

1. My title for this lesson is "Wisdom as a gift from God". One thing we learn fairly early in life is that different people are born with different gifts. I'm not talking about genetics. My point is if one thinks about one's friends, one can usually say, I know that person has special gift to do this. Another person I know has a special gift to do that. I was discussing with one of my daughters yesterday about each of her friends and she was telling me about how one of them had a special gift of loyalty. She said another friend of hers had a special gift of kindness. My point is she got it without any special training in how to recognize that some people have more of a talent for one thing more than they do another.
 - a) All of that leads me back to Solomon, the son of King David, who in this chapter is going to be the next King of Israel in this story. Coming up in the next chapter, we will read of Solomon asking God for wisdom. What we will notice here in Chapter 2, is that Solomon already had that gift and he is asking (almost confirming) what he already had.
 - b) Let me explain this concept another way. Most Christians are aware of the fact that they knew God had a hand on their lives long before they'd ever dedicated their lives to Him. We realized that long before we got saved, we had a talent to say, show kindness to others or be helpful or whatever it is with what one is good at. It's usually after we have give our lives to Jesus that we come to realize at some point that God has called us to serve in some specific fashion partially because we have a gift to do what we believe He has called us to do. That doesn't mean we don't have to work hard at our ministry or that there will never be tough decisions to make, it just means we do what we are called to do because we can't stand not doing it, as I like to put it.
2. This leads to my alternative title for this lesson, "Solomon shows us his wisdom". I didn't go with that title as I wanted to show how this lesson applies to our lives and not just how Solomon made tough decisions using the gifts that God had gave him, probably from birth.
 - a) Specifically in this chapter, we are going to read of the death of King David, and his final instructions that he gave to Solomon as he assumed the role of the next king of Israel. It is far more than just "be wise and make good decisions" although that type of general advice is part of this chapter. It also names specific characters that are mentioned in 2nd Samuel that David wanted Solomon to deal with. Some were people David wanted to reward for their loyalty to him. Others were people that needed to be punished. In fact we are going to read of Solomon in this chapter, putting people to death including his half brother.
 - b) My point is Solomon is no wimp. We'll read he had both the courage and the wisdom to make the tough decisions that has to be made as a king. Both his wisdom and his courage were naturally born gifts from God and also (big "also") things that all of us need to pray for in our own lives in order that we can and should make a difference for God.
3. This leads back to you and me. The lessons of this chapter are not about how to be a good king as much as it is about how to recognize the spiritual gifts that God has given each of us and how He expects us to use those gifts in order to use our lives to make a difference for Him. To begin, it always starts with prayer: if one is say, afraid in a situation, pray for the boldness to do what needs to be done. If one has no idea what to do next, pray for guidance. If one just needs peace in a situation, pray over it. It is a matter of reminding ourselves that God is in charge and we are not. As one looks back at one's life, one usually realizes that God was there, guiding us the whole time. That includes times prior to us giving our lives to Him. It's to realize that God has given us the wisdom to handle whatever it we have to handle, even if we pray our way through it.
 - a) My point here is as we read about the wisdom of the decisions that Solomon has to make as he starts his reign as king, is to realize that God gives each of special gifts so that we can and should use our lives to make a difference for Him. With that said, we are ready to read about the transition in power from King David to King Solomon in ancient Israel.

4. Verse 1: When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon his son.
 - a) In the first nine verses, we are reading here the last things King David says to Solomon before he dies. There is a parallel and expanded passage to this speech in 1st Chronicles Chapters 28 and 29. By the way, get used to the idea that there are passages in "Kings" that parallel "Chronicles". There are a lot of cross-references between those books.
 - i) That reminds me, I should quickly discuss how 1st and 2nd Kings was probably organized. Jewish tradition is that Jeremiah wrote it, although no one can prove that. Like most kings throughout history, I'm sure there were scribes (writers) present to write down whatever it is a king said. Whoever organized and wrote "Kings" probably went through a lot of old official records and selected what the writer wanted to select to put in these books. One person collected and selected specific things kings said. Most likely a different writer studied those writings to put together 1st and 2nd Chronicles. Think of these collections as being written by two different history writers giving different perspectives on the same events.
 - ii) The short version is "Kings" and "Chronicles" each have a different emphasis. The book of "Kings" is mostly about how each king ruled. Chronicles focuses more on each king's relationship with God. Yes the two series overlap each other, but both are considered God inspired and have different emphasis.
 - b) I explained all of that to start, just so that one can think about how "Kings" was organized. The last recorded words of King David are preserved for us in the first part of this chapter as he gives his final instructions to King Solomon before he dies. It sort of tells one what is important to him based on the last things they want to say before they die. Notice that his final words did not focus on himself, but on what it he wanted Solomon to accomplish.
 - c) An interesting thing to keep in mind as we read this section is that Satan was now aware that a promised Messiah would come from the descendant of David, (based on the public announcement from 2nd Samuel 7:14-17), so now Satan knew where to focus his attack to try to prevent this Messiah-king from ruling over the world and in effect ending Satan's domain over people. It's something to keep in mind as we go through "Kings".
