

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church,  
10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS**

**LESSON 2A**

**THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS**

**CHAPTER 2**

**INTRODUCTION**

In chapter one, the death of King David was foreseen but before he died, God's appointed successor had to be installed. Adonijah's attempt to wrest the kingship was foiled and Solomon duly anointed as co-regent and successor to King David. In chapter 2, David died but before he died, he summoned Solomon to his side and imparted his last words of instruction. His two-fold charge indicates his concern for his young son, Solomon, who had a great task in keeping the country spiritually strong and united, and ensuring the kingdom's continued spiritual progress and obedience to God's Word. There were loose ends that needed to be tightened i.e. made right in God's sight, and David advised Solomon to take the appropriate measures required to start well on a clean slate.

Chapter two introduces the character of Solomon as a man of his word. This chapter describes his graciousness and his resolute heart to bring justice into Israel before his reign begins properly. He was a man of

justice tempered with mercy. This is a wonderful combination.

**OUTLINE**

1. A personal charge to Solomon (vv. 1-4)
2. An Administrative Charge (vv.5-11)
3. Adonijah's Foolish Act (vv.12-25)
4. Abiathar Exiled (vv.:26-27)
5. Joab Executed (vv. 28-34)
6. Shimei Punished (vv.35-46)

**COMMENTARY**

**A Personal Charge  
to Solomon --2:1-4**

David recognised his declining health and strength and that his death was near. He said to Solomon: "I go the way of all the earth", an expression to mean that he would die like all mankind. Death is inevitable. He therefore had very important things to say to Solomon. The words of a dying man are always significant.

David gave a two-fold charge to Solomon. The first part concerns Solomon personally. The charge is similar to the one Moses gave to Joshua (Joshua 1:6-9) before he died. David charged young Solomon to be "strong therefore, and shew thyself a man" (2:2). Solomon's age is not given but we know that he was much younger than Adonijah. He said of himself, "I am but a little child" (3:7). Josephus, the Jewish historian, fixed

his age at fourteen while others fixed it at twelve, and yet some at twenty. We can safely accept that he was in his late teens.

This exhortation to be strong was repeated three times by Moses to Joshua. David might have thought that Solomon needed the same encouragement. Difficult times would be ahead and Solomon needed to be strong in character to rule and lead the nation Israel. David exhorted him to keep God's commandments which were written in the Law of Moses. It was imperative that he walked in the ways of the LORD (YAHWEH or JEHOVAH) his God if he were to be successful in all his works and pursuits.

To be "strong" does not refer to physical strength or health but always to strength and courage to obey God's holy and perfect Word. This is the bane of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christianity. Leaders are afraid to obey God's Word. Instead, they skirt and dance around God's Word and to the tune of the evolutionists and liberals and modernists in undermining and attacking God's Word. Such failures on our part have led to a diluted and compromising Christianity that has no biblical basis for its existence. Obedience to God's Word has been conveniently replaced with emotions and sentimental experiences which have given rise to the Charismatic Movement which has taken the Protestant world by storm. The lost courage in the believer's life is like that one small nail that is lost. Without that nail, the horse could not be shod. Without that horse, the soldier could not carry the message from the king to the general in the battle field. Without the message, the battle was lost

and the nation fell and thousands died and lived the life of a slave!

Solomon must understand that he was no ordinary king leading an ordinary kingdom. It was God's kingdom! It must be led God's way and no other way. Any other way is the wrong way! Therefore the injunction or charge from God's Word in 1 Kings 2:3 was, "*And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself.*" Obedience will bring prosperity to the land of Israel since he was Israel's king. Being married to the land, this was the conditional blessings and curses that God gave to Israel. We do not have such a "physical" promise in the Bible in relation to the church or a Christian's doing business in our age and time. That means a Christian who is very obedient to God's Word could still lose money in his business and become a bankrupt. Or a church which may be very obedient to God's Word could still remain small in number and poor in its finances.

