

Solomon & His Wisdom, I

We are going to consider the books of 1 and 2 Kings and particularly the first character who is introduced there, King Solomon. He is the first main character and one of the more enigmatic characters in the Bible.

I would like to begin simply by giving a very general look at the books of 1 and 2 Kings in overview. You will notice that there is a chiasm. I use this one only because I think it is helpful in getting a handle on one way of analyzing the overarching structure of 1 and 2 Kings. This first chiasm is not original to me. However, it is modified by me with apologies to those others who have done more detailed and excellent work in the past. I try to make it as memorable as possible. The two A elements of the chiasm are entitled, "One Kingdom, Rise of the Davidic Dynasty" and "One Kingdom, Fall of the Davidic Dynasty." This starts with the rise of the kingdom in Israel after Saul and David. We have the rise of the kingdom of Solomon described in the first 11 chapters of 1 Kings. That is where we are going to focus in this session as we get there. By the end of 2 Kings we have the fall of the northern kingdom. It is interesting that the description of the destruction of the temple, as it is recorded in 2 Kings 25:13-17, corresponds to the order of the manufacture of the temple in 1 Kings 7. There seems to be an intentionality in the matching up of these two A elements, as that which was built is now destroyed in the same order.

At the center of the B elements we have Jeroboam's building of the infamous golden calves. These B elements deal with the northern kingdom under Jeroboam I. In 1 Kings 11-14 we read about the rise of the northern kingdom. In 2 Kings 17 we read of the fall of the northern kingdom at the hands of the Assyrians. Jeroboam's building of the golden calves was strongly condemned both by the narrator and the prophet who comes from the south to the north. He comes to condemn those golden calves and false places of worship. We find this in 1 Kings 12:25-33. There is a link between this first B element and the fall of the northern kingdom. The B prime element is made clear by the explicit statement that the fall of the northern kingdom was the result of the idolatry begun by Jeroboam I. We find this in 2 Kings 17:16-18. Again there seems to be an intentional design on the part of the narrator to link up the fall of the northern kingdom with its starting point, how it was begun under Jeroboam I.

Then we come to the C elements, which both are simply entitled, "Kings of Judah and Israel." In these sections we have a rather rapid alternation between kings of the north and kings of the south. You hear a little bit about one and a little bit about the other. Perhaps these serve simply to recount the history of both kingdoms and to separate the creation and destruction of the northern kingdom, described in the B elements, from that central section, D, which is so very important for the message of this book.

Those who have earlier analyzed this particular structure in the books of 1 and 2 Kings have sometimes described this central element, the D element, as demonstrating the victory of prophetic over monarchic forces. In other words, prophet takes precedence over king.

I would like to make a slight adjustment here and really say perhaps this describes the victory of Yahwehism over Baalism. The central kingly character in this large section in the middle of Kings is Ahab and his wife Jezebel. The false worship took place under their rule. The prophets with whom they come into greatest contact are Elijah and Elisha. In this section is the famous contest between the prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18. In this section we see God triumphing over the prophets of Baal and over the gods of Canaan, Baal, and Ashtoreth. That is a very broad structure for the books of 1 and 2 Kings. Again, there does seem to be some intentionality in the linking up of these

different elements, although I do not know that the writer of Kings would have sat down and said, I think I will have an A, B, C, D, C, B, A structure. Sometimes these things happen more organically and intuitively. But I think as an analysis it helps us get a handle on the material.

Let us move on to 1 Kings 1-11. There is another nice chiasm here. It is also not of my making; others have noticed this. I have greatly simplified it to make it match up with chapter numbers and thus it is a little schematic. I need to warn you about that. Do not think that there would not be better ways or other ways to analyze these first 11 chapters. This is a way of providing structure to the discussion we will have later in this session. The A elements first involve Solomon's great gain. In chapter 1 he comes into possession of the kingdom. He is installed on the throne by the end of chapter 1. In 1 Kings 11 we read of Solomon's loss of the kingdom, or at least the prophecy that the kingdom would be divided under the reign of his son, Rehoboam. That, in fact, does take place in chapter 12.

I struggled a little bit to make the B elements match nicely. I have entitled the first B element simply, "Solomon Takes Charge." As we will see I am referring both to his reception of his father, David's final charge to him and Solomon's taking charge of things. On David's death bed he will issue a charge to Solomon. In the latter half of chapter 2 we see Solomon taking charge. We will talk about what that means when we get there. I have isolated the second B element as 1 Kings 10. It could obviously spill to the latter part of 1 Kings 9, but to keep it neat I will leave it 1 Kings 10. Here you see Solomon taking. He took charge in chapter 2, but by chapter 10 he is simply taking.

