

The Final Song

The Singer, Part 17

1 Chronicles 28-29

Some of the most telling words a person can speak are words that come at or near the time of their death – what we might call their final words.

Perhaps you've been in a hospital room or at the bedside of a loved one – and their final words, to this day, bring encouragement.

The last conversation you have with someone is significant – especially if you find that they've passed from this life to another soon after.

In ancient times, long before medical processes could cause a person to live well beyond consciousness; people often planned their final words as their death neared.

I have a book in my library by Herbert Lockyer entitled, *The Last Words of Saints and Sinners*. He had extensively compiled his research on the subject – research that went back through the centuries.

He recorded the last words of the Sultan of Spain, centuries ago who said, "Fifty years have passed since I first became Sultan. Riches, honor, pleasures, I have enjoyed them all; but in this long time of seeming happiness, I have counted the days on which I have truly been happy – and they have numbered only 14."

Phillip III, the King of Spain who died in 1621 said, "How happy I would have been to have spent these last 23 years I have served as king, in retirement instead."

Ramon Narvaez, a Spanish soldier of fortune lay dying and was being exhorted by a priest to forgive his enemies. He responded by saying, "I don't have any enemies anymore – I shot them *all*."

Stephen Gardiner was the Lord Chancellor of England, used by the Catholic Church in the mid 1500's to make many believers die as martyrs during the reformation. On the day that Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer were burned at the stake in Oxford, he was smitten with a fatal disease and before dying admitted, "I have sinned like Peter, but have not wept like him."

Perhaps the most realistic confession came from the lips of King Louis XIV who, as he was dying, called his son to his bedside and lamented, "My son, I might have lived a better life; profit by my errors; and remember this – kings die like everyone else."ⁱⁱ

As we conclude our study of the life of David, I'm going to fast forward the tape past the episodes of murder and intrigue – past a few more battles with enemies and the betrayal of David's son Absalom who attempts to gain the throne.

I'm going to look with you, past the last few chapters that contain even more failure and even still more confession from the lips of this Singer Composer – King David.

I want to take you to his last recorded words . . . and his last recorded song.

Turn with me to First Chronicles 28.

It happens to be loaded with encouragement and challenge and legacy and wisdom.

Frankly, it not only David's final speech recorded, I think it's his finest speech.

In the closing days of his life, he will deliver a message to his leaders, to his son, to his nation and to his Creator God.

And in these verses, he effectively provides several examples for us that are worth a closer look.

The first example is this:

1. David provides an example of godly surrender

Notice verse 1. David assembled at Jerusalem all the officials of Israel, the officials of the tribes, the officers of the divisions that served the king, the commanders of thousands, the commanders of hundreds, the stewards of all the property and livestock of the king and his sons, together with the palace officials, the mighty men and all the seasoned warriors.

In other words, David wants to have a parting word with his entire leadership core . . . these were the movers and shakers of the Jewish nation –

A nation that once barely held on to 6,000 square miles, but now commanded 60,000 square miles. A nation that was now unified under one flag; a nation now firmly established in its capital city of Jerusalem; a nation virtually undefeated in war; a kingdom now respected, if not feared, by surrounding nations.ⁱⁱ

More importantly, they were a nation that worshipped the true and living God – a nation that worshipped God to the sound and songs of their beloved Singer King.

If anybody had a right at this moment to polish his trophies and regale his audience of powerful people of how great and powerful he was . . . that's exactly what David did *not* do.

Look down at *verse 4*. **David said, “The Lord God of Israel chose me from all my father’s house to be king over Israel forever; for he chose Judah as leader, and in the house of Judah my father’s house, and among my father’s sons he took pleasure in me to make me king over all Israel.**

David never lost sight of how he got where he was. And at the end of his life he wants everyone to know – he is refusing a pedestal of praise . . . his role in life was the work of God’s choosing and grace.

Let’s back up for a moment and notice the first thing on David’s mind – *verse 2* – **Then David rose to his feet and said; “Hear me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord and for the footstool of our God, and I made preparations for building. 3. But God said to me, “You may not build a house for my name.”**

You may remember in a previous study where after 15 years of subduing the enemies of Israel – unifying the nation – establishing the kingdom – David revealed his passionate dream to build a temple that represented the presence and glory of God.

