I. INTRO:

A. IDOP: Int Day of Prayer for the Pers Church! (100,000 churches participating)

1. Although religious persecution has existed for centuries, the persecution of Christians has become a humanitarian crisis unlike any other.

2. As the church continues to grow in countries where anti-Christian hostility is fueled by politics or opposing extremist religions, hundreds of millions of believers remain at risk of being victimized by harassment, injustice, physical abuse, kidnapping, false imprisonment, or even martyrdom because of their faith.

   a) Heb.13:4 Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies.

   b) Gal.6:10 Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone - especially to those in the family of faith.

B. Famous Last Words:

1. Akiba ben Joseph (c.40-c.135) "The paper burns, but the words fly free." (at the stake, when the Torah was also burned)


3. Thomas Becket (1119-1179) "I am ready to die for my Lord, that in my blood the Church may obtain liberty and peace."

4. Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887) "Now comes the mystery."

5. Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) "Beautiful."

6. Paul Claudel (1868-1955) "Doctor, do you think it could have been the sausage?"

7. O. Henry (1862-1910) "Turn up the lights, I don't want to go home in the dark." (Quoting a popular song, 5 June 1910)

8. Louis XIV (1638-1715) "Why are you weeping? Did you imagine that I was immortal?" (Noticing as he lay on his deathbed that his attendants were crying.)

9. William Wallace (1270-1305) "Freedom" [Ascribed to him in the film Braveheart]

10. Pancho Villa (1878-1923) "Don't let it end like this. Tell them I said something."

   a) Some serious, some contemplative, some humorous.

C. Now these are the last words of David. (vs.1)

1. At least 73 psalms in the Book of Psalms are assigned to David.

2. But this last one is found only here in 2 Samuel 23:1-7.
3. The phrase “the last words of David” means his last inspired written words from the Lord. (probably written during the closing days of his life)
   a) The death of David doesn’t take place till 1 Kings 2.

D. The theme is Godly leadership & making the right choices!
1. It might have been written for his son Solomon, but it has much to say to all of us.
2. Ch.21-24 serve as an appendix to 2 Samuel, & seems to focus on both the divine & human sides of leadership.
3. A leader’s decisions may have serious consequences, as proved by the sins of Saul[ch.21] & David[ch.24].
4. Leaders must depend on the Lord & give Him the glory.
5. And its about right choices!

E. (Deck of cards illustration 51+1) In the beginning, it seemed God stacked the deck in Adam’s favor.
1. Every choice but one was the right choice! [there was only 1 wrong choice available]
2. In the moment he made that choice he choose another path, one that did not include the presence of God.¹
   a) Like Adam, we chart our course & navigate our journey w/the choices we make.
      (1) Either moving us toward God & all the pleasures that come w/Him; or steer us away from Him to a life of shame & fear.
   b) We know while Adam was hiding, God set out in search for Him (lost/pursuit/grace/hope)
   c) Even when we are lost in the great jungle of life, God in His divine mercy pursues us & invites us, once again, to join His grand adventure! :)

F. (Deck of cards illustration 1+51) Now it feels we are in a jungle of endless wrong choices & we are desperately searching for the elusive right one! [But that’s not the case at all!]
1. Turn to Deut.30:11-14.
   a) It’s like God’s saying, “you can’t use the fact you don’t know what to do as an excuse, or it’s too difficult.”
   b) It’s not about reading Gods mind, but knowing His heart!
2. Read Deut.30:19,20.
3. 2 different paths in life: 1 a journey that parts ways from Him; the other, a journey in which He parts the way. 1 is the road to death; the other, the path to life.
   a) Key: The Lord is your life! - Now choose life!

G. Outline: Privileges of Leadership & Responsibilities of Leadership.

II. PRIVILEGES OF LEADERSHIP! (1,2)

¹ Adapted from Seizing Your Divine Moment, McManus.
A. David never ceased to marvel that God would call him to become the king of Israel, to lead God’s people, fight God’s battle, help write God’s Word, & even through his descendants bring Messiah into this world.

B. From the human standpoint: David was a nobody, a sheep herder, the youngest of 8 sons, from an ordinary Jewish family; nevertheless God selected him, & made him to become Israel’s greatest king.

