

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 23:1-7

### The Consolation of a Sure and Everlasting Covenant

*...yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure – v. 5*

As we near the end of the book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel one thought that's been on my mind is how to go back over the entire book and give a synopsis of the whole book. And if we cared to carry that synopsis back into 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel then the question that would naturally arise would be – what is the basic meaning or lesson of David's life? If there is one thing that we could take that would span the narrative from the very first time we meet David, when as a young man he's anointed by Samuel back in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 16 up to where we find him now uttering his last words as they're called in 23:1 what would that one thing be?

I realize that such a question might be rather speculative in nature and I suppose any number of answers might be considered and then the task we'd face would be determining who has made the strongest case for their answer of what best encapsulates the life and reign of David. Or we might take a better approach to that question by letting David himself answer that question for us; for I think that is what he is in fact doing in the opening verses of 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 23.

And isn't that what a man would aim to do if he knew he was speaking his last words? Put yourself in that position for you may soon actually be in that position. The time of your end is near; perhaps you're on your death bed but you're still coherent enough to be able to communicate with those gathered around you. You know your time is short and you have this opportunity to consider all that life has meant to you. You can look back over the span of your life and you can try to stress one last thing to your loved ones. What would you want to say? It's a little bit, I suppose, like considering what you'd like put on your tombstone.

One thing you might like to have at your disposal would be the same thing David had at his disposal which was the leading of the Holy Spirit. And this is made a point of emphasis in these first 3 verses. You'll notice that these last words of David are initially attributed to David the man – *David the son of Jesse* v. 1 says. David who was raised up by God and anointed by God and favored by God. This is the man who spoke.

But note again – and this is important especially in what it teaches us about the inspiration of the Bible. This was not merely David speaking. This was and is the Spirit of the LORD. *The Spirit of the LORD spake by me* he says in v. 2. *His word was in my tongue*. And what that means is made very plain in the next verse. *The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me...* So this is David speaking but it's also God speaking. And that's how the Bible works. *Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost* (2Pet. 1:21).

There's a remarkable consistency in Peter's view of inspiration. In Acts 1 when he stood up among the other apostles to offer an explanation for the betrayal of Christ by Judas and the need to replace Judas with another he said: *Men and brethren, this scripture must*

*needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.*

So David's last words are words that the Holy Spirit gave him and what do those last words tell us? That's what I want to focus our study on this morning –

## The Lessons from David's Last Words

A simple analysis of these words presents us with a broad principle stated; a humble confession made; a firm basis for hope; and a warning. Knowing as we now know the importance of these words since they're David's last and knowing that they are also God's words, let's analyze David's last words under these headings. Consider with me first of all:

### I. A Broad Principle Stated

These words in v. 3 must be considered as a point of emphasis, perhaps the main statement to the entire section since so much leads up to it. Let's begin in v. 1 so you can get the feel of how emphatically this broad principle is being expressed:

*Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, 2 The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. 3 The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.*

Think of all that David would have had behind him in the realm of his knowledge and experience in order to make such a statement. He was on the scene of time when the very first king of Israel mounted the throne. He remembered king Saul and in his reflections toward king Saul he undoubtedly would have thought on what a negative example Saul had been. He did not rule justly. His pursuit of David was unjust. And he did not rule in the fear of God. He ruled with a sense of his own entitlement. His obedience had been incomplete. And in the course of his reign we read how a number of people who were distressed and in debt and discontented gathered themselves unto David.

David himself would have cause to reflect on his own rule. I think it would be safe to say that generally speaking he ruled justly and in the fear of God. He was after all a man after God's own heart – but not all the time. You remember how Nathan the prophet presented to him the case of a man who was rich who had an abundance of lambs but instead of using one of his own lambs to entertain a guest he stole the only lamb that his neighbor possessed. David was outraged. He knew what to do - *he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity* (12:6) – to which the prophet replied: *Thou art the man*. David certainly demonstrates time and again doesn't he that even the best of men are but men at best.