David goes to Nathan the prophet and said, ‘Listen, Nathan, what I want to do with the rest of my life – what I want my legacy to be – what really fills my heart with joy is to build the Temple of God. Can I?’

Nathan answered, “Absolutely . . . I love what’s in your heart, David . . . that’s a great ambition.”

But God came to Nathan that night and effectively said, “You hit a foul ball on that one . . . next time ask Me first before you speak for Me. Go back and tell David the answer is no.”

So Nathan went back to David and basically apologized by saying, “David, I’m really sorry, but I spoke out of turn – I said “yes”, but God says “no.” And now here in 1 Chronicles 28, David reveals the reason why – notice *verse 3b*. **You may not build a house for my name, for you are a man of war and have shed blood.”**

Now if you’re David, right about now you would probably be reeling from this . . . you’d probably be

thinking, “Hey, wait a minute! Those wars I fought were for your people, Lord. That blood I shed, going all the way back to Goliath was for Your reputation; every time I swung my sword, I was following Your will . . . and now you’re telling me that because I fought all those battles, I can’t build the temple?”

You got to understand that David pulls back the curtain of his heart here – we’ll discover later that he’s already drawn up the plans.

When David laid his head on the pillow at night, he wasn’t dreaming of battle plans, he was dreaming of building plans. His one great desire in life was to build the magnificent temple to his majestic Lord.

And God said, “No.”

Listen, when nobody is around and when you’re able to be absolutely honest without yourself before God – and you entertain certain dreams about your life – if God allowed you to have the intention of your heart – would it be different that what you’re enduring right now?

My guess is . . . almost every one of us would have to say, in one way or another . . . yes . . . God’s has often said no, where I have wanted Him to say yes.

In David’s final speech, however, he doesn’t begin to spew bitterness and anger at God – look what God made me do . . . look what God didn’t let me do . . . instead, he models submission – incredible surrender – by telling his audience what God allowed him to do instead.

He chose me to be King . . . He’s chosen my son to rule and build this great temple . . . He’s given to me the plans for the temple . . . but while He’s chosen to use my plans, He has chosen to use someone else’s hands.

In fact, from *verses 9 all the way through verse 19*, David unveils the intentions of his heart – the details of the Temple – the gold and silver and iron; the lampstands, the bowls, the floor plan of the temple, the organization of the priesthood.

What do you think David’s been doing for the past 15 years? He’s been gathering everything and planning everything and designing everything for the Lord’s temple.

But at this point in the narrative we really ought to be studying the final speech of a bitter man – an old, angry, frustrated King who had followed the will of God and was now kept from his dream.

You can almost hear him pine away with, “This is the thanks I get in life from God?!”

Instead, David models surrender and submission . . . and with that self-sacrifice . . . and humility. His life didn't turn out like he thought it would, but he knew God was still worthy of praise.

For those of you in your 50's, 60's, 70's and beyond, you're waking up to the reality and truth of David's speech, aren't you?

By now, you know you'll probably not own a fortune 500 company. You might still . . . let me know if it happens.

Perhaps that home you wanted on the coast of New England or that vacation cottage in Florida isn't going to materialize. You're stuck here with the rest of us . . . that's okay – we like you.

Perhaps you dreamed of good health . . . a paid off mortgage.

I know of one couple in their 80's that recently lost their home after paying it off over 30 years due to financial investments gone wrong.

Those of you with children, your dream was that they would walk with God . . . and some of them have chosen to walk away from God.

Your final chapter is far different than what you had intended or hoped or dreamed decades ago.

David says this as an older man, in his early 70's – “This was the intention of my heart – this was the deepest longing of my life . . . and God has given it to someone else.”

I don't know about you, but it's one thing to not have your dreams fulfilled, it's another thing to have your dreams postponed . . . but it's an entirely different thing to watch as God gives what you dreamed of, to someone else.

Solomon will get to build the temple of God that David designed.

But what is David doing here? Focusing on what God did allow – what God did give him – where God did bless him.

Go back to *verse 4 again* – *Yet* – *underline that* – *Yet, God chose me from all my father's house to be king . . . He took pleasure in making me king.*

Make no mistake – this wasn't easy . . . David isn't trying to sound super spiritual here and win some spiritual badge of honor.

