

Women's Bible Study – Fall 2009

What's in the Heart?

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A Heart the Finishes Well

1 Kings 2; 2 Samuel 23

Jann Wright



In early October I had a chance to do something that probably few individuals get to do in their lifetime. I attended a birthday party; but not just any birthday party. This was a party to honor my grandmother on the occasion of her 100th birthday. Lest you think that living to be 100 is commonplace in our family, you should know that my mother died at the age of 51 and my father at the age of 62. So it was indeed an occasion for a family celebration.

On a beautiful Kentucky morning we gathered with close family and friends at an Old Historic Restored Schoolhouse that held fond memories for my grandmother, a retired teacher. I opened a time of remembrance by reading Proverbs 31 and sharing specific memories of my grandmother that correlated with the many character traits of a Godly woman in that passage. Then many family members stood to share the contributions my grandmother had made to each of their lives. Many of their stories were ones that I had never known or heard. It was a wonderful experience for all of us, but especially for her, kind of like being able to attend your own funeral without being dead.

Pausing and taking inventory of one's own life is a healthy exercise. It is especially beneficial to do it before you turn 100. This morning/evening we are going to look back over the life of David, and remember.

Context/Background

The Scripture Passage for today occurs near the end of David's life. He is about 70 years old. While many of us may have the impression that everyone in the Old Testament lived a long time like: Noah (950), Abraham (175), or Moses (120); actually after the Flood the life spans dropped dramatically, and during David's time and the reigns of the Kings who will follow him most of their life spans were considerably shorter than the averages of today. However, God tells us that 70 years old is a good lifespan. (Psalm 90:10 **The length of our days is seventy years-- or eighty, if we have the strength; . . .NIV**) Of course there are many who do not live that long and there are some that are granted decades beyond.

A lot has happened in David's 70 years. We have seen the very best a Godly man can offer and the very darkest recesses of his soul. We have seen the good, the bad, and the ugly. This morning/evening we will review David's last words, recap the highs and lows of his life, and leave with three legacies from the one who had a Heart that Finished Well.

Scripture Passage **Legacy to a Nation**

Let's begin with our first Scripture Passage, 2 Samuel 23. Please turn with me if you have your Bibles, 2 Samuel 23:1-7. These are David's last words to the Nation of Israel.

2 Samuel 23:1-7

¹ Now these are the last words of David. Thus says David the son of Jesse; Thus says the man raised up on high, The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel: ²"The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue. ³The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me: 'He who rules over men must be just, Ruling in the fear of God. ⁴And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, A morning without clouds, Like the tender grass springing out of the earth, By clear shining after rain.'

⁵"Although my house is not so with God, Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, Ordered in all things and secure. For this is all my salvation and all my desire; Will He not make it increase? ⁶But the sons of rebellion shall all be as thorns thrust away, Because they cannot be taken with hands. ⁷But the man who touches them Must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, And they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place."

This is the legacy left to a Nation. It is poetic and timeless. Like most poetry we have to pull it apart a little to understand it. Note first that David, describes God. He is the God of Jacob. He is the Spirit. He is the God of Israel. He is the Rock of Israel. We have here a veiled reference to the trinity. David begins his address to the nation by focusing their attention on God.

Next, he describes himself. He is the Son of Jesse. He is a man raised up, anointed by the God of Jacob. He is the sweet psalmist of Israel. Isn't it interesting that of those descriptors the only one he had some tiny influence over was being the sweet psalmist of Israel. It was God's choice that he is Jesse's son, that he is lifted up to a high rank, and that he is anointed by God. David had little to do with those honors, they were gifts. And the other reference to himself directs us to his role in worship; he was the sweet psalmist of Israel.

In his last words to the nation, The Legacy he leaves is that in a nation it is first about God and second about political leaders. God is involved in the events and leadership of nations whether they choose to acknowledge him or not. Those who rule over men must be just, Ruling in the fear of God. This was the message to the ancient nation of Israel in 970 B.C. and it is a timeless message intended for us as well. The character of our leaders is important. David would know that better than anyone else, because at times in the history of the nation his citizens suffered and died because of his sin. We don't want to hear that today. We want to see character issues as something we can put on a shelf, but David didn't see it that way. God doesn't see it that way either, those who rule over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. When that happens the atmosphere in a nation is so glorious that it is compared to three picturesque images in nature: the dawning of the sunrise, a cloudless morning, and tender grass coming up after a rain.

Yet, David knows even he has not lived up to that standard, nor will his descendants. He says, **⁵"Although my house is not so with God, Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, Ordered in all things and secure. For this is all my salvation and all my desire . . .** God will keep his promises even when His servants do not. David is giving us a glimpse of grace, that undeserved merit and favor from God. David ends his national address by recognizing all those men who have supported his reign and served him well. He calls them by name, noting their particular contributions.