Now commentators point out that this statement by David is not merely made with reference to himself. The formula for this saying is very similar to the formula for the way

another man spoke prophetically many years before David. You remember the prophecies of Balaam found in Numbers 24? Listen to these words from Num. 24:2-5:

*And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the spirit of God came upon him. 3 And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: 4 He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: 5 How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!*

David too is not only stating a principle that applies to any ruler or to any man with authority, he's looking ahead. The Spirit of God is communicating to him just as he did when he communicated the Davidic covenant to him back in chp. 7. When it comes to rule of David's greater son – Christ Himself, this broad governing principle will at last be realized. There will come a day when the mediator of the Redeemed will rule over men in the fear of God. Paul describes that day in 1Co 15:28 *And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.* This is the rule that we long for but in the mean time we must strive for.

You could say that this stated principle represents the ultimate fulfillment of the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment. *Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee* (Exod. 20:12). That's a command, you know, that has far greater application than to children obeying their parents though obviously it does apply there too. One of the best benefits to our shorter catechism questions and answers is the analysis those questions give us of the 10 commandments.

Listen to this answer to question #64 **What is required in the fifth commandment?**  
*Ans: The fifth commandment requireth the preserving the honor, and performing the duties, belonging to every one in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals.* And if you care to follow up on a study to that commandment you'll discover that the term *Father* is a more far reaching term than merely to a biological father. The term is used to describe elders or rulers of all sorts.

This might come across to the carnal flesh or to unsaved folks as an undesirable form of bondage. This was, after all, the very thing that man in his fall rebelled against. Basically in the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve said *I will not have God rule over me. I'll have no man rule over me. I will be as God. I will rule myself. I will answer only to myself.* And the fruit of that mindset is what explains the state of the world today.

Oh how we wish that God-fearing men would be raised up to represent us in civil government – men who would be just, ruling in the fear of God. And how we wish as parents we would measure up better to that standard in our own lives. We know we should and we try – as Christian parents we try, but like David our strivings do come short. And we wish as elders and under-shepherds that we tended well to the flocks of God, being just and ruling in the fear of God. And as parents we groan for submissive children and as

elders we groan for more submissive sheep. So we groan in our strivings. We groan especially in the absence of God fearing men ruling over us. We groan under the reality of Prov. 14:34 *Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin [is] a reproach to any people.* And in our groaning we also anticipate a day when the knowledge of God and Christ will fill the earth, when at last we'll reach our full potential under God as created and redeemed beings. Thank God that day will come. David illustrates what that day will be like in the next verse when he says in v. 4 *And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.*

There's actually a hymn that must be based on this text. It makes reference to heaven when the hymn-writer says: O they tell me of a home far beyond the skies; they tell me of a home far away; they tell me of a home where no storm clouds rise; O they tell me of an unclouded day. Some of you wouldn't admit to others but you'd admit to yourselves that you can hear Willie Nelson singing the words to that hymn as I quote the words.

So we groan but not as those with no hope. We groan as we anticipate an everlasting day that will be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. May the Lord hasten such a day. But what do we do in the mean time? And this leads to my next point of analysis in these last words of David. We've seen a broad principle stated. Would you consider next that we also find in his last words:

## II. A Humble Confession Implied

Listen to the words of v. 4 and the beginning of v. 5: *And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. 5 Although my house be not so with God;*

This is one of those verses that finds some variety to its translation if you care to compare the AV with other English versions. I think the modern translations supply a little more interpretations to their translations when they take a negative statement and convert it to an interrogative question. *For does not my house stand so with God?* – the ESV reads and the NAS reads very similarly.

I think the AV translators got it right and their translation makes perfect sense in the broader context of 2Samuel as well as the immediate context of what follows. What have we found in David's life after all? Have we found his life to be altogether unclouded? Have we found his home to be altogether unclouded? Far from it. We've seen heinous sin in his children. We've seen a similar kind of sin that Paul would have to deal with in the church at Corinth and in his dealing with such sin he makes it clear to them that it was despicable even by pagan Gentile standards.

