

## Jason Upchurch - 1 Kings 2 - Act Like a Man

I want you to turn to a passage in **1 Kings 2** as we worship through studying the Word of God this morning.

I was reading this passage several weeks ago and was really struck by this passage and began to jot down some notes. Notes eventually evolved into a sermon and here we are. I hope this is an encouragement to you this morning.

My big goal this morning in our time together is to exhort the men in our congregation to act like men. That's the controlling command in this whole section: act like a man.

I'm not berating anyone, I'm not picking on anyone or calling anyone's manhood into question. But I personally was challenged and convicted by this passage and want to encourage especially the men from the words of king David. So, men, gear up. I'm primarily talking to you this morning.

But, ladies, you need to know that this applies to you as well. If you're married this is what God calls your husband to be. If you're not married yet, this applies to the man you should be looking for.

Unless you have the gift of singleness, you will get married. And the guy you choose will set the course for your entire life. It will also set the course for your children and grandchildren and ultimately your legacy in proclaiming the gospel.

You need to hear what God calls these young men to be. Because it's easy for you to be attracted to young men who are good looking. It's easy for you to be attracted to young men who are funny and clever. Maybe you like a guy who has some money or is popular or athletic. But who has no plan for life, no idea how to lead in a godly manner, and frankly little if any spiritual life whatsoever.

And as I get older I look at you young ladies as daughters in the faith and my biggest desire for you is to find a godly man, raise children in a godly home, live a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness as **1 Tim. 2** says because that is pleasing to God our Savior.

If he's cute, great. If he's funny, great. If he's well off, fine. But what he needs to be more than anything is a man of God who has a plan to lead you and your family in Christlike love and devotion. He needs to provide and protect and have a plan to lead you for the glory of God.

And you husbands are called to be that man and model what a man is to your wife and sons and daughters.

Here in **1 Kings 2** we have a huge transition in the OT; this is the passing of the baton between the two most famous kings in all of biblical history. King David is literally on his death bed and he is passing the torch of kingship to his son, Solomon. What he says here is from one king to another king. But more importantly it's from a father to his son.

And I just want to say: Men, if your father never had this talk with you, this is what you need to hear. God is giving you this talk right now. And this is the talk you need to have with your sons and your daughters. **Read 1-12**

This whole section revolves around the command from David in **Vs. 2**: show yourself a man. I like the NIV which says "act like a man."

This isn't to be chauvinist. This isn't some sort of woman hating, locker room talk. This is an intimate look at the last words between David and Solomon, likely recorded for us by Solomon himself. This is a charge from David for his son to step up to the role God had called him to fulfill, first and foremost as a man.

And we need to hear this as well. We need to be reminded of this command first and foremost because the world has no idea what it is to be a man. Outside of the gospel, the world is pretty much clueless as to what manhood is.

On the one side you have the world telling us that there is no difference between men and women. That men are women and women are men and that can change back and forth on a whim. And we should encourage little kids to be whatever gender they think they are.

At the same time, you've got the same ungodly world telling us that the essence of manhood is to be super strong. If you're standing in line at the grocery store and you see the cover of Men's Health their definition of a man is some guy with huge biceps and an 8 pack who only eats protein bars and raw meat.

Hollywood tells us men are violent. Bruce Willis beats people up. Arnold Schwarzenegger blows people up. If you're not violent you're not a man.

GQ says men need to be rich wearing the latest fashion and driving the most expensive cars and a womanizer.

None of those things has anything to do with being a man. The world has no idea what a real man is.

The second reason we as believers need to be reminded of this command is because it's easy for us as believers to forget what manhood is. That's why the Bible reminds men to act like men over and over.

Four times in the first chapter of **Josh 1** the Lord says to Joshua: Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, do not be dismayed.

**Haggai 2:4** Yet now, be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the Lord. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people in the land, declares the Lord. Work, for I am with you, declares the Lord of hosts.

He's not saying to the men to go do pushups and squats. He's saying be brave. Step into the leadership role that I have given you and lead like I've commanded you to lead - as a man.

Paul says to the Corinthians at the very end of the book: Act like men (16:).

Again, this isn't about being macho or violent or having big biceps. Men are stronger and should be the de facto protectors of family and society. But this is about stepping into the role God designed for men all the way back in the Garden. Men have always been designed to lead and love and protect and provide.

