

Solomon

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[0 : 0 0] died drew near. He commanded Simon, his son, saying, I am about to go to the way of all the earth. Be strong and show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do, and wherever you turn, that the Lord may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, if your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel. Moreover, you also know what Joab the son Azarua did to me, how he dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel, Abner the son of Ner, and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed avenging in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting the blood of war upon, on the belt around his waist, and on the sandals of his feet. And therefore, according to your wisdom, according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to show in peace, but deal lowly with the sons of Barzillia and Gadethite, and let them be among those who eat at your table. For with such loyalty they met me when I fled from Absalom, your brother. And there is also with you Shammai, the son of Gerah the Benjamite from Bahiriam, who cursed me with a grievous curse on the day when I went to Bahiriam. But when he came down to meet me at the

Jordan, I swore to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put you to death with a sword. Now therefore, do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man. You will know what you ought to do to him, and you shall bring his gray head down with blood to shale. Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. And the time that David reigned over Israel was 40 years. He reigned for seven years in Hebron and for 33 years in Jerusalem. So Solomon sat on the throne of David, his father, and his kingdom was firmly established. Well, very briefly, the rest of the chapter contains three executions. Joab, Shammai, and then Adonijah, who we heard about last week. Three executions, which makes it a difficult chapter to deal with, but an important one. And then it finishes with these words, which is parallel to verse 12, but with a key difference. Verse 46, then the king commanded Ben

Ananiah, the son of Jehadiah, and he went down and struck down him and he died. So the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon. Again, we'll come back to that word as it's the message after this next hymn. Thank you. So if you'd like to turn again to 1 Kings chapter 2. And as you're doing that, you'll be aware that last time we saw that central to the Christian faith is the idea of belonging to a king and a kingdom. Whatever else that we believe about being a Christian, and whatever else we believe about the new heavens and the new earth, the one thing that we must keep central to that belief is that we belong to a king and a kingdom. So the very center of the Christian faith, or it's very central, is this idea of king and kingdom. And such books like One King, help us to understand, at least in part, the importance of the kingdom, but also it leads us to Jesus, our king, and of course the kingdom that he brings with him. When we come to this section in 1 Kings 2, this is very much about the establishment of the kingdom, as we saw in verse 12, and then as we saw in the last verse, about the kingdom being established. And whenever something is established, like a kingdom or anything's being established, some things remain and some things are removed.

And Solomon has the very difficult duty of inheriting certain things under his father's reign, David, which he is now instructed by his father to deal with. Pastors, when they take over churches from previous pastors, they inherit things. And this is just part of being within a generation.

Families inherit things that the previous generation left. And not everything can be dealt with in the time that you have for dealing with it. So in the same way as someone can have a job, and they're meant to get several things done before they leave their job for the day, because they're not in tomorrow, and someone else will have to pick up where they take over. If they've not managed to get everything done, then the person who comes in after them has more to do. And in much the same way, this is what's happening between 1 Kings, sorry, in 1 Kings 2, that David is saying, look, I'm on my way out, so you're going to have to deal with these issues. Now, again, this is very central to the kingdom.

[6 : 19] The difficulty here is three executions is, for me, something very difficult to stomach, very difficult to handle. I believe in justice, and I believe in injustice being performed on this earth. But I believe that justice must be performed in terms of when it's the last, or not that justice is the last option, but when it's necessary. The reason I mention that is because if David let these men live, then why is it necessary at this point that they be put to death? And that's a difficult one.

You know, it's like men being on death row. Well, if it was really important that they be put to death, then, you know, and it's clear that they should be put to death, then why don't just get on with it straight away? And whenever we talk about these issues, they become difficult, but they become perhaps more difficult when we realize that it's a thoroughly New Testament idea as well.

