

## Famous Last Words

2 Samuel 23:1-7

By [Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas](#)

Now we come tonight to chapter 23, 2 Samuel chapter 23, and what are recorded here as the last words of David. We'll read together verses 1 to 7 of 2 Samuel chapter 23. As I've been saying, these final chapters contain a half dozen or so accounts, some of them have been psalms, as this one is psalm-like and prophecy, and the word of testimony on David's part. They're taken out of chronological order, although this one does purport to be the last words of David, and they are an attempt, I think, on the part of the author of 2 Samuel, to bring as a closing statement on the life of David those particular things that were important about David, or perhaps David himself felt were important. And tonight especially we will see David looking to the covenant of God and drawing such extraordinary comfort from it. Now before we read this passage, let's look to God in prayer.

Let us pray.

*Our Father, we thank You for the means of grace and bless You for prayer and an access that we have to You as our Father and we as Your children that we may come and make our wants and needs and desires known to You. We thank You that in the Gospel there is a fellowship between us, a rapport, even a happiness as we were considering a few moments ago with the children. We thank You for what grace has done in opening up the way and access into Your presence and tonight we want Your blessing. We want Your blessing upon the Scriptures and we ask for the Spirit's work in opening up the Word of God and making it known to us and applying it deep in our hearts enabling us to trust every part of it and to be strengthened and nourished and fed and challenged by it. So come, O Lord, we pray. Do this for us tonight. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.*

This is God's holy and inerrant Word:

Now these are the last words of David:

The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel:

“The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; His word is on my tongue. The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.

For does not my house stand so with God? For He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For will He not cause to prosper all my help and my desire? But worthless men are all like thorns that are thrown away, for they cannot be taken with the hand; but the man who touches them arms himself with iron and the shaft of a spear, and they are utterly consumed with fire.”

Thus far, God's holy and inerrant Word.

Last words. Jack Derrida, the father in some ways of post-modernity — anyone who's studied literature at a college or university in the last twenty-five years will have encountered deconstructionism of whom Derrida is the father. His dying words were, “I'm smiling at you from wherever I am.” Hmm. David has more certain words than that. David's confidence, his trust, his foundation, what enables him now to face death with poise and equanimity, what gives him purpose, what gives his life meaning, is a word, a promise, a covenant that God has made with him and his house. David looks to the word of God. He is, in one sense, an instrument of the word of God. God speaks through him, and yet what he speaks is of the Spirit. At this point here, he's a prophet. He's a king too, but he's also a prophet. He speaks; he's speaking about Jesus.

The targums — these were expository thoughts, if you like, on passages of the Old Testament, and there's a targum known as the Targum of Jonathan, and it is quite specific that this section of 2 Samuel 23:1-7 is in fact a prophecy of the Mediator, of Messiah, that this prophecy is in line with other prophecies of Scripture like Genesis 3:15 — the seed of the woman that will bruise the head of Satan, the promise to Moses that a prophet will arise, the covenant that God has already established with David that we looked at earlier in 2 Samuel chapter 7. We know Paul, in Acts 13, takes this covenant with David and he sees in this covenant with David an ideal king and an ideal ruler who is none other than Jesus, great David's greater Son. David is drawing strength, he's drawing comfort, he's drawing reassurance for himself for his life, his terrible life, his awful life, in part. This bruised reed, this broken vessel, this failure, whose life especially at the end was a disaster, a disaster politically, a disaster in his family, a disaster in his marriage, and yet — and this is what I want you to get on perhaps especially on Mother's Day. Those of you who worry about your sons and your daughters, there is a covenant that is ordered in all things and sure and certain. You see, God doesn't bless those who are brave.

You may have seen the third movie of the Narnia chronicles. It's a travesty. The

moral lesson of the movie is, "God blesses the brave." No, God blesses sinners, sinners, failures, broken vessels, and that's why I think this passage, on a personal level and on a bigger canvas, a redemptive historical canvas of a fulfillment of a promise that has been written in the pages of Scripture from the very second page in chapter 3 — you've just turned one page after the question that we've had with the children when Adam and Eve have fallen and sin had come into the world and God revealed a solution, a Mediator. So there's a microcosm here but there's a macrocosm. There's a word that brings comfort to David but there's a word that brings comfort to us too, and to generations of believers after David. And David is reflecting; he's reflecting on his life. He's reflecting on one whom God has raised and made a king and as he reflects on his kingship he's reflecting on a kingdom that he rules over a kingdom and that God is establishing a kingdom.