 - d) OK, enough background about the book and David's final words. Since it was Gods' will for Solomon to be the next king and David is at the end of his life, part of chapter two will focus on David's final words to Solomon, as he is about to start his reign.
 - e) With that said, I'm ready for Verse 2:
5. Verse 2: "I am about to go the way of all the earth," he said. "So be strong, show yourself a man,³ and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go, ⁴ and that the LORD may keep his promise to me: 'If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.'
 - a) Let's start with the first phrase, "way of all the earth". This is a colorful way of saying that David is going to die as all people have to face the reality of death. I have to admit that I wonder if it is better to die by saying final words to one's family or just to die suddenly. My father died by an accident late in life and his father who died before I was born died in a car accident. As painful as it may be to say, live with cancer, at least one knows one is going to die soon and then has the opportunity to pass on instructions to one's children.
 - b) My point here is if one never gets to hear say, final words from one's parents know that it is one reason why God gives us "His word". The same type of instructions that David is passing on to Solomon is the same type of wisdom we need to pass on to our children.
 - c) Since I love to paraphrase, here goes, "Solomon, be brave. I know this is a tough time to watch me die, but be strong, trust in God, and keep on studying your bible for wisdom. If you desire His wisdom, He will make sure you have it all the time you reign as king.

- d) David also realized that with the promise that the Messiah would come from one of his descendants, also came the responsibility of living a life that is pleasing to God. Since David realized that a descendant of his would rule the world forever that means he did desire that all of his descendants who ruled as king honor God as David has done all of his life. I say that here as David, as he was dying is telling Solomon to seek God, study the bible (as written to date), especially the first five books as penned by Moses. (Also notice in Verse 3, David credited the "law" as being written down by Moses. To those so called bible scholars who argue that Moses was not the author of those books, they must realize they are saying both David and Jesus were wrong when they say Moses wrote it.)
- e) Ok, I've wandered from the text again. I would argue that the main point in these verses is David is encouraging Solomon to "be strong and courageous".
 - i) Stop and compare David's early life to Solomon's life for a moment. David started off as a shepherd. Before he knew it, he was working part time or full time for King Saul. Then he had to spend years on the run as Saul tried to kill him. David learned how to fight, defeat and kill enemies of Israel. As the king, he conquered the nations that surround Israel and brought a lot of wealth to that country. God didn't allow David to build a great temple to God, but He never told David that he couldn't organize the building materials with his wealth, so that is what he did.
 - ii) We know that David was thirty when he started to reign as king (Compare Second Samuel 5:4 and Verse 11 coming up, which says that David reigned for 40 years.) Doing the math that means David was seventy at this time. That also means that he died fairly young, but he also lived a hard life of being on the run much of his life and the strains on his health from having to rule for forty years.
 - iii) Now compare all of that to Solomon. Scholars believe he was about sixteen when all of this occurred. He was raised in the royal palace. He never lead an army in war and probably only observed as a child when his half brother Absalom lead a rebellion against his father David.
 - iv) My point of this speech is that David realized that Solomon didn't have the hard-nosed experience that David had before he became king. Solomon became king the easy way compared to David. Solomon would need a lot of wisdom in order to rule as king. That is why David is giving him this warning about how to lead and trust in God's word to help him lead.
- f) When we get to Chapter 3 in the next lesson, we will read of Solomon asking God for the wisdom to lead the Israelites. We will read in this chapter that God has already given him that gift. Chapter 3 is about Solomon realizing he was given that gift, but we are still near the start of Chapter 2, let alone Chapter 3.
- g) I have to admit as I read this charge by David, I keep thinking of God's charge to Joshua in the first chapter of that book. Imagine how hard it must have been for Joshua to have to follow in Moses' footsteps. Now imagine how hard it must be for young Solomon to have to follow in David's footsteps. That's why it is necessary for us to encourage the next generation to say in effect, "Don't try to be exactly like your parents. Just go do what God has called you to do, trust in Him and He will guide you just as He guided your parents."
- h) Let me speak for a moment to each of us about our age. In the bible, "thirty" is considered a time when a young adult is accepted as a man. The Jewish priests did not begin to serve in the temple until they were thirty. Jesus was about thirty when he started his ministry. My point is those of us over thirty need to spend time finding others under thirty as for us to encourage the next generation to trust in God. I try to do that with my girls and I hope that these messages also reach out to those of the next generation as they too learn to trust God with their lives as I have with my life.
- i) Now that hopefully, I've encouraged all of you to move forward and hopefully encourage someone of the "next generation", we can move on to David's specific commands.

6. Verse 5: "Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me--what he did to the two commanders of Israel's armies, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether. He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime as if in battle, and with that blood stained the belt around his waist and the sandals on his feet." ⁶ Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to the grave in peace.
- a) David's first final command is in effect to kill Joab, a relative of David and for most of his life Joab was David's head general. I admit, that studying Joab as a character in the bible has always fascinated me. He has always been intensely loyal to David and lead Israelite armies to many victories. He never struck me as a very religious person, but I suspect he did believe in the God of Israel as a guide over that country.
 - i) Here comes the "however": One can read of a number of times in Joab's life where he killed his potential rivals in order to stay as the head general of the army. Two of those rivals are listed here in these verses: Abner and Amasa.