In the Fall we lost some of that desire. That's part of the curse: that there will be tension between husbands and wives. Men who refuse to lead or wives constantly try to usurp their husband's authority.

And along comes Jesus in the gospel and he calls people not only to believe in him for eternal life but to follow him and be transformed by his Spirit.

Think about this: Jesus was the quintessential man. We know he was truly man and truly God, but he was also everything that God designed a man to be. He lived up to the high calling. And he calls all men to do the same, and he gives all his redeemed men the grace to live out this calling.

And so as we look, this call is something that men have always been called to. So what is it to be a man?

### 1. Men call their sons to maturity. Read 1-2

This is the final Dad talk. Of all the things that David could have said he said this. This is what matters most.

We know that David told these things to Solomon over and over because we see hints of that all throughout the book of Proverbs. In Proverbs Solomon passes down some of the very same lessons to his son that he learned from David his father.

But what we need to understand, men, is that it is critical for us to pass down godliness to our kids. It means having the hard talks. It means being vulnerable and frank at the same time.

It means calling them to maturity. Our culture is creating this perpetual state of adolescence where no one is actually growing up. People are intentionally waiting until their 30s to get married. They're waiting longer and longer. Adolescence is prolonged, maturity is put off.

I mean, David was killing bears and lions when he was 12 or 13. He had responsibilities, he had chores, his father trusted him to pack his bags and take a several day journey to the front lines of combat when there were Philistines all over the place ready to kill him.

We need to call our young men to the high calling. We need to remember that we are training **men**. That's the goal: full manhood, full maturity.

And part of that is ensuring they understand that goal. And when we do that, it's not a suggestion, it's not an encouragement here or a feel good talk. Notice what it says David did to Solomon. **Read 1**

What did he do? He commanded him. He understood his God-given role of authority in his son's life to command him to walk in the ways of the Lord.

Men we are to command our sons to be men because God has commanded this. Young men you are commanded to grow up into the role God has designed you to be. This doesn't mean you have to have life all figured out, but your ultimate goal in life is as a fully mature godly man.

## 2. A godly man is brave. Read 2

When we see these kind of admonitions in the Bible they are often given as a charge by God before a really difficult task. God commands Joshua to be strong and courageous right before he enters the Promised Land. He says it 4 times in one chapter. Why?

Because it's going to be rough. He's going to have to fill the shoes of Moses who was beyond legendary to the Israelites. He's going to a place he's never been, with people he's never led and it's not going to be easy. And he's going to need courage to live this out in faithfulness to God.

Men, we are called to be brave.

**Prov. 28:1:** The wicked flee when no one pursues but the righteous are as bold as a lion.

I love that.

You remember when Peter and John are preaching the gospel and religious leaders are upset in Acts 4? "When they saw the boldness of of Peter and John, and perceived they were uneducated, common men - not Harvard grads or rich kids - they were amazed. And they recognized they had been with Jesus."

Being tight with Jesus gives us boldness. Jesus was bold. He spoke the truth. He stood his ground. He did all that God had called him to do.

We are called to the same. We are called to be courageous. The Lord is with us! He is by our side. Courage doesn't mean we have no fear. It doesn't mean everything is happy.

Courage assumes there is difficulty. It assumes there's pushback and hardship and trials. And the more hardship there is, the more courage you need. You can't buckle in the face of hardship, you need resolve in the face of hardship. Courage is pressing on when things get tough because you know that you know what you're doing is right in the eyes of the Lord.

It's right in the eyes of the Lord **who is with you.**

So men call their sons to maturity, a godly man is brave.

## 3. A godly man knows his time is short. Read 2

We follow Jesus because he gives us *eternal* life. According to **John 17:3** eternal life is an intimate knowledge of the Father and the Son. It's given through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

But there is a sense in which when we come to faith in the Lord Jesus we have an eternal perspective. And that eternal perspective means we know our time on earth is short, but also that our time on earth matters.

There's an old phrase that says "What is done in time echoes for eternity." That's true. But we only have so much time.

The old theologians used to have skulls on their desks. It was kind of weird and maybe a little creepy but they served a purpose. They're called "memento mori" which means a reminder of death. Not in a morbid sense but in the sense that they wanted to constantly be reminded that time is short and we need to live wisely.

