10 ESV

In the Hebrew Bible, the books of 1 and 2 Kings were one book and considered by the ancients to be a continuation of the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, compiled sometime around 250 B.C., these four books were called the Book of the Kingdoms. It was later divided into two books and called 3 Kingdoms and 4 Kingdoms. They considered our 1 and 2 Samuel to be 1 and 2 Kingdoms. Hundreds of years later, with Jerome's Vulgate (Latin) translation of the Hebrew text, the books were changed to 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings. But in spite of all the name changes, the common belief remained the same: The books of 1 and 2 Kings were closely linked to the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, continuing the narrative that began with King Saul and ended with King David.

With the opening of 1 Kings, we fast-forward and find David advanced in years. He is in poor health and requires round-the-clock nursing care. Long gone are the days of battle. David would no longer accompany his mighty men as they faced the enemies of Israel. Like every other human being, David was facing the inevitable reality of old age and mortality. This once-great leader was now weak and nearing the end of his long and fruitful life.

The author provides us with an interesting piece of information that, at first glance, seems superfluous.

...no matter how many blankets covered him, he could not keep warm. So his advisers told him, "Let us find a young virgin to wait on you and look after you, my lord. She will lie in your arms and keep you warm." – 1 Kings 1:1-2 NLT

This seems like an odd treatment for David's condition, but it was quite common in those days. To keep an elderly person warm, they would place a healthy person in bed with them. The body heat of the younger person, trapped under the blankets, would provide the warmth that the elderly person's body could no longer produce. So, we should not automatically see this as something odd or as an indication that something sexual was going on. The text tells us that, while the girl was very beautiful, "the king had no sexual relations with her" (1 King 1:4 NLT). But it is hard not to make the connection between this period of David's life and the earlier years when his sexual drive had gotten him into trouble. We are familiar with the story of David and Bathsheba. But we should also remember that David had many wives. His love for women would cause him great trouble throughout his lifetime. Now, at the end of his life, David spends his days lying in bed with a young, beautiful woman, receiving no pleasure from her, other than the warmth of her body.

But it is not only David's physical powers that have diminished. As king, his old age and incapacity have weakened his ability to rule. Everyone knows that his days are numbered, and there will be those who see this as an opportunity to seize the throne for themselves. One such individual was Adonijah, the son of Haggith. Adonijah, whose name means "Yahweh is Lord", was David's fourth son, born to him by Haggith, one of David's many wives. Adonijah was not in line to be the natural successor to the throne, but that did not stop him from coveting the position and the power that came with it. Taking a page out of the playbook of his older, deceased brother, Absalom, Adonijah "provided himself with chariots and charioteers and recruited fifty men to run in front of him" (1 Kings 1:5 NLT). That is precisely what Absalom had done years earlier when he was preparing to take the kingship from David.

Absalom bought a chariot and horses, and he hired fifty bodyguards to run ahead of him.
– 2 Samuel 15:1 NLT

Adonijah decided the best way to become the next king was to act like one. Like his former older sibling, Adonijah was handsome. He had seen how far Absalom had gotten on his good looks and kingly image, so he saw no reason not to copy his plan. The text provides an important insight into Adonijah's upbringing. "Now his father, King David, had never disciplined him at any time, even by asking, 'Why are you doing that?'" (1 Kings 1:6 NLT).

Once again, we see David's failure to discipline his children coming back to haunt him. David had been a great military leader, but had neglected to establish any laws at home. He was a reluctant disciplinarian who let his children get away with murder, both literally and figuratively. Adonijah had seen how David dealt with Absalom's murder of Amnon. David had done nothing. David had even allowed Absalom to return home from exile, refusing to discipline him in any way for his actions. David's lack of discipline led Absalom to rebel against him, forcing David to flee Jerusalem and relinquish his kingdom. David's kingdom had been

restored to him only when Joab killed Absalom. So Adonijah, who had been raised in this atmosphere of unrestrained freedom and license, saw no reason not to take what he coveted. He was not used to being told no. Instead, he was accustomed to getting what he wanted, and he coveted the crown.

So, Adonijah began to gather together the group who would assist him in his coup. Among them would be Joab, David's military commander, and Abiathar the priest. These two individuals probably saw this as an opportunity to secure their positions. Joab, who had disobeyed David and killed Absalom, knew he was not on David's good side and would probably be demoted if Solomon became king. Abiathar had stood by and watched as David had given Zadok, another priest, increasing prominence in his administration. These two men, among others, cast their allegiance with Adonijah.

Adonijah held a banquet, inviting all his brothers, except Solomon, as well as all the royal officials of Judah. For obvious reasons, David's mighty men were left off the invitation list. This banquet was designed to win over as many of David's former allies as possible. Like Absalom, Adonijah was playing a carefully crafted public relations game, where he was gaining favor with all those who could help him take the throne. All of this should remind us of the warning given to David after his affair with Bathsheba.

