



Studies in the Life of David

Text

First Kings 2:1-12

Topic

From his deathbed King David gives advice
to his son and successor, Solomon

Title

"Famous Lasting Words"

Introduction

I thought this was funny. It's from a list called the *Top Ten Criticisms of Churches*. The writers first state the criticism then give their suggested solution.

In the interest of time I'll only mention three of them.

Criticism #1 - "Nobody noticed when I was gone for three weeks."

The Suggested Solution: From now on, each member of the congregation will be required to have placed on their ankle a tracking device so that we will know where they are at all times, including when they are at the lake, at the golf course, hunting, etc. Also, each member will be required to bring a doctor's note stating that the member was actually sick and had an excuse for being out of church. The church will also start to use the phone tree system to give everyone a wake-up call on Sunday mornings so that they can get to church on time.

Criticism #2 - "I don't know everybody anymore."

The Suggested Solution: From now on each member of the congregation will be required to memorize the names and faces of each member of the congregation, including each new member that joins hereafter. Also, each member will be required wear a photo ID for identification purposes.

Criticism #3 - "The worship team doesn't sing my kind of music."

The Suggested Solution: From now on, there will be no more worship team or congregational singing but each seat in the sanctuary will be equipped with an IPOD and headphones to listen to your favorite type of Christian music during the worship service.

These were posted by a deacon board that was obviously frustrated by criticisms of their leadership. You've heard of *Angry Birds*? This was an **Angry Board!**

Their sarcastic approach is probably not helpful but it does highlight the fact that we might not always be working together in the church to further the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of the biblical illustrations of the church is that we are God's building, we are God's temple, on the earth. The apostles and prophets of the first century laid the foundation and we come along as living stones and continue to build generation after generation.

- In the New Testament letters to various churches we discover the Lord's **plans** for our building.
- We also discover that God the Holy Spirit makes available to us every necessary spiritual **provision** with which to build.

So we have all the *plans* and every *provision* for building God's spiritual temple. All we need, then, is to have the right spiritual heart as we approach the work.

We can identify a few components of that right heart as we look at the last words of David to his son and successor, Solomon. Just like the Lord has done for us, David had provided all the plans and every provision for the

building of God's literal temple on earth in Jerusalem. All Solomon needed was the right heart as he approached the work.

He gets an understanding of that right heart from David's deathbed counsel. The king tells the future king (1) to live Godward with devotion, and (2) to look man-ward with discernment.

David's advice will serve us well if we will heed it with regard to building God's spiritual temple, the church, on the earth.

I'm going to organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Build The Church By Living Godward With Devotion, and #2 You Build The Church By Looking Man-ward With Discernment.

#1 You Build The Church
By Living Godward With Devotion
(v1-4)

In the letter to the church at Ephesus the apostle Paul said that the foundation of the building was laid once and for all. He said that the church is,

Ephesians 2:20 ... built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

Ephesians 2:21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

Ephesians 2:22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Then, regarding the day-to-day work of the church he said,

Ephesians 4:11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

Ephesians 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

We would say that the church exists to **exalt** Jesus Christ and we accomplish that by **evangelizing** nonbelievers and by **equipping** believers to do the work of the ministry.

Within that general framework there is a lot of room for variation. There *can* and there *should* be different vision for exactly how to build. There will always be many different gatherings of the church, each group building with their own vision.

In any particular church the builders need the right heart. In his charge to his son, David gives us some things to consider about having a heart devoted to the Lord in our building for Him.

1 Kings 2:1 Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying:

1 Kings 2:2 "I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man.

The words "be strong" can have a variety of meanings, including *continue*, *prevail*, and *withstand*. With such perseverance over time serving the Lord Solomon could "prove" himself.

It does not take anything away from our dependance upon the Lord to realize that as His servants we are called upon to be faithful over time. Faithfulness, in fact, is required of us.

1 Kings 2:3 And 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;

This word "charge" means to *safeguard* and to *watch* as if you were a *sentry* on duty.

If you want to be faithful throughout your lifetime and prove yourself then watch and guard over two things: "His ways" and His word.

What is meant by God's "ways?" There's a beautiful verse in the Psalms, 103:7, that reads, "He made known His ways to Moses, His acts [works] to the sons of Israel." Israel saw God's works - His acts, deeds, and miracles. Moses, however, knew God's ways - His character and nature. The people knew what God did, *but Moses knew God*.

Are you looking for God's ways - or just His works? Let's say you are struggling in a trial, or you are stuck in some suffering. Are you wanting deliverance and healing? Or are you willing to wait upon the Lord and learn something about His ways that you could not know otherwise?

The trials of Job related in his book are a good example. Job and his three friends all thought they knew God. But as Job suffered, and as his situation continued, their dialog revealed that they knew God's works and not His ways. In fact, they didn't really even know God's works because they were wrong about why Job was suffering.

Finally Job started to understand God's ways. At one point he exclaimed, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You" (42:5). It was an "Aha!" moment going from wondering about the works of God to knowing His ways.

You're also to stand guard over God's word. "His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies," are a description of what was "written in the Law of Moses." It's like saying "the Scriptures" only with more depth to remind Solomon that everything he needed to know could be discovered there.

The companion exhortation for us, in the New Testament, would be Second Timothy 3:16.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

I find it comforting that everything I need for living the Christian life with godliness can be discovered in the Bible. What a source! What a resource!