**Eph. 5:15-16:** Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of your time because the days are evil."

We've only got so many minutes. How are we using them? Are you ready to meet the Lord? Whether we go to him or he comes to us it's going to happen. Are you ready for that?

The Psalmist: Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom (**90:12**). Understanding our days are limited helps us to number them.

You've only got so long. Foolish people never think they're going to die. Foolish people also fail to prepare for death and fail to prepare their young men for their death. It's wisdom that remembers our time is short. It's wisdom that helps us to act accordingly.

Men we need to be reminded that we are mortal. We're going to get old, Lord willing. And our bodies are going to decay and breakdown and wear out and die.

And we need to remind our young men that we are mortal and that they are mortal and that what are striving for in this life is something bigger than this life. It's bigger than themselves. It's the Kingdom of God that matters.

That's what David cares about. The Kingdom. For him it was the Kingdom of Israel because that was God's Kingdom. For us it's the Kingdom of heaven because that's the true Kingdom. We live our life looking forward like Abraham to the city whose designer and builder is God, whose foundations cannot be shaken.

Acting like men means knowing our time is short.

#### 4. A man is obedient to the Lord. Read 2-3

You want to be a real man? You'll be diligent to keep the commands of God. All the commands of God.

He says it in about every way possible.

Keep the charge  
Walking in his ways  
Keeping the statutes, commandments, rules, testimonies

Real men are obedient to the Word of God at every turn.

One of the things that often gets presented as the pinnacle of being a man is rebellion. James Dean's Rebel Without a Cause is sort of the classic poster for a rebellious man.

They don't follow convention, they don't keep any rules. They do what they want, when they want, how they want and they could care less about the consequences.

That is the exact opposite of true manhood. God's man is diligent to keep the commands and ways of the Lord. He is dedicated to loving the Lord his God with all of his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.

Here David calls on Solomon to walk faithfully in the Law of Moses. We are not under the Law of Moses, of course. In Christ we are freed from that Law. But nonetheless we walk according to the Law of Christ and take great encouragement and instruction from the Law of Moses.

But here's a crucial element in walking in the ways of the Lord: you have to know what those ways are. You have to be in the Word to know what the Word says.

Remember this is king David charging King Solomon. **Turn** back to **Deut. 17:14-20** for just a moment. This was something that's pretty crucial. It's a Law requiring kings to make a copy of their own Bible. And not only that, but the copy that he makes has to be approved by the Levitical priests. **Read**

This is pretty fascinating. The kings were not to acquire horses, wives, and gold. My OT professor in college said "Gold, gals, and giddy up." If they did, there was potential for their hearts to be drawn away from the Lord.

What did Solomon acquire? Gold, gals and giddy up. What happened to his heart. Shockingly, it turned from the Lord. How might he have been warned against that? If he had read the Bible he was supposed to make for himself.

The king was to physically write his own copy of the Law. That way he couldn't ever claim he didn't know the Law. And that copy had to be approved by the Levitical priests so that he didn't add anything or take anything away. He was accountable.

This is the man of God. Someone who is dedicated to the Law of God. Who knows the Law of God, who makes no excuses for the Law of God. Who is diligent to know and keep the Law of God for the glory of God.

And it's not just keeping laws to keep laws. It's because we know that God will bless those who are faithful to him. **Read 20**

He obeys in order to be blessed. That he may have a long reign and blessing in his family. That's actually the same thing David says back in **1 Kings**. **Look** back there. **Read 4**

Men understand that walking in the commands of God, is not some drudgery. It's actually because God promises to bless us. In the NC it's not a blessing of having a son to sit on the throne. It's actually an eternally blessing.

**Matt. 5:6:** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

When does that happen? For all eternity in the New Heavens and New Earth.

Godly men are committed to knowing and obeying the Word because they know God will bless them eternally for it.

Fifth - and this is where it starts to get interesting.

5) Godly men are committed to justice. **Read 5-6**

Godly men are committed to justice. If you know the history and background of Joab and David you it's something of an OT soap opera.

Joab was the commander of David's army and also happened to be David's nephew. Joab is often referred to as the son of Zeruiah. Zeruiah was David's sister.