*The Lord, the God of Israel, says: I anointed you king of Israel and saved you from the power of Saul. I gave you your master's house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more. Why, then, have you despised the word of the Lord and done this horrible deed? For you have murdered Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the Ammonites and stolen his wife. **From this time on, your family will live by the sword because you have despised me by taking Uriah's wife to be your own.** – 2 Samuel 12:7-10 NLT*

Even in the closing days of David's life, the prophecy was being fulfilled. Yet another one of David's sons would attempt to take the throne from him. Adonijah didn't care that God had chosen Solomon to be the next king of Israel; he wanted the throne for himself. And all of David's other sons, except for Solomon, would join Adonijah in his attempted coup. David, the man after God's own heart, had raised a palace full of children who seemed to have no heart for God. Only Solomon would give evidence of having been raised in the fear and admonition of the Lord, and this was most likely due to his mother, Bathsheba, not his father. Like most men who find themselves late in life facing the prospect of their own death, David longed to leave a legacy of godly children. He would give his kingdom to know that his sons and daughters were godly and that his progeny would carry on his love for God. But David had already lost three sons due to sin and rebellion. Now he was facing the prospect of watching yet another son rebel against the expressed will of God and face the consequences. David would be remembered as a great king. However, it isn't hard to imagine that he would have preferred to be remembered as a great father.

1 Kings 1:11-27

What Will You Do?

Then Nathan said to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, "Have you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith has become king and David our lord does not know it? Now therefore come, let me give you advice, that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. Go in at once to King David, and say to him, 'Did you not, my lord the king, swear to your servant, saying, "Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne"? Why then is Adonijah king?' Then while you are still speaking with the king, I also will come in after you and confirm your words."

So Bathsheba went to the king in his chamber (now the king was very old, and Abishag the Shunammite was attending to the king). Bathsheba bowed and paid homage to the king, and the king said, "What do you desire?" She said to him, "My lord, you swore to your servant by the Lord your God, saying, 'Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne.' And now, behold, Adonijah is king, although you, my lord the king, do not know it. He has sacrificed oxen, fattened cattle, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the sons of the king, Abiathar the priest, and Joab the commander of the army, but Solomon your servant he has not invited. And now, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. Otherwise it will come to pass, when my lord the king sleeps with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be counted offenders."

While she was still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet came in. And they told the king, "Here is Nathan the prophet." And when he came in before the king, he bowed before the king, with his face to the ground. And Nathan said, "My lord the king, have you said, 'Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne'? For he has gone down this day and has sacrificed oxen, fattened cattle, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king's sons, the commanders of the army, and Abiathar the priest. And behold, they are eating and drinking before him, and saying, 'Long live King Adonijah!' But me, your servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon he has not invited. Has this thing been brought about by my lord the king and you have not told your servants who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?" – 1 Kings 1:11-27 ESV

David is old and bedridden. His days on this earth are numbered, and once again, one of his sons is plotting to take his kingdom from him. When David should have been enjoying his final days in peace, he was suddenly confronted with yet another looming disaster. Until he breathed his final breath, David remained the king of Israel and had to deal with the situation facing his kingdom. He was responsible for protecting the rights of his son, Solomon, to succeed him. But the only problem was that David knew nothing about what was going on. He was unaware of the danger facing the kingdom and was safely ensconced in his bed within his royal chamber, being cared for by Abishag the Shunammite. He is oblivious to the actions of Adonijah, Abiathar, and Joab. But Nathan the prophet is on top of all that is happening and

sends Bathsheba, David's wife and the mother of Solomon, to inform him of the gravity of the situation.

One of the problems seems to be that David had made no preparations for his succession. It appears that Adonijah, being the oldest living son (his three older siblings had all died), assumed he was the legitimate heir to the throne. He was simply taking advantage of David's old age and speeding up the transition process. But God had told David that Solomon would be his successor.

"But you will have a son who will be a man of peace. I will give him peace with his enemies in all the surrounding lands. His name will be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel during his reign. He is the one who will build a Temple to honor my name. He will be my son, and I will be his father. And I will secure the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever." – 1 Chronicles 22:9-10 ESV

Yet, it seems that David had done nothing to ensure that the transition of power to Solomon would take place. Once again, his inaction had produced some very negative consequences and could even result in the death of Solomon, should Adonijah's coup succeed. So, Nathan sent Bathsheba to David, encouraging her to prompt him to take action, and she did just that. She not only informed him of what was going on, but warned him that all the eyes of Israel were on him. He was being watched, and the people were waiting to see what he would do. Despite his old age, David was going to have to muster up the strength to stave off this threat to his son's throne. What he did next would secure the future of his kingdom and that of his son, or seal Solomon's fate.

Nathan saw the gravity of the situation and told Bathsheba, "Let me give you advice, that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon" (1 Kings 1:12 ESV). He knew there was no time to waste. Something had to be done, and David was the one who had to do it. But he would need prompting and support. So, Bathsheba's job was to bring David up to speed and to plead with him to intervene. Then Nathan was to come in and corroborate her story and provide much-needed counsel to David. He was also to act as a second witness to anything David decreed in their presence.