 - b) To make this brief, these were both generals in Israel and during times of peace, Joab had them both killed as he saw them as a threat to his job. David never had Joab punished as David knew he was popular with the army. Also, Joab knew of David's secret of having the husband of Bathsheba killed to protect that affair. If killing these two men during a time of peace was not enough, Joab also violated a direct order not to kill Absalom, who is the son of David that rebelled against him. Without repeating much of 2nd Samuel, a key point here is that although Joab was a good army leader, his great fault was during times of peace he literally had his rivals killed, which are the two names listed in this text.
 - c) Coming back to the verse, David in his own colorful way described the murders as "blood stains on his (Joab's) belt and sandals on his feet". That's David's way of saying justice has to be done with regards to Joab's life. Didn't David feel guilty that he got away with the murder of Bathsheba's husband and killing Joab would make him a hypocrite? Yes and no. David confessed that sin and God in effect told David, "I'm not going to kill you for what you did, but by the time I'm through with you, you wish that I did." David had to suffer tremendously including the loss of some of his own children for that sin. However, Joab never got punished so far for his crimes and that is the issue at stake here.
 - d) To put all of this action another way: I'm guessing David was thinking, "Joab is a cunning old soldier who is experienced at warfare. I know about warfare and I could handle him. However, you Solomon are an inexperienced young man who has never seen war. That is why I'm asking you to have him killed so he is not a threat to you. Don't forget, Joab did side with your half brother in the fake king coronation in Chapter 1. Bottom line: David wanted Solomon to be tough here and literally have Joab killed for his murders.
 - e) The lesson for us is not about having our enemies killed. The lesson for us is about doing the right thing and in this case, it is about justice being done. OK, time to move on.
7. Verse 7: "But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai of Gilead and let them be among those who eat at your table. They stood by me when I fled from your brother Absalom.
- a) Verse 7 is here, for no other reason to show that David is not here to say, here is my list of people I want you to kill." Part of David's final requests before he dies to extend kindness to those who did help him in his time of need. The short version here from 2nd Samuel is that when David was on the run for his life because his son Absalom organized a national rebellion against him, Barzillai provided David with food and supplies when he and his troops, also his family, and probably Solomon himself needed those things to live. David told Solomon here to offer was part of the kings' provisions to live upon out of gratitude.
 - b) The lesson here for us is about showing kindness to those who have helped us in our time of need. Yes it is important to show gratitude to those who have helped us, but David is also teaching a young Solomon the importance of not only gratitude, but also offering to repay those whenever possible to those who have made a difference in our own lives.
 - c) OK, enough of the positive. Time for another person that David wants to have killed.

8. Verse 8: "And remember, you have with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, who called down bitter curses on me the day I went to Mahanaim. When he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the LORD: 'I will not put you to death by the sword.'⁹ But now, do not consider him innocent. You are a man of wisdom; you will know what to do to him. Bring his gray head down to the grave in blood."
- a) One has to admit, to really study the first part of this chapter, it would help to really know 2nd Samuel. Most of the names we have read in this chapter are prominent as characters in that book. I'm trying to give the "short version" here. Speaking of minor characters, we have this man named Shimei. To summarize, David had to quickly leave Jerusalem as his son Absalom started a civil war in that country. There was a man named Shimei who was cursing David and throwing rocks at him as he left. (See 2nd Samuel Chapter 16.)
 - b) The key point here is that David promised back then that he would not kill Shimei despite his curses. That promise is the reference to Verse 8 above. Now David on his deathbed is regretting that decision, so he asked Solomon to have good wisdom to deal with this man. We'll read later in this chapter how Solomon uses his wisdom to deal with Shimei.
 - c) OK, and what does any of this have to do with my life? It isn't that God wants us to go kill anyone that has hurt us. It is about having the proper perspective about how to deal with those who have caused us pain in our lives. The short version is the bible teaches both the concepts of applying love and justice in dealing with situations. As a simple example, if someone physically hurts us, we should still call the proper authorities. At the same time, God does not expect us to take revenge into our own hands. Those who hurt us expect us to hurt them back as that is how they would react. However, if we show kindness to them they don't know how to handle that. I usually find they will eventually stop that behavior because they can't handle that type of loving reaction. To state the obvious, there can be life-threatening situations that are different, but I'm talking about simpler behavior here.
 - d) All of that talk leads me back to David and Solomon. Both are kings, so as kings, they are the headmen in charge of justice. David is saying to Solomon, figure out a way that I can keep my word to not kill him, but at the same time, minister the proper justice because he broke the law of cursing (and throwing rocks) at those who are in power. When we read later in this chapter how Solomon does that, I give him credit for a creative solution.
9. Verse 10: Then David rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David.¹¹ He had reigned forty years over Israel--seven years in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem.¹² So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David, and his rule was firmly established.
- a) Sometimes as one reads books that cover extensive time periods of history, we forget that they cover long time spans. For example, as one reads 1st and 2nd Samuel or 1st and 2nd Kings, one can read those stories as if they are just covering a week or month's time span. My point is 2nd Samuel covered the time frame that David was the king and we read here in Verse 10 that it was a forty year period that David did reign as a king, first of one part of Israel and then over all of Israel.