The two C elements involve two very important appearances of the Lord to Solomon. The first one is at his low point in chapter 3, and the second is at his high point in chapter 9. The central section, chapters 4-8, describes Solomon's glorious ministry and his building projects. I want to say in advance that this central section about his glorious ministry and the building projects should not be overlooked. Solomon accomplished great things. We will have an opportunity to assess our own reading of Solomon. He has often been interpreted in a positive fashion, up to and including Chapter 10 and then suddenly in chapter 11 everything goes wrong. I want us to see that there is another side to Solomon's experience, almost from the very beginning. We are going to be looking again into the shadows. I know that this maybe gives a sense of imbalance, but generally people accent the positive aspects of Solomon's early reign and the bulk of his reign. I, by no means, want to deny those, but I want us to see how one who started so well could end so poorly. So bear with me if I seem to be ferreting out little criticisms about Solomon. I am doing that with intent while not denying that he had a great ministry and a great impact in many other respects.

When you hear the name Solomon, what do you think of? By far the most popular answer is wisdom. In fact, I will give you a few references to back up your immediate response. In 1 Kings 3:12 the Lord says, "I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be." Thus Solomon is often called the wisest man who ever lived. However, the mere life of Christ on earth indicates to us that we are being hyperbolic. We are exaggerating a bit because surely Christ was wiser than Solomon. In Him were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. It is hyperbole to say Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. You have to make at least one exception, but he was exceedingly wise.

What else comes to mind when you think of Solomon? Wealth. In 1 Kings 3:13 it says, "Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both riches and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings." Wisdom, wealth; what else?

What I have in my notations is folly. I do not equate one woman with folly, but perhaps I would equate multiple women with folly in the sense in which Solomon was involved with many, many women. One woman can be a great blessing; multiple women, perhaps, can be a folly. When you think of Solomon, I think all of us have something of a question mark in our minds. We have a deep uneasiness. What happened to this guy? I thought wisdom led to fruitfulness in life, but look at how things fell apart for him.

We also think of the temple when we think about Solomon. In 1 Kings 4-8 we read in detail about the building of the temple. All of these things come to mind. We see that Solomon started well, but he failed miserably. Even the structure of these first 11 chapters that we have been talking about confirms this. We see either a downward spiral or an absolute drop-off in chapter 11. I am of the opinion that what we see is a gradual descent in Solomon's own experience.

One scholar has observed that Solomon's reign is given lengthy treatment. Attention given to him is much more lengthy than other kings, except perhaps with Ahab. His reign is given lengthy treatment first because of his historical importance. It is also given lengthy treatment because of the programmatic character of the story of Solomon. When something is programmatic it sets up a pattern. It develops within us certain expectations of the way things work. It helps us know the way the kingdom is going to work and the dynamics we can expect to be involved in the books of 1 and 2 Kings. Solomon is a prototypical king. He has some positive aspects and some negative aspects, yet despite his sin and failure, God remains faithful. God's promises demonstrate that they are, in fact, unconditional.

Let us move into my next point, which is entitled "Solomon's Great Gain." We are going to start in 1 Kings 1. We have just been talking about what words come to mind when we talk about Solomon, but what else do we know about Solomon? He is David and Bathsheba's son. David probably had about 17 or 18 sons. In 2 Samuel 3:1-5 we read about six that were born in Hebron, and in 2 Samuel 5:13-15 we read of 11 more born in Jerusalem. Now, it is probably 18 because I imagine Solomon was not included. He was not yet born until 2 Samuel 11.

What was the Lord's pronouncement upon Solomon at the time of his birth? He was named Jedidiah by God. Jedidiah is a great name because of its meaning. It means beloved of Yahweh, beloved of the Lord. It is very interesting that God should pronounce that name upon Solomon inasmuch as he was the son of David and Bathsheba. The first son that was conceived in that adulterous relationship died, and then they had another son. God, in His Grace, named him Beloved of Yahweh. God is a God who brings good even out of bad.