Oh, there's good reason for David to say *Although my house be not so with God.* There was not only sibling rivalries within his home, there was the sin of one son murdering his

half brother to avenge his sister who had been defiled by that half brother. And in the course of that son's rebellion there was a sense in which that son was put out with Dad, the king, who evidently did little about it. Absalom would go into exile and even after being brought back out of exile he would be so put out that he would eventually lead a rebellion against his dad, a rebellion that would lead to his own death.

And you might recall from our studies in that period of David's life that David was very much aware that this was all traceable back to his own sin of stealing another man's wife and having her husband murdered in battle. Oh, there's good grounds for David to say *Although my house be not so with God*.

James makes reference in his epistle to Elijah being a man *subject to like passions as we are* (James 5:17). The same thing can be said of David. We share a common carnal nature with him. Interestingly enough when I looked up that verse in James 5:17 I found another use of that same phrase *like passions* in Acts 14:15. This is the account of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra. They had just performed a miracle by lifting a lifelong cripple to his feet who before that moment couldn't walk. You remember the story? The pagans at Lystra were so impressed by that miracle that they deified Paul and Barnabas and were about to offer sacrifices to them, honoring them as if they were gods.

You would think the contrast couldn't be greater between those pagan Gentiles with Paul and Barnabas but when they address them and plead with them to cease and desist they say *Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you*. We're all idolaters Paul and Barnabas are saying. Was it John Calvin that said Our hearts are idol making factories?

David knew his own sin and he knew the sins of his children. The man after God's own heart could say truthfully and humbly *Although my house be not so with God*. The thing to note here, however, is that this is only the first part of the statement – a very important part obviously for what it takes into account, but it's not the complete statement. The next part of the statement leads to the next point of analysis. We've seen so far a broad principle stated and a humble confession implied. That which follows this phrase *Although my house be not so with God* leads us to see next:

### III. The Firm Basis of Hope in David

Let's read now the entire verse – v. 5 *Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow*.

In my introduction I raised the question about the over arching purpose to the life of David. Why has God seen fit to give us the biography he has of this man's life and reign? What is the Divine intention behind this character in the Old Testament. And if I had to choose a chapter which I would call a key chapter to the book in would be chp. 7. This is that chapter which records for us the covenant made between David and God.

David, you will recall, had the desire to build a house for God. The ark of the covenant had only recently been brought to Jerusalem and it abode in a tent, presumably a replica tent of that tabernacle in the wilderness. This bothered David because he himself lived in a palace of sorts. David didn't like what was implied by that. It gave the appearance that somehow God was subservient to him. So he had the desire to build a temple to Jehovah but instead God said to him that He would build David's house.

*And when thy days be fulfilled, God says to David in 7:12 and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.* Here was a promise that included David's seed but went way beyond David's seed and David's kingdom. In our study of that chapter I pointed out that David's dynasty through his line would last for some 400 years, longer than any earthly dynasty in the course of world history. 400 years is a very long dynasty but it's far short of forever and the promise made to David was that his reign would be forever.

The true fulfillment of David's dynasty would spring from David's greatest Son, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. That dynasty is in effect now. David's greater Son is right now this very moment seated at the right hand of God and He rules and reigns now and His Kingdom is forever and His Kingdom will prevail over every rival kingdom that exists in the world today. And this Kingdom is a reign of grace and salvation. David certainly saw it that way. Look at what he says again in v. 5 *Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire...*

This text is certainly worth a sermon of its own. Indeed I'm sure it could easily lead to a series of sermons. Look at the descriptions of this covenant. This is an everlasting covenant. It began in eternity past between the Father and the Son and it will extend into eternity future and will encompass a new heaven and a new earth. This is an ordered covenant – *ordered in all things* the text says. It was planned before the earth was created – that's why Christ is called in Rev. 13:8 *The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

It was ordered, then, in the eternal counsel of the blessed Trinity. It was executed in time. So we read in Gal. 4:4,5 *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

Planned before time, executed in the fulness of time, and you could say applied in due time. 1Co 15:8 *And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.* From start to finish, then, this covenant was planned, executed, and applied – applied to every believer. I wonder this morning – has it been applied to you? How can you know whether or not it's been applied to you? You can know it this way in the words of Rom. 10:9 *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

So this covenant is everlasting and it's ordered in all things from the planning and executing and applying it. Would you notice also that it's sure: *Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.* There can be no doubt about the veracity of this covenant. Christ will not be denied. He paid too high a price for those He came to save to be denied their salvation. This covenant is sure because Christ is our Surety.

