

The Last Words of King David: 2 Samuel 23:1-4 (Acts 13:36)

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"*Tis well.*" said George Washington.

Stonewall Jackson said, "*Order A. P. Hill to prepare for action! Pass the infantry to the front rapidly! Tell Major Hawks ... Let us cross over the river and sit under the shade of the trees.*"

"*Hold the cross high so I may see it through the flames!*" cried Joan of Arc.

P. T. Barnum asked, "*How were the circus receipts in Madison Square Garden?*"

"*Friends applaud, the comedy is over,*" sighed Beethoven.

Jesus cried out, "*It is finished!*"

What do all these quotes have in common? They are famous (and some not so famous) last words. Last words, and farewell speeches, are what people are often remembered for. We think of General MacArthur saying, "*Old soldiers never die, they just fade away.*"

Today we finish up our stories from the life of David with his last official words as King. These were not his very last words, he lived a while longer, but this is what he wanted us to hear, consider, and remember.

The oracle
of David,
son of Jesse

The word "oracle" is no longer commonly used, but it simply means "a declaration, or a wise, or prophetic statement." Here, I believe, through the inspiration of God, David was doing all three; summarizing his life, seeking to pass along some wisdom, while also speaking of another promised king yet to come. Let's see what we might learn from these wise and prophetic words.

First, Let's consider BACKGROUND, David's and ours.

With God, background doesn't matter. David wasn't ashamed of his background or family. He freely admits that his father was Jesse, a common farmer. David grew up tending sheep near the little town of Bethlehem. Shepherds were among the lowest of the lower class; theirs was the job that no one else wanted. As the eighth son, David got the family shepherding duties. He wasn't even regarded important enough to be called home for a family banquet with a distinguished guest, where the sons had been specifically invited.

But David wasn't ashamed of his roots. He was proud of them. He must have marveled at the fact that God had plucked him out of the pasture to be the shepherd of Israel. Being described as "a head taller than all the others," King Saul had looked like a king. David was simply described as a red head, short and slight of build.

This lets us know that...God can use ANYBODY.

The prophet **Amos** was another shepherd, whom God used to deliver His message to the people of Israel.

Nehemiah was a mid-level politician, a cupbearer in the service of the Persian king, whom God used to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Peter, James and John were fishermen. The religious leaders of the days considered them "uneducated men." God used them to light the fire that started the Church.

Jesus had worked as a carpenter for thirty years before beginning to preach. His hometown folk were so offended at what he now claimed to be, that they tried pushing him off a cliff.

Jeremiah said he was too young to serve the Lord. When God called he replied, "*Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.*"

Moses was an 80 year old man with a criminal record and a stutter, again working in the middle of nowhere as a shepherd, when God called him to lead over a million Israelites out of slavery in Egypt.

The truth is God uses whomever He wants. God can use anybody to do something great for His kingdom; even you.

Second, whom God calls He EQUIPS.

The man whom God exalted, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the favorite of the Strong One of Israel:

David went from being a forgotten shepherd, to the servant of a king, then a fugitive from that king, until one day himself becoming the king. He began with a slingshot and a harp and ended up writing hymns to God that are still read and sung the world over.

"*God doesn't call the equipped, he equips the called.*" God gives us the ability to do what he calls us to do. It doesn't matter what our backgrounds are. Some of us are from middle class,

and some are not. Some are phenomenally talented like Bill Rutledge – I can say that now because he is not here to blush – others aren't. Some are bold in public, and some are shy. Some of us were raised in the church, and some of us weren't. It doesn't matter what our background was. All that matters is, if we are willing, God can equip us for the job he has planned for us. He took a ragtag bunch of disciples that included fishermen, a tax collector, a political radical, among others, and turned the world upside down. In some ways it's not even a matter of our own will or desire – remember Jonah, the reluctant prophet – it's about God's decision to call and equip us. When God calls, He will equip.

This is true because God is... Our SECURITY.

The spirit of the Lord speaks through me,
His word is upon my tongue.
The God of Israel has spoken,
The Rock of Israel has said to me:

David was aware that what wisdom he had, came from God; his psalms continue to comfort and they were often prophetic. The term "Rock" occurs frequently in the Old Testament as title for God relating to stability, safety, and security.

When we think of rocks we may think of our Appalachian Mountains. They have been worn down by the ages, but they remain strong, steady and sturdy. They aren't going anywhere. They have stood the test of time, weathered storms, winds, rain, and earthquakes. We have topped them for coal and blasted car tunnels through them with dynamite, but they have not collapsed.

In Psalm 62, David wrote, "*For God alone my soul waits in silence; from Him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall never be shaken.*"

As He was for David, **God is also our ROCK.**

The old hymn says, "*Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee.*" When the storms of life batter us, God is our Rock that offers us stability, safety and security.

Now we come to that portion of David's declaration which can be read two different ways.

One who rules over people justly,
ruling in the fear of God,
is like the light of morning,
like the sun rising on a cloudless day,
gleaming from the rain on the grassy land

Here, David paints an idyllic picture of a leader, but was he referring to himself?