Bathsheba was blunt with David. This was not a time for pleasantries and politeness. She knew that her son's life was in danger. She even reminded David, "If you do not act, my son Solomon and I will be treated as criminals as soon as my lord the king has died" (1 Kings 1:21 NLT). She was not going to leave David's side until he took action. She boldly challenged him, saying, "And now, my lord the king, all Israel is waiting for you to announce who will become king after you" (1 Kings 1:20 NLT). There was no time to waste. Inaction was not an option. And just as planned, Nathan followed Bathsheba into the king's presence, confirming her words and challenging David to act like a man. The entire nation was waiting on pins and needles, wondering what David would do. A line had been drawn in the sand. Sides had been chosen. Adonijah had assembled his team and secured what he thought would be his future. The only one who is conspicuously absent from this whole affair is Solomon himself. He had not been

invited to Adonijah's feast with all their other brothers, for obvious reasons. But he was also not present when Bathsheba and Nathan met with David. His fate was in their hands. His future and that of his kingdom was entirely in the hands of his father, and he would have to trust that David would do the right thing. Solomon was at the mercy of David.

He does not appear anywhere in the passage. He doesn't show up, begging David to keep his word and give him the kingdom God had promised him. Perhaps Solomon was not aware of the word that God had spoken to David. But, in the next section of this chapter, we will see that Bathsheba knew, and it is doubtful that she kept Solomon in the dark. He most likely knew that he was the God-appointed heir to the throne, yet, he was not demanding his rights or whining about his fate. He had to have known what Adonijah was up to and that all of his brothers were at the feast, enjoying Adonijah's hospitality and shouting along with all the other guests, "Long live King Adonijah!" (1 Kings 1:25 ESV). But Solomon patiently waited in the wings. Like all the rest of the people of Israel, his eyes were on David. What would he do? How would he respond?

So often, we can find ourselves in similar, if not quite as dire, circumstances. We can reach a point where a decision is required, an important and potentially life-altering one. And others are watching us to see what we will do. Perhaps our family is waiting on us to act, wondering how we will respond. Perhaps our coworkers are anxiously watching to see how we will handle a difficult situation at work. There are always others watching us, depending upon us to do the right thing, to make the right decision, and to give them peace and confidence that we can be trusted. Even the world is watching us. The church of Jesus Christ is to be salt and light amid all the decay and darkness surrounding it. As the secular world presses in and the enemy continues his assault on the will and the ways of God, the world is watching to see how the church will respond. Will we do nothing? Will inaction and complacency mark us? Are we confident enough in the Word of God that we will confidently take our stand against all the forces lined up against us? What David did next was a matter of life and death. The future of his kingdom and that of his son were at stake. All eyes were on him. What would he do? But what about us? The world is watching and waiting to see what we will do?

1 Kings 1:28-40

King and Ruler

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." Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the ground and paid homage to the king and said, "May my lord King David live forever!"

King David said, "Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada." So they came before the king. And the king said to them, "Take with you the servants of your lord and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet there anoint him king over Israel. Then blow the trumpet and say, 'Long live King Solomon!' You shall then come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne, for he shall be king in my place. And I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah." And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, "Amen! May the Lord, the God of my lord the king, say so. As the Lord has been with my lord the king, even so may he be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David."

So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule and brought him to Gihon. There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!" And all the people went up after him, playing on pipes, and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth was split by their noise. — 1 Kings 1:28-40 ESV

David listened to the words of Bathsheba and Nathan and took immediate action to have Solomon, his son, anointed as the next king of Israel. This was necessary to prevent any attempt by Adonijah to steal the throne. While Adonijah and his guests were busy celebrating what they thought was his new kingship, even calling him king, David was implementing the plans that would bring their little celebration to a grinding halt.

But what stands out in this passage are the expectations that David, Bathsheba, and the others had of Solomon. He was to be the successor of David, but even more than that, he was to carry on the unique relationship that David had with God. David had promised Bathsheba, "He shall sit on my throne in my place" (1 Kings 1:30 ESV). There is more to this statement than meets the eye. David is not just saying that Solomon will succeed him, but that he will act as his representative or replacement. Notice that David refers to the throne as "*my throne*" and he says that Solomon will serve in "*my place*." Solomon is not just to be *another* king of Israel, but the same kind of king as David. The exact expectations that God had placed on David would fall on Solomon. There is far more to being a king than simply the power and prestige that come with the title.

David called to himself, Nathan, Zadok, and Benaiah. These three men represent the roles of the prophet, priest, and military commander. Each of them will play a part in making Solomon the next king of Israel. But what is important to notice is the instructions David gave these three men:

*“Take with you the servants of your lord and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet there anoint him king over Israel. Then blow the trumpet and say, ‘Long live King Solomon!’ You shall then come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne, for **he shall be king in my place**. And **I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah**.” – 1 Kings 1:33-35 ESV*

Once again, David states that Solomon will “be king in **my** place”. But he adds another aspect to Solomon’s role that must not be overlooked. He says that he has appointed Solomon to be *ruler* over Israel and Judah. Is this just another way of saying “king?” Does the word “king” refer to his title and “ruler” to his function? The key to understanding the significance in what David is saying is found in the words themselves. The Hebrew word for king is *melek*, and it refers to the actual reign of an individual. However, when David says that he has appointed Solomon *ruler* over Israel and Judah, he is conveying a completely different message. The Hebrew word David uses is *nagiya*, and it had special significance to the Israelites. It is sometimes translated as “prince” or “leader” and was often used to refer to someone who ruled at God’s discretion and decree. As we saw with Absalom, anyone could claim the title of king, simply by taking it by force. But only one man could serve as the ruler over the people of God, and claim to be God’s appointed leader. With that appointment came heavy responsibilities. Just look back on when God told the prophet Samuel to anoint Saul the first ruler of Israel.

