

David: Ending Well by— Dying Gracefully I Kings 2

It is hard to fully comprehend how much lasting impact one single human life can accomplish.

Think of just David's brief lifetime.

Three thousand years ago he lived and died—yet today millions and millions of people read, quote, memorize, gather comfort and hope, and sing the words he wrote in the Psalms.

Three thousand years ago he lived and died—yet today billions and billions of people think about, revere, love, and want the city he founded and built as the capitol city of God's people. Jerusalem, David's city, is in most newspapers and TV news reports and on the web daily!

In fact the two final wars on this planet (Revelation 16 and 20) will both be fought over control of David's city that is also God's city named—Jerusalem!

So David's life has accomplished something that touches most people on earth daily! That is astounding, and just one more reason we have spent this year seeing David's life through the lens of Scripture.

Today we begin to look at the conclusion of David's life. When David comes to the end of his long and event filled life, it was not a worn out body that caused his death, nor was it the lack of medical care. It was God's appointed time.

Listen to the words of Job who lived nearly 5,000 years ago, recorded perfectly for us by God in His Word, the Bible. Job 14:1-5

"Man who is born of woman Is of few days and full of trouble.

2 He comes forth like a flower and fades away;

He flees like a shadow and does not continue.

3 And do You open Your eyes on such a one,

And bring me to judgment with Yourself?

4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?

*No one!
5 Since his days are determined,
The number of his months is with You;
You have appointed his limits, so that he cannot pass.*

Our life time is not set by how carefully we guarded our health through diet and exercise (yet God commands us to be disciplined and not reckless in our physical lives); nor is our lifetime extended by physicians (though God commends to us proper health care). Our length of days has been determined by God alone.

As we open to 1 Kings 2:1-2 we will begin to see the elements David models in what I am calling, "Dying Gracefully".

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.

The first element we find as we look at David's final recorded moments is that **David is gracefully unafraid of death because he was saved, redeemed, and thus prepared spiritually**. He was open and exemplary in his instruction to his son. David is unafraid to initiate talk about his death. He had taken time to prepare for death, and then he talked about it clearly with his son (and probably many others) and by God's Spirit even to us!

How did David come to this place of spiritual preparation for death? He was sure about the destination of his soul.

Remember what we saw back in Psalm 31:5?

Psalm 31:5 Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.

David knew he was redeemed—bought and paid for by God. Because of that confidence, he declares his life is held by God's Hands.

The key to dying gracefully is to be certain that our immortal spirit is safely sealed and kept by God. Our future destiny is in His Hands, not a doctor's, not a terrorist's, and certainly not in ours. So a secured spiritual life is the first key to dying gracefully.

Jesus reflects this certainty as he went to the cross. And calmly at His final moment He says in Luke 23:46 those same words of David.

Luke 23:46 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Having said this, He breathed His last.

Spiritual certainty like David's is faith in what Christ's work on the cross accomplished. Jesus defeated death; Jesus delivered us who trust in Him. The writer of Hebrews notes

that part of Christ's work on the cross was to deliver us who come to Him from the fear of death.

Please turn with me back to Hebrews 2:14-18 and this morning review again what happened at Christ's cross.

Stand and read.

*Hebrews 2: 14-18 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death **He might destroy** him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ **and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.**¹⁶ For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.¹⁷ Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*

Pray

If you have been born again, Jesus has released you from the fear of death.

Christ's work is finished, the power of death is destroyed, the price of sin is paid, the power of an endless life is yours and mine in Christ.

Have you come to the place in your spiritual life that you know that you are His? That your soul is held by God? That your spirit clothed immortal will make its flight to realms of Glory? That is dying gracefully

Fanny Crosby's (1820-1915) words often flow through my heart as I think of this reality. That blind poet, hymnist and saint triumphantly affirmed her hope in Christ as resurrection and life!

All the Way My Savior Leads Me

All the way my Savior leads me;
Oh, the fullness of His love!
Perfect rest to me is promised
In my Father's house above.

