

2 Samuel 23:1-39 | “Sunrises, Thorns, & Spears”  
*Preached on December 4, 2022 by Pastor Matt Brown*

You can turn in your Bibles to 2 Samuel 23. *[pause]*

**Have you ever heard someone say their last words?**

Sometimes a person’s last words are quick-witted and make us chuckle, like Benjamin Franklin’s last words...

“His daughter told him to change position in bed so he could breathe more easily. Franklin’s last words were, ‘A dying man can do nothing easy.’”<sup>1</sup> *[pause]*

Other times, someone’s last words are somber like when Winston Churchill gave his last words, which simply said, “I’m bored with it all.”<sup>2</sup> *[pause]*

And still other times, a person’s last words display someone with no hope, as when filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock said...

“One never knows the ending. One has to die to know exactly what happens after death, although Catholics have their hopes.”<sup>3</sup> *[pauseeee]*

**Well when it comes to king David, what were his last words?**

Although these last words are most likely not his final words on his deathbed, they are definitely his last *public* words for the people.

And his last words don’t make us chuckle, they aren’t somber, and they aren’t hopeless.

Rather, they are filled with rock-solid hope in God’s truth and promises. *[pauseeee]*

Now before we get to David’s last words, in verse 1 to the beginning of verse 3, we see some introductory remarks.

Look down at verse 1. *[READ VERSES 1-3a]*

**We are told that this is David’s last words.**

He is the son of Jesse, the man raised on high, anointed, and the sweet psalmist. *[pause]*

This reminds us of who David was.

He had humble beginnings, but God raised him up and anointed him to be the appointed leader of His people. *[pause]*

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/58534/64-people-and-their-famous-last-words>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sunlife.co.uk/articles-guides/funeral-planning/9-famous-last-words/>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/58534/64-people-and-their-famous-last-words>.

David's prominence and success was always because of the Lord.

We learned all about that in the last chapter in David's song of deliverance. *[pauseeee]*

So these are David's last words, but did you notice something about the first couple verses?

They may be David's words, but they are really God's words. *[pause]*

His words are called an 'oracle', which is a prophetic utterance.

And David even says that the Spirit of the Lord speaks by him, the Rock of Israel said to him these words. *[pause]*

So David is recognizing that he is a mouthpiece for the Lord.

These are actually God's Words being spoken by David. *[pause]*

What he is about to say isn't made up by him, but rather, it's God's Word, and we would do well to pay attention.

Let's READ IT starting in verse 3. *[READ VERSES 3-7]*

*In David's words, we discover...*

### **I. The Blessing of a Righteous Ruler. (3b-7)**

What are the characteristics of a good leader?

For some in our world, they are drawn into, and think a good leader is someone charismatic, charming, and full of personality.

For them, the good leader is the one who is enthusiastic and rallies people behind them. *[pause]*

They marvel at his or her speaking ability, and how they present themselves.

For them, the good leader is the leader that tells them exactly what they want to hear, and is boldly proclaiming it. *[pauseeee]*

Now some of those things can be good, but are they really the foundational things that make a good leader? *[pause]*

According to the Bible, what makes a good leader?

David shows us that the best leadership qualities are someone who fears God and does what's right.

They are someone who knows they are under God's authority, and governs in a way that reflects God's righteousness. *[pause]*

So there is this vertical and horizontal aspect to his leadership.

Vertically, they fear God, which then leads them to rule justly horizontally among the people.

*[pause]*

Why is this the best leadership?

Well, think about it.

Since God is the ultimate Leader and Authority, then any leader submitted to Him and governing in a way that reflects His character will be a good leader. *[pauseeee]*

As Christians, we should not be influenced by our culture's leadership values, but what God says a leader should be.

So many of us have been molded into the leadership mindset of the world.

In fact, why is it that so many well-known pastors seem so much like the CEO of a business or a motivational speaker?

Because Christians have been tricked into thinking that what the culture values in leaders is the right way of leadership. *[pause]*

But if you look at the qualifications for pastors in the Bible, what it is mostly about? Character.

This is why time and time again, we are seeing these charming pastors fall.

Because people were looking for the wrong things, instead of looking for a guy who fears God and reflects God's character. *[pauseeeee]*

Now certainly any leader should seek to govern this way, but what is David really pointing to? Christ.