*Anoint him to be the **leader** [nagiya] of my people, Israel. He will rescue them from the Philistines, for I have looked down on my people in mercy and have heard their cry. – 1 Samuel 9:16 ESV*

When Saul failed to rule or lead as God had commanded, he was told that he would be replaced.

*But now your kingdom must end, for the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart. The Lord has already appointed him to be the **leader** [nagiya] of his people, because you have not kept the Lord’s command. – 1 Samuel 13:14 ESV*

God would later tell David:

*“This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies has declared: I took you from tending sheep in the pasture and selected you to be the **leader** [nagiya] of my people Israel.” – 2 Samuel 7:8 ESV*

Years later, God told the wife of Jeroboam, the king of the northern kingdom of Israel:

*Give your husband, Jeroboam, this message from the Lord, the God of Israel: "I promoted you from the ranks of the common people and made you **ruler** [nagiyd] over my people Israel. I ripped the kingdom away from the family of David and gave it to you. But you have not been like my servant David, who obeyed my commands and followed me with all his heart and always did whatever I wanted. You have done more evil than all who lived before you. You have made other gods for yourself and have made me furious with your golden calves. And since you have turned your back on me..." – 1 Kings 14:7-9 ESV*

You see, Solomon was expected to be far more than just a king; he was to be a ruler over the people of Israel. He was to carry on the role that God had given David, and that role included godly leadership. But as the story of Solomon's life unfolds, it will reveal that, while he started well, he finished poorly. Jeroboam would be made the king of the northern kingdom of Israel after God split Solomon's kingdom in half, all due to his disobedience and failure to rule God's people well. And Jeroboam would prove to be a lousy leader as well.

David had learned the hard way that being king was easy, but being God's ruler was difficult. It required obedience. It demanded faithfulness. It came with serious ramifications if you failed to rule according to God's standards. Wearing the crown did not make anyone king; it was living in submission and obedience to the one true King that made someone a ruler. The sad truth about Israel's history is that it had many kings but few rulers. The list of men who had the heart of David would be short. God would tell Jeroboam, "You have not been like my servant David, who obeyed my commands and followed me with all his heart and always did whatever I wanted." Jeroboam had the crown, but he lacked commitment to the things of God. And this indictment would be leveled against king after king of both Israel and Judah.

As was proven true with Absalom and Adonijah, anyone can win over the hearts of the people and have themselves crowned king. But few have the heart for God that would qualify them to rule and lead God's people. I am reminded of what God said to Samuel the prophet when he was at the house of Jesse, looking for the next king of Israel. When he laid eyes on Eliab, the eldest son of Jesse, Samuel said, "Surely this is the Lord's anointed!" But God said to him:

"Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." – 1 Samuel 16:7-8 NLT

The king wears a crown on his head. But the ruler carries God in His heart.

1 Kings 1:41-53

God's Will Be Done

Adonijah and all the guests who were with him heard it as they finished feasting. And when Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said, "What does this uproar in the city mean?" While he was still speaking, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came. And Adonijah said, "Come in, for you are a worthy man and bring good news." Jonathan answered Adonijah, "No, for our lord King David has made Solomon king, and the king has sent with him Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites. And they had him ride on the king's mule. And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king at Gihon, and they have gone up from there rejoicing, so that the city is in an uproar. This is the noise that you have heard. Solomon sits on the royal throne. Moreover, the king's servants came to congratulate our lord King David, saying, 'May your God make the name of Solomon more famous than yours, and make his throne greater than your throne.' And the king bowed himself on the bed. And the king also said, 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who has granted someone to sit on my throne this day, my own eyes seeing it.'"

Then all the guests of Adonijah trembled and rose, and each went his own way. And Adonijah feared Solomon. So he arose and went and took hold of the horns of the altar. Then it was told Solomon, "Behold, Adonijah fears King Solomon, for behold, he has laid hold of the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let King Solomon swear to me first that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.'" And Solomon said, "If he will show himself a worthy man, not one of his hairs shall fall to the earth, but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die." So King Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and paid homage to King Solomon, and Solomon said to him, "Go to your house." – 1 Kings 1:41-53 ESV

While all the emphasis in this opening chapter of 1 Kings seems to be on its three main characters: David, Adonijah, and Solomon, it would be a mistake to lose sight of God's sovereign hand working behind the scenes. God had promised to establish David's kingdom and raise up a son after him who would sit on his throne.

