

42. The Book of 2Samuel—23:1-7

“Words the Matter”

(6/18/17)

This morning we come to 2Samuel 23:1-7—a section that is called ‘David’s last words’.

Before we look at David’s final words—let me just say that today, it seems, we are surrounded by a constant chorus of “talking heads” in the form of pundits and commentators on T.V., talk radio, and the internet.

All of these mediums have provided a platform or ‘soapbox’ from which people can spew a constant stream of trivial and even meaningless drivel into our lives.

One day as I was preparing a study, I was looking at the farewell address of Joshua and it hit me that when a person is saying good-bye to the people that matter most to them—they aren’t going to waste their words with meaningless ‘chit-chat.’

They’re not going to talk about the weather or sports or even business—they’re going to try to sum up what they’ve learned over the course of their life—the things that really matter, and pass those insights along to the people they love and care about in a concise way.

We see that here in our text this morning with the final words David chose to share with us about what is really important in life—words that matter.

2 Samuel 23:1 (NKJV)

¹ Now these *are* the last words of David. *Thus* says David the son of Jesse; *Thus* says the man raised up on high, The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet Psalmist of Israel:

So, in verse 1 David identifies himself as the one who penned these words—but in verse 2 he tells us Who actually gave these words to him to write down—

2 Samuel 23:2 (NKJV)

² "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, And His word *was* on my tongue.

So even though these were some of the last words of David (not spoken from his deathbed, but expressed sometime just prior to his death)—he acknowledges that they were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

And the first thing that David, as the current king of Israel, wants to express in these final words of wisdom is how important godly leadership is to a nation—

2 Samuel 23:3 (NKJV)

³ The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me: 'He who rules over men *must be* just, Ruling in the fear of God.

David took over for King Saul as king of Israel.

Saul didn't rule in the fear of God—he abused his power by using it to reward his allies and punish his enemies (fellow Jews).

Also, Saul didn't fully obey God but often did what pleased the people (he was a man-pleaser).

Paul the apostle said, *“If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ’s servant.”*
(Gal.1:10)

David is saying, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that those who rule over people must be just (righteous not corrupt) and must rule in the fear of God.

Ruling in the fear of God means that—a good ruler will honor God’s Word and govern his people according to its precepts and commandments.

He will not take a bribe to pervert justice nor show favoritism to the rich over the poor in a civil matter.

He knows that someday he will have to stand before the Great King and Judge of the whole earth and give an account of how he led those under his authority—and that produces in him a godly fear that impacts and underpins the way he rules over people.

Warren Wiersbe—

“Without righteousness and the fear of God, a leader becomes a dictator and abuses God’s people, driving them like cattle instead of leading them like sheep. David was a ruler who served and a servant who ruled, and he had the welfare of his people on his heart (24:17). It encourages me today to see that even secular business specialists are comparing effective leaders to shepherds who care.”

2 Samuel 23:4 (NKJV)

⁴ And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, A morning without clouds, Like the tender grass springing out of the earth, By clear shining after rain.'

The idea behind the poetic language that David is using here is that—when a ruler, rules righteously in the fear of the Lord it will usher in a new period of opportunity, growth, and blessing for his people.

The people will be bathed in the light of God's truth and will flourish like the green grass after the rain.

“For well-watered seedlings to fulfill their potential, they must have bright sunlight; similarly, strong, righteous leaders help create an environment in which the people under their care can fulfill their potential.”

2 Samuel 23:5 (NKJV)

⁵ **"Although my house *is* not so with God...**

David is admitting that he had not always lived the righteous kind of life that he described in v.4 a good king or leader needs to live.

2 Samuel 23:5 (NKJV)

⁵ **"Although my house *is* not so with God, **Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, Ordered in all *things* and secure...****

You see, even though David was imperfect and had done some pretty bad things in his life (adultery, murder)—yet he was assured that God would still fulfill His promise to him.

You say, *“What promise?”*

Back in 2Samuel 7, God made David and his house (family) a promise that his descendants would sit on the throne of Israel forever.

2 Samuel 7:12-16 (NKJV)

¹² "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the

blows of the sons of men. ¹⁵ But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." ' "

How could David be so sure that God would keep His promise to him even though he had blown it so many times—because it wasn’t dependent on *his* faithfulness but on *God’s* faithfulness.

This was an unconditional, unilateral covenant (solemn promise) that would ultimately be fulfilled by Messiah who would be a descendant of David (“Son of David”) and would bring in an everlasting Kingdom and reign over the whole earth forever.

