

**1<sup>st</sup> Kings 2:1-4**

1 When David's time to die drew near, he charged his son Solomon, saying: 2 "I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, be courageous, 3 and keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn. 4 Then the LORD will establish his word that he spoke concerning me: 'If your heirs take heed to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel' (NRSV).

Kings covers the history of Israel from the death of King David to the release of exiled King Jehoiachin from prison in Babylon. When King David is old there is a struggle for succession. After his three oldest sons have died his fourth son Adonijah was involved in a conspiracy to seize the kingship. However, according to David's favorite wife Bathsheba he promised her that their son Solomon would be king. The Prophet Nathan warned Bathsheba about the conspiracy, she told David, and David had a public ceremony anointing Solomon as the new king. There is a lesson here that we can learn from the Bible in regard to the struggles that we face. We tend to pray to God to free us from our struggles, take our burdens away, and eliminate our pains. However, we see that there were many Bible heroes that faced struggles. God does not promise us freedom from struggles. People often ask "Why does God give me this burden?" Well, God does not do that. God does not pick & choose who is going to get sick and who is going to die prematurely. God does not pick a child and decide to give that child cancer. Everyone gets sick, has pain, has to face seat backs and heartache, and everyone dies. The lesson for us is that if the Bible heroes had to face struggles then you can be assured that you too will face struggles. What God does is help you during your struggles.

There is another important biblical lesson here on righteousness. We tend to view righteousness by our own standards but righteousness is in the eyes of God. One very important aspect of David's personality is that David was a righteous man. Now, it is important for us to realize that David was not 100% righteous all the time. He slipped up, committed adultery, and transgressed from will of God. This was the catalyst of all of his troubles. There are always consequences of behavior. The point that I want to make is that one of the greatest Bible heroes was not 100% righteous. The lesson for us is not to judge the righteousness of others but to learn from King David. What he did after he realized the depths of his sins is he sought forgiveness and repented. He devoted his life to living by the will of God and the pursuit of righteousness.

When David was at the end of his life he handed the throne over to Solomon. This brings us to today's Scripture. David gives a spiritual warning to Solomon to keep God's laws. During antiquity in Israel everyone was under God's laws, even the king. David gives these very important instructions to Solomon "keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, so that you may prosper" (1st Kings 2:3).

David realizes that his own success as a warrior and as a king is due to receiving God's favor and being righteous. The Bible is about almighty God and human relationships; the covenant between God and the people of God. The covenant with David was expressed to David through Prophet Nathan. "The LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth

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. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever” (2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 7:11-16).

David is well aware of this covenant with God and reinforces it to his successor. Then there is the all important warning. It is the same warning expressed repeatedly in the Bible “If your heirs take heed to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel” (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 2:4). David passes on to Solomon the necessity to follow God, the will of God, and the law of God. David also reinforces the necessity to be faithful with all your heart and soul. The Bible emphasizes complete devotion, to be faithful with all your heart and soul.

Solomon was so successful that he was famous. It is very important for us to remember that the promise from God is conditional. God promises the blessing to Bible heroes if they stay true to God and obey the commandments. Here in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings we see that this condition is also passed on to their heirs. God also expects the descendants to remain devoted. The contemporary lesson for us is how this parallels with the life of the modern church. The church itself is richly blessed when it is focused on staying true to God. Churches begin to struggle when you are not devoted to God. Today in contemporary society we are all familiar with how churches struggle from a lack of devotion by our heirs. Solomon had a very serious problem – the pursuit of materialism, pleasure, and self indulgence. He let go of the ways of God and this led to the destruction of the kingdom. The nation split in two and ended up in exile.

When New Testament times come one thing that the people look forward to is God’s intervention and they expect it to come due to strict obedience to the law. They want and expect the throne of David to be re-established. It is promised by God, hoped for by the people, and realized through Jesus. Now here today we have the advantage of being able to see that the throne lasts forever through Jesus. Bible lessons repeat. There may be different words, different places, and different people, but it is the same fundamental lesson. Obey the word of God, walk in ways of God, keep God’s commandments, statutes, and laws. Be faithful with all your heart and soul.