He's the perfect leader because, as we see Him in the Gospels, He is constantly submitting his will to the Father.

And He perfectly leads and rules justly because He is God Incarnate. *[pauseeeee]*

What a blessing to have Christ as our Ruler!

He will always do what's right, and never be unjust because He is God, who is the very definition of what justice is. *[pauseeee]*

As David points out, there's blessing that comes to those who live under the righteous ruler.

Look there at verse 4...

“He dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.” *[pauseeeee]*

Throughout human history, people have groaned and suffered under bad leaders. *[pause]*

Leaders really do make a difference in our lives.

Just think of the impact between having a good boss and a bad boss at work.

Or think about the difference between a good or bad leader in our government.

Well David says that when people have a righteous ruler, “he dawns on them like the morning light”. *[pause]*

Think of a sunrise on a cloudless morning.

A beautiful sunrise can really cause you to feel happier, as you watch it rise and you drink your coffee.

It’s this image of light, life, joy, and hope for a new day.

It’s a beautiful and glorious thing to watch. *[pause]*

The sun rises and shines on the wet grass, and the grass sprouts up from the earth.

It’s reviving, refreshing, and renewing.

A godly, righteous ruler is like that for his people - they are like a sunrise shining on the people. *[pause]*

Who does this remind you of?

\*None other than Jesus Christ, the light of the world!<sup>4</sup> *[pause]*

We have all experienced bad leaders - unjust leaders, who don’t fear the Lord.

Immoral, corrupt, oppressive, and power-grubbing leaders.

We have experienced the not good things that come from that kind of leader, and our hearts ache and long for a righteous ruler.

And that righteous ruler is Christ! *[pause]*

He shines and when we look to Him, he brings us life, joy, growth, and hope.

And so every sunrise on a cloudless day is a reminder of the blessings that come from being a follower of King Jesus. *[pause]*

---

<sup>4</sup> See John 8:12.

*Even this morning was a beautiful sunrise on a cloudless morning, and it was fitting, for and as I looked at it, it reminded me of Christ's reign that gives blessing. [pauseeee]*

When we believe in Christ, he becomes a channel of blessing to us.

In what ways have you seen the blessing of following Christ in your life? [pauseeee]

In verse 5, David explains that his family line is called to be this kind of king for Israel.

Why?

Because God promised his house to have a sure kingdom, which would be established forever.<sup>5</sup>

So because of this promise, David was utterly confident that God would come through and his line would rule Israel. [pauseeee]

David says that this was an “everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure.”

This covenant was arranged in all of its details, so it's not like there are a bunch of question marks about it.

And it's reliable because God Himself would keep and guard it from failing. [pause]

Because David trusted God's promise to his family line, he could say, “For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?”

God would ensure the security and success of the Davidic line because of His promise.

It is the Davidic dynasty that was the human instrument by which God would rule over and bless his people.<sup>6</sup> [pauseeee]

Do you believe that whatever God has said is totally secure?

Even though David didn't know the future trials and hardships that Israel would go through, this he knew: His God would come through on His promises. [pause]

\*For us, even though the present is frightful and the future is foggy, we can trust His Word!

May we be able to say, “He has made a promise with me of eternal life, will I not have it?”

Or, “He has made a promise to always be with me, will He not do it?”

Whatever promise of God you can think of, plug it in there!

It is secure, kept and guarded by God Himself. [pauseeee]

---

<sup>5</sup> See 2 Samuel 7:1-17.

<sup>6</sup> Vannoy, J. R. (2009). *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: 1-2 Samuel* (Vol. 4, p. 419). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

In verses 6 and 7, David shows us that though God blesses him and Israel, God is against those who rebel against him.

They are called “worthless men” because they are wicked.

They are like thorns, useless and harmful.

And what does God do? He throws them away and they are consumed with fire. *[pause]*

There is salvation for God’s people, who are under God’s King, Jesus - or you will face judgment as an enemy and rebel of the King.

This is the teaching throughout the Bible. *[pause]*

Even in Psalm 2, God said that His King would break his enemies with a rod of iron.<sup>7</sup>

And this isn’t just an Old Testament thing, for recall Matthew 13...

When talking about the parable of the weeds, he says...

“The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace.

In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”<sup>8</sup> *[pause]*

Sounds a lot like our passage, doesn’t it?