For the most part David was an excellent king in Israel. He was the measuring stick against whom all future kings of Israel were measured, but he wasn't perfect. David's early reign showed promise as one who ruled in righteousness (2 Samuel 8:15). Then came the affair with Bathsheba and Uriah, along with his failure to discipline his own sons. In these stories, David was shown to be a sinful man who did not consistently rule in the fear of God. David was not the picture of perfection. Older translations of David's next words, appear to acknowledge this (cf. 2 Samuel 23:5 KJV). So might he be saying something else here? Speaking of someone else?

David described this righteous ruler as "*like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless day, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land.*" What ruler could ever live up to this description?

Pastor and Biblical commentator Gordon Keddie notes,

"The messianic implication is inescapable. The coming of Christ is in view. Ultimately, the fruit of the land is Jesus Christ, the 'Branch of the Lord' (Isaiah 4:2). He is the ultimate Davidic king, under whose scepter his believing people will enjoy the goodness of God both in time and in eternity."

Gordon J. Keddie, Triumph of the King: The Message of 2 Samuel, 233–234.

So this is perhaps where the Spirit of the Lord was again speaking through David of another king yet to come. David said

Is not my house like this with God?
For he has made with me an everlasting covenant,
ordered in all things and secure.
Will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?

David was remembering a promise; the covenant that God had earlier made with him. At the start of his reign, David had wanted to build a "house"—that is, a temple—for God. However, God had replied, that rather than David building a house for God, He would build a house—that is, an everlasting royal dynasty—through David. Through the Prophet Nathan, God said to David,

"Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. 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.... And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever"

(2 Samuel 7:11b-13, 16).

David's offspring to whom God was immediately referring was Solomon, but ultimately God was referring to David's Greater Son, Jesus Christ. God promised David that through his lineage He would establish the kingdom of Christ which would then endure for all eternity. Assured of God's good purposes toward him, David said, "*will He not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?*" David trusted God's promise that this would be so.

Our world doesn't trust promises; we are driven by guarantees. Since our things don't last, we want everything guaranteed: cars, houses, computers, and anything else that we buy. This car comes with a 3-year/50,000 mile warranty, but for an extra fee it can be extended to 10 years and 100,000 miles. Mufflers often come with lifetime warranties. Whose lifetime: the muffler's, the car's, or ours? God's guarantees are eternal. Long after our cars have been turned to scrap metal, God will still be there.

And God always HONORS His promises. God's Word is permanent and unchanging; His decisions are not dependant on our actions. That's the distinction between God's covenants – His promises – and our human guarantees. Warranties always have conditions that must be met – like don't use this car for commercial purposes, don't drive in a war zone – or the warrantee is voided. God honors His covenant with us even when we fail Him.

Your house and your kingdom
shall be made sure for ever before me;
your throne shall be established for ever.

2 Samuel 7:16

God made this covenant that the Savior would come through David's descendants before David was found guilty of lying, adultery and murder. We would expect God to rescind His covenant and choose someone else, but that wasn't the case. As Scripture would teach us, **even when we fail Him, God remains faithful** (2 Tim. 2:13). Jesus said that God's Word is truth. Despite the problems that David had, God held true to the covenant that He had made.

God's has also made a covenant with us; offering us salvation through His Son Jesus Christ. The offer is as good today as it was ten years ago. It doesn't matter where we come from or what kind of life we have lived; God still offers us salvation. It doesn't matter if we never knew Him until recently, or if we've walked away from Him. The offer of salvation and blessing is on the table for us to claim for ourselves and live with the same hope as David.

David's last words were

But the godless are all like thorns
that are thrown away...
And they are entirely consumed in fire on the spot.

The problem is that there are people out there who actively leading people away from God. God has also made them a promise. Evil people will get their reward. There are a lot of wolves in sheep's clothing leading people away from God. It doesn't matter what their motive is, if they are leading people away from God, God promises to destroy them.

So, be careful. Don't let someone become a substitute for the security found only in God. God is our Rock. No one else is.

This brings us to the conclusion; what lesson should we learn from these last words of David?

It doesn't matter if we grew up rich or poor. It doesn't matter if we grew up in the church or out of the church, or what church we grew up in. It doesn't matter what we've done. It doesn't matter what kind of education we have. It doesn't matter what our ancestry was. It doesn't matter if we move in high class circles or not. None of that stuff matters.

All that matters is our commitment to God. We have to trust God and act on that trust.

David trusted God. David never forgot where he came from and Who got him to where he ended up. David knew that without God, he would probably have lived his life out as a shepherd in total obscurity. For the most part, David was a godly king. He did commit sins that really messed up his family, yet he did fulfill the role God had given him. David's time was always looked back on as a golden age for Israel. As the Apostle Paul concluded, "*For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, died, was laid beside his ancestors, and experienced corruption*" (Acts 13:36).

And yet that which he accomplished, as a man after God's own Heart, and God's promises that he passed along, still bless us to this day. Looking back we see David as a larger than life character. Next week as we celebrate Independence Day, we are reminded that we see George Washington and Abraham Lincoln the same sort of way.

As our historic leaders, they are larger than life to us. No one can seem to measure up the standard they set. The point is that David, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln took their trust in God and put it into action. What counts at the end of the day is God's promises to us and our commitment to God.

God still calls for us to trust him and act on that trust. God may ask us to do something we never thought we could. But where God calls, He equips. And where we fail, God never fails. These are promises we need to keep close to our heart, and certainly live by whether as a shepherd or a king.

Let's pray about this.