1 Kings 2:4 that 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.'

God **wants** to “fulfill His word” to His servants. All He needs from us is that we would “take heed to [our] way” and to “walk before [Him] in truth with all [our] heart and soul.”

- Taking “heed to [our] way,” would certainly include the general “way” a Christian should walk as revealed in the Bible. But it also reminds me that God has a specific path, a plan, for my life to discover as I seek Him.
- To “walk before [Him]” fully committed is our reasonable response to the love He showed us on the Cross at Calvary. Who doesn’t want to be loved and to return that love? You **ARE** loved - so realize it and return God’s love.

Our first look must be Godward. When it is, we will build according to His plans depending on His spiritual provision.

#2 You Build The Church
By Looking Man-ward With Discernment
(v5-12)

It all sounded so glorious, this building of the temple in Jerusalem. It was; but there were some people who would not be on board and who could hinder the work.

The church on earth, God’s spiritual temple, is glorious. *And then there are always some people who are not on board!*

(Including me; including you. You or I can sometimes be the ‘difficult person’ that makes building God’s temple so stressful).

What can we learn from David’s lasting words? We can identify at least three types of people in the three men he talked to Solomon about.

Or, if we apply this to ourselves (as we should), we see three possible attitudes we can adopt as fellow builders. Two are not good; one is good.

First there is Joab. He represents the self-serving person and attitude.

1 Kings 2:5 "Moreover you know also what Joab the son of Zeruah did to me, and what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed. And he shed the blood of war in peacetime, and put the blood of war on his belt that was around his waist, and on his sandals that were on his feet.

1 Kings 2:6 Therefore do according to your wisdom, and do not let his gray hair go down to the grave in peace.

Joab killed "the two commanders of the armies of Israel" so he could remain commander. He did it with deceit and brutality in order to further or secure his own self interests.

Before commenting further on this, let me answer a question. Why didn't David take care of this? Why leave it for Solomon?

The same could be asked with regard to Shimei as we see in a moment.

Well, *I'm not sure!* On the one hand, David and Joab and Shimei had history together. They understood each other. David could keep them reined-in to a certain extent.

On the other hand, if they deserved death, why postpone the inevitable and leave it to Solomon?

David was either led by the Lord in this or he was being disobedient.

- Now sometimes we are quick to want to deal with things in the church and I think we can be too quick and get ahead of the Lord, not giving Him room to work.
- Other times we should deal with issues, with people, but we simply don't.

From Joab we learn that there is no place for self-serving, for self-seeking, for self interest, in building God's temple. It's apparent that most church difficulties result from someone being selfish, self-willed, and wanting their own way. They may disguise what they are doing in spiritual lingo, but at the heart of it you will find self.

Self isn't always expressed negatively. Often times it is expressed by people who simply have their own agenda in a church. Instead of building together they are building for themselves. They may establish something, some ministry, they think is necessary. Maybe it is... Or maybe it just syphons the strength of the church and is not what the Lord has raised-up.

Self is overcome by seeking the Lord and, in the building of His church, by submitting to the godly leadership He has raised-up.

Let's skip talking about Barzillai in verse seven and look at Shimei.

1 Kings 2:8 "And see, you have with you Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a malicious curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim. But he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I swore to him by the Lord, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.'

1 Kings 2:9 Now therefore, do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man and know what you ought to do to him; but bring his gray hair down to the grave with blood."

Shimei represents the subversive person and attitude. We might use the word 'divisive.' He's the person who refuses to recognize God's delegated authority in the leaders who have been raised up. He rallies others against them, all in the name of what is best for everyone when in reality he is just refusing to submit.

It's too bad that God's church is known so much in the world for its division, for its in-fighting. We are to maintain the spirit of unity in the bond of peace. There is no place for subversive behavior that undermines the building.

It's not all doom-and-gloom. Back to verse seven and Barzillai.

1 Kings 2:7 "But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table, for so they came to me when I fled from Absalom your brother.

Barzillai represents the supportive person and attitude. He recognized David as the man God had raised-up to be king and when David needed it, Barzillai supported him at great sacrifice, great risk, great cost to himself.

Most of the believers in God's temple are supporters! They are there to build by giving their money, their time, their gifts and talents, to the work.

They deserve to “eat at [God's] table.” They deserve to be fed and nourished, to be built-up in order to do the work of the ministry.

Remember the deacon board I quoted in the intro and their sarcasm? They allowed the selfishness and the subversiveness of a few in their midst to influence their thinking. Instead of feeding the supporters, they took a shot at the others. The problem is, the supporters often take the hit, feeling condemned.

David's life closes out with these last words:

1 Kings 2:10 So David rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David.

1 Kings 2:11 The period that David reigned over Israel was forty years; seven years he reigned in Hebron, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years.

At every stage of his life David was a misstep away from death:

- As a young boy shepherding the sheep he was confronted in the wilderness by lions and bears.
- As a teenager he faced-off against Goliath.
- As a musician in King Saul's court he had to dodge spears being thrown at him by the demented king.
- For over a decade Saul sent murderers after David or sought to kill him himself.
- All that time Israel's enemies sought to kill David, too.
- After he became king, David had to survive a coup attempt by one of his own sons.

Death stalked David.

Death stalks us. You and I have no real assurance beyond right now. Any of us could pass into eternity today.

Let's be about the Lord's business. Let's build and let's do it with devotion and discernment.