You know, think for a minute of the gospels. Sixty separate unique occurrences in the gospels of the word "kingdom" — kingdom of God, kingdom of heaven. The first words on the lips of Jesus, the first words on the lips of John the Baptist - "Repent because the kingdom of God has come!" And yet, when you look back into the Old Testament, the expression "kingdom of God" is barely there at all. But John the Baptist didn't have to explain what was meant by "kingdom of God." Jesus didn't have to explain what this expression meant because Scripture had prepared them that there is a king who rules over a kingdom and that king is Jesus. That king is God's Son.

What we have here, let me put it this way, what we have here is the A-B-C of the redemptive purposes of God. The A-B-C. The "A" first of all.

### **The "A" is the ancestor of Jesus.**

The "A" is David himself, the son of Jesse, exalted by the Most High, anointed, verse 1, "anointed by the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel." God had taken a shepherd boy, the runt of the family, according to his family, and God had blessed him, God had exalted him, God had made him the king of Israel. God had given to this shepherd boy extraordinary gifts of poetry. Who of us has not drawn comfort from the words, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He restores my soul"? The sweet psalmist of Israel, for all of his greatness, he was flawed. For all of his talent, for all of his gifts, he was flawed. He was a tragic sinner capable of doing the most terrible things. David is preparing for death. These are the last words of David. It's his last will and testament. There was a time when people wrote those out. Some of you may be contemplating doing that yourself. What's important? What are my most important things? What are my most important truths? He's reminding himself of what God has done.

What has God done in your life? He's brought you out of the miry pit and set your

feet upon a rock. He's established your goings. He's called you to Himself. He's regenerated you. He's given you a name, a new name of Christian. He's adopted you into the household and family of God. You are children of God and heirs and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. David is preparing for death and he's reminding himself of the blessings, the extraordinary blessings that God has bestowed upon him. He is the ancestor, he is the ancestor of the Mediator, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

### **The “B” is the beauty of the King.**

He describes the King. He's speaking about kingship. He's speaking about ideal kingship. He says, “When one rules justly,” in the middle of verse 3, “When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God,” and listen to the poet now; you know, he's artsy — “he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.” You can picture it. You get up early on the morning on a beautiful, beautiful morning, temperature upper 60's, no more than 71 (laughter), no humidity. You sit on the back porch; you watch the sun rise; you've got your coffee brewed, steaming beside you. The birds are beginning to chirp and sing and there's an extraordinary beauty. Photographers will tell you that's the best time of day to take a picture - the early morning light. Green grass after rain, in a climate that was perhaps a little scorched, that just that little bit of rain and within twenty-four hours you see that pasture just emerging from the ground. The beauty of it. He's describing an ideal kingship, a kingship that rules with justice, with righteousness, with equity in the fear of the Lord. But he's not talking about his own reign, perhaps, in the end. He has drifted away from his own reign. He's a prophet now. He's speaking of an ideal King, a King who rules with absolute justice and fairness.

We live in a world that's so unfair. I was going through the security line on Friday — Friday, weekend travelers. Where are these people who have bottles this size of shampoo and conditioner and who knows what? And of course they were all being taken away from her and she just stood there and she said, “This is not fair!” Well, that's trivial, but we live in a world full of unfairness, full of lies and deception, rulers who are out for themselves and for their own glory and the advancement of their own name. And David is talking about an ideal picture here of a rule that is just, where there's no injustice, and it's like light and you can hear John, as he recalls a story of Jesus in the eighth chapter and then again in the ninth chapter. John remembers a King who says, “I am the light of the world.” There is a brightness that shines from this King and it's integrity, it's justice, it's righteousness. His rule you can trust. There's no duplicity. He means what He says. His word is its bond. When He promises, He keeps His promise; when He threatens, He means it. It's beautiful. There's a beauty about this King. “A King there in His beauty, without a veil is seen. It were a well spent journey, though seven deaths lay between. The Lamb with His fair army, doth on Mount Zion

stand, and glory, glory dwelleth, in Emmanuel's land. The bride eyes not her garment." That's all they talked about wasn't it, at the wedding? You know, *the* wedding. The dress. Well not in this wedding. "The bride eyes not her garment but her dear bridegroom's face." She's looking at Him because there's a beauty. There's something about Him that's just exquisite. There's light. David is looking toward his own death, but he glimpses now a King and a kingdom in which righteousness and integrity will dwell.

