

September 13, 2015 - 11:00 a.m. Pastor Jonathan Falwell

Portrait of a King: You Can Lead!

Scripture: 1 Kings 2

Summary: In this sermon, Pastor Jonathan Falwell begins a series examining the life of King Solomon, today focusing on the final words of advice to the young heir from his father, King David.

I want to put this verse on the screen. This is our memory verse for this week, and I encourage you to write this reference down. You can go to it on our website or on our app if you want to. But I want to make sure that you, throughout the week this week, that you spend some time looking at this verse and memorizing this verse. Second Timothy 4:6 and 7. And it says, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

Of course you know this is Paul’s statement, challenge, if you will, that he gave to Timothy. Let’s read it again. Let’s all read it together out loud as we commit to memorizing this verse this week. Second Timothy 4:6 and 7. And it says, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

Now the reason that that passage is being used as our memory verse this week is because of what we are going to begin talking about today as we take a journey back in the Old Testament, but a journey that will help us learn what it is that God wants us to learn, to be the people, the individuals that God wants us to be.

Well today we begin a brand-new series we’ve entitled *Portrait of a King*. And we’ve done that very deliberately, because we’ve gone into the Old Testament, we’ve looked at a man that I know all of you are familiar with, and his name is Solomon. You know him as David’s son. You know him as the one who took over after David as the new king of Israel. You know him as the one the Bible talks about as the wisest man who ever lived. You know him as the one to be known as the richest man who has ever lived.

In fact, some theologians have said that if we were to take the wealth that Solomon had back in around 900 or 1000 BC when he was born and following, if we were to evaluate the wealth that he had at that time based on the wealth and the value of things here today, he would be a trillionaire, which certainly would make him the richest man that ever lived. He would put Bill Gates and Warren Buffett to shame how much money that Solomon had.

We know him as the wisest, we know him as the richest, we know also that he had over 900 wives, which doesn't make him the smartest in some ways that some of us could say. But we know that this is a man that David specifically chose by the inspiration of God in his life that this is the man who would lead when David was gone.

And you know that David was a guy who the scriptures tell was a man after God's own heart. And you know while he had his ups and certainly had his downs, that David was a man who wanted to do that which God wanted him to do.

And so as David began nearing the end of his life, as we're going to read in a moment, David took the time to look at his life in perspective, all the things that he'd done and all where he had been and where he was at that moment. He took a look at all of his family members and all of his children to evaluate what was next. What is this country going to look like once I'm gone? And David, as he spent time looking and thinking and looking at all the situations, he chose Solomon to be the next king.

Now Solomon was an unlikely choice at that time. As you know, Solomon was the son of David, but he was also the son of Bathsheba. You know that Solomon came, his life began, from what began as a sinful relationship with Bathsheba. Solomon was not the likely choice. He was not the oldest child of David. But he was God's anointed. He was the one that David knew that God wanted to sit on the throne.

And so today we're going to be beginning to look at Solomon's life, because as we talked about already, Solomon is known as the wisest man who has ever lived. Why is he known as that? Well, you can go—and we're not going to look at it specifically today—but over in 1 Kings 3, after Solomon had become king, it says that Solomon had a dream one night and God appeared to him in that dream, and when God appeared in that dream, he asked Solomon, "What do you want? Name it; it's yours. Whatever it is you want, you tell me what it is, and I will give it to you."

Solomon spoke back to God, and he basically said this, "What I want, God, is I want the ability to discern between good and evil. I want wisdom. I want knowledge. I want understanding so that I can lead your people in the right way, so that I can make the right decisions to give justice to our people and do the right things for you people, God. That is what I want."

And it says that God was so honored and blessed that that's what Solomon asked for that God said, "I'm going to give you that wisdom. I'm going to make you the wisest man who has ever lived before or the wisest man who has ever lived after. And also because you asked for that instead of asking for other things, I'm going to give you everything else as well."