You take Matthew 13. In Matthew 13, Jesus is clearly teaching that the Son of Man will send out his angels at the close of the age, and they will come into God's kingdom on earth, and take out from that kingdom all causes of sin and all causes of evil, and just cleanse the kingdom, as it were, into a kind of, into the purity that God wants it to be. And that's an act of justice.

You know, Christians believe in hell. Hell's a horrible place, but we believe in the necessity of such a place. But there's a tension there, because we can't imagine really desiring anybody to go there. And that's where the tension falls. But it's thoroughly biblical to believe in the purity of the kingdom, and the cost that comes with purifying something.

So here's the summary of 1 Kings 2. David, as we see, is about to die, and so he gives his son final instructions. But it seems to be a mix of wise words, and if I were you, I would do this. And perhaps as a father and son relationship, David could get away with that.

[8 : 44] Okay, if I were you, son, this is how I would do it. And his son might look up to him and go, okay, dad, but you didn't. Okay, if I were you, I would do this. And if I were Solomon, not that I am, and not that I'm there, I would be tempted to say, okay, but you didn't do it.

Okay, it's all right passing it off onto me, but notice that you're passing it off onto me from the position of not doing it. And therefore, how am I supposed to take the words of David?

Well, David does have wise words for his son, because he tells his son to stay faithful to God, and the way to stay faithful to God is by being obedient to the law of God. There's a guy called Lionel Windsor. He's an Australian at Moore College. He's got a very clear distinction between the law of God and salvation in terms of speech and actions. He says that everywhere in salvation, it's always about speech. Someone hears the word of God being spoken to them, and then they confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord. So salvation is very much about speech, very much about words.

But the law of God is always about actions. It's always about what you do in your actions, how you obey obediently through what you do. And so when David says to Solomon here, obey God, he is expecting Solomon to behave in a particular kind of way, and that way must be consistent with the law of God. The next thing to notice is that David is pretty convinced, according to the promise God made to him back in 2 Samuel 7, that if Solomon's sons pay close attention to the biblical way, then what will happen next is that he will not lack a son for the throne of God. You'll have someone ready made. The trouble is, is that there is trying to force the issue when God's already made an unconditional promise, and we'll get to that in a moment. David then goes on to speak about unfinished business, about a man, Joab, who killed two men without a cause. In other words, that in the time of war, killing is to be expected to happen, but in a time when there is no war, then that type of killing becomes an unjust murder. And we understand that difference because we've seen certain issues on the news where people have been shot outside of war, or out of the context of war, and suddenly it becomes murder. And this man has done that, and he's been alive, but now David wants him to be put to death. He even says that Solomon, verse 6, should act according to his wisdom, but notice how David puts it. He says, act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down into shul in peace. In other words, in other words, Solomon, act according to your wisdom, but if I were you, if I were you, do not let him die of old age. When it mentions gray hair and his head going down, what he's effectively saying is don't let him get old, let his hair gray and die in peace. Okay? If he's going to die, he must die by the sword. So David is here encouraging the execution of this man, Joab, here.

He then goes on to say that Solomon should do this as he feels instructed, but listen to him. And then David then says that there's another man, in verse 8, Shemime, who should also be put to death by the sword. Verse 9, Solomon, don't hold him guiltless. You're a wise man. You know what you ought to do, but by the way, this is what I would do if I were you. So Solomon is being encouraged by his father David that he's a wise man, but at the same time, he's kind of saying, if I were you, this is what I would do to him. What you begin to find throughout this chapter is that Solomon executes three men. The two men that we've just mentioned and Adonijah. Adonijah was the man who thought he was going to be king and he wasn't, he did not become king. And now he comes to Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, asking if Abishag can be his wife, you know, the woman that was made to go and lie with David to keep him warm. And of course, all the sexual connotations there, and it didn't happen. Can she be my wife?