When my spirit, clothed immortal,
Wings its flight to realms of day,
This my song thro' endless ages:
Jesus led me all the way;

This my song thro' endless ages:

Jesus led me all the way.

So first, David made the most important preparation, he was spiritually certain of his salvation. As we turn back to 1 Chronicles 22:14 we will find the second element of David's graceful preparation for death--**David surrendered to God the ownership of all his material possessions before his death.** By that I mean David had made sure that none of the normal things that tie most people down to the earth were tying him.

*1 Chronicles 22:14 "Indeed **I have taken much trouble to prepare** for the house of the Lord one hundred thousand talents of gold and one million talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond measure, for it is so abundant. I have prepared timber and stone also, and you may add to them.*

One of the most amazing elements of David's life is how he viewed his immense wealth.

As we studied many months ago in the message called "David's Legacy—what he left behind" we saw that David was perhaps the wealthiest person who has ever lived. He very well may have surpassed all the Pharaohs and other ancient kings in sheer magnitude of wealth. But that is not the key. What amazes me and instructs me is what David did with his wealth.

He carefully gathered it, safely stored it and very consciously gave it away to God. The record of that final gifting to God by way of his son Solomon is very touching in and of itself. But seen in the light of all that David experienced and then captured in the Psalms we see a pattern.

I am often reminded that wealth is like stored time from the past. My present use of wealth saved from the past is a way to give part of those years now gone—to the Lord. Look at 1 Chronicles 22:14 again. Note that David took much trouble to prepare. This was the premeditated murder of any materialistic desire in his heart.

He wanted his stored up time of his life, measured by his wealth to reflect his great love for God. So he was very careful to direct his wealth while he was alive, into the hands of God.

David had learned what Jesus spoke so forcefully about in His Sermon on the Mount. Money is the monitor of our heart. At any time in life, our view of our money reflects the condition of our heart. The entire section of Matthew 6:19-24 is all about one area of life. Who owns our material possessions—us or God.

*Matthew 6:19-24 "**Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;** 20 "**but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.** 21 "**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.** 22 "*The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.* 23 "*But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how**

great is that darkness! 24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

This graceful preparation of our personal wealth before our death is a real challenge to each generation of Christ's Church throughout the ages. Once, a wealthy Christian plantation owner invited John Wesley (1703-1791) to his home. The two rode their horses all day, seeing just a small part of all the man owned.

At the end of the day the plantation owner proudly asked, "Well, Mr. Wesley, what do you think?" After a moment of silence, Wesley replied, "I think you're going to have a hard time leaving all this."

The plantation owner was attached to the world he was in. Wesley was attached to the world he was going to.

It is very hard for a believer to die when they have wealth that is not surrendered to Christ's control.

Jesus told us that believers who lay up treasures on earth spend their life backing away from their treasures. To them, death is loss.

Jesus also told us that believers who lay up treasures in heaven look forward to eternity; they are moving daily toward their treasures. To them, death is gain.

Any believer who spends their life moving away from their treasures has more and more reasons to despair. Those who spend their life moving toward their treasures have more and more reasons to rejoice.

How are you doing with all of your physical, material, earthly possessions? Are they surrendered as tools given back to God's control? Or are they treasures held tightly?

David died gracefully because he took much trouble to surrender the control of all his material possessions to God as tools in God's Hands.

Is the passing of time causing you and me to despair or rejoice? God's ownership of everything is the reference point for all of us who serve the Lord. Century by century the greatest servants of God in Christ's Church have said nearly the same thing about their wealth. They have each battled with materialism and put it to death by conscious obedience to Christ's claims upon their lives and material possessions—whether little or much. Listen to their voices affirming Christ's words and David's.