And as **2 Samuel** unfolds we see that Joab is an amazingly complicated figure. He's one of my favorite people in all the Bible because of how complex he is. On the one hand he is an outstanding general. At one point he

really has more power in the kingdom than David because all the soldiers will follow him and both Joab and David know it. But he has enough restraint to not take over the kingdom.

But he does do things that are treacherous. Two of which are mentioned here. He kills Abner and Amasa. I'll spare you all the details, but suffice it to say that Joab kills Abner and Amasa on separate occasions out of vengeance when there was no war going on.

Here's where it gets really interesting: Joab and Amasa were cousins. And Joab and Abner were cousins. Joab murdered his own cousins in cold blood. And all 3 of them, Joab, Amasa and Abner were nephews to David.

This is treachery inside David's own household and inside his own administration. So here's king David, whose nephews are some of the best soldiers on the planet and they're all killing each other. And David did nothing - Joab remained his general because he had the backing of the entire Israelite army.

Imagine that kind of scandal going down. Fast forward several decades and here we are when David is about to die. And on his deathbed he says to his son Solomon: you need to set this right.

You need to execute justice. Why didn't David do it? David didn't do it because he was stuck. Politically he was in a trap, relationally he was in a trap. And if you remember God had cursed David after his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. God said the sword will never depart from your house.

And that was true. David's own family life and administration was filled with vengeance and bloodshed. Could David had done more? Sure.

But with his death on the horizon he sees an opportunity to make things right. And so he charges Solomon: "You make it right. Do what I never did. Execute justice on Joab."

Joab is an old man by now, but no less treacherous. If you read the rest of this chapter you find out that Solomon comes to power and Joab runs to the Tabernacle and grabs the horns of the altar to try to save himself. He won't let go even when Solomon commands him to. So Solomon has him killed while he's grabbing the horns of the altar. Joab finally gets justice.

But David wants justice for 2 others. If you remember, there was a point in David's reign where his son Absalom tried to take over the Kingdom. And there were those who loved David and those who hated him. Barzilai loved David, Shimei hated him and David wants justice for both. **Read 7-9**

Barzillai was an old wealthy man who helped David flee when Absalom tried to take over the Kingdom. He fed David and those with him and did everything he could to keep him safe in the midst of the chaos. Barzillai was probably long dead by this time but David wanted to bless his sons for their father's faithfulness.

Shimei was the polar opposite. As David was sneaking out of Jerusalem during the siege, Shimei hurled insults at David and cursed David. Adding insult to injury. And although when David returned to power he decided not to kill Shimei, there was still a sense that Shimei had cursed the Lord's anointed and deserved death. Even David's soldiers wanted to kill Shimei for what he had done.

David says to Solomon: set everything right. Set everything right that I didn't do. Listen, there's a lot of fascinating OT history that's covered in these few verses but what it all points to is that many times in our lives we waffle on justice. We know the right thing to do, we know how we should act and we don't do it. We put it off, or maybe our situation seems too complicated. And sometimes it's only when death is knocking at the door do we feel a sense of urgency to make things right.

As men who are committed to justice, we should do everything we can to make things right as soon as we can. But listen, it's better late than never.

There's an old saying that justice delayed is justice denied. That might be true, but justice delayed is better than no justice at all. If there are things we need to do in our lives to make a situation right, we need to go do it.

David is telling Solomon to be the man he wasn't. He's telling Solomon to carry out justice that he didn't because it's still the right thing to do.

So men call their sons to maturity, a godly man is brave, we know our time is short, we are obedient, we are committed to justice...

6) A man of God recognizes God's work in blessing. Read 10-12

David died and Solomon's reign is established. And it says his Kingdom was firmly established. Who established it? God did.

In the Bible there's a sly little piece of grammar called the divine passive. It's when something happens and we know it's God who did it, but God isn't mentioned specifically. As someone said: "it's a way to denote the hidden work of God as the agent responsible for the activity." (Greidanus, S.)

He doesn't say "And God firmly established his kingdom" - although that's true. He says the Kingdom **was** firmly established. It's a subtle reminder in the midst of the fray that God is in control of all things.

Listen, if you have any blessing at all in life, no matter how obvious or how subtle, who has done it? God. And the man of God recognizes that.

And that's what we are called to be: men of God. Men who love the Lord with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. Men who are obedient and just, who have one eye here and one eye to eternity calling all men to live for the glory of God.

**Pray**