That's an important thing when you look at what Solomon asked for and God appeared. You think about it for a moment. What would happen today if you went home and you're sitting at home and a knock came at the door and you went to the door and opening the door there let's say that Bill Gates showed up at your door.

And Bill Gates shows up and you're blown away because Bill Gates is standing there. Bill Gates is worth \$50 billion, \$60 billion. That's B like in boy, billion dollars. That's what he's worth. And so for some reason Bill Gates shows up at your door and the first thing you're going to do, you're going to be amazed he's there. The second thing you're going to do is you're going to hide your iPhone and your Mac computers because this is the Microsoft dude.

And you're going to look at this guy and Bill Gates is going to say to you, "Listen, I've got all the money in the world. I've got tons of money. I have got more money than I could ever use. So what I want to do is I like you and think you're a good guy, and I want to give you whatever it is that you want. You just tell me what it is. Name the figure. I'm going to write you a check right here today. The check's good, I promise. I'm going to give it to you and you just name it right here."

Now ask yourself a question. What would you do? What would you ask for? I got a mortgage. I've got rent I've got to pay. I've got to feed kids. I've got to make that car payment. I've got to have that Corvette. Not the same as rent, but you can ask him. I'll take a 'Vette. Whatever it might be. What are you going to say?

Well, Solomon had that same situation, except the person that asked that question, the Bible says, owns the universe, the cattle on a thousand hills. It means He's got far more than Bill Gates could ever want or desire or ever hope to have. And Solomon asked for wisdom.

And it says over in 1 Kings 4 that not only did God give him wisdom, God gave him so much wisdom that literally it was immeasurable as the sand on the seashore. That's how much wisdom Solomon had. That's a lot of wisdom. So I would think it would be true to say that we could probably learn something from Solomon. Am I right about that?

We could learn something from his life, so that's what we're going to be doing over the coming weeks is looking at the life and the writings, the teachings of Solomon, to find out what we can learn from this guy that God made the wisest man that has ever lived.

Now in 1 Kings 2, we're going to start at the beginning of his journey. We're going to start at the beginning of Solomon's leadership, the beginning of Solomon's life, because in this series, *Portrait of a King*, we're going to talk about three different areas, three important areas in the coming weeks.

The first one we're going to talk about starting today is leadership. All of us want to be leaders. We're going to talk about leadership. We're going to talk about relationships. We all want to be good at our relationships. We all want to make sure our relationships are strong. And then we're going to talk about life, how to live the life that God wants us to live.

So today we're going to start talking about leadership, and we go right back to the beginning of Solomon's leadership when in 1 Kings 2 David sat Solomon down and gave him a challenge. He gave him his marching orders. And let's read this together, 1 Kings 2, beginning with verse 1,

Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying: "I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. 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; 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.'

Now let's take a moment and look at the context of this passage. David is nearly dead. David, this man after God's own heart, is very near to the end of his life. He's gotten to the place where he knows his time is short, his days are numbered. He wants to make sure that things are set up for the future. He wants to make sure that when he is gone that what God wants to happen in this country, in this nation.

So he sits Solomon down and says, "Listen, here's what you've got to do. You know I'm dying. You know I'm not going to be here long. You know I'm not going to be here much longer. You're not going to be able to learn from me much more, so here's what you need to do. You need to make sure that you listen to and obey all that God is telling you to do. You need to be strong and be courageous. Be a man," David says.

"And you need to make sure that you follow everything that God is telling you to do. And if you do that, then what's going to happen is that God is going to keep His word. God's going to keep His word that He told me," David said, "that as long as you and your children and your grandchildren follow the will of God and walk according to what God wants them to do, then there will never stop being a man sitting on the throne of Israel. Our family will lead this nation forever."

That was an important thing, because it didn't really matter much about whether it was David's sons that ran it. It was really important that God's hand would be upon this nation.