David would have, in a heart-beat, traded in his crown for a hard hat . . . he would have been thrilled to trade in his scepter for a hammer.

And he's honest with his staff and leaders – “This was my deepest desire . . .”

But he didn't stop there – yet – yet – yet, this is what God did!

It's as if David wants to make sure that he isn't remembered as someone who rebelled over what God didn't choose for him – he wanted us to know he was surrendered to what God did choose . . . for his life.

He leaves us an example of godly surrender.

2. He also leaves us, secondly, an example of godly parenting.

Now for those of you who've studied the life of David in the past – you're well aware that David provides for us more examples of how to get it wrong, than in how to get it right.

- He will ignore the sins of his sons;
- He will fail to provide spiritual leadership to his children when they needed it most;
- He will effectively nurse a grudge and refuse to see a son who disappointed him – for years;
- He will choose to pamper instead of punish – and for it he will lose the respect of many in his household – and nearly lose his kingdom to his wayward son, Absalom.

So you might be surprised by this second point in our study.

And I'm so glad to be able to point it out – David often got it wrong – and so do we – but here's an opportunity, near the end of his life, when he got it right.

He pulls Solomon aside and gives him the best father-son speech in his entire life – and it's a classic.

Notice *verse 9*. *And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever. 10. Be careful now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary, be strong and do it.”*

You might want to go back through that text and circle some key verbs in David's father-son farewell speech of a lifetime.

Know the God of your Father – k-n-o-w – get to know God. *Serve Him . . . seek Him . . . be strong . . . do it* – in other words, do the right thing.

If there is a key word that makes this speech effective it is David's ability to use possessive

pronouns – did you catch it in *verse 9. Solomon . . . I want you to get to know the God of your father.*

Not, the God of your grandfather . . .

The God of your mother . . .

The God of Israel's high priest . . .

The God I used to follow.

No, Solomon – I want you to grow in your understanding and knowledge of my God.

Look down at *verse 20 where David repeats much the same – Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed; for the Lord God, even my God is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you . . .*

If you could pull your child aside before you died and give him or her one last piece of advice regarding life, what would it be?ⁱⁱⁱ

What would you tell them?

- Listen, get a good job
- Get a good education
- Settle down and follow your budget
- Obey the law and be a good citizen
- Wash behind your ears and eat plenty of vegetables
- Mind your manners

That's all good advice, but you can check every one of those boxes and live a miserable life, amounting to nothing as it relates to bringing God glory and pleasure.

In fact, you can do all of those things and die and go to hell.

David is saying, "Solomon, I'm commending Someone to you that I have claimed as my own – and I want Him to become your living Lord as well."

Education and a job and your health and your manners all need to flow out of your pursuit of and relationship with God.

The best message we could ever pass along to our children is that God is faithful and God is worth following even when our dreams don't come true.

Solomon, I want you to know and serve my God.

We're not told exactly how long it was between David's last words and his death, but he's publicly ending his life with further proof that he was indeed a man after God's own heart (*1 Samuel 13:14*).

And as we've already learned, being a man or woman after God's own heart doesn't mean you're sinless. David was guilty of great sin against God and others.

Why could David be called a man after God's own heart? Was it because David was perfect? No; it was because God was David's priority.

Being a man or woman or a young person who pursues after the heart of God doesn't have anything to do with your perfection – it has everything to do with your priority.

And that is exactly the priority that David wants to ring in Solomon's ears for the rest of his life.

And out of that kind of priority comes this wonderful example of parenting.

David addresses the nation in *chapter 29* – In *verse 1* David openly admits that Solomon is young and inexperienced, and the work is intimidating in its greatness, but God has chosen him.

David effectively asks the nation to rally to Solomon's aid – which they will do – and the temple, as you may know, will become one of the incredible marvels of the ancient world.

But David doesn't just want Solomon to pursue after God, as any godly parent desires – David also wants this for his nation.

Notice his prayer in the open air before his people – *verse 16 of chapter 29. O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own.*

In other words, we donated all this gold and silver, but it belonged to You in the first place.