The LORD had made a covenant with Solomon that if his children walked before God in truth wholeheartedly, none of his descendants would be cut off from the throne. We know that God's covenant with David was unconditional (2 Samuel 7) but the blessings from the LORD are always conditional upon godliness and obedience. There was

even the promise that there would be a Greater Son of David who would ultimately rule the kingdom. He is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. But David in his charge to Solomon gave a negative twist to the unconditional covenant God made with him. David's intention probably was to make a strong plea that his son would not stray away from God and also to ensure that the nation Israel would be powerful and prosperous.

### **An Administrative Charge – 2:5-11**

There were some loose ends to be tightened. While David was king, he could not discipline Joab who was his army commander and whom he needed to handle the unstable political and military situation then. Joab had served him well. He captured Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5) and Rabbah, the capital of Ammon (2 Samuel 12); protected him when Absalom rebelled (2 Samuel 14); became his instrument in the matter of Uriah (2 Samuel 11).

Nevertheless, Joab killed Absalom and now joined Adonijah's rebellion. But David brushed this aside and focused on the double murder which he committed, namely, Abner (2 Samuel 3) and Amasa (2 Samuel 20). They were innocent and loyal servants of the king. The blood of these men still stained Joab's clothes and cried out for vengeance (Genesis 4:10; 9:5). David charged his son to use his wisdom and not let Joab die in peace. Joab could not be trusted and he posed a threat to Solomon's rule.

The next person who posed a threat to Solomon's reign was Shimei, the Benjamite. David recalled how he

had cursed him when he was fleeing from Absalom. But he came down to meet David when he was returning to Jerusalem after Absalom's death. There, David promised that he would spare his life. David now charged Solomon to execute him for his wicked deed. We wonder why David would charge Solomon to execute him when he had promised that he would spare him. The reason we can adduce from the text is that of the "grievous curse" that he pronounced on David. Could David be superstitious that for the curse to be lifted, it required the death of the one who cursed? This was the belief in those days. This is possible but most unlikely. But Shimei showed that he could command a great influence on the people (2 Samuel 19:17). This could be attributed to the fact that he was of the family of Saul, the first king of Israel. He too posed a threat to young Solomon. He must be dealt with summarily. Remember that the kingdom was not carnal but spiritual. Should it be destroyed, the spiritual plan of the LORD for the salvation of mankind would have been put in jeopardy.

David did not dwell only on the dark side of things. He remembered Barzillai, the Gileadite. He called on Solomon to show kindness to Barzillai's sons. This aged man had been very kind to David during his flight from Absalom (2 Samuel 17:27-29). He brought provisions for David and his men who were "hungry, and weary, and thirsty in the wilderness." His acts of kindness perhaps had saved them from starvation. When David returned to Jerusalem after the

death of Absalom, Barzillai declined David's invitation to take a place in his court. He however recommended his son, Chimham, instead. David wanted to make sure that Solomon would not forget to provide for the members of this loyal family.

Not long later, David died and was buried in the city of David which was located on the south-eastern hill of Jerusalem. The traditional tomb of David that was shown to tourists on the south-western hill is therefore not the real tomb of David. David ruled for forty years (1010-970 B.C.). He ruled seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem over all Israel. During his reign, he expanded the boundaries of the nation Israel. The nation Israel reached its zenith in the reign of David and his reign and walk with the LORD have become the bench-mark for subsequent kings and rulers. Even modern Israel is symbolized by the six pointed "Star of David" in blue on her white flag!

### **Adonijah's Foolish Act – 2:12-25**

Upon the death of his father David, Solomon sat on the throne and began to establish the kingdom.

Now Adonijah, his elder brother, who tried to seize the throne but failed, desired to have the hand of Abishag, who was David's nurse and concubine (or wife number 9). He solicited the help of Bathsheba to speak to Solomon for the hand of Abishag, the Shunamite to wife. Bathsheba promised to speak to Solomon in his behalf.

It is quite puzzling that Bathsheba should agree to help Adonijah in this

matter. She, fearing for her life if Adonijah had won and become king, did play a significant part in defeating Adonijah's bid for the throne. Why would she help Adonijah with this petition? Could it be that she was not aware of the kingdom's custom that when you ask for the previous king's wife or concubine it was like asking for his position as king?

Or was Bathsheba really very clever? It might be that she knew full well that the request for Abishag to Solomon would mean a breach of his promised good conduct and would seal his fate once and for all. How else could she have gotten rid of Adonijah once and for all? Anyway she approached Solomon and made the request.