Furthermore, the Lord declares that he will make a house for you—a dynasty of kings! For when you die and are buried with your ancestors, I will raise up one of your descendants, your own offspring, and I will make his kingdom strong. He is the one who will build a house—a temple—for my name. And I will secure his royal throne forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. If he sins, I will correct and discipline him with the rod, like any father would do. But my favor will not be taken from him as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from your sight. Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever. – 2 Samuel 7:11-16 NLT

David had made a vow before God that Solomon would be his successor on the throne. Why would he have done this? Solomon was not the next in line in terms of age; Adonijah was. But David had decided to give his throne to Solomon, and this move was directed by God Himself.

In order for God's promise to David to be completely fulfilled, it was necessary that Solomon be the next king. Verses 11-16 are prophetic and speak of someone more significant than Solomon. Part of this passage would be fulfilled by Solomon, but there is another aspect of the promise that would be fulfilled in Jesus.

*"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. **I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.**" – Revelation 22:16 ESV*

*...concerning his Son, who was **descended from David** according to the flesh... – Romans 1:3 ESV*

*...he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, "I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will." **Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.** – Acts 13:22-23 ESV*

*And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And **the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David**, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. – Luke 1:31-33 ESV*

So, there is much more going on in this passage than just the succession of Solomon to the throne of David. Jesus would be a direct descendant of David, born through the line of Solomon, not Adonijah. Had Adonijah become the next king of Israel, the promise God had made to David would have remained unfulfilled. But God had sovereignly ordained for Solomon to succeed David, and God would bless Solomon in many ways. Yet, even Solomon would eventually fail the Lord and worship false gods, forcing God to divide his kingdom. And the kings who would rule over Israel and Judah from that point forward would, for the most part, continue a downward spiral of spiritual and moral decay. Ultimately, God would be forced to send both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah into captivity. While God would eventually return them to the land, they would never again experience the glorious days they had under David and Solomon. To this day, there is no king in Israel, yet, God is not done. His will concerning Israel is not yet complete.

The prophet Isaiah records the following prophecy concerning Jesus, the Messiah:

*For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,*

*to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. – Isaiah 9:6-7 ESV*

Jesus did come. He was born a descendant of David and Solomon. But He has not yet established His throne in Israel. But that day is coming.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. – Revelation 20:11 ESV

The apostle John goes on to record the very words of Jesus, spoken from the throne of David in the New Jerusalem.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment." – Revelation 21:1-6 ESV

It was necessary for Solomon to be crowned king. He was part of the dynasty that would carry on in Jesus, the Son of David. It was also essential that Solomon become king so that he could carry out his father's dream of building the Temple. But while Solomon would fail to be the kind of king God demanded, and the temple would eventually be destroyed, God had a great plan in store. A new heavens, a new earth, a new kingdom, a new Temple, and the King of kings and Lord of lords to rule over it all – from the throne of David. Rest assured, God's will *will* be done.

1 Kings 2:1-4

Godly Manhood

When David's time to die drew near, he commanded Solomon his son, saying, "I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man, 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, 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 2:1-4 ESV

Solomon is the newly anointed king of Israel, but David is still alive and will serve as the acting king until his death. Solomon will act as his co-regent and, because of David's ill health and Solomon's youth, he will serve as the face of the crown, representing David in any public events. In the meantime, David has a chance to pass on words of wisdom to his son while he is still living. David will give Solomon two sets of instructions, one will be spiritual in nature, while the other will be personal.

The first thing David does is pass on to his son what God had told him. When David came up with the idea to build a house for the Lord, God had denied him that privilege, but God had also made a promise 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. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever." – 2 Samuel 7:12-16 ESV

David knew that the key to any success he experienced as a king had been due to God. He also knew that the success of Solomon's reign would be dependent upon the Lord as well. So, he passed along what God had told him, and he added a few vital words of encouragement and warning:

Be strong, and show yourself a man, 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 2:2-3 ESV

Where had David gotten this bit of information? How could he be so sure that God would prosper Solomon if he were obedient? Back in the Book of Deuteronomy, long before there was

a king in Israel, God had given the people of Israel a series of commands concerning the day when they would demand to have a king.

And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel. – Deuteronomy 17:18-20 ESV

God had instructed that each and every king of Israel was to live by His law. The king was to keep a copy of the law at hand and have it read to him every day of his life. But it wasn't enough to be familiar with the content of the law; the king was to keep every word, statute, and commandment. There was to be no veering to the left or right. No cherry picking or selective obedience. The health and longevity of the king's reign were going to be directly tied to his obedience to the law.

So, David made sure Solomon was well aware of God's expectations. David ties Solomon's manhood to his ability to keep God's law, telling him to act like a man and be strong. And he makes it clear that the proof of Solomon's manhood will be found in his obedience to God. But David knew that Solomon would sin. Like any man, he would have times of disobedience, just as David had. But God promised to deal with Solomon in a loving manner, just as a father would with his son.