2 Samuel 23:5 (NKJV)

⁵ "Although my house *is* not so with God, Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, Ordered in all *things* and secure. **For *this is all my salvation and all my desire*; Will He not make *it* increase?**

The NIV translates the last part of v.5—"*...Has he not made with me an everlasting covenant, arranged and secured in every part? Will he not bring to fruition my salvation and grant me my every desire?*"

There are two kinds of covenants in the Bible—1) bi-lateral; 2) unilateral

A bi-lateral covenant is a *conditional* covenant where two parties enter into an agreement with each other to each fulfill their part of the covenant.

If either of the two fails to live up to their part of the covenant—the covenant is rendered null and void.

A bi-lateral covenant requires faithfulness on the part of *both* parties to keep the terms of the covenant—that’s why it is called a ‘*conditional*’ covenant.

An example of a bi-lateral covenant would be the Mosaic Covenant—a covenant that God said would either bring blessing or cursing *depending* on Israel's obedience or disobedience.

A unilateral covenant is a one-party contract or agreement.

It is *unconditional* because it only has one person making a promise to another—a promise that has no terms that they have to fulfill to receive the benefits of this kind of covenant.

A good example of a unilateral covenant would be a will (as in 'last will and testament')—(Explain)

We see this in the language God used when He made this covenant with David and his family in 2Samuel 7—

2 Samuel 7:14-16 (NKJV)

¹⁴ I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity [speaking of David's son Solomon], I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. ¹⁵ But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I removed from before you.

¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." ' ' [no terms are mentioned]

David and his descendants had nothing to fulfill, no terms to keep to be the recipients of the benefits of this promise by God (to be the family that Messiah would be born into).

It was not dependent upon David or his descendant's faithfulness but depended solely on God's faithfulness to fulfill the terms of this covenant—it was unconditional.

I bring this up because this was exactly the kind of covenant that God made with His Church thru His Son, Jesus Christ—a unilateral, unconditional covenant called the "New Covenant".

Luke 22:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

2 Corinthians 3:6 (NKJV)

⁶ who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

If the New Covenant had been a bilateral covenant where God promised to give us eternal life if we kept our part of the covenant (keep the law perfectly—the only way into heaven apart from Christ)—none of us would be saved.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Romans 4:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Therefore *it is* of faith that *it might be* according to grace, so that the promise might be sure...

The point is that, in the New Covenant we receive God's promise of eternal life by believing in and receiving Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

If the promise of salvation was based on our keeping the law perfectly (think of the Ten Commandments) the promise would be worthless because—it would be based on conditions that no one would be able to meet.

For example, if God said, "*I promise to give you eternal life—if you jump across the Grand Canyon*" that promise would be worthless because no one could meet that condition.

Some would jump farther than others—but all would fall way short.

The same would be true if God promised to give a person eternal life if they lived a sinless life—again that would be a worthless promise because no one could meet that condition.

Some would do better than others—but all would fall way short of sinless perfection.

But if God said to you and me (which He did), *“I promise to give you eternal life—if you believe in My Son”*—then the promise is attainable by anyone because everyone can believe.

That’s why God could promise us eternal life the moment we put our faith in Jesus (1John 5:13)—because it’s based on what He did for us and not on what we do for Him (which is why Jesus said, *“It is finished”* from the cross right before He died).

If it was by our works He couldn’t have promised us eternal life (uninterrupted life for all eternity) from the moment we put our faith in Jesus.

All He could have done was to say, *“we’ll see if you live a good enough life to earn the eternal life I’m offering—and if you’re good enough and work hard enough when you die you’ll receive it”*.

You see the fact that God promised to give us eternal life instantly and forever the moment we put our faith in Jesus testifies to the fact it was by grace and not by our works.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT)

⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

And that’s why the writer to the Hebrews said when it comes to the promise of eternal life that we have under the New Covenant—it’s a promise that is both sure and steadfast (because it’s not dependent upon our faithfulness or goodness).

Now so far David, in these last words to us, has sought to pass on to us words of wisdom concerning the importance of godly leadership; secondly about the surety of God's promises—and finally the destiny of the wicked:

2 Samuel 23:6-7 (NKJV)

⁶ But *the sons of rebellion shall all be as thorns thrust away, Because they cannot be taken with hands.* ⁷ But the man *who* touches them Must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, And they shall be utterly burned with fire in *their* place."

David's final words of wisdom (once again wisdom that is being spoken thru the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) that he wants to pass on to us (words that matter)—have to do with rebels and how they are to be dealt with by man in this life—and will someday be dealt with by God in the afterlife.