 - b) Let me talk about these verses another way: Why is David's life emphasized so much in the bible? There is far more written about, and by David that any other character in the Old Testament (with the possible except of Moses who wrote the first five bible books).
 - i) My question is why is David emphasized so much? Yes he is an ancestor of Jesus and the first person God desired to be the king. More importantly, he was the one who God told that a descendant of his would rule forever. My point is that David was considered a man after God's own heart not because he was perfect, but only because he learned to trust God with his life despite the many mistakes he made.
 - c) Think of David this way: If he was to record the story of his life, he might delete the parts about the sexual affair with Bathsheba or that one of his children tried to overthrow him as king and he had to run out of town in fear. He may only write about his successes. All the details of his life teach us that David was human and God loved him faults and all.

- d) With that said, these verses mark the end of the reign of David and the actual transfer of power to Solomon as the next king of Israel. It is interesting that David's final words were about specific people that David either wanted to eliminate or reward. Yes there are other things David taught Solomon near the end of his life and one can read some of that in 1st Chronicles 28 and 29. The point here is that Solomon was still a young man, who needed counseling on how to deal with people. Therefore, David was giving him practical advice on how to deal with different types of people. I can almost see David saying here in effect, "I've said all I want to say. It's now up to you Solomon to use the gift of wisdom that God has given you and trust in Him as you are to be the next king." With that said, David died and we are now over the next ten chapters or so, going to read about how the next king of Israel rules over that land.
 - e) In fact, the first issue we're going to read about Solomon is challenged for the kingship by his half-brother in a subtle way. A reason that story is given first is to teach us, "Once we have been given some sort leadership role by God, here is how we trust in Him in order to deal with that power." With that said, we're ready for Verse 13.
10. Verse 13: Now Adonijah, the son of Haggith, went to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother. Bathsheba asked him, "Do you come peacefully?" He answered, "Yes, peacefully." ¹⁴ Then he added, "I have something to say to you." "You may say it," she replied.
- a) It's time to reintroduce ourselves to some key characters from the last chapter. Adonijah is a half brother of Solomon. Both have David as their father, but different mothers. This is the brother that was the oldest son and next in line to be the king. He's the one who left the palace to go announce he is to be the next king. Therefore technically, he knew he was guilty of treason. In this scene, he is approaching the mother of Bathsheba with a request to ask of King Solomon. Just by the fact that Adonijah approaches Bathsheba and not King Solomon himself is a strong clue he is up to something.
 - b) With that said, Adonijah gives his request to her in the next few verses.
11. Verse 15: "As you know," he said, "the kingdom was mine. All Israel looked to me as their king. But things changed, and the kingdom has gone to my brother; for it has come to him from the LORD. ¹⁶ Now I have one request to make of you. Do not refuse me." "You may make it," she said. ¹⁷ So he continued, "Please ask King Solomon--he will not refuse you--to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife." ¹⁸ "Very well," Bathsheba replied, "I will speak to the king for you."
- a) As I read this a few times, I kept thinking, Solomon's half brother Adonijah who tried to make himself king is thinking, "I was THIS close to pulling it off. Except David pulled the rug out from under me." You can sense Adonijah's arrogance and his lack of humility in making his request to Solomon's mother. Know that Adonijah is the brother of Absalom.
 - b) Back in 2nd Samuel, Adonijah's full brother Absalom spent years plotting how he would overthrow his father David. I suspect Adonijah is thinking the same way here. If you are confused by the names of these brothers, just remember Solomon's two brothers plotted to overthrow him so they could be in power. Bottom line is in a quest for power Adonijah is still working to overthrow Solomon from the throne.
 - c) Now think about this scene from Bathsheba's perspective. You may recall from Chapter 1 that she was well aware that Adonijah tried to overthrow her son from being the king. He didn't invite her or her son Solomon to his "coronation". I'm sure she didn't trust him and it didn't matter what he asked in that regard.
 - d) With all of that said, the text says that Adonijah asked for Abishag. I know it is tough to keep all these names straight that sound similar and are tough to pronounce, but hang in there with me while I finish these introductions. This was the young woman who was a "nurse" who took care of David as he was dying. The problem with Adonijah asking for her as his wife is that she was now legally one of David's concubines even though Verse 4 in Chapter 1 said that David never had sexual relations with her. The point is legally if she married Adonijah it gave him a "legal step closer" to being the king.

- e) If all of this palace intrigue confuses you, just remember that if that couple got married, and say Solomon accidentally died before having children, Adonijah could claim he is next in line to be the king because he is married to one of David's concubines.
 - f) Personally, I suspect Bathsheba figured all that out and knew that Solomon would take of his half brother (i.e., have him executed for this request) so she agreed to ask him about it. Think of this plan by Adonijah this way: If he asked Solomon directly, I'm sure Solomon wouldn't trust him as he remembered how Adonijah plotted to be the king. The point is Adonijah can't stop thinking about being a king so he is trying this back door method by asking Solomon's aging mother to make the request for him.