Scripture Passage

Legacy to a Son

The next passage is 1 Kings 2. These instructions are the Legacy to a Son. These words are addressed to Solomon, the heir to the throne. He is still rather young, about 18 years old. Unlike the words to the nation, these words were likely uttered in private. They are direct, specific, and time oriented. First, he passes the spiritual baton to the next generation.

¹ Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying: ²"I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. ³And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, 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 fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul,' He said, 'you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.' (NKJV)

I am not sure there is a more emotional moment in the life of a parent than the moment they realize that their life is almost over and they must pass the spiritual lessons they have learned on to the next generation. David warns Solomon that he will go the way of all the earth in other words he will die. He implores him to faithful to God. David knew better than most the difficulties that arise from stepping off the path of obedience. He is imploring Solomon that he must take the responsibility for his own spiritual obedience. His father will not be there to guide him. He had instructed him, helped him to make preparations for the Temple, but now Solomon will have to be strong and complete the work. He will have to maintain his own relationship with God, seek Him, and obey Him. David reiterates the covenant that God had made with him and beseeches Solomon to follow through on this his greatest responsibility.

We should each take this responsibility seriously. Since we do not usually know the time of our death, we must continually be passing on the spiritual lessons we have learned to the next generation. How sad if the next generation is to gain no benefit from our mistakes, failures, and lessons learned. Pass the lessons you have learned on to those around you.

As I was working on this lesson, I was reflecting back on the lesson that Lorie taught on a Heart of Prayer. Remember she brought a little box with rocks in it, on each rock was inscribed a circumstance in which God had been faithful. When I had a quiet moment one day running errands, I slipped into a craft store and found that you can buy whole bags of rocks for very little. A few aisles over is a set of boxes, in various shapes and sizes. And so following Lorie's example, I brought home a few supplies and explained them at one of our family dinners. So we are now creating a way in which spiritual lessons can be passed to the next generation as well. You may have a different idea, but find a way to pass on the spiritual lessons to the next generation.

This passage ends with David covering a list of longstanding difficulties in the kingdom and his advice on how to deal with them. Some have interpreted these as a list of revenge motivated instructions, while others see them as divine appointed judgments finally being meted out against those who had transgressed against the Lord's anointed. That dichotomy is one we are not going to be able to fully explore this morning/evening; but I encourage you to read the full context of the historical account to see the details surrounding these men as well as how Solomon actually dealt with them.

Finally, we read, **¹⁰So David rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David. ¹¹The period that David reigned over Israel was forty years; seven years he reigned in Hebron, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years. ¹²Then Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established. (NKJV)**

Legacy to All Generations

We have looked at David's legacy to the Nation, David's Legacy to His Son; finally we will look at David's Legacy to All Generations. We have spent 10 weeks studying David's life. This morning/evening we are going to review his life by listening to a selection of scripture excerpts from every lecture. Then from each of those selections there is an ABC block to represent the aspects of David's heart that we have studied.

In David we saw a Heart of Courage. ⁴⁵**Then David said to the Philistine, "you come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.** (NKJV)(1 Samuel 17:45-46). C is for Courage.

Next, we saw in David a Heart of Friendship. ¹**Now, when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.** (NKJV) (1 Samuel 18:1) F is for Friendship.

Then, we saw a Heart of Honor. ⁹**And David said to Saul: "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Indeed David seeks your harm?' ¹⁰Look, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed.'** (NKJV) (1 Samuel 24:9-10). H is for Honor.

Then, we see a Teachable Heart. ³²**Then David said to Abigail: "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! ³³And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand.** (NKJV)(1 Samuel 25:32-33) T is for a Teachable Heart.

Next, we studied a Heart of Sorrow and Regret. ¹¹**Therefore David took hold of his own clothes and tore them, and so did all the men who were with him. ¹²And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son, for the people of the LORD and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.** (NKJV) (2 Samuel 1:11).

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." (NIV) (2 Cor. 7:10). S is for Godly sorrow.

Next, we have a Heart of Worship. ¹⁴**Then David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod.** ¹⁵**So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet.** (NKJV) (2 Samuel 6:14-15) W is for a Heart of Worship.

Then, we studied a Heart of Prayer. ¹⁸ **Then King David went in and sat before the Lord; and he said: "Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far? . . .** ²² . . . **You are great, O Lord God. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.** ²³ **And who is like Your people, like Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people, to make for Himself a name--and to do for Yourself great and awesome deeds for Your land-- . . .** ²⁵ **Now, O Lord God, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, establish it forever and do as You have said.** ²⁶ **So let Your name be magnified forever, saying, 'The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel.'** **And let the house of Your servant David be established before You.** ²⁷ **For You, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, have revealed this to Your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house.'** **Therefore Your servant has found it in his heart to pray this prayer to You.** (NKJV) (2 Samuel 7:18, 22,23, 25-27). P is for Prayer.