That's a biblical term – Surety. We find in Heb. 7:22 *By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament* (or covenant). The reference is made to an oath – an oath that Christ should become our great high priest after the order of Melchizedek. *By so much* which means *by that oath* referenced in the previous verse Christ was made a surety which is tantamount to saying Christ took upon Himself the responsibility for landing His people safely on heaven's shores. Aren't you glad this morning that as a follower of Christ, as a believer in who He is and what He's done you don't shoulder the responsibility for landing yourself on heaven's shores – that's His responsibility, a responsibility He pledged Himself to by nothing short of an oath. This is why David could say that this covenant was ordered in all things and sure.

It's also why he could go on to say *this is all my salvation*. This everlasting covenant encompasses salvation in its entirety. Nothing is left out. We've recently completed a series of studies in our communion services on the 7 sayings of Christ from the cross. And when we considered His 6<sup>th</sup> statement *It is finished* I borrowed a phrase from David Murray's book on the Happy Christian in which he vividly describes how the gospel is the gospel of done. It's a done deal. It's not the gospel of what you and I must do – no, it's the gospel of done. The work is done – the obedience required is done; the work of paying our sin debt is done. It's all done.

Now there are things for us to do but what we do or what we refrain from doing is all based on what is done which I suppose is just another way of saying this everlasting covenant is all our salvation and it is sure. But now comes what arguably could be regarded as the test. Do you believe in this salvation? Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Do you see your need for His grace and His forgiveness and His cleansing and His enabling power? The test is found in the next phrase of the verse. This everlasting covenant, you see, which was ordered in all things and sure and was all David's salvation is also said to be *all my desire*.

What does that mean – all my desire? Knowing what we know about David, that he was a man after God's own heart, I think you could say that when he says this salvation is all my desire he's saying not only that he desires the benefits of this salvation, especially given the fact that his *house be not so with God* it also means that this salvation became the focal point or the core of all he did and all he refrained from doing.

By saying that this salvation was all his desire he's saying in effect that Christ is all my salvation and Christ is all my desire. I want to know Christ. I want to know Him better. I want to live for His glory. I want to please Him in all things and I want to avoid anything

that is displeasing to Him. I want to walk in the obedience of faith. I want to magnify His name and make His name known. Perhaps this statement of David finds its best cross reference in the New Testament in the words of Paul in Phil. 3:10 *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.*

Let me ask you some questions this morning as we bring this study to a close. Why is it that you come to church on Sunday? I hope it's because Christ is all your desire and this is the place like no other place that you meet with Him and worship Him and learn of Him and hear from Him and sing to Him and thank Him for an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure.

And could I point out here (for I must do this before I finish) that this is the answer to the first part of the verse – *Although my house be not so with God.* Although I sin and I stumble and stagger and fail on so many accounts *yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.* Although I fail as a worker and I fail as a neighbor and I fail as a parent and I fail as a spouse and I fail to measure up to God's glory and I find myself to be terribly inconsistent in all my devotional habits and in all my obedience. *Although my house be not so with God* – God's grace nevertheless prevails. The gospel wins. Salvation triumphs. Or as Paul says in Rom. 5:20 *where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.* Isn't that the New Testament way of saying what David says in our text?

I wonder, then, this morning – is this salvation yours? When David says this is all my salvation, he's not speaking in the realm of abstract theory, he's speaking rather of something that he possessed. Do you possess it today? Will you possess it today? It's full and free for the taking. All it takes is to see your need of it and receive it.

These then are David's last words, and what glorious words they are. These are words to live by and words to die by. How I desire that my life be encapsulated by such words and the truths conveyed by such words. What truths are conveyed? The truth that grace reigns through righteousness in Christ and He is willing to covenant with sinners to bring about their salvation.