 - g) You know, even if you get nothing spiritual out of this story, one has to admit, it makes a good read of all of this palace intrigue.
 - h) To explain the significance, we should finish the rest of this little drama:
12. Verse 19: When Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah, the king stood up to meet her, bowed down to her and sat down on his throne. He had a throne brought for the king's mother, and she sat down at his right hand.
- a) Speaking of palace intrigue, the scene now moves to Solomon's throne room. His mother enters the room and bows down to her son as a sign of respect. To show his respect for his mother he orders another chair be put next to his so he could publicly hear what it is that his mother has to say to him. With that said, it's time for the big moment:
13. Verse 20: "I have one small request to make of you," she said. "Do not refuse me." The king replied, "Make it, my mother; I will not refuse you." ²¹ So she said, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given in marriage to your brother Adonijah." ²² King Solomon answered his mother, "Why do you request Abishag the hunammite for Adonijah? You might as well request the kingdom for him--after all, he is my older brother--yes, for him and for Abiathar the priest and Joab son of Zeruiah!"
- a) Before I comment on this text, let me remind us of my lesson title, "Wisdom as a gift from God". Even before Solomon asks God for wisdom in Chapter 3, we can see that God had already given Solomon wisdom here in Chapter 2. That's because as a king, Solomon saw right through his half-brother's plot. Just as I suspect Solomon's mother knew that her son would react harshly, Solomon did react that way. His response to Adonijah's request for this girl as his wife was in effect, "He might as well ask to be king himself".
 - b) To put this story another way, the first thing that popped in Solomon's head as he thought about his half brother, is the fact that he plotted to be a king himself along with the High Priest of Israel (Abiathar) and the head of the army (Joab). My point is Solomon simply heard his half brother's name mentioned and his first thought was another mutiny! He understood the implication that his half brother would then be next in line to be the king if something happened to him, so it brought on this negative reaction. I can almost see Bathsheba chuckling to herself, as she knew her son would react this way.
 - c) The bottom line for us is that Solomon had the wisdom to see through this plot and now he is going to take strong action against his half brother.
14. Verse 23: Then King Solomon swore by the LORD: "May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if Adonijah does not pay with his life for this request!" ²⁴ And now, as surely as the LORD lives--he who has established me securely on the throne of my father David and has founded a dynasty for me as he promised--Adonijah shall be put to death today!" ²⁵ So King Solomon gave orders to Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and he struck down Adonijah and he died.
- a) John's loose translation: Solomon had his half brother killed. Remember that Adonijah was already guilty of treason by trying to assume power himself. This is the punishment for trying to overthrow the king. Think of Solomon's actions here as, "My brother didn't learn the first time that there is a price to be paid for treason and now he's plotting again so I (Solomon) have to take drastic measures as there is no stopping this guy." Therefore Solomon gave the order to have his half brother put to death for treason.

- b) As I read this, I kept thinking of the Godfather movie series where Michael Corleone (Al Pacino) has his brother Fredo put to death for "treason" against the family. The difference between that movie and here is that a king in Israel is also the "supreme court". If a king says a man is guilty (and Solomon's brother was guilty) there is no other appeal here.
 - c) Notice that Solomon is no "wimp". Now that he's in full power, he does what he has to do to establish himself as king and in effect give a warning to anyone else who is thinking of challenging his leadership. By having his half brother put to death, Solomon is sending a message to anyone else thinking of treason of "don't try this, or you too will die".
 - d) So is the moral of the story, "don't mess with the king, or you will end up like Fredo, the dead brother of the Al Pacino character? For starters, yes. Proverbs teaches us to in effect, "watch our mouth in the presence of a king". (See Proverbs 24:21 as an example).
 - i) The main point for us to learn is to have wisdom when judging what other people have to say to us. Let's be honest, Solomon could have said, "mom, if that's what you want, I'll give it to you." Give Solomon credit for having the wisdom to see through this plot and do the right thing in this situation.
 - e) With that said, the key point is Solomon heard the story, and gave the order to have his half-brother Adonijah killed. While Solomon was thinking about the plot to overthrow his kingdom organized by Adonijah, his next order of business is to deal with the other two co-conspirators of that plot. The first of them was the High Priest Abiathar.
15. Verse 26: To Abiathar the priest the king said, "Go back to your fields in Anathoth. You deserve to die, but I will not put you to death now, because you carried the ark of the Sovereign LORD before my father David and shared all my father's hardships." ²⁷ So Solomon removed Abiathar from the priesthood of the LORD, fulfilling the word the LORD had spoken at Shiloh about the house of Eli.
- a) This is another story where to fully appreciate it, one has to go all the way back to First Samuel to understand what is happening here. The book of First Samuel effectively opens with the story of a baby named Samuel being brought to the High Priest as a "living gift". To make a long story short, Samuel's mother struggled to get pregnant. She promised God if she could get pregnant, the first baby would be given to God (via the high priest). The point being that Eli was now "stuck with this little boy" to fulfill her mother's vow.