Now, Solomon is an enigma to us. We have been describing the fact of his superlative wisdom and then his gargantuan folly. He had 1,000 wives! That is a lot. The question this raises in our minds is how did it happen? How did he go from having great wisdom in 1 Kings 3 to 1 Kings 11 where he is doing such foolish things? David Paying, in his article on Solomon in the *New International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, writes, "It is not easy to assess the character either of Solomon or his reign. He is credited with great piety, but his apostasy does not go un-remarked. His wisdom is proverbial, but his folly was responsible for the disintegration of his realm after his death. The surface peace and prosperity barely veiled considerable oppression and unrest. Since Solomon's reign was long, one may conclude that his character, ability, and farsightedness, and the state's economic security and political strength, were impaired gradually, perhaps imperceptively." What I want us to see as we work through these chapters is that, in fact, the very way the story is told warns us that the disintegration we see in Solomon's life can happen very gradually, almost imperceptively. In fact, I think one of the reasons commentators have viewed the first 10 chapters as positive toward Solomon, and then everything goes wrong in chapter 11,

is that the earlier hints are almost imperceptible. They are not entirely imperceptible, however, as we shall see.

Next we will talk about how Solomon came to power. You read about it in chapter 1. We see, first of all, that David is old and infirmed. He is advanced in years. He cannot keep warm even when they put covers on him and so his servants say to him, "Let us look for a young virgin to attend the king and take care of him. She can lie beside him." This is the NIV translation, and most of the translations do this. The Hebrew says, "She can lie in his arms; she can lie in his bosom," which is not an entirely innocent-sounding phrase. "She can lie with him so that our Lord, the king, may keep warm," would be fairer to the real sense of the text. David is having this problem of not being able to keep warm, so they find a beautiful girl, Abishag, a Shunammite, and bring her to the king. "The girl was very beautiful; she took care of the king and waited on him, but the king did not know her," the text says. "The king had no intimate relations with her," translates the NIV. The question that has agitated the minds of commentators, rabbis, and probably some of us is why is David so cold? What is the problem? Is it just that he has some circulatory problems and is cold and needs a blanket? If so, why was Abishag brought and not just a fluffy shag carpet? Why did they search for the most beautiful woman in the land? There are a lot of answers and ancient notions that can be given. One rabbi, for instance, says that a virgin was considered more suitable than David's 18 wives because her very virginity warms her flesh. I do not know. It seems that the problem was that David had trouble getting heated up and thus he was in danger of being considered past it. In other words, it seemed that the potentate was no longer. Again, there is a lot of debate back and forth as to what that is, but we can say that he seemed physically infirmed. His weakness was interpreted by one of his sons, whom I have entitled the wayward brother, as a sign that now was his chance to make a bid for the throne.

In 1 Kings 1:5 and following we read about Adonijah, who took this cue. His father is unable to get heated up anymore. He is past it, in a sense. Our reading first of those few verses leaves us with questions. I am not saying one way or the other that it had to be the one or the other thing. It is uncertain. It is ambiguous. This wayward brother makes a bid for the throne, and notice what it says in verse 6. We mentioned this verse before, where Adonijah has gotten out the chariots and the horses and fitted himself out as a king. It says in verse 6 that "his father had never interfered with him by asking, 'Why do you behave as you do?' He was also very handsome and was born next after Absalom." These issues teach us a number of things. Maybe David had not been a proper disciplinarian with his son. He did not seem to have taken much interest in questioning the things that Adonijah did. In addition, the linking with Absalom is not particularly encouraging inasmuch as Absalom had been one who launched a rebellion. Is Adonijah doing the same thing? Is Adonijah a wayward son or is he a worthy son? He is next in line in terms of primogenitor, in terms of the eldest son being in line. It is his turn. The others have died or been killed. Does he know that Solomon has been selected to be king after David and not him? Has Solomon been selected and not him? We do not know for sure. We do have some hints, however.

Let us look at 1 Kings 1:9, "Adonijah then sacrificed sheep, cattle and fattened calves at the Stone of Zoheleth near En Rogel. He invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the men of Judah who were royal officials, but he did not invite Nathan the prophet or Benaiah or the special guard or his brother Solomon." Now why would he do that if Solomon were not special? Maybe this is hint that Adonijah knew that Solomon was to be king, and he was simply being an opportunist, trying to make his own way to the throne if at all possible. Are Adonijah's actions clearly wrong? It seems they probably were wrong, but nothing is all that clear yet in this chapter.