And then there's a "C." If "A" is ancestor of a King and "B" is the beauty of a King,

### **"C" is the covenant of the King.**

And he says in verse 5, "Does not my house stand so with God? For He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure." He's thinking back to 2 Samuel chapter 7 — a covenant that God had entered into with the house of David, a covenant that was described as everlasting, as everlasting, just as the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17 was described as everlasting. This covenant will go on forever. Just as David will reflect in the royal psalm, Psalm 21, "You made Him blessed forever." The covenant love of the Lord will not be removed. They are contained, do you see? David thinks about what God has done with him and with his house. There was a temporal significance, to be sure, with the covenant God made with David, just as there was a temporal significance to the covenant that God had made with Abraham, but there's something more here. There's a timeline now that stretches forth into eternity. God has made a promise, and at the heart of this promise is something that's going to last forever. David is drawing strength from covenant theology. He's drawing strength from covenant theology because when God makes a promise it can never be broken. It can never be broken. It's ordered. Just as ancient near eastern covenants were structured, very, very structured, God's covenant is structured. You can see the details of it. You can detect what the promises are. You can detect what the threats are. And it can never be broken.

Now David is talking to himself first. These are his dying words. How can David be sure, given his appalling record, how can David be sure about the future? Because he stands in covenant with God. When you stand in covenant with God, when you stand justified in God's presence, then nothing can separate you, not even your sins, not even your failures, because all those sins and all those failures, God had foreseen and atonement had been made for those sins and those failures. David is looking, you know — where do I draw comfort at the end? Do I draw comfort at the end from myself? Do I look within? Do I now begin to write out all the things that I've done, all of my accomplishments? And David says, as Luther said, "It is *extra nos* — it is outside of me." My comfort isn't in me. My security isn't in me. My security isn't in my resolution. My security lies on the solid rock of a covenant that God has made, a word, a bond that God has made.

John Bunyan looked at this covenant in 2 Samuel 23 on a very famous ocular chart on the whole scheme of redemption and this was the text that he put down for the covenant of grace. He saw more than just a covenant with David here. He saw the entire promise of God to redeem sinners to Himself through a Mediator, through His Son, Jesus Christ. Charles Simeon looked at this covenant and he referred to this covenant as the covenant of redemption, the covenant between the Father and the Son in eternity, a bond between two persons within the Godhead that cannot be broken, that can never ever be broken. Do you see it? I've got to say it one more time, David is looking not to himself but outside of himself to the promise of God in covenant with a Mediator, a King. Do you see what David is saying here? "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling. Naked look to Thee for dress, helpless look to Thee grace, foul I to the fountain fly, wash me Savior, or I die." It was at the fountain that this King, this ideal King, this just King, this ruler, it was at the fountain that this King would take the curse of the covenant, the brokenness of the covenant, and He'd take it upon Himself so that we, in union with Him, might stand in God's presence as covenant keepers.

You see the warning at the end. Covenants always have promises and threats. It always does. It always does. There's an inside, but Revelation 21 and 22 reminds us, there's an outside. There's an outside. There are the sons of Belial and they're like briars, they're like thorns, they're like that stuff that you have to get out of your yard and you burn them. Do you think Jesus was thinking of this passage when He speaks about weeds and chaff and they are burned with fire? Was He thinking He is the covenant Mediator of the Davidic covenant and all those who are not in union with Jesus, they will be burned? Where are you tonight? Where are you tonight my friends? Is this your testimony? Is this your certainty? Is this the Rock on which you build your life, you're trusting, you're trusting solely on the covenant Mediator and Him alone? Because outside of Him, outside of Him, there is fire.

Let's pray.

*Father we thank You for the beauty of the King, that the bride eyes not her garment but her dear bridegroom's face. Help us to gaze tonight upon the beauty of the face of our Lord Jesus Christ. We ask it in His name. Amen.*

Please stand. Receive the Lord's benediction. Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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