 - i) All of that background is important to understand this story. The next part of the background to know is that Eli had two wicked sons who he didn't discipline. A prediction was made to Eli that one day his descendants would no longer be the top priest in Israel. Here we are a generation or two later, and that promise made by God is coming true here as the last of Eli's line is being removed from power by Solomon because this grandson of Eli committed treason against the king.
 - b) The story also says that Solomon decided not to kill Eli for treason, because Solomon did recall how Anathoth (the grandson of Eli who was part of the treason plot) was a help to David during his times of troubles. To paraphrase Solomon, "I know that you were a big help to my dad, so therefore I'm sparing your life despite the fact you committed treason". Bottom line is it cost this man his job, but not his life.
 - c) OK John, nice story. Why should I care? Again the issue is about having the wisdom to make the right decisions in life. So is Solomon saying, one's good deeds outweigh one's bad deeds here? Remember that this is not a model of eternal judgment, just a model of how we should be treated fairly here on earth. God does not judge us based on one set of deeds vs. another. God is perfect and because He is perfect, He has to judge us perfectly. God can't just forgive us for "treason" (not trusting in His son's payments for our sins) just because we did some good things in our lives. In a sense, Solomon does something even more powerful by taking away this man's life work, his power and his title. I also don't think it was Solomon's intent to fulfill prophecy, that was an editorial comment that was added by whoever wrote and organized this book.

16. Verse 28: When the news reached Joab, who had conspired with Adonijah though not with Absalom, he fled to the tent of the LORD and took hold of the horns of the altar.²⁹ King Solomon was told that Joab had fled to the tent of the LORD and was beside the altar. Then Solomon ordered Benaiah son of Jehoiada, "Go, strike him down!"
- a) Well we now have two of the three treason conspirators taken care of by Solomon, now it is time to deal with the last of the conspirators, "General Joab" the head of the army.
 - b) To state the obvious here, Joab wasn't stupid. He probably quickly found out Solomon had Adonijah killed and the high priest stripped of power and he knew he was next. Joab also knew that besides being guilty of treason against the king, he committed other crimes in his life including murder during peacetime. There are two separate stories recorded in 2nd Samuel where Joab plotted to kill his rivals for power. The short version here is that Joab was guilty of multiple crimes of murder, which is a death sentences in Israel. So you know, a reason David never had Joab killed was simply that he was too powerful and at those points in history. David couldn't have Joab killed without risking his own throne.
 - c) With that said, Joab tried the old trick of grabbing the horns of the altar in order to try to save his own life. For the few of you who didn't read my lesson on Chapter 1, let me go over this real quickly: In that culture at that time, to run into a main temple is kind of like asking a Catholic priest for asylum when one is guilty of a crime. However, that does not work in ancient Israel. To quote Exodus 21:14: "But if anyone schemes and kills someone deliberately, that person is to be taken from my altar and put to death." (NIV Translation).
 - i) Bottom line is one cant run to God's altar for protection if one is guilty of murder. Therefore, even a good Catholic priest who knows his bible would realize that one can't run to a Catholic church for asylum if one is guilty of murder.
 - d) Thus ends the life of one of the most complicated characters in the Old Testament, Joab. The guy had his good points in that he was fiercely loyal to King David and he won all the battles he was involved with. In other words, he was good at his job. However, he also killed his rivals to power during peacetime. Solomon's father David, stated on his deathbed how powerful and cunning a man General Joab can be. Therefore, David told Solomon to have him killed not only for his murders, but also because General Joab will be a threat to Solomon as he was ultimately a threat to David's decisions as a king.
 - e) One has to admit, as one reads of the life of Solomon as he stared his role as a king, he did start well in life. He applied wisdom to do the right thing in a handful of tough situations. He killed potential rivals to his throne. We'll read in the next chapter that he did seek out God in order to be a good king. As we'll also read later, Solomon's fault will be that he didn't finish well, but I'm getting ahead of the story.
 - f) Consider something else here: I've always held the view that Satan is not "all knowing". He learns the same way we learn, by paying attention. When God told David that one of his descendants would be the Messiah, I'm sure Satan took careful note of that promise as that Messiah would be a threat to his rule over the world and one day it would mean the end of his power over mankind. My point here is simply that in effect, Satan knew where to focus his attack, as Solomon assumed power as the king. Even with Solomon seeking God in the next chapter, Satan didn't give up. He just waited for a later opportune time in Solomon's life to get him to turn from God, which Solomon did by marrying many foreign women and then turning to the gods of those women.
 - i) My point is just because we seek God, does not mean demons will leave us alone. Their desire is to reign over us as much as they can. If we're not a good witness for Jesus, we're not leading others closer to Him. That is why their goal is to make us ineffective witnesses for Jesus. They can't take away our salvation, but they never stop trying to get us to be ineffective witnesses for Him. So you know, that's why God allows Satan to rule, as a motivation for us to keep us close to God, to rely upon His power to overcome demonic forces.

17. Verse 30: So Benaiah entered the tent of the LORD and said to Joab, "The king says, 'Come out!' " But he answered, "No, I will die here." Benaiah reported to the king, "This is how Joab answered me."
- a) So while I was explaining to us the importance of sticking close to Jesus throughout our lives whether we are nobody famous or a powerful king, we last left our story with Joab about to be killed for the murders he committed and treason against Solomon.