Then we come to a discussion of Solomon's wise mother, Bathsheba. Was she really wise or not? Again, the way the story is told leaves us asking some questions. It begins in 1 Kings 1:11. "Then Nathan asked Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, 'Have you not heard that Adonijah, the son of Haggith, has become king without our lord David's knowing it?'" The name Haggith seems to relate to the notion of festival or banquet from *haggi* in Hebrew. So the descendant of the partier has been launching his own bid for the throne by throwing a party. The issue of David's knowing something is a key issue. It is a key word, although the word "know" is used in several different senses. He did not know Abishag, who was laid beside him. He does not know what Adonijah is doing. Bathsheba is in discussion with Nathan, and they come up with a plan whereby they can save their lives and circumvent Adonijah in the nick of time. Nathan describes what Bathsheba is to do. She is to go to King David and remind him of a promise that he has made to Solomon. While she is speaking, Nathan will come in and confirm what she has to say. They orchestrate a way of manipulating David into remembering a promise that he had made earlier. We are not absolutely sure if he actually made this promise, though. It seems that he did. I would have trouble thinking of Nathan as manipulating David deceptively because Nathan is a prophet. We need to remember that Nathan, when acting as private citizen, could do wrong. When David wanted to build a temple, Nathan said that sounds like a great idea, go ahead. That night the Lord said He is the one who is supposed to make that decision, and David is not the one. So, we dare not put even a prophet on a pedestal where the prophet could not do something wrong. However, the prophet could not speak something wrong in the name of the Lord. That would belie his inspiration. But it is theoretically possible that Nathan could have taken things into his own hands. He may have thought, "Adonijah is going to take the throne and we better do something. He did not invite you, me, or Solomon, and if he gets on the throne and gains power, we will be dead." It is possible.

I do not think that is what happened. I think, in fact, David made that promise to Solomon and simply needed reminding. The point I am trying to make is that the narrative does not make it perfectly clear. It leaves us puzzled. It leaves us asking some questions. There are many questions.

Did David really make a promise to Solomon? Let us rehearse some of the evidence that he did make the promise. We have seen a little bit of it. Adonijah treats Solomon differently by not inviting him to the feast. Solomon was named Jedidiah, beloved of Yaweh, beloved of the Lord, in 2 Samuel 12:25. Nathan seems aware of Solomon's special status in 1 Kings 1:12 when he says, "Now then, let me advise you how you can save your own life and the life of your son Solomon." Somehow he sees that Solomon is set apart. Furthermore David, when reminded, does not question Solomon's claim, but he agrees and places Solomon on the throne.

Some might argue that David had not made a promise about Solomon succeeding him. They might say that David is characterized in this chapter as being unaware. What does David know? The fact that David agreed with what Nathan and Bathsheba said to him does not prove anything because he is shown as being old and maybe a little senile. He does not seem to remember things too well. Maybe Nathan and Bathsheba implanted an idea that he would then believe. The narrator nowhere explicitly states, not in this book or in any other book, that David had chosen Solomon. Furthermore, perhaps most curiously, in 1 Kings 1:24-25, Nathan appears almost to feign ignorance of David's design for Solomon. In 24 Nathan comes in and says, "Have you, my lord the king, declared that Adonijah shall be king after you, and that he will sit on your throne? Today he has gone down and sacrificed great numbers of cattle, fattened calves, and sheep. He has invited all the king's sons, the commanders of the army and Abiathar the priest. Right now they are eating and drinking with him and saying, 'Long live King Adonijah!'" He is asking, is this your plan? He does not come right in and say, "I thought you said Solomon was going to be king." He may simply be asking David, "Have you changed your mind? Have you made a new plan? Have you ordered this because this is what you want? If not, you need to know." On balance, I

think the evidence suggests that Jedidiah, beloved of the Lord, had been set apart by David, probably at the Lord's direction, to succeed David as king.

The narrative leaves us asking a question or two. We are not absolutely sure. We were not sure about David and the nature of bringing in Abishag. Was that God's will? David's servants thought it was a good idea. He seemed to agree that it was a good idea. It did not do any good. Is that what the Lord would have wanted? What about Bathsheba? We are left wondering whether she and Nathan conspired to put this thing together. What about Adonijah? Was he really off base to make a bid for the throne? He was in line. The narrative throughout leaves us wondering. We are cast into a questioning frame of mind. We will talk about that later in this session.

The last thing I think we discover about Solomon's rise to power is that though he had a weak father and a wayward brother and a wise mother, he had a wonderful God. As we read these narratives we need to be very careful not to become so fascinated with the human characters that we forget that we are primarily meant to learn something about God Himself. God often operates behind the scenes. His actions are not as apparent sometimes. We can tend to overlook what it is we are supposed to learn about Him.