When Bathsheba went to the king to speak, Solomon showed great respect for his mother. He rose up to greet and meet his mother. He bowed himself to her. He ordered a throne for her to be seated on his right hand, the place of honour. Solomon sat on his throne and Bathsheba put the petition: "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife" (2:21). Solomon reacted with anger and irony judging by his words. He told his mother that she might as well ask for the kingdom also, and added that the kingdom might as well be given to Abiathar the priest and Joab the son of Zeruah (2:22). Solomon swore before the LORD that God would deal the same with him as Adonijah had signed off his own death penalty. Solomon had been gracious to him, and had spared his life if he promised to behave himself (1:52).

Adonijah breached this promise for to request for the concubine of a king was understood in those days to be an intention to aspire for the throne. Adonijah's supporters were still alive and a potential threat to Solomon now that David had died. Without hesitation, Solomon sent Benaiah to execute Adonijah.

#### **Abiathar Exiled – 2:26-27**

Solomon next moved against Abiathar, the priest, who had supported Adonijah. He banished Abiathar to his own village of Anathoth, which was about three miles north-east of Jerusalem. Solomon deemed him worthy of death for his treasonous part in Adonijah's rebellion. But he spared him, partly because of his high priestly dignity and his faithful service to David, and he had suffered the same with David from the time of Saul's persecution up to Absalom's rebellion.

Solomon's abrupt command: "Get thee to Anathoth" is indicative of his anger. The inspired writer comments that this banishment from the priestly office is in fulfilment of the prophecy that Eli's descendants, of which Abiathar was a member, would be cut off (1 Samuel 2:30-35). Abiathar was a fool. He could have remained loyal to David by taking the side of David's appointed king, Solomon. Instead he threw everything away.

#### **Joab Executed – 2:28-34**

News of the death of Adonijah and the banishment of Abiathar came to Joab. He realized that his turn would be next. He had supported Adonijah in the rebellion. He fled to the tabernacle of

the LORD, which was then situated in Gibeon. He caught hold of the horns of the brazen altar. The Brazen Altar was a place of mercy for those who were unjustly accused of a crime or accidental manslaughter, but not of deliberate murder (Exodus 21:13-14).

Solomon was informed of what Joab had done. He sent Benaiah to take him. When Benaiah came to Joab, he told Joab to come forward towards him. Joab refused and said that he would rather die there. Benaiah told Solomon Joab's reply. Solomon then instructed Benaiah to execute him as he had desired and then to bury him. The instruction to bury him was like giving Joab an honourable discharge.

What Solomon did to Joab was not an act of vengeance. Joab by the way was Solomon's uncle. The issue is one of justice. As king, he had to act this way. There was no other option left for Solomon but to do righteously. Therefore he uttered the words in **1 Kings 2:32-33** concerning Joab, "*And the LORD shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing thereof, to wit, Abner the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah. Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab, and upon the head of his seed for ever: but upon David, and upon his seed, and upon his house, and upon his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the LORD.*" Solomon was the judge and king in Israel. He meted

out to Joab a judgement that was very much overdue. Joab should have been punished long ago if not for his power he wielded during David's reign. Finally, he received his just reward!

### **Shimei Punished – 2:35-46**

The last person mentioned in David's charge to Solomon was Shimei, the Benjamite. He was punished for his breach of promise. Solomon called for him. Solomon told him to move his living quarters to Jerusalem where he could build his house and remain within the confines of the city. He was not allowed to go out of the city. If he should breach this restriction, even to go as far as the brook Kidron, he would be put to death. Kidron was mentioned because this was the route he would be assumed to take if he thought of returning to his hometown of Bahurim. Shimei accepted the offer and even commented that it was good. He promised to abide by the ruling and stayed in Jerusalem for many days. He was placed under house arrest.