[13 : 49] Solomon doesn't look at that as just a request to have something. He actually looks at that as that this man's claiming a certain sense of ownership, that this man is claiming a sense of right over somebody else and even over the kingdom. And so even though Adonijah eventually admits, perhaps unwillingly, that Solomon is God's chosen king, even though he says to Bathsheba, oh, but by the way, you know that I was going to be king. And then he says, verse 15, all of Israel knew, expected me to be king, but I acknowledge that Solomon is God's chosen king, that Solomon is the one whom God has chosen to give the kingdom to. And so after everything is accomplished in this chapter, Solomon, the new king, has executed three men or had three men executed.

He hasn't done it himself. And then David, it's David dies, of course, in this, and Solomon's throne is established or his kingdom is established. Well, here's a few things to consider. I think the first thing is, was it necessary? Was it necessary to execute three men? I've got to be careful here because I want to be able to deal with the text objectively, but I recognize that now being a New Testament Christian, that that can color my view of the Old Testament. And I can't afford for that to happen.

I can't allow me who understands grace and forgiveness because of the cross to then take that mindset back into Solomon's day where that understanding was not there or that grace was not there in the same way and applied and say Solomon made a bad decision. But the question is, was it necessary?

So here's a few truths to consider. The first one is this, that God makes an unconditional promise, but unconditional promises and blessings are found together, but don't always work together.

And what I mean by that is this, David tells Solomon to obey the law of Moses, because that's what you ought to do to stay faithful to God, behave the way God wants you to behave.

[16:13] And by doing that, you'll experience the blessings of God. Again, this is a very basic idea to Christianity, that those who honor God, God will honor. Okay, there is a certain kind of relationship between the person and God when it comes to blessings. Then he adds that if Solomon's sons do exactly the same thing that David is instructing Solomon to do, then he's not going to lack a man for the throne. And this goes back to 2 Samuel 7, where you'll remember God promises David that he will not be the one who builds the temple, but his son will, and his son will have a kingdom that will last forever. Now, of course, that cannot be Solomon. Now, here's the issue. God has made an unconditional promise, which means that there's no conditions attached to it. God has promised an eternal kingdom that will last forever with no conditions attached to it. But David doesn't seem to have read it that way. And what that means is this, that it doesn't matter how much sin David commits.

Well, it does matter before God, but it doesn't matter to the promise. And it doesn't matter how much sin Solomon commits, and Solomon commits a lot of sin going forward. And neither does it matter how much sin any of their successors commit throughout their lives, if they're kings and so forth and so on.

It cannot change the promise that God has made, because the promise is unconditional. In other words, the promise does not depend on an obedient king, or it does, but not on David as king, or Solomon as king.

And so the problem you have is, again, a clear one. How does God fulfill his promises when his promises require people to be obedient when none of the people that he makes the promises to are able to be obedient? What do you do? How do you fulfill a promise which is based on obedience to God?

Okay. When you're making those promises to people who can never be obedient to God. Well, of course, when God sets something up like that, which seems impossible to be able to be fulfilled, then you know it's not going to be David, it's not going to be Solomon, it's not going to be anybody else, until that is you get to Jesus. And Jesus is introduced as the one who does the will of his father on earth, the king who has come. And so this is how God gets us to see that it's not these men.

[18:47] These men will not be the savior of Israel. These men will not redeem the world. These men will not be able to bring about the things that you're hoping that they will. Because the only person who can do that is the person who obeys me perfectly. The person who can establish a kingdom forever. And what's the biggest problem with a kingdom ending? A king dies.

And what everyone is looking for is a good and perfect king who will last forever. Of course, that's not difficult to see when you see that it is Jesus. But here's the important thing to remember.

That just because the promise is unconditional, the blessings aren't. The blessings aren't. And what that means is this. That blessings are added to obedience. But blessings are not added to disobedience.

The promise remains. That God's promise remains. But God's blessings that accompany that promise only accompanies it when you are obeying God. So if Solomon obeys God, there'll be lots of blessings upon his life and his kingship and who he is as a person and his family and the kingdom.