And so he told Solomon, "This is a big deal. This is important," and in this short passage that we read today, God, through David, gave Solomon some very important leadership lessons, and it's where I believe we need to start in our beginnings of our study of the life and teachings of Solomon. As we start talking about what we can learn from this king. That we start right back here at the very beginning, when Solomon got his marching orders on how to be the right kind of leader, that we can take from it how we can be the right kind of leader.

Because I think it's pretty much safe to say that if I were to walk up to anybody in this room and say, "Hey, do you want to be a leader or be a follower?" I think all of us would say, "I want to be a leader. I want to be a leader." And you all can be leaders. That's what God wants out of every single one of you, to lead in your home, to lead in the classroom, to lead in your business, to lead in your workplace, to lead in your community. God wants you to lead in your church. God wants all of you to be leaders, and the only way that we can be leaders is if we do what God tells, Solomon, through David, to do.

So let's look at this passage and take a look at a few of the things that we can learn about what it means to be the right kind of leader. What leadership lessons can we walk away with today from this passage in 1 Kings 2 that can help us be what God wants us to be.

And the first thing that we walk away with, the first thing that we grab a hold of is this: We must always remember that we can learn from those who've gone before us. We can learn from those who've gone before us. This flies in the face of human nature, because every generation that comes along, they believe and they think that they are smarter than the generation that was before.

And a lot of times, when you look at technology, they in some ways are right. In fact, yesterday I was watching TV with my son, Nicholas, and my daughter, Natalie. We were sitting there on the couch in the family room, watching TV, and I had in my hand some incredible, brand-new technology. Amazing technology. It was a thing called a "remote control." We've had those around for like 30 years now, right? I've been using those since way back.

And I was sitting there watching TV with my kids yesterday, and as I was watching TV, I was having difficulty knowing how to use the remote control. And I was asking my kids, "How do I do this?" And I know that they were sitting there saying, "Oh, we love Dad. He's just stupid."

No doubt in my mind that my kids were thinking, "My dad. I love him. He's great. He takes care of us. But he doesn't even know how to use a remote control." You see, it's in our human nature to think that we are smarter than the other people that have gone before us. It's just human nature. We believe that. We think that.

And in some cases it's true. But we believe that, and when we do, we forget that we can always learn from those who've gone before. Look what it says in this passage as David is talking to his son. Verse 1, "As the time of King David's death approached, he gave his charge to his son, Solomon, 'I am going where everyone on earth must someday go. Take courage and be a man.'"

Basically what he is saying is, "You can learn from me. Do what I'm telling you to do." David is saying to Solomon, "Don't forget. These things are so vitally important. Hang on to them. Cling to them. Because if you do, God is going to do some amazing things."

And Solomon, it doesn't say it here, but I believe because we saw what took place in the following chapter, because of what Solomon did, Solomon listened to what his dad had to say. He listened to what he had to say.

Now it's interesting, when David was talking to Solomon, he said, "Listen, if you do this, God's going to bless you and God's going to keep this thing together and God's going to continue to honor His word if we honor our commitment to Him."

It's sad if you look in the scriptures, if you go over to 2 Chronicles 10 and 1 Kings 12, and you read those passages where Rehoboam came in—Solomon's son who came after him—and it says that when Solomon died a Rehoboam took over, Rehoboam had the opportunity one day when the people came to him and said, "We need you to help us with this. Your dad did this, and we

need to know what you're going to do, how you're going to handle this, how you're going to lead."

And it says that Rehoboam pulled in the people of his father's generation, he pulled in the people who were older, the people who led with his dad, and he sat down and he said, "This is what they're telling me. Here's what the nation is telling me, and I need you to give me some advice here on what I need to do."

And so he listened to what they said and they left. And then it says that Rehoboam called in those of his own generation, those of his own peers, those that were younger, and sat them down and posed the same question and heard what they had to say. And then tragically, it says that after that took place, Rehoboam rejected the advice of his father's generation, and as a result, he chose the wrong path.