"If he sins, I will correct and discipline him with the rod, like any father would do. But my favor will not be taken from him as I took it from Saul..." – 2 Samuel 7:14-15 NLT

Yet, David knew that obedience was preferable to discipline. It was far better to obey than to learn the difficult lessons that come as a result of God's loving hand of discipline. David had lost three sons due to his own sins. He had watched as two of his sons attempted to take his kingdom from him. He had seen innocent people die because of his disobedience. And he knew that living in submission and obedience to the will of God was far better in the long run, and the true mark of a godly man. He also knew that obeying the Lord would require real strength. For Solomon to do what God commanded would take faith, trust, and a willingness to die to his own self-centered desires and wishes. Disobedience is the way of cowards.

The words that David speaks to Solomon are very similar to those Joshua said to the people of Israel as he prepared for his pending death.

"Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left, that you may not mix with these nations remaining among you or make mention of the names of their

gods or swear by them or serve them or bow down to them, but you shall cling to the Lord your God just as you have done to this day.” – Joshua 23:7-8 ESV

Be strong. Obey. Don't veer to the left or right. Stay the course. Cling to the Lord your God. Joshua knew what the people would have to do if they were to be successful in their attempt to possess the land. And David knew what Solomon would need to do to be successful in leading the people of Israel. His success would not be tied to his own leadership skills, the strength of his military, the combined intelligence of his cabinet, or the size of his kingdom. It would be directly linked to his willingness to obey God. Nothing more. Nothing less.

In his letter to the believers in Corinth, Paul gave a similar charge. He encouraged them, “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love” (1 Corinthians 16:13-14 ESV). Living the Christian life is anything but easy. Following the will of God is far more difficult than giving in to your own will. It isn't easy to stand firm in the faith you have in the gospel of Jesus Christ when everything around you seems to be caving in and the waves of doubt confront you. Solomon would have days of doubt and moments of despair. He would end up turning to money, materialism, human wisdom, sexual pleasure, food, and even science, in an attempt to seek meaning in life. He would chronicle his thoughts in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Solomon would surround himself with hundreds of wives and concubines, whose false gods would lead him astray. He would start out strong, heeding his father's advice and obeying the Lord's commands, but his reign would end poorly. He would begin as a godly man, but not end that way.

And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the Lord commanded. Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, “Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant.” – 1 Kings 11:9-11 ESV

Hundreds of wives and concubines didn't make Solomon a man. A mighty kingdom and a massive army didn't make Solomon a man. A reputation for wisdom and wealth didn't make Solomon a man. A godly man is someone who loves, fears, and obeys his God. A godly man is a man who knows his help is from the Lord and who realizes that he is nothing apart from the presence and power of God in his life. Faith in God requires real strength. Disobedience is easy. Which is why Paul calls us to “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”

1 Kings 2:5-9

Passing the Buck

“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. 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. 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.” – 1 Kings 2:5-9 ESV

David had two sets of instructions for his son; one was spiritual in nature, while the other was more personal. In the first four verses of this chapter, David instructed Solomon about what it means to be a man – a godly man. He encouraged Solomon to be obedient to God, reminding him that it would be the key to the success of his kingdom. But now, David makes a slight departure and gives Solomon some last-minute instructions regarding a few personal matters. These involved some unresolved issues linked to David’s reign and involving a few individuals whom David wanted to pay back, either positively or negatively.

There are three men mentioned: Joab, the long-time commander of David’s armies; Shimei, the Benjaminite who cursed David as he fled Jerusalem during the coup by Absalom; and Barzillai, the wealthy Gileadite, who provided David and his companions with “beds, basins, and earthen vessels, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans and lentils, honey and curds and sheep and cheese from the herd” (2 Samuel 17:28-29 ESV), after Absalom took over Jerusalem. In the cases of the first two men, David was passing on to Solomon the responsibility to mete out justice for what they had done to him. In the case of Barzillai, David was instructing Solomon to show favor to this man and his family by rewarding him for the kindness he had shown him.

It seems odd that David would have waited all these years to take action in any of these situations. In the case of Shimei, David had sworn an oath before God that he would not take the man’s life. The exchange that took place between Shimei and David upon David’s return to Jerusalem is important to consider when discussing David’s request to Solomon. After the defeat of Absalom’s forces by Joab and the armies of David, Shimei ran out to meet David.

“My lord the king, please forgive me,” he pleaded. “Forget the terrible thing your servant did when you left Jerusalem. May the king put it out of his mind. I know how much I sinned. That is why I have come here today, the very first person in all Israel to greet my lord the king.” – 2 Samuel 19:19-20 NLT

Shimei confessed his sin to David, and acknowledged the gravity of what he had done. He had cursed and even thrown stones at the king as he made his way out of Jerusalem. But now, he expresses remorse, perhaps even repentance, for what he had done. He pleads to David for mercy. While those around David counseled him to kill Shimei for what he had done, David rejected their advice and responded, “**This is not a day for execution**, for today I am once again the king of Israel!’ Then, turning to Shimei, David vowed, ‘Your life will be spared’” (2 Samuel 19:22-23 NLT).