Exactly. This is what happens to those who rebel against the righteous ruler, and don’t find refuge in Him. *[pause]*

You are either for or against God and His King.

The sun either brings blessing or burns up - Christ is either a sunrise to you or a fire. *[pauseeee]*

This is our holy God, who always rules justly, and this is great news because it means justice will always be done! *[pause]*

So what about you?

Have you repented of your sins and trusted in Jesus Christ, who died for you and rose again?

The amazing thing is that Jesus Christ, who is King and Lord, is the very One who died on the Cross so that you could be forgiven.

---

<sup>7</sup> See Psalm 2:7-9.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 13:41-43.

Though He is so great, yet He humbled himself and took your place, paying the penalty for your sin.

And all those who trust in Him find refuge, forgiveness, and life. *[pause]*

He hasn't made it impossible to be His follower to avoid judgment, but you simply need to humbly place your faith in what He has done for you.

So repent and trust in His sacrifice today! *[pauseeee]*

*As we move on in the chapter, we see the rest of the chapter show us...*

## **II. The Blessing Exemplified (8-39)**

Didn't David just say that God causes to prosper all his help and desire?

Well here we see it, as God worked help and salvation through the mighty men that surrounded him.

Look at verses 8-12. *[READ VERSES 8-12]*

It starts out by talking about the three most elite soldiers that David had.

These guys were like the best of the best.

One guy killed 800 in a battle, and the other two stood their ground and won battles when others were retreating. *[pause]*

These 3 were amazing warriors, none could compare with them.

Yet did you notice verses 10 and 12?

It was ultimately the Lord who brought about great victory. *[pause]*

The Lord used these mighty, elite soldiers to bring help and salvation to David and to Israel.

There is blessing that comes to God's appointed ruler and His people. *[pause]*

It was not only these top 3 that helped David, but there were others, too.

We will get back to verses 13-17, but scoot down to verse 18. *[READ VERSES 18-23]*

Here's a couple more guys, who did some amazing feats.

Abishai killed 300 men in a battle.

And Benaiah apparently was an expert at killing impressive foes, even killing a lion in a pit and an impressive-looking Egyptian with his own spear.<sup>9</sup> *[pauseeee]*

David's mighty men weren't imaginary or made up legends, but they were real people as verses 24-39 provides their names in detail. *[pauseeee]*

**The Lord used David's mighty men to bring help and salvation to David.**

There is truly blessing and salvation for God's people, and judgment upon His enemies, like the Philistines. *[pauseeee]*

Now in the church, God doesn't use mighty warriors to kill lions and slay Philistines.

But he still does use mighty men and women of faith to bring help for His people! *[pause]*

Even Paul would often name fellow co-workers like Prisca and Aquila, who risked their necks for him.<sup>10</sup>

He even named those who worked hard in the ministry and were encouraging to him.<sup>11</sup> *[pause]*

**You see, God uses Abishai's and Benaiah's even today.**

People who are kingdom servants, using their gifts and roles for the glory of God, and for the aid of the church. *[pauseeee]*

**Has He ever sent that person to you to encourage you *at just the right time*?**

That's a mighty man or mighty woman that God used in your life. *[pause]*

**Praise the Lord that He raises up courageous, faith-filled servants to aid us and help us!**

And maybe He wants to use *even us* to be prayer warriors, encouragement warriors, and truth warriors, pushing back the darkness of this world for His kingdom. *[pauseeeee]*

**So David's mighty men show us an example of how God caused to prosper, help, and deliver David, reflecting what David said in verse 5.**

But we also see in verses 13-17 an example of a godly king in action, reflecting back to what was said about a righteous ruler who blesses his people.

Let's look at those verses. [\[READ VERSES 13-17\]](#)

At first, this doesn't make sense to us.

---

<sup>9</sup> Instead of 'handsome' as the ESV translated this, the Egyptian was probably huge and impressive (See 1 Chronicles 11:23 for the parallel).

<sup>10</sup> See Romans 16:3-4.

<sup>11</sup> See Romans 16:6, Colossians 4:12-13, and 2 Timothy 1:16-18 among others.



How could David just pour out the water that they risked their lives attaining? *[pause]*

You see, three of his mighty men hear of David's longing for water from his hometown and take action.

They push through the enemy lines, get the water, and come back. *[pause]*

This is no small feat, for it was a 25 mile round trip, plus only 3 of them had to fight through an enemy stronghold to get the water.