And after that, of course, we read in that passage that that was when Israel was split. That's when the nation divided. And we know of all the challenges, all the problems, all the heartache that came of that. Why? Because in one generation people forgot that you can learn from those who come before.

I look out across this room, and there are so many incredible people in this room, people that I've grown up knowing. I look out here and see Dr. Borland, who was teaching at Liberty when I was coming through. I think of people like Jim Moon, who just last year went to heaven. I think of people like Charlie Harbin, who's up in his 90s, who's part of this church. I think of Elmer Towns and Harold Willmington that I had the opportunity and privilege of listening to and hearing from and getting wisdom from, and I recognize and realize that God has put them into my life so that I can actually learn from them and it will help me learn to make the right decisions in the days to come.

What's really cool is this: Every single one of us has someone like that in our lives. Make no mistake. If you want to be the right kind of leader, then make sure you listen to the leaders of the past. Don't reject, just because you think you're smarter, just because you think you are the new kid on the block that you can walk away from what we've learned before.

So the first thing we learn from this passage is this: Learn from those who come before. That's what Paul was talking about in 2 Timothy when he made that statement, "I have finished the course. I've fought the fight. I've kept the faith. I've done all those things." He says that because he's trying to challenge Timothy, just like David challenged Solomon. "Stay the course. Do what I've done to honor God."

First Corinthians 11, there's another verse. Paul writing, he said, "Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ." From that we get our second lesson that we'll look at in 1 Kings 2. Even though we know we can learn from those who have come before, we must also remember that we must follow God's path, not man's.

Yes, it's important to listen to and learn from those who have come before, but know this; recognize this: It is also and far more important that we follow God, not man. Every time that

you depend on man, you will be let down. When you worship man, when you elevate man, when you follow man, you're going to fall. You're going to fall flat on your face.

You know why? Because man is faulty. Man has a sinful nature. Man messes up. We see it all the time. We see it over and over again, people who follow man, who will follow the heroes. We see it in Hollywood, young people who are following all of these Hollywood stars, these music stars that are out there.

They've got their You Tube channels and they've got their Twitter feeds, and we follow them and we want to see everything that they do, when they're brushing their teeth in the morning, wow, they just brushed their teeth! All these things that we think are so important, so amazing.

And what happens is we follow these people and we worship these people and we put them on a pedestal and you know what they do? They do what all of us do. They blow it. So often we see lives that are crushed because they followed man rather than God.

David knew that. In 1 Kings 2 he said in the first part of verse 3, he told Solomon, "Observe the requirements of the Lord your God and follow all His ways." In other words, "Solomon, I'm your father. I'm the guy that I've tried to teach you all the right things to do, but listen, when it comes right down to it, don't you forget: follow God. Listen to what He has to say. Do what He's called you to do. Follow all of His commandments. Obey His Word. Be who God wants you to be."

When we recognize that our opportunity for and the level of leadership that we will attain is directly related to how closely we follow God, it puts it into perspective how important it really is.

So we know we must follow God's way and God's path for our lives, not man's, which brings us to the third thing. Because a lot of times we start following God's path and God begins to bless, and then what happens is we allow the blessings of God to distract us, to get us away from what God's plan is, which brings us to the third. Don't allow the blessings of God to keep you from obedience to God. Don't allow the things that God puts into your hands that God allows you to do, that God allows you to be part of to keep you away from always following after God.

David said this to his son in the last part of the verse, "Keep the decrees, commands, regulations written in the Law of Moses so that," listen to these words, "so that you will be successful in all that you do and wherever you go."

David knew how easy it was to get comfortable, how easy it was to get apathetic, how easy it was to get to the place when you're following God and God is blessing that you just get so comfortable in life that you stop doing what God has called you to do. The greatest hindrance to what God wants to do next is when we get comfortable and rest in what God did last.