How would Shimei have received that news from David? With joy and great relief, but also with a sense of permanence. In other words, Shimei would have taken David at his word and believed that his life was being spared. He was forgiven and granted mercy for the rest of his life. But that was not to be the case. Years later, David asked Solomon to take Shimei’s. He doesn’t leave Shimei’s fate up to Solomon’s discretion, but clearly tells him, “I swore by the Lord that I would not kill him. **But that oath does not make him innocent.** You are a wise man, and you will know how to arrange a bloody death for him” (1 Kings 2:8-9 NLT). All that David left up to Solomon’s discretion was the form of execution, not the sentence of death itself.

In the case of Joab, David had more than enough reasons to take his life. During the days when David ascended to the throne after Saul, Abner, Saul’s military commander, had led a rebellion against David, placing Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, on the throne of Israel. When Abner offered to strike a treaty with David, promising to bring all the tribes of Israel with him, the king accepted, but Joab, seeking revenge for Abner’s murder of his brother, killed Abner. His action infuriated David, but he chose to do nothing about it. Years later, when David’s son Absalom raised a rebellion against his father to take the throne from him, Joab killed Absalom in battle, despite the clear command of David (2 Samuel 18:9-15). Finally, when David chose to demote Joab for his disobedience and replace him with Amasa, Joab responded by murdering Amasa in cold blood (2 Samuel 20:8-10).

In each of these cases, Joab committed murder and was deserving of death. But David had chosen to ignore his responsibility as king and allowed Joab to live. Now that David was about to die and Solomon had been crowned the next king of Israel, he was passing off his responsibilities to his son. Once again, David leaves nothing up to Solomon’s imagination when it comes to the fate of Joab, except the form of his execution. David matter-of-factly states, “Do with him what you think best, but don’t let him grow old and go to his grave in peace” (1 Kings 2:6 NLT).

So, Solomon, the newly anointed king of Israel, is given the unenviable task of meting out vengeance on behalf of his father against two men. He would have to do his father’s dirty work and clean up what David should have taken care of long ago. In the case of Shimei, there should have been no vengeance taken, because David had sworn an oath before God that this man’s life would be spared. David had never really forgiven Shimei. His oath had all been a show, designed to make all those around him think that he was a gracious and forgiving king. But obviously, David had never forgotten or forgiven what Shimei had done. In the case of Joab, David never forgave him for murdering Absalom, even though that was the very fate his son had

deserved. Joab's murders of Abner and Amasa meant far less to David than Joab's decision to murder Absalom. And while David had every right and a royal responsibility to deal with Joab's crimes, he had chosen to do nothing. Now, he was passing on that responsibility to his son.

In his commentary on the Book of 1 Kings, D. J. Wiseman writes:

"David was wrong in passing on responsibility to Solomon to execute the judgment he himself should have ordered at the time. This was to cause his son and successors much trouble and feuding." – D. J. Wiseman, *1 & 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary*

David had a habit of putting off the inevitable and the unpleasant. He had allowed Amnon to get away with his rape of Tamar. He sat back and did nothing after Absalom murdered Amnon. He ignored all the signs of Absalom's plan to take over his kingdom. And while Absalom had been guilty of murder *and* treason, David determined to do nothing to punish him, demanding instead that his life be spared. Joab had three murders to his credit, but David had chosen to turn a blind eye. Part of it was probably motivated by expediency and convenience; he needed Joab. As long as David was alive, Joab was an asset he couldn't afford to lose. But now that David was dying, Joab was no longer a necessity, and Solomon would need to clean up David's mess.

Call it what you will: procrastination, conflict avoidance, or merely shirking responsibility, David was guilty of putting off on his son those things he had chosen to ignore or delay. While David had given Solomon wise counsel regarding what it means to be a godly man, he was actually illustrating just the opposite. He had been disobedient to God. He had failed to listen to God's commands and deal with his own son justly. He had neglected his responsibility as king to punish Joab for his crimes. He had made an oath before God concerning Shimei, and now he was planning on breaking it by somehow convincing himself that his oath lasted only as long as he was alive. He justified his decision by rationalizing that he would not be the one to kill Shimei, Solomon would be. Not exactly godly reasoning, and not what you might expect the man to do. But David was far from perfect. He was a man, just like any other man, and prone to the same character flaws and moral indiscretions as the rest of us.

One of the main lessons that jumps out of the life of David is that it isn't how well you start, but how well you finish. David lived a long life and had enjoyed an illustrious reign. To this day, he is considered the greatest king Israel has ever had. But the closing moments of his life are not exactly his finest. His final words to Solomon, while filled with wisdom, are also marred by his own human flaws. You can see his weaknesses on display. You can sense his ongoing struggle with sin, even to the very last. He would pass on to Solomon a great kingdom, and hand over to his son a powerful army and a remarkable legacy. But he would also pass the buck, leaving his son to deal with his own unfinished business.