After three years, two of his servants ran away to Achish, son of Maachah, the king of Gath in Philistine territory which was some thirty miles south west of Jerusalem. Shimei, probably very angry at that time, "forgot" the restriction imposed on him. He saddled his ass and went to Gath and brought his servants back to Jerusalem. Solomon was told of Shimei's breach of the ruling. Solomon called Shimei and put to him that he had broken his promise before the LORD not to get out of Jerusalem, and that he himself had said that it was good. Solomon now charged him with the wickedness of his

heart which was only privy to himself what he did to David, Solomon's father. The LORD therefore punished him for his evil deeds. Solomon commanded Benaiah to execute him.

It is significant that the inspired writer commented at the end of chapter 2, after Adonijah, Abiathar, Joab and Shimei had been dealt with, that the kingdom was established at the hand of Solomon.

### **PRACTICAL VALUE**

The spiritual lessons in this chapter are not a few. David's charge to Solomon his son is applicable to every born-again Christian. It takes much strength and courage to walk in the ways of God in truth and with all our heart, soul and mind. But it comes with a promise that obedience results in God's blessings whereas disobedience brings down His judgement upon us. Keeping God's commandments and walking in His ways are not means of gaining our salvation because salvation is obtained through faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross. It is God who calls and saves and no one and nothing can change His promise and word. In order to have a meaningful relationship with him and experience the promises that He had given to us, we must walk in His ways. There is no short cut. Do not confuse salvation which is one of grace and the abundant life promised to every believer. The abundant life is conditional upon obedience. Lot was saved but did not enjoy an abundant

life as he lived a life of great disobedience.

In regard to David's instruction to Solomon on how to deal with Joab, Abiathar and Shimei, it is not just a matter of forgiving and letting the culprits go scot-free. On one hand there is personal forgiveness pertaining to personal matters; God has taught us to forgive even our enemies. On the other, the works of evil men have to be reckoned with. People such as Joab, Abiathar, Shimei and Adonijah are a threat to the community at large. The rule of law and natural justice must prevail. They had shown no repentance. Even if they did, they would still have to be dealt with according to the law which stipulated an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth and a life for a life. Hence they must be resolutely dealt with. David thought of the cause of God in preparing a nation for the coming Messiah. Therefore, David instructed Solomon to deal with them according to his wisdom, and to be strong and courageous.

Trust is a precious virtue. Once a person loses his trustworthiness, it is very difficult to regain it though not impossible. Every Christian should work at regaining his trustworthiness if it were destroyed through acts of betrayal and lies. This was how God dealt with us and how we must deal with one another. Russell Dilday comments: "Here is a powerful reminder that those are least to be trusted who have once proved themselves to be enemies, especially when they suddenly appear with tokens of peace. While we must never become cynical and suspicious of every act of untrustworthy people, we

must be aware that the most presumptuous motive is often hidden under the mask of unassuming deportment. Ambitious and power hungry people do not hesitate to use any means to obtain the ends they cannot achieve by force. When they can no longer demand, they beg. This pitiful scene of a contender for the throne of Israel begging help from the queen mother is further evidence of the flawed character that made Adonijah unfit for kingly responsibility." Do you agree with Dilday's comment?

Another valuable lesson of filial piety is the example of Solomon. Even though he was busy with important national affairs, he did not forget what his mother meant to him. Solomon respected his mother Bathsheba when she came to see him. How often children forget their parents who have cared and nurtured and provided for them until they take their place in society. Some even are ashamed of their aged parents when they have attained great riches and honour. AMEN

## DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Daily Readings

**MONDAY:** 1 Kings 2:1-11; Joshua 1:6-9.

**TUESDAY:** 1 Kings 2:12-25; Acts 20:28-32.

**WEDNESDAY-1** Kings 2:26-34; Romans 2:15-16; 13:1-2.

**THURSDAY:** 1 Kings 2:35-46; James 4:6; Job 36:11-12.

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**FRIDAY** 1 Kings 2:1-46.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Do you think that the leaders in the church are strong and courageous?

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2. How and why were the following put to death:

a) Adonijah

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b) Joab

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3. Do you think David was right in giving the counsel he did to Solomon concerning Adonijah, Joab and Shimei or was he a coward who asked his son to do his "dirty" work for him?

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4. What would cause a man like Abiathar to throw everything away and make a gamble to side the wrong man?

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5. Do you agree with Dilday's cynical comment as a Christian?

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