But if Solomon does not obey God, then the blessings are not transferred to him or out to the people that he is king over. And so the condition of the people depends entirely on the condition of the king's heart towards God. How the people, what kind of blessings the people will experience in the kingdom will depend entirely on the type of king that you have. And of course, now we begin to see over and over again the importance of Jesus Christ being the true and perfect king. And I think this is something that Christians need to know and experience. That when you are saved, the first thing it says in Romans 6 is that you have become obedient from the heart. Why? Because from all of time, obedience to the law of God is a non-negotiable. Grace does not nullify the law of God, as if to say it no longer matters if you keep it or not. No, the law of God always matters and the law of God is always to be kept. What the grace of God does, if you read Titus 2, is that it enables us to say no to sin and yes to God. So the grace of God never allows us to continue in sin if it's true grace. The grace of God only ever encourages us to obey the law of God in all matters. And this is what we are meant to understand here.

[21 : 44] Well, here's the next thing then. The issue of law and justice. David tells Solomon to keep the law of God to experience the blessings which we know. And we also know that when Jesus preaches on the Sermon of the Mount, he has quite a lot to say about this. And what I mean by that is this, that God's people frequently throughout scripture do not know how to read the law of God. They just have no clue.

And so when Jesus turns up and he starts preaching, he says things like, you have heard it said, but I say unto you. In other words, someone along the line has got it wrong and has told you wrong.

You have heard it said, but I say unto you. In other words, the law of God was always supposed to be interpreted to its highest order. Okay, to its highest order. And that's absolutely crucial for understanding what Jesus is about to say. Jesus is not changing the law of God when he seems to heighten it. He's simply saying that this is what it has always meant. So when Jesus comes, he perfectly obeys God. He perfectly does the will of God on earth. And his kingdom brings with it blessings. He tells us to repent and believe because the kingdom of God is at hand. And as his kingdom grows, how are we to treat enemies? Well, one of the things that Solomon does is that he executes them.

Solomon executes the enemies because they are a threat to the kingdom and to the peace of the kingdom. So they must be removed from the kingdom. And as we said, that's not inconsistent with the idea of the value of the kingdom in Matthew 13. The idea of that which is sinful being removed is not an unbiblical idea. Solomon isn't doing anything, you know, that's inconsistent with the value of the kingdom. And he's a king. But how does King Jesus deal with it? Or what does he say? He says, love your enemies. Well, now we've got something to deal with. How are we supposed to treat people now? Well, because no one on earth is a threat to the kingdom of God being extended throughout the world. No one in this world is going to come up against God and win. Here's an example. And I'll use the same example that I used Wednesday evening because it's incredibly important that you understand and it fits wonderfully well here with 1 Kings 2. You'll remember on Wednesday evening, if you're there, that Jesus takes the Sermon on the Mount and he takes the lex talionis, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. In other words, that if someone takes out your eye, then under the law of God, you are allowed to retaliate or have the judgment upon them, the justice of removing their eye. But the point is, is that you're not to go any further than what they have done to you initially. And then Jesus changes it.

And he says this, that in the covenant context, we should not resist. We should resist in a whole different kind of way. If someone slaps you on the right cheek, don't slap them back, but rather turn your face so that you can be hit again. Okay? So Jesus is saying an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Under the law, okay, that would mean that you, if someone has slapped you on the face, if it's an eye for an eye, it's a slap for a slap, then you're to slap them back on the face. But what Jesus now says under a redemptive context, under the context of the new covenant, is there still has to be two slaps, but don't give the second one, take the second one. Okay? Don't give the second slap, take the second slap. Why? So that you can obey the law of God. So that the law of God is not broken.