Talk about a dangerous, almost impossible-seeming mission!

And yet out of loyalty and love for David, they risked their lives to get him a drink of water. *[pause]*

Truly, God causes David's desires to prosper!

But this isn't just about the loyalty and love of David's men, but also about David's loyalty and love for his men. *[pause]*

Imagine if David just took the drink, and said, "Wow, that was impressive. Thanks guys." Drank it, and moved on.

That's actually not as meaningful as what David does in the story. *[pause]*

You see, what David did was he gave their act *more meaning* than just simply a brave feat to get some water.

He turned their sacrifice for him into a sacrifice of worship. *[pause]*

He didn't simply pour the water out, but he poured it out to the Lord.

He humbly recognized that he didn't deserve that water, but God did. *[pause]*

So if you think about it: David didn't truly waste the water, but worshiped with it.

It wasn't trash to David, it was treasure! *[pause]*

The men wouldn't be bummed that they risked their lives on a worthless mission because David didn't drink it.

Rather, they would be joyous that their sacrifice was given to God as an offering and recognized by Him. *[pause]*

David was lifting up to the Lord their sacrifice, showing them that they actually did it for the Lord.

Their commitment and loyalty to him *was* commitment and loyalty to the Lord. *[pause]*

So also, any love and service done for others is really love and service for the Lord.

They are sacrifices and offerings pleasing to God.<sup>12</sup> [pauseeee]

Are you willing to actually sacrifice for God's kingdom, though?

The mighty men of David were willing to risk their lives for a drink of water, and yet we feel like we can't sacrifice a little more time or a little more resources. [pause]

So often, we aren't willing to let go.

Our possessions and our time are too valuable to us, but what does that show about what we value most? [pause]

What are you willing to sacrifice for God's kingdom?

He is deserving of all things! [pauseeee]

In how David responds to his men's bravery shows us an example of a godly king.

He recognizes his people's actions, and doesn't ignore them.

He recognizes their sacrifice, and doesn't treat it as trash.

That kind of leader instills in his people even more loyalty and love.

He truly is like a sunrise, shining on a cloudless day. [pause]

Christ is the same for us, but so much better.

He doesn't ignore or disregard our service for Him, but our labor is not in vain.<sup>13</sup>

Even Jesus says in Mark 9:41 that "whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward." [pause]

The Lord acknowledges, remembers, and rewards even a cup of water in His name.

And when we truly believe that, we are pushed on to further loyalty and love. [pauseeee]

*David's godly leadership exemplifies a righteous ruler, who blesses those who follow him, and David's life points forward to Jesus Christ for...*

**Jesus Christ is the righteous ruler, who channels blessing to us!**

He is raised on high, and is the Anointed One, the Messiah.

---

<sup>12</sup> See Hebrews 13:16.

<sup>13</sup> See 1 Corinthians 15:58.

God's Word was on his tongue, because He is the Word.<sup>14</sup>

He always rules justly as King.

And He dawns on us like the morning light because He, the true light, came into the world, giving light to everyone.<sup>15</sup> *[pause]*

That's what we celebrate at Christmas.

As Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, prophesied about Jesus coming...

“the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”<sup>16</sup> *[pause]*

The sunrise on a cloudless day came! A light has dawned!<sup>17</sup>

Jesus came to us by taking on flesh and dwelling among us.

He died for our sins and it may have been dark, but remember that when they went to the tomb of Jesus, it was dawn!<sup>18</sup> *[pause]*

The Son of God, who is the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings,<sup>19</sup> rose so that we could escape death and darkness and receive light and life!

And for us who believe in Him, he becomes a channel of blessing, for God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing.<sup>20</sup>

In Him, we have everything that we need. *[pause]*

So we keep looking to Him, our righteous ruler, who will someday come again.

He is the One we trust, the One we worship, the One we follow!

What a joy it is to have Jesus as our Ruler!

---

<sup>14</sup> See John 1:1-4.

<sup>15</sup> See John 1:9.

<sup>16</sup> Luke 1:78b-79.

<sup>17</sup> See Matthew 4:12-16.

<sup>18</sup> See Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:2, Luke 24:1.

<sup>19</sup> See Malachi 4:2.

<sup>20</sup> See Ephesians 1:3ff.