1 Kings 2:10-12

The God of David

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. So Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established. – 1 Kings 2:10-12 ESV

And David died. His long, circuitous life came to an end. The Book of 1 Chronicles adds the detail: “Then he died at a good age, full of days, riches, and honor” (1 Chronicles 29:28 ESV). David had been king for 40 years and had experienced all the ups and downs that come with life. He had enjoyed his fair share of victories, but had also known what it was like to suffer defeat. He experienced the accolades of the people and then stood by and watched as they turned their backs on him. He had been blessed by some and cursed by others. He had been lauded as a great king and accused of being a usurper to the throne. David had been a man of great faith, but he had also shown signs of doubt and displayed a tendency to take matters into his own hands. He could be decisive and, at the same time, doubtful. At times, he was impulsive and driven by his desires. At other times, he was unwilling to act until he had received a word from God. David was a man of God and a murderer, a man of great faith and an adulterer. He loved God, but he also had an inordinate love for women, marrying far too many of them and disobeying God in the process. David had a heart that beat fast for God, but that, at the same time, struggled with ungodly desires. In other words, David was human. He was just a man.

Too often, we deify someone like David. We turn him into a saint and place him on a pedestal, treating him as an icon rather than seeing him as a living illustration of what it means to walk with God. David was not perfect, and he is not presented to us in Scripture as a super-saint or intended to be an unapproachable model of holiness. In the life of David, as portrayed in the pages of the Scriptures, we are given a vivid glimpse into all his faults, failures, weaknesses, and sins. Nothing is held back. We are not given a neatly sanitized version of his life, an autobiographical treatment complete with all the less-than-flattering parts removed. No, we are treated to a warts-and-all, no-holds-barred chronicle of his life, the good, the bad, and the ugly. Most of us would be mortified if we knew our entire life’s story was going to be put in a book for all to read, for generations to come. All our dirty little secrets would be put in print and outlive us for thousands of years. But that’s precisely what happened to David.

David was not an icon of virtue or a perfectly pious saint. He was a man, chosen by God, and commanded to serve as the shepherd of God over the people of God. This was not a position for which David aspired. He had not asked to be chosen. He had been content shepherding his father’s sheep. But one day he was protecting his sheep from predators, and the next he was standing face-to-face with a Philistine giant. David’s life was one of extremes. He would go from the peace of the pasture to the political intrigue of the palace. He would become a warrior of great renown. But he would also become a fugitive with a bounty on his head. David would know what it means to succeed and fail, to experience the heady thrill of glory and the heart-

breaking darkness of defeat and disappointment. He would know the pleasure of life in the palace and the uncomfortable reality of life in a cave.

David is not the hero in his own story, God is. He is the one who chose David. He is the one who stood beside David, through all the ups and downs of his life. God is the one who lovingly disciplined David and graciously equipped and empowered David for each and every victory he enjoyed. God remained faithful to David throughout his life and never abandoned or turned His back on him. Yes, there were moments when it appeared as if God had walked out on David, but He was there. God was watching over him, protecting him, teaching him, molding and making him into the kind of man he was meant to be. David, like all men, had rough edges that needed to be smoothed out. He had sinful dispositions that needed to be exposed and eliminated. And David recognized that God was intimately involved in his life, lovingly disciplining him so that he might be the kind of man God called him to be. That is why he could write the words:

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. – Psalm 139:23-24 NLT

David loved God and trusted Him to do what was right and just. He didn't always obey God. He didn't always rely on God. But when all was said and done, David always came back to God for help, hope, strength, and direction. He knew his life was nothing without God. He knew his future was directly tied to the power and promises of God. His life would end, but the covenant God made with him would last long after he was gone.

David was a man of faith who trusted God. His name is mentioned in Hebrews 11, the Great Hall of Faith, where the names of the patriarchs and matriarchs of the Old Testament are given as examples of unwavering faith in God's promises.

*How much more do I need to say? It would take too long to recount the stories of the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, **David**, Samuel, and all the prophets. By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight. – Hebrews 11:32-34 NLT*

Like Abraham, David believed in God, and it was counted to him as righteousness. He trusted in the promises of God, and knew that God would preserve his kingdom and place a descendant on his throne, ensuring that his kingdom would have no end. Like all the other Old Testament saints, David died long before he saw this promise fulfilled in its entirety. But thousands of years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, born as the son of Mary and as a descendant of David. He was the legitimate and legal heir to the throne of David. Yet, Jesus died a criminal's death on the cross. He was buried in a borrowed tomb, but was raised back to life and returned to His rightful place at His Father's side in heaven. One day, He will return, and when He does, He will

return as the conquering King and the rightful heir to the throne of David. He will rule from Jerusalem over the people of Israel, and all the nations of the earth will bow before Him as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Then I looked again, and I heard the voices of thousands and millions of angels around the throne and of the living beings and the elders. And they sang in a mighty chorus:

*“Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered—
to receive power and riches
and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and blessing.”*

And then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. They sang:

*“Blessing and honor and glory and power
belong to the one sitting on the throne
and to the Lamb forever and ever.”*

And the four living beings said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped the Lamb. – Revelation 5:11-14 NLT

The story of David is the story of God. He is the faithful, covenant-keeping God who chooses to use men like David to accomplish His will and bring about His divine plan for humanity. God doesn't need us, but He graciously uses us. Yet, we need Him. We must trust and rely upon Him, knowing that He will do what He has promised and complete what He has started. Our lives may end, but His work will not. We are temporary, but He is not. Our future is in His hands.