When we get focused on what God did in the past, we celebrate that and we forget that God is not done working. Solomon had that happen. If you go to Ecclesiastes 1—and we'll get to that passage in a the coming weeks—Ecclesiastes 1, you know what happened? Solomon said, "I had

everything that I could ever want. And I began doing all the things that God wanted me to do and God blessed me and gave me wisdom, and it's amazing how God stacked all this stuff on top of me. And I had it all, and I realized quickly that all of it was vanity. All of it was like the wind that just quickly disappeared."

What an amazing lesson, a leadership lesson, a life lesson for us. Because so often we get focused on the same stuff. We get focused on what it is that we are able to do and our abilities and our power and possessions and talents and all of the things that we have, and we quickly take our eyes off of the fact that God wants to do something that is new today that He didn't do yesterday.

So don't ever let God's blessings take us off mission. Don't ever let God's blessing take us away from where we're headed. Don't ever let the things and the victories and the successes in the past keep us from the successes and the victories of the future. Which brings us to the next thing that we want to do today, which is a kind of a summation of what we've been talking about, kind of a summary of all of this as we begin this study.

And it's just simply this statement that David wanted Solomon to realize. We've got to begin with the end in mind. We have to know where we're going. If we don't know where we're going, if we don't have a specific strategy and a plan of where we're going and what God wants to do and where God wants to take us, if we never focus on what God wants us to be, it's guaranteed we'll never get there. We'll never get to the place God wants us to be if we don't sit down and sit back and evaluate where it is that God wants to take us.

Look what David said to Solomon in verse 4, "If you do this," he says, "then the Lord will keep His promise He made to me. He told me 'If your descendants live as they should and follow me faithfully with all of their heart and soul, one of them will always sit on the throne of Israel.'"

Go back into verse 3, the last part of that verse, "And you will be successful in all that you do and wherever you go." David made it very clear, listen, the end is this: "If you stay close to God, Solomon, when you come to the place where your life is ending, where you are sitting in the same seat where I'm sitting, where I'm about to leave the stage and turn things over to you, when you get to that place where you're getting ready to turn things over to your child, if you stay focused on and committed to and connected to where you're supposed to go and keep that in mind all the way through, God will always keep His promise, and God will always keep things the way they are supposed to be."

Begin with the end in mind. Stay focused on what God wants you to do. All of us God has called to be a leader. All of us God has infused with exactly what it takes, what we need to be able to be leaders God wants us to be. The only thing keeping you from being God's leader is when you spend too much time focusing on man's desire. Don't let that be your story. Don't let that be what describes you. Don't let that be the tale that people tell later of the life that you lived.

And so I just want to leave you with three quick questions. You don't need to write them down. I just want you to think about them. Three quick questions. The first one is this: Starting now, what will you do differently today to be the leader that God intended you to be? The second

question: What changes are you willing to make to see that happen? The third question: What disobedience, what sin do you need to seek forgiveness for that is keeping you from being that leader?

These are all things that we've got to deal with. These are all issues and challenges and problems that no matter who you are and your position in life, your status in life, whether you're a student or whether you're a CEO or whatever you might be, all of us deal with the same stuff. We go through the same challenges and the same trials and the same problems.

But you know what's amazing? Regardless of where we are in life and regardless of who we are, we all serve the same God, and that God never changes. He's the God who created all. He's the one who was here before anything else was, so He's the one that will be here when everything else ceases to be. He's the God of the universe.

He's the God who loves you. He's the God who sent His Son Jesus to die for you. He's the God who allowed His Son to be placed in a borrowed tomb. He's the God that allowed His Son, three days later, to let that Son walk out of that tomb, victorious over sin, Satan, and death. And He is the God that today has called you and equipped you and challenged you and filled you with everything you need to be the leader that God wants you to be. The real question here is, as David asked Solomon, Are you going to step up and be strong and be the man, be a woman that God wants you to be?

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