

## Useful Fruit or Painful Thorns!

### 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)
2. **Max Baer** (1909-1959) [American boxer, Heavyweight Champion 1934-5] "Oh God, here I go..."
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.<sup>1</sup>

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)**

<sup>1</sup> 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**(rt.).
6. (vs.3) Leaders must **have a submissive attitude toward God** (rule in the fear of 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?*