 - b) Think of Benaiah as being the "military police" with an order to either arrest Joab so he could stand trial or else having the power and authority to have Joab killed.
 - c) Benaiah's specific orders here were not yet to kill Joab, but just to drag him back in front of Solomon to stand trial for his crimes. Notice that Solomon was not afraid to face Joab and wanted him to stand trial. I can see Solomon growing here in his power and his trust in God to do the right thing. Bottom line here is that Joab knew he would be sentenced to death and wanted to see if a fellow soldier in the same army had the guts to kill him.
18. Verse 31: Then the king commanded Benaiah, "Do as he says. Strike him down and bury him, and so clear me and my father's house of the guilt of the innocent blood that Joab shed. ³² The LORD will repay him for the blood he shed, because without the knowledge of my father David he attacked two men and killed them with the sword. Both of them--Abner son of Ner, commander of Israel's army, and Amasa son of Jether, commander of Judah's army--were better men and more upright than he. ³³ May the guilt of their blood rest on the head of Joab and his descendants forever. But on David and his descendants, his house and his throne, may there be the LORD's peace forever."
- a) The short version is Solomon gave the order to this army officer to go kill Joab because he was guilty of murder. It's hard to describe this story without spending a few moments to recall a few facts from 2nd Samuel. I'll make this quick: Abner was the head general for King Saul and later defected to David's side. Joab saw Abner as a rival to his job and he killed him in peacetime. (2nd Samuel 3:30). Amasa was the general for David's other son Absalom. After Absalom was killed and the war was over, David made Amasa the head general. Joab was demoted for violating David's direct order not to have his son killed. Anyway, Joab later killed Amasa in peacetime as he was a rival. (2nd Samuel 20:10.)
 - b) Notice what was not mentioned here in 1st Kings: The killing of Solomon's half brother Absalom, who started a civil war against David. (I know it's hard to keep all of these "A" names straight, so I'm describing this with some details to remind us who is who.) The reason that Solomon didn't mention that is because that was "war-time". Joab could claim his innocence for killing Absalom because it was a time of war. Joab could not claim any innocence for those other two men he killed in times of peace.
 - c) Bottom line is Solomon had Joab killed for the crime of murder. Solomon gave the order to Benaiah to kill Joab, and like a good soldier, Benaiah obeyed the command. In the next verse, we read the end of life of this significant bible character.
 - i) Let me ask the question: Do you think Joab is in heaven? Don't know as that is God's decision to make and not mine. Religious Jews will argue that murder is an unforgivable sin and therefore, Joab is in hell for that. Joab doesn't strike me as a religious man, just one who was loyal to David and a good soldier. If you forced me to guess, I would say no, but that is God's business and not mine.
 - ii) Meanwhile, the actual killing of Joab is the next verse.
19. Verse 34: So Benaiah son of Jehoiada went up and struck down Joab and killed him, and he was buried on his own land in the desert.
- a) Bottom line is Benaiah did as he was ordered to do. OK John, good palace intrigue story. Tell me why I should care? Wisdom is about doing what God desires we do. We learn what he desires of us by studying our bible. Solomon obeyed Exodus 21:14 and justice was done in this situation. Give Solomon credit here for applying biblical wisdom to his own life and as he started his rule as the king.

- b) Now I have another question: Why does the text mention that Joab was buried in land that he owned out in the desert? Why is that epilogue mentioned? As best as I can tell, it is statement about his isolation. Let's face it those who live in the wilderness usually don't want a lot of people living around them. I don't know of Joab was a really a loner or even if he had a family. Based on how he lived his life, he strikes me as the kind of person who did his job and just did what was best for himself. If I had to guess, he had no family.
- c) Meanwhile, we get to read next of Benaiah and his reward for doing his duty.
- 20. Verse 35: The king put Benaiah son of Jehoiada over the army in Joab's position and replaced Abiathar with Zadok the priest.
 - a) This verse is Solomon showing wisdom as to who are the replacements. Benaiah got to move up to be the head general. I don't know how much of a promotion that was, but at the least he had the guts to carry out the king's order to put his boss Joab to death. There is an epilogue to "Ben" in 1st Chronicles 11 that essentially says he was a brave man for other deeds besides this one. Now Ben" is the head general based on that bravery here.
 - b) The other promotion we read here is Zadok became the new head priest. This is another man who was loyal to David and helped him in the war against Absalom.
 - c) Coming back to my lesson title we again seeing Solomon applying wisdom about not only about who to eliminate but who to replace them in their jobs. The bottom line here for us is about studying our bible like Solomon did and learn how God wants us to live wisely.
 - d) Meanwhile we still have one more 2nd Samuel person left to deal with to finish Chapter 2.
- 21. Verse 36: Then the king sent for Shimei and said to him, "Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and live there, but do not go anywhere else. ³⁷ The day you leave and cross the Kidron Valley, you can be sure you will die; your blood will be on your own head."