1. The Lord gave him skillful hands & a heart of integrity (Ps.78:70-72) & equipped him to know & do His will.

C. Aren’t you surprised God has chosen you to lead your wife, your children, or your family? Chosen you to lead your business, your division, your branch, or your department at work? Chosen you to lead a ministry, to children, to youth, to adults?

D. David didn’t promote himself to achieve greatness; it was the Lord who chose him & elevate him to the throne.

1. The Lord spent 30 years training/preparing David.
   a) First w/the sheep in the pastures, then w/Saul in the army camp, & finally w/his own fighting men in the wilderness.

2. Great leaders are trained in private before they go to work in public.
   a) Goethe wrote, “Talents are best nurtured in solitude, character is best formed in the stormy billows of the world.” [David had both]
   b) D. Martyn Lloyd Jones used to say, “It is a tragic thing when a young man succeeds before he’s ready for it.”

3. This was the road for Moses, Joshua, Nehemiah, the apostles, & even Jesus!
   a) Its good to be educated by men, but it’s even more important to be trained by the Lord.
   b) Jesus was 30 years in preparing for 3 years service right?

E. The anointed - A.W.Tozer said, Never follow any leader until you see the oil on his forehead.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEADERSHIP! (3-7)

A. The Spirit empowered David for battle, but He also inspired him to write beautiful psalms that still minister to hearts 3 millennial later.

1. David makes it clear he was writing the Word of God, not just religious poetry.
2. Peter even calls David a prophet in Acts 2:30.

B. Leadership:

1. (vs.1) Leaders must be called of God(raised up) & empowered by Him(anointed).
2. (vs.2) Leaders must be taught the Word of God by the Spirit of God.
3. (vs.3) Leaders must be men & women of character who fear God.
4. (vs.3) Leaders must lead for God & not for self.
5. (vs.3) Leaders must be just (rule in the fear of God).
6. (vs.3) Leaders must have a submissive attitude toward God.
7. (vs.4) Leaders should be like the dawning of a new day & the springing up of new grass after the rain.
8. (Also 24:17) Leaders must have the welfare of their people on their heart.
   a) Even secular business specialists are comparing effective leaders to shepherds who care.

C. (4) This metaphor depicts, what photographers & cinematographers call, The Golden Hour!
D. This beautiful metaphor is depicting the work of the leader, Rain & Sunshine, together produce useful fruit instead of painful thorns. [title]
   1. David exemplified this principle in his own life. When he came to the throne it meant the dawning of a new day for Israel.
   2. And when Jesus came to earth it was the dawning of a new day for the world!

E. (5) It seems the NIV has the best read, If my house were not right with God, surely he would not have made with me an everlasting covenant, arranged and secured in every part.
   1. David's house/dynasty was secure because of God's covenant promises.
      a) This covenant is divine in its origin...He has made with me an everlasting covenant.
         (1) Oh that great word He!
   2. The Lord providentially preserved Israel & David's seed so that Jesus Christ could be born in Bethlehem, the City of David (which we'll celebrate next month/Christmas)

F. Ministry involves both sunshine & rain, bright days & cloudy days; but our leadership should produce gentle rain that brings life, not storms that destroy.
   1. Unspiritual leader produce thorns that irritate people & make progress very difficult.

G. (6,7) (msg) But the devil’s henchmen are like thorns culled and piled as trash; Better not try to touch them; keep your distance with a rake or hoe. They’ll make a glorious bonfire!
   1. Actually I think vs.7a is actually Messiah ruling with a rod of iron.

H. In David’s final words he reminds us, there are 2 different paths in life:
   1. 1 a journey that parts ways from Him; The other a journey in which He parts the way
   2. One, the road to death; The other, the path to life.
      a) Remember the Key from Deut.? The Lord is your life! - Now choose life!
b) Today will you put away the baggage from your past?

c) Today will you shake yourself free from the fear of the future unknown?

d) Right now, choose life! Choose the path to life. How?
   Make HIM your life & the length of your days...starting today!

I. In the end, will your life be defined as *Useful Fruit, or Painful Thorns?*