Listen, David had lived throughout his reign surrounded by wealth – but he never surrendered to wealth. Warren Wiersbe commented that David had possessions, but they never possessed him.

Notice verse 18. O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep forever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people, and direct their hearts toward you – now notice – and by the way this is one of the few times in the Bible you'll read the prayer of a parent on behalf of their child – *verse 19. Grant to Solomon my son a whole heart – that is a heart of integrity – that he may keep your commandments, your testimonies, and your statutes, performing all, and that he may build the palace for which I have made provision.*

Did you note what David didn't pray? I don't want to belabor the point, but David didn't pray, "God, give my son a successful reign" . . . O God, please give my son wealth and fame and health and safety from all those would-be assassins out there; God please give my son a comfortable life where all his dreams come true."

David knew better! His own best dream will not come true.

NO . . . Oh God, give my son a heart of integrity . . . give his hands perseverance to do Your will.

Pull up a chair and look one more time at *verse 20, back in chapter 28*. It's the second time David challenges his son.

Listen in – Then David said to Solomon his son, **“Be strong and courageous – notice – and do it!**

Just do it . . . this is evidently where Nike got their advertising campaign – someone in headquarters was reading this text . . . maybe not.

But what great advice.

Act . . . act out God's will as you know it.

Don't be strong and courageous and talk about it; don't be strong and courageous and have some really great ideas.

Just do something for God with your life – and rest assured, Solomon, God will never leave you nor forsake you.

I want you to picture old, grey-haired David, nearly breathing his last, probably leaning on a staff, or perhaps Solomon's arm – giving his farewell speech.

If I could paraphrase his last recorded words to his son he would be saying, “Listen, Solomon – I've been king for 40 years; I've walked this earth for nearly 70.”

I've been a shepherd, a soldier, a fugitive, a sinner, a poet, a singer . . . and a king.^{iv}

God has never left me . . . He's never failed . . . He's never disappointed me . . . He's worth trusting.

I've stumbled often . . . but God never has . . . He's never once made a mistake with my life.

One more example . . .

3. David leaves us an example of godly worship

In chapter 29, verses 10 through 13 are part of David's final prayer, but they form poetic lines.

It would be appropriate to view these 4 verses as poetry – this is effectively David's last song.

Let's read the lyrics of His God-honoring, God-exalting worship:

10. Therefore David blessed the Lord in the sight of all the assembly – in other words, they watched and listened as David more than likely chanted these lines . . . this is the Singer's final solo . . . Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. 11. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the

victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. 12. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. 13. And now we than you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

This is David's closing doxology.

- Everything comes from Your hand
- Everything belongs under Your rule
- Everything about You deserves Your praise

I have read that George Handel first performed his composition; we refer to as Handel's Messiah, in 1741.

It had come out of physical and spiritual desperation. In fact, for 3 weeks, he hardly stopped to eat or sleep or entertain visitors as he wrote the lyrics and music – the lyrics primarily nothing more than one scripture tied to another.

Finally, after 22 days of solitude a friend made it inside Handel's apartment and found the composer at his piano, sheets of music strewn everywhere; George looked up at him and with tears streaming down his face as he said to his friend, “I do believe I have seen the greatness of God.”

In 1741, when The Messiah was first performed in London, as they arrived at the Hallelujah chorus, England's King George who was in the audience removed his crown and stood up – for in their culture one never sat in the presence of a superior.^v

I want you to see King David – the great king of Israel – taking, as it were, the crown from his head, and standing in honor and deference to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And he sings his composition of praise and blessing to that King.

And then – get ready – his last recorded words in scripture, found in *verse 20*, are the words where he now tells everyone, ***Bless the Lord your God.***”

In other words, “You sing praise to God too.”

Oh, that this would be said of all of us who know the King; that we would lead our family – our generation – our congregation – our world, to sing praise to God.

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- i Quotes taken from Herbert Lockyer, All The Last Words of Saints and Sinners (Kregel Publications, 1969), pp. 77-95
ii Charles R. Swindoll, David: A Man of Passion and Destiny (Word Publishing, 1997), p. 292
iii Swindoll, p. 289
iv Alan Redpath, The Making of a Man of God (Revell Company, 1962), p. 253
v Edited from several internet sites: George Handel/History of The Messiah