 - a) The good news is we're done with characters whose names begin with "A". The bad news is I need to tell one more 2nd Samuel story before we can wrap up this chapter. Here goes:
 - i) When David was running for his life from the rebellion against his son, there was a man named Shimei who cursed David as he was leaving. Another general who worked for David wanted to kill Shimei, but David said in effect, "I'm already in a bad mood because my son is trying to kill me. Let him curse away." When David returned to Israel in victory, this Shimei guy apologized for "betting on the wrong horse" and David forgave him.
 - b) If you recall, one of the final things David said to Solomon before David died was that this guy Shimei should not die in peace. Was David regretting his decision to spare his life? Don't know. I suspect the bigger idea is that David was trying to teach Solomon how to handle people who threaten the kings' life. The problem of course is that David already promised he wouldn't kill this man. If you recall, in the early verses of this chapter David asked Solomon to use wisdom (Verse 6) and not let this guy live out a long life.
 - i) Therefore, Solomon's order to this Shimei guy is in effect, "you are under house arrest for threatening to kill a king". Solomon told Shimei that he had to live out the rest of his life in Jerusalem and if he ever left, he would be killed.
- 22. Verse 38: Shimei answered the king, "What you say is good. Your servant will do as my lord the king has said." And Shimei stayed in Jerusalem for a long time.: ³⁹ But three years later, two of Shimei's slaves ran off to Achish son of Maacah, king of Gath, and Shimei was told, "Your slaves are in Gath." ⁴⁰ At this, he saddled his donkey and went to Achish at Gath in search of his slaves. So Shimei went away and brought the slaves back from Gath.
 - a) Here we read that three years after this judgment Shimei violated his parole terms. Why did he do it? Anybody who has children knows the answer to that question: People like to test their boundaries to see what are the consequences. That is what Shimei did here. Did he know that Solomon would have him killed for doing this? I suspect that he only cared that his slaves ran away and therefore, this became an excuse to test his parole and see if Solomon was going to be a man of his word or not.

- b) The bottom line here is that Shimei found his slaves and returned to Jerusalem. I don't know if the man didn't fear for his life or thought that Solomon would forget about the terms of his trial, but he did this act anyway.
 - c) Time for a quick comment about boundaries. One of the important things to teach our children is about boundaries of what they are and are not allowed to do. Children also have to learn there are consequences for violating those boundaries. This little story of how Solomon punished this guy is a good example of how to properly apply boundaries.
 - i) The lesson to parents is about sticking to one's guns with boundaries and not be afraid to dish out consequences when children violate those boundaries.
 - d) The point is this final story does also show the wisdom of Solomon. Did Solomon know for sure that this Shimei guy would violate his parole? Probably, as Solomon understood human nature to test one's boundaries. Solomon also understood that it was his father's will to not let this guy die peacefully. Therefore Solomon did not violate David's order to not have him killed earlier but at the same time, Solomon did follow David's last request to not let the guy peacefully. It is a wonderful lesson for us not only about the importance of boundaries, but how to apply Godly wisdom to a tough situation.
 - e) Meanwhile, I've jumped ahead of the story and need to finish the text.
23. Verse 41: When Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and had returned, ⁴² the king summoned Shimei and said to him, "Did I not make you swear by the LORD and warn you, 'On the day you leave to go anywhere else, you can be sure you will die'? At that time you said to me, 'What you say is good. I will obey.'⁴³ Why then did you not keep your oath to the LORD and obey the command I gave you?"
- a) Here is Solomon telling this Shimei guy, "you violated your parole terms, and the penalty is death." Solomon even asks Shimei why he violated the terms. Notice the text never lets Shimei respond because Solomon already knew there was no defense he could make.
24. Verse 44: The king also said to Shimei, "You know in your heart all the wrong you did to my father David. Now the LORD will repay you for your wrongdoing. ⁴⁵ But King Solomon will be blessed, and David's throne will remain secure before the LORD forever." ⁴⁶ Then the king gave the order to Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and he went out and struck Shimei down and killed him.
- a) Here is Solomon giving the actual order to Benaiah to kill Shimei. Remember that "Ben" was the guy who struck down Joab so he wasn't afraid to use violence in order to carry out a king's order.
 - b) The interesting part here is that Solomon reminds Shimei how he badly he treated King David. It has been years since that incident occurred and Solomon wants him to know that Solomon was among the people who left town and has not forgotten that incident.
25. Verse 46b: The kingdom was now firmly established in Solomon's hands.
- a) The bottom line is all the people that David asked Solomon to eliminate before he died have now been killed and Solomon is now free to rule without any threats of the people who David considered a threat to Solomon's throne. Solomon also rewarded those who his father David told him to reward. The key point of this whole chapter is we read of Solomon applying the gift of wisdom that God has given him in order to start well as being the next king of Israel.
 - b) OK John, good for Solomon. How does any of this affect my life? The answer has to do with learning to apply wisdom to our own lives for the decisions that we need to make. I'll explain that a little better in my closing prayer. Speaking of which:
26. Let's pray: Father, we thank you that we don't have to earn Your love or respect based on the way we live out our lives. Still, out of gratitude for our salvation, help us to live out a life that does make a difference for You in all that we do. Give us the wisdom to make the right decisions we need to make in life. Help us to trust in You, seek You daily for guidance and regularly read Your word to guide us as we use our time for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