At the end of the chapter, beginning in verse 28, we see through a number of circumstances God fulfilling His promise to David. He allows him to see a successor on the throne. God had made this promise in 2 Samuel 7, and it had been repeated thereafter. We see that God is fulfilling His promise despite Adonijah's bid. Despite the threats, God makes it possible that Solomon is on the throne.

The last thing I want to do is ask the question is there a sense in which 1 Kings 1 is programmatic for the story of Solomon? I have already said that the story of Solomon, chapters 1-11 is programmatic for the entirety of 1 and 2 Kings. In the future I will probably just say the book of Kings, meaning 1 and 2 Kings. They were not originally separated. Is this chapter 1 somewhat programmatic for the history we are about to read of Solomon's reign? How does it prepare us to read that story?

It lets us know that Solomon rightfully ascended the throne. It seems that he did, but we have said there are questions about this. Had the promise been made to Solomon or did they engineer this? Human actions are perplexing, puzzling, and even sometimes opaque. Chapter 1 raises some questions in our minds and prepares us to look for subtleties in the chapters that follow. It is not always going to be explicitly stated. The point of a given narrative will not always be expressly put forth by the narrator. There may be little subtleties. We will be called upon to infer some things from what we read. I think you will see as we move through this that the cumulative case becomes increasingly convincing.

Second, I think this first chapter is programmatic in the sense that God remains completely faithful to His people. He works all things together to accomplish His good and to keep His promises to His people. We see that happening in this very conflicted chapter where human motivations are somewhat suspect or at least open to question. God marches on with His purpose and accomplishes His will for His people. I think we could also learn from this chapter that active or passive disobedience to God creates situations that bring trouble into our lives. It causes us not to experience the fullness of blessing that God wishes for us. Yet God still holds onto His own. We see this in a number of different ways, particularly in the life of Adonijah, who misbehaves. In addition, David was in a compromising situation and yet God holds on to His own. He accomplishes His purpose. Though we are faithless, He remains faithful. I think that double focus on the faithlessness of God's children and the faithfulness of God is programmatic for what we continue to read as we march on through these chapters dealing with Solomon.

Let us move on to 1 Kings 2 where Solomon takes charge. I have set this up with three points, and I have done this in several different instances in these chapters as we go through them. I try to show you, or at least suggest to you, a way of taking a narrative text and presenting a logical expository three-point message from it. That is what I want us to look at as we look at chapter 2. The proposition I put before you is that because God loves us we should accept His charge, His ambition for us, and add nothing to it. Because God loves us, He knows what is best for us; we should accept His charge, His ambition for us, and add nothing to it. We will see how this works out in chapter 2. We learn these three things.

First of all, we learn that accepting God's charge requires courage. Look at the beginning of the chapter at verse 1, "When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon his son. 'I am about to go the way of all the earth,' he said. 'So be strong, show yourself a man, 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, 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.'"" Accepting God's charge requires courage. David charges his son to be strong and courageous. There are a lot of ways that that can be illustrated. I think of one from my own life: my mother told me once that she had a very hard time deciding to marry my father because she knew that he was going to become a pastor. As a daughter of a businessman she grew to expect that kind of security. Her father was a man who earned a good living and was able to pay for his children's education. It was particularly that latter question of her children's education that troubled her most. She wondered how they would ever educate their children on a pastor's salary. She learned later that you cannot educate your children on a pastor's salary, but God can educate them whatever your salary. I have three brothers and sisters and God has provided for us in different ways, but He has always provided. It took courage for her to go ahead and trust God with the uncertainty of the future. God was in it. I know that is particularly applicable to many of you because many of you are either potentially married to, already married to, or perhaps interested in a man who may someday become a pastor. You yourselves may be launching into a Christian ministry of some sort and do not know exactly how all the financial things will come together. It takes courage to accept God's charge, and David is alerting Solomon to that.