[25 : 53] And the reason for taking the second slap is because the law of God matters. Jesus isn't changing the law. He's simply putting it in a redemptive context. He's putting it in a New Testament context full of grace and of mercy. So the law is being fulfilled not by, not by lex talionis, in other words, giving it back, but by receiving the same again. And this leads us to the cross, where upon the cross, Jesus is forgiving his enemies. Forgive them, Father, for they do not know what they do. He is taking the retaliation, as it were, or the just judgment upon himself for their sin. Now, why is that important to understand? Well, here's why it's important, especially when we read Solomon, for this reason. When Jesus was teaching the disciples and teaching many others who were listening, he would say this to them, that Moses was allowing divorce for one reason only, because people's hearts were hard. And so what God did, through Moses, of course, was make an allowance within the law of God for the condition of the human heart. That it wasn't always meant to be that way.

It wasn't always meant to be that you were to get divorced. But because of the hardness of your heart, because it's sinful, essentially, and you couldn't change or you wouldn't change, that Moses allowed divorce so that things don't get out of hand, so that things don't become incredibly worse very, very quickly. But it wasn't always so. And so what you see happening there is that God is understanding the human condition and the law is reflecting the human condition.

When it says an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, God is not coming up with an idea of perfect retaliation. What he's coming up with is because he knows how sinful people can be, he's putting a limit to how much you can do back to the person who's done something to you. In other words, don't go beyond, don't take it any further. Why? Because as a human heart, we want to take everything further. We want to go even further to someone else than what they have done to us. If we've been hurt by them, we want to hurt them even more back. And God is saying that you can't do that. But now Jesus is saying, you can't even go that far. Now you're to take the same again so as to show the redemptive mercy of God.

You're to point it to the cross of what it means to fulfill the law of God in this different way. Jesus is asking us to live to a brand new kingdom ethic. Okay, what about Solomon? Well, here's the exhortation. Was it necessary for Solomon to execute those three men? Well, number one, we can say that it wasn't inconsistent with getting a kingdom peaceful. We can at least say that it wasn't inconsistent with establishing a kingdom, a peaceful kingdom of unity rather than of sin or any kind of evil uprising. But here's the most important thing, that that law allowed Solomon to do what he did, fulfill justice because not a single man died in an act of injustice. They all got their just reward.

But did they get their just reward because of the human condition was taken into consideration? In other words, because Solomon lived in the day that he did, was that the only possible option?

[29 : 39] And I think it was. I think Solomon did what he did because it was the only thing that could be done to establish a peaceful kingdom because he wasn't Jesus. And too often we want to read the Bible back to front and go, well, the Old Testament is just awful and horrible and thank God that Jesus came along.

But what we need to understand is God throughout all of history takes into consideration the condition of the human heart, even within his own law. But when Jesus turns up, he says an eye for an eye, okay.

Don't have, don't just, don't just have the one eye taken out, have both of them out. You think, well, that's, that's incredibly unjust. No, that will be an act of fulfilling the law of God whilst giving mercy to the other person. And that's the cross. The challenge here is for us to understand that Solomon is not Jesus. And Solomon did what Solomon had to do, whether we approve of it ourselves or not. The challenge for us is slightly extended the moment we come into contact with Jesus' words, because now we have to obey the law just like Solomon. But we have to obey the law in a whole different way. There is no retaliation. There is no retaliation. Now we must always take the second slap. We must always receive double rather than paying back. And that's the new kingdom ethic.

If it was one rule as it was under Solomon's kingdom, under Christ's kingdom, it is entirely different. We are not to retaliate, but we are to take. And by taking it, what we're doing is we're calling the people in the world to look at the cross and what Christ accomplished. Look at how God justly justifies unjust people. Not by judging them, but by judging someone else in their place who is perfectly kept the law of God in order that they, the sinners, us, can perfectly go free.

What we have in Christ's kingdom is the supreme ethic of grace and mercy. And having been changed by that, we are no longer to continue fulfilling the law in the way that Solomon did. But we are required to fulfill the law in the way Jesus says. As he says to everyone else, he says to us, you have heard it said, okay, perhaps you've heard differently. But I say unto you, but I say unto you, amen.