And so it is that when a man walks along a road, the lighter he travels, the happier he is; equally, on this journey of life, a man is more blessed if he does not pant beneath a burden of riches. ~Tertullian (155-230 AD)

Let temporal things serve your use, but the eternal be the object of your desire.
~ Thomas A Kempis (1380-1471)

I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all. But whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess. ~Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Whatever good thing you do for Him, if done according to the Word, is laid up for you as treasure in chests and coffers, to be brought out to be rewarded before both men and angels, to your eternal comfort. ~ John Bunyan (1628-1688)

I value all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity. ~ John Wesley (1703-1791)

I place no value on anything I possess except in relation to the kingdom of God.
~ David Livingstone (1813-1873)

And finally, from modern times, we often miss something in the 29 year old missionary martyr Jim Elliot's (1927-1956) famous words, "*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.*" We focus on his willingness to go to the mission field. That willingness started when he surrendered all of his material possessions into Christ's Hands, and thus relinquished his hold on things as no longer MINE!

God's kingdom and control over all of life was the reference point for David and these saints mentioned. Paul in Acts 13:36 (David's Epitaph) reminds us that David wanted to fulfill God's purposes and did. So David and these heroes of the faith saw all else in light of the kingdom. They were compelled to live as they did not because they treasured no *things*, but because they treasured the *right things*.

David had paid a high price to prepare materials for the advancement of God's Kingdom. In his lifetime he was generous with his wealth. He gave, encouraged and supported many in his realm. But behind all that he did was this long term strategy to be involved in what God was doing that would extend beyond his lifetime. He distilled down moments of his life into wealth that would be used as he directed in the promotion of God's goals. He amassed building materials for Solomon.

An application for us remains--if we diligently prepare the materials, others after us may build. God asks all of us to live obediently in this life. But within that obedience come choices and David's choices blessed the Lord and brought an endless reward. The fact that David wrote and sang these 71 plus worship Psalms for the Lord is so powerful.

David's whole life was involved with worship and praise, singing and teaching of God's wonders.

So should ours.

So how can David's spiritual preparation impact our view death? In I Kings 2 we saw

that David calls death “the way of all the earth”—it was a reminder to even young Solomon that death is universal and inevitable.

David was saved or redeemed, the first element of his life we see at death. Then he surrendered the ownership of his life and treasures back to God. There is one final element that made David unafraid to end well and die gracefully. Death was the way out of earth for him and into the dwelling God had prepared for him. It was early in his life, most likely as a shepherd boy that the real foundation for dying gracefully was laid.

Turn with me there to the last half of the 23rd Psalm. Death to David was not an unknown, it was not a mystery—it was an appointment. The third element we find as we look at David’s final recorded moments is that ***David sees death as an appointment with his Good Shepherd, who we know is Jesus.***

Even the greatest enemy—death, was disarmed before David. He could dine (a wonderful picture of his fellowship with the Lord) even in the presence of death, the end of all we know of this earthly part of life.

Psalm 23:4-6

*4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;*

For You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup runs over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord

Forever.

David had reservations in Heaven. It was where his God lived, and a place was prepared for him and he was following his guide through life into the valley, through the shadows and safely home,

Many times over the years I have stood at bedsides in hospitals, emergency rooms, and hospice arranged homes—and shared these same words.

Death is an appointment for all who know Jesus, with their Good Shepherd. Jesus comes to take us through the valley of death’s shadow. We have an appointment already set by Him (Hebrews 9:26) and neither we nor He shall ever be early or late.

When a loved one dies whether we make it there in time or not—the Good Shepherd does make it. He arrives exactly on time and takes His beloved by the hand and walks them safely home.

So David was not afraid of death, he spoke openly about his appointment with His Good Shepherd Jesus who was coming to get him. But such hope and confidence does not removed from us the pains associated with death—just the fear is removed by faith and trust in Jesus.

All the Way My Savior Leads Me

All the way my Savior leads me;
Oh, the fullness of His love!
Perfect rest to me is promised
In my Father's house above.

When my spirit, clothed immortal,
Wings its flight to realms of day,
This my song thro' endless ages:
Jesus led me all the way;

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