The second thing we see is that accepting God's charge does promise prosperity. We read in 1 Kings 2:3, "Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as it is written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go." When we were first dealing with the book of Joshua we saw some very similar phrases used. Joshua 1:7 says, "Be strong and very courageous [...] that you may be successful wherever you go." I remind you that this prosperity is not necessarily in a financial sense. Sometimes God prospers His servants with financial means, but certainly He does not prosper all of them with financial means. It is an entirely different issue involved here. We recognized that it means that you shall have success and you shall prosper in your way, your mission and calling in life. He will prosper you in the place in life for which you were created. If you will be strong and courageous and walk in obedience to God and in faith in God, then you will be successful in His terms. It may not be worldly terms, but honestly, if the world ever looks a little below the surface, they discover that the lifestyles of the rich and famous are not always successful. Oftentimes marriages are dissolving, depression is deep, suicide is taking place, or crimes are being committed. There is no success at all unless God is undergirding that with the real success. You will find truly successful people who are poverty stricken and some successful people who are wealthy. But Jesus said it is more difficult to be the latter than the former, because if you have nothing you know how to trust God.

David is saying it is going to take courage, but there will be success. There will be prosperity if you will walk in faith and trust according to the Law of Moses. He mentions in 1 Kings 2:4 that “the LORD may keep his promise to me.” This raises the question of what blessing God has promised to David and his descendants. It is possible to read this verse as promising that life will not overwhelm them and destroy them from without. Rather than saying you shall never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel, it is possible to read this as “one of your descendants will never be cut off.” In other words, “I have made a promise to your house and insofar as they trust me and obey me, they will never be cut off.” No one will ever come in from the outside. They will be inviolable, similar to when God said to Joshua, “Every place you set your foot, no one will be able to withstand you.” It may be that. He promises us the same thing in many respects. We are familiar with Roman 8:28, which says, “In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Following in those lines we need “fear no evil.” There will be no evil that is outside His good will for us. He will in some way turn to good effect for His glory even if it is not for our comfort. Accepting His charge promises prosperity of the right sort. We need to be very careful to recognize that.

The third thing I think we need to notice about this particular charge is that adding anything to God’s charge causes problems. We find this as we move into 1 Kings 2:5-9. We may not always have read the passage this way, but notice what David says,

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 Jethur. He killed them, shedding their blood in peace time as if in battle, and with that blood stained the belt around his waist and the sandals on his feet. Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to the grave in peace. 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. 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.” 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.

This is not the Lord’s command; it is David’s command. What is troubling about this? It seems that he has held a grudge, although maybe he has not. David seems to be a fairly laid back fellow in some respects. I am not sure whether he is holding a grudge or perhaps something else motivates this. He looks at young Solomon, who is about to take over the kingdom, and he realizes that he has had some problem characters in his reign. Joab is one of them; he is a partisan of the south. He is a southerner. He is going to be the kind of person who can develop factions in the kingdom. Similarly, Shimei was a Saulide from Bahurim. It is possible that he witnessed the return of Michal to David with Paltiel weeping behind her. That may have steeled him in his opposition to David because it was in Bahurim that Paltiel was turned back. Shimei might have seen them tell Paltiel to go back. We are told that Shimei was from that village. He was a Saulide; he was a northerner. David looks at his son and says, “You need to act according to your wisdom.” Notice he says it twice. “You are a man of wisdom. Act according to your wisdom.” You have got the smarts, Solomon. Walk according to the Law of Moses and trust God. Also, you are a man of wisdom; you will know what to do.

I think that often parents have an easier time trusting God for themselves than they do for their children. I think it is a lot easier for me, for instance, to go into a situation that might be potentially dangerous than to send my 19-year-old son into that situation. I would be a little more ready to go myself than to send him. But more significantly than that, sometimes we are more willing to trust the Lord and follow

Him than to see our children say to us, "I am trusting God. I think He is calling me here, and that is where I am going to go." Parents sometimes have more trouble trusting God for their children than they do for themselves. We ask the question, "Are we not supposed to be practical? Do you not need to be expedient?" Yes. Oliver Cromwell said, "Trust in God and keep your powder dry." Nehemiah says in Nehemiah 4, "We prayed and then we posted a guard." We did not just test God. We did not pray and then say, "Why stay up all night? God will take care of us." We prayed and we posted. One wise man of the past said, "Trust in God does not supersede the employment of prudent means on our part. To expect God's protection while we do nothing is not to honor, but to tempt Him." We are not supposed to simply test Him by saying we will do nothing. There is some value in being practical, but the key is not pragmatism, expediency, and practicality. The key is not inaction, but rather action in obedience in God's leading. That was the first charge that David had given to Solomon, and really it might have been better had he stopped there. Trust God, act according to the Law of Moses, and God will keep His promise. It might have been better had he stopped there.