We have before us a very impressive life. One in which the life of the good, and faithful leader is laid out for all to see and emulate. However, we have glossed over a few unpleasanties in David's life even up to this point. While they have not yet coalesced into what we would label a building block for the other side, we begin to see little grains of sand, pebbles gathering on the dark side.

David had picked up many wives in his journey. Deuteronomy 17:17 clearly cautions against this temptation for a King. David had lied to the High Priest at Nob and had contributed to the circumstances that lead to their slaughter. When David faced the King of Gath the first time he, " . . . **changed his behavior before them, pretended madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall on his beard.** (NKJV) (1 Samuel 21:13). Not exactly behavior commendable for the LORD's anointed.

David did not obey the clear instruction of God regarding the transporting of the Ark of the Covenant the first time. As a result a man had died. There are other examples, but these are enough to illustrate that David was not a perfect man, even before we encountered the last two lessons in our study.

A Heart of Lust and Murder, what a sad chapter in the life of Israel's Greatest King. **It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they**

destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. (NKJV) (2 Samuel 11:1)

And in Jerusalem David laid his eyes on another man's wife. He took her. He committed adultery. He tried to cover up his sin, by retrieving her husband from the battle lines and bringing him home to sleep with his wife. But Uriah was more honorable than David and would not enjoy the comforts of home while his fellow soldiers slept in tents in the field of battle. So David, had one of his elite fighting men, sent back into battle carrying the orders for his own death. David commanded Joab, Commander of the Military, to have Uriah killed in the line of duty.

But the thing David had done displeased the Lord. And the prophet Nathan is sent to confront David. “. . . **Thus says the LORD God of Israel: `I anointed you king of Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more! ⁹Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? . . .**” (NKJV) (2 Samuel 12:7-9) A for Adultery. M for Murder.

Finally, we studied a Broken Heart. Michelle explained in that lecture that following the story of David and Bathsheba we have the account of Amnon, the crown prince, who raped his half-sister Tamar. David, while angry, does nothing to discipline his son. Two years later Tamar's brother Absalom, murders Amnon, and then eventually courts the people of Israel with his charm and tries to take the throne from David. ³⁰**So David went up by the Ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up.** (NKJV) (2 Samuel 15:30) ¹¹**And David said to Abishai and all his servants, “See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. . .** (NKJV) (2 Samuel 16:11)

The rebellion eventually ends with Absalom's death at the hand of Commander Joab, but the loss is devastating to David. B is for a Broken Heart.

So we look at the life of David and we see the very best a Godly Man can offer in His service to God and we see the very darkest recesses of the Heart. We struggle to reconcile the sin in his life with the fact that God described him as a man after his own heart. We wonder how can a man that has experienced all of that stand before a nation, a son, and generations yet to be born and speak with such authority about righteousness and obedience. How can he have such peace in the face of death?

The answer is the primary lesson that we need to take from our study of the life of David. It is the difference between Law and Grace. In our worldly perspective we look at a person's life and judge whether the good generally outweighs the bad. And if it does that seems good enough for us. That is our standard for Righteousness.

But, we don't get to set the standard. God does. This kind of good and bad works set on a balance scale is just another way of explaining the Law. However, the Law doesn't work the way most think.

James 2: 10 **For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.** That is really bad news. It is bad news for David and it is bad news for us. It means that when we break any of God's laws or sin we are guilty. David was guilty according to the Law before he even got to Adultery and Murder. Even these little grains of sin and little pebbles are enough to break the law. And the penalty for breaking the law or sin is death. God's standard is very high. If you are trying to gain righteousness before God by trying to do more good than bad you are not going to make it. I believe it was Chuck Swindoll who said He wouldn't trust the best 5 minutes he ever lived to get him to heaven. Stumbling at just one point makes you guilty. That is the bad news.

But there is good news and Christmas is one of the most delightful times to celebrate it. Luke 2:

⁸Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. ¹⁰Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. ¹¹For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (NJKV)

The good news is that Jesus, the very Son of God came to earth, born of a Virgin, to pay the penalty for your sins, so that they would be wiped away, cleared from the balance sheet. And instead of your good works remaining, which are only as filthy rags in the presence of God, we are given the righteousness of Jesus.

David loved God, he sought earnestly to obey him and many times he demonstrated incredible courage and faithfulness; but when he fell short and into the pit of sin, he repented, accepted the forgiveness God offered, and was a recipient of Grace. That is why God could call him a man after his own heart. It is how we too can be women after God's own heart. God kept his promise to David, even though Solomon was

unfaithful, and the nation was unfaithful for centuries. God kept a descendant of David on the throne of Judah, and then came the one who would sit on that throne and rule forever and ever, Jesus Christ, who was of the house and lineage of David. **Acts 13:36 says, ""For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed.(NIV)** Let us each serve God's purpose in our own generation all the while knowing that we are dependent upon the Grace of God.