

# Abiding Fruit

*Informing the Mind & Inflaming the Heart*

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## **The Last Words of a King 2 Samuel 23:1 - 7**

This section of Holy Scripture is entitled, *"The last words of David."* These are the words of Israel's great Shepherd King.

He has come far in his journey - from the rocky hills of Bethlehem to the glorious palace in Jerusalem. From being a shepherd to his father's sheep, he became shepherd over God's people. It has been a life steeped in faith and dependence. He has known sore trials, great hardship, devastating temptations, and terrible sins. He has borne them with reliance on God. This is God's king, God's man. God plucked him from the hills of Bethlehem in a unique way.

David did not seek the kingship. He did not offer himself as a candidate based on his genealogy (though he could have, but he had many older brothers - he would have had to wait his turn). No - this was a godly boy watching dirty sheep when the old prophet Samuel came to his father, Jesse's house looking for God's man. Samuel looked at all the sons of Jesse (1 Sam. 16). He saw the powerful and tall Eliab (1 Sam. 16:6), and immediately thought, this is surely God's man - just look at him. God said to Samuel regarding Eliab, *"I have rejected him,"* and so the prophet asked Jesse to parade all his sons before him, only to have the Lord reject all seven. Obviously David was not even regarded by Jesse as of any consequence (probably due to his age) to bring him before Samuel. Samuel will not proceed until they bring David, and when the shepherd boy finally stands before the prophet, fresh out of the hills, God says to Samuel, *"Arise, anoint him, for this is he"* (1 Sam. 16:12). The Bible says that from that day forward the Holy Spirit rushed upon David (1 Sam. 16:13). From the time of his anointing to be king over Israel, the Spirit was with David in power.

From the time of his anointing to the end of his life, David has known good and bad. He has walked in dependent faith, he has departed from God in sin and rebellion, he has returned to God in fresh reliant faith, and now at the end, he pens these words concerning himself and God. He can look back on his life and see the providential hand of a gracious God. This is true of all God's children. We can see the hand of God in this way and that. Even in our sin and rebellion, the hand of God is disciplining, directing and leading.

You cannot read 2 Samuel 23 without being conscious of something extraordinary having happened in the life of this remarkable king of Israel. The simple telling of his encounter with Goliath leaves us amazed at his faith (1 Sam. 17). His hardships under King Saul who viewed David as a constant threat to his throne and his family (1 Sam. 19 - 27) cause us to marvel at how he sustained himself through all those years on the run. His confrontations with the Philistines show us the man weak and tired but yet clinging somewhere to the promises of God to him (1 Sam. 29). We see him assaulting the impregnable city of Jerusalem and taking it from the Jebusites (2 Sam. 5). We see David bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and rejoicing in restoring God's presence among his people (2 Sam. 6). We see him valiantly leading Israel as her king into battle over and over again, only to stay at home on one occasion and see Bathsheba bathing, and that leads him to commit adultery and murder (1 Sam. 11). We see him respond in contrition to the accusations of Nathan the prophet (2 Sam. 12). From such repentance comes Psalm 51. We see his failure as a father to deal with the sins of his children ultimately prompting Absalom to rebel against David his father (2 Sam. 13 - 18) and try

to take the throne. We see the mighty king of Israel humbled, hastening out of his city Jerusalem lest his own son find him and kill him. We see him entreating his general Joab and others to treat Absalom kindly, only to have Joab murder Absalom (2 Sam. 18). We see his deep grief and we feel for this man. David is a picture, in his various trials and temptations, of all of God's children. Though our triumphs and our failures differ vastly from each other, yet it is the same grace of God that comes to all of us, as it did to David over and over again.

Now that David has reached the end of his long life, he can look back upon it and see God with him. These words in 2 Samuel 23 reflect his heart. He calls his words, an oracle (נְאֻם *ne'um*). This is the word for a prophetic utterance or a declaration. David recognizes that he was elevated to a position of glory by God (vs. 1). He did not seek it – it was thrust upon him. He speaks of himself as the anointed of God, the God of Jacob (perhaps a reflection upon his life of hardship and trials as was Jacob's). He calls himself the sweet psalmist of Israel. In his psalms, David would often speak of himself as the Lord's anointed (as God's King or messiah), and in so doing his psalms were prophetic of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Lord's anointed Servant – the Messiah King. The word for "sweet" is the word for delightful, beautiful, agreeable, and pleasant (נְאִיִּם *na'iyim*).

David wants to make sure that he is not misunderstood, so he directs our attention to the Holy Spirit as the one who is truly speaking (vs. 2). David's words here are in the Spirit, inspired of God. David wants to convey that God has done something for him. God had spoken to him and through him. When a king rules in reverent righteousness (vs. 3), then he is said to be like the brilliant shining of the sun on a cloudless morning that causes the grass to grow on the earth. There is light, radiance and growth when a person relies on God. David sees himself as this person ruling in the fear of the Lord (vs. 3, 4). In order to prove his claim, he appeals to the promises of God to him in verse 5. He asks us to look at his house. It was assaulted and attacked, yet it still stands. The reason it stands is because God causes it to. His house is a reflection of what God has done for him. God has done this on the basis of an everlasting covenant. This covenant with David is found in 2 Samuel 7. It is an eternal covenant speaking of Solomon and ultimately of Jesus as the one who would sit on David's throne as rightful king. Such is our Lord Jesus. He is descended directly from David, and He sits on His Throne at His Father's right hand. All the promises of God to His anointed are realized in the Lord Jesus Christ. This covenant with David is ordered in all things and secure – it cannot fail and has not.

It is God who has caused David to prosper (vs. 5) in every situation. On the other hand, the wicked enemies of David shall not prevail. They are like worthless thorns thrown away (vs. 6). They shall be burnt with fire and shall be consumed (vs. 7). The end of all the wicked is sure and certain. God will punish the ungodly and bless the righteous. David is an example of this to us. What shall our last words be? What legacy shall we leave behind? The life of faith is a life that sees the invisible spiritual realities of the promises of God as real and viable, simply because God promised them. It is a life that will be up and down, yet ever moving forward in the things of God. It is a faith that perseveres. It is God that keeps us and brings us to His heavenly city – our final home. Let us not lay hold of too much on earth – it will one day vanish away. Only what is done for Christ will last.

The life of David is an encouragement to us because David suffered so much, yet he trusted in God. He was forced to walk with God in the wilderness of Judea before he came to the throne of Israel. He met with God as he was hounded by Saul. He composed beautiful psalms expressive of his life with God. He trusted the minutest details of his life to God. You cannot go from Bethlehem's hills to the throne, be exiled by Saul, not knowing the future at all, without faith in God. David's faith was in a covenant-keeping faithful God who does all He promises to do. We are in covenant relationship with God (Jer. 31:31 – 34) through our Lord Jesus. Let us entrust all of life to Him, and at the end, we shall find that He has ordered all things and made them secure.