These are rebels against God—those who refuse to live in obedience to what He has said in His Word.

The statement in v.6 where David refers to these people as “**the sons of rebellion**” isn't just a description as to how they live—it is a designation as to who they are.

These are the *sons of rebellion*—or in other words the children of the first rebel in the history of the universe—the devil.

2 Samuel 23:6-7 (NKJV)

⁶ But *the sons of rebellion shall all be as thorns thrust away, Because they cannot be taken with hands.* ⁷ But the man *who* touches them Must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, And they shall be utterly burned with fire in *their* place."

Thorns are emblematic of the curse brought into the world by man's sin and rebellion in the Garden of Eden (Gen.3:18).

Here, David is likening godless, wicked people to thorns—which serve no useful purpose to the farmer but are only a curse to him.

He has to gather them up with a pitch-fork or some other iron implement—he can't touch them with his hands because to do so he would be injured by them.

In that regard, they were not only worthless—they were dangerous.

Dangerous to good crops they would choke out if left in the ground (Mark 4:7)—but also dangerous to any who came in contact with them.

The Bible clearly says that the righteous must be careful not to come in contact with (have fellowship with) the rebels of this world—

1 Corinthians 15:33 (NKJV)

³³ Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

And so the only thing thorns are good for, is to be burned in the fire—which will be the end of all rebels against God—like thorns, they will be burned in the fire.

Isaiah 33:12 (AMP)

¹² And the people will be burned...like thorns cut down that are burned in the fire.

Malachi 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ "For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the LORD of hosts...

Matthew 13:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." ' ' "

One author said,

“In a brilliant oracle-ending analogy, David likened the fate of the evil in his realm to the fate of weeds in a farmer’s field: both would be killed with “a tool of iron or the shaft of a spear” (v. 7) and be “burned up where they lie.” The king’s righteous zeal would purge evil from his realm, through the use of deadly force where necessary.”

We are currently watching our nation descend into lawlessness and anarchy—as Paul prophesied, *“In the end times evil men will grow worse and worse”*.

This is directly related to the fact that the foundation of our nation, the Word of God, has been destroyed by godless rebels that want to do *“whatever seems right in their own eyes”* and not obey what God has said.

Psalm 11:3 (NKJV)

³ If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?

Noah Webster, one of our founding fathers, in a text book he authored for students, he identified the reason serious social problems might befall America—*“All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery, and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible.”*

John Adams, our second president and signer of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, on Oct. 11, 1798 said that there is no government in the world strong enough to force people to do something against their will—*“We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”*

Samuel Adams, in 1775, made this relevant statement—*“When people are universally ignorant and debauched in their manners, they will sink under their own weight without the aid of foreign invaders.”*

Robert Winthrop, an early speaker of the House of Representatives, said, *“Men in a word, must necessarily be controlled either by a power within or by a power without them, either by the Word of God or by the strong arm of man, either by the Bible or by the bayonet.”*

That is the very thing David is saying with regard to the wicked (thorns) in our passage—

2 Samuel 23:7 (NKJV)

⁷ **But the man *who* touches them** [comes in contact with the wicked, rebels of a society] **Must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear...**

Pray for our nation—we are in deep trouble, and I fear it will only get worse before it gets better.

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

David’s words of wisdom summed up—in any nation there are those who honor God and are blessed; and then there are those who rebel against God and are cursed.

If I were in David’s shoes and I was giving my final words to my nation (or anyone that would listen)—I would say the same thing.

We, like David, are imperfect sinners that don’t deserve any of God’s blessings—especially not eternal life.

But He loves imperfect sinners and is inviting them to be a part of an everlasting, unconditional covenant, ratified by the blood of His Son, to give us eternal life in heaven and blessings here on the earth—if we would believe in and accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

All who refuse God's offer and instead choose to go on living in rebellion against Him—will be judged someday without mercy.

Proverbs 29:1 (NKJV)

¹ He who is often rebuked, *and* hardens *his* neck, Will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Colossians 3:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

If the Holy Spirit could sit you down and tell you what really matters in life—wouldn't you listen to what He had so say?

Well, He has done that very thing thru David!

Let me leave you with the final words of David's son, Solomon—

Ecclesiastes 12:11-14 (NLT)

¹¹ The words of the wise are like cattle prods—painful but helpful. Their collected sayings are like a nail-studded stick with which a shepherd drives the sheep. ¹² But, my child, let me give you some further advice: Be careful, for writing books is endless, and much study wears you out. ¹³ That's the whole story. Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty. ¹⁴ God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.