May 27/28, 2017

IT TAKES COURAGE TO LEAD

Courage to Lead Series

1 Kings 2:1-46

Pastor Bryan Clark

In this room this morning there are many, many serious Christ-followers: men and women who are passionate about influencing people out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. We understand that is a declaration of war, and we are in. For those who are committed, David has one final charge: that we must *obey His commandments and walk in His ways.* It all sounds kind of straight-up, simple enough, Sunday morning when we are sitting in church. But we all understand sometimes in the trenches of the real world, it can get very challenging and even confusing about what in *this circumstance* is the right thing to do. That's what we want to talk about. If you have a Bible, turn to 1 Kings, Chapter 2. If you're visiting with us, we've worked our way through 1 and 2 Samuel and are just doing 1 Kings, chapters 1 and 2 to finish up the David story. This is the last week in what has been a long series. We pick it up in chapter 2, verse 1:

> **As David's time to die drew near, he charged Solomon his son, saying, "I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man. Keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn, so that the LORD may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.**(*NASB, 1 Kings 2:1-4)

So David is on his deathbed; this is literally the final charge to Solomon. Sounds very similar—in some ways almost identical to what the angel of the Lord said to Joshua in Joshua chapter 1 when he was receiving the mantle of leadership passed on from Moses. *"Take courage. Be strong. Walk in His ways. Obey His commandments."* There is a reminder that this is not going to be easy. You have to be courageous. It's interesting that he says to Solomon, **"Show yourself a man."** Basically in the Hebrew, "Solomon, it's time to be a man." There's a lot of discussion around the age of Solomon; it's not possible to pinpoint it exactly, but most of the discussion is somewhere between the ages of twelve and twenty. Stop and think about the difference between David and Solomon in terms of their preparation for the throne. David was a shepherd boy, the son of Jesse. We talked about that a few weeks ago. David was a decade and a half in the *Wilderness School of Leadership*. David was a warrior. David was proven in battle before he ever got on the throne.

Solomon, on the other hand, wasn't born until David had conquered Jerusalem. He had grown up in a life of power, a life of luxury, a life of ease; Solomon had grown up in an environment radically different from David. But now he was about to sit on the throne of Israel and it was going to be very hard. It would take courage; it would take strength. When David is charging Solomon, he in essence is saying, "Solomon, it's time to put on your big-boy-pants. It's time to be a man."

This transition of leadership from one generation to the next is always difficult. You know, at some point in life when we get older as leaders, we finally are aware of what all is involved—things we were totally naïve of when we first thought we could do it. So, then, you think the next generation has to know everything we know or they'll never succeed, and we hesitate to pass the mantle of

leadership, "'cause they're just not ready." And yet the reality is: you have to trust God. You have to believe that God is continually raising up those who will lead the next generation for His glory.

I was thirty-four years old when I took over as the senior pastor of Lincoln Berean. If you've ever seen that video of Curt and Claudine kind of talking about the history of the church, it gets to the part where it was time for me to take over and he says in the video, "You know, he was so young." He kind of says it like, "Oh my word, what are we doing?" But there's always that sense of, "Is he or she ready? Is this the right thing to do?"

So here's some things to think about: When people look at the current generations—the Millennials, the i-Gen, the Gen Z, whatever label you want to put on them but basically 30's on down—they see this and they see that and so many concerns, and we pull out our hair (what's left of it!) and can we possibly trust them—the next generation—to lead?

When I look back—I'm a Baby Boomer—so we were the 60's and the 70's, and there was lots of research done on us—most of it negative. We were kind of a flaky generation and had all kinds of problems and issues, and that's true. Even to this day, the Boomers have all kinds of issues and struggles and are not aging well, and I think, by and large, that is true. But it's also equally true that God has raised up a remnant of Baby Boomers who have been serious about their faith and they have changed the world for good. God has raised up a remnant of Baby Boomers that love Him; they have counted the cost; they've been willing to pay the price, and they have changed the world. When the story is ultimately written, in the midst of the struggles and the flakiness of the Baby Boomers, there will be this story of amazing Baby Boomers who trusted God and amazing things happened. The Baby Boomers have been the heart and soul of Lincoln Berean Church. For years they have laid it down; they have given of themselves, and God has done amazing things through this generation.

When I think, then, of the Millennials and down, it's very similar to me. There's a lot of research—a lot of stuff written—most of it negative and probably rightfully so. There are lots of reasons for concern; but it's equally true that within these younger generations, there is this amazing remnant of serious Christ-followers who are counting the cost. They have said, "I'm in," and they are going to be world changers. I spend a lot of my time with people in their 30's, in their 20's, and in their teens, and I tell you, I couldn't be more optimistic. These are people that are serious about their faith; they're serious about counting the cost; they understand what this is going to take, and they have said, "Count me in!" And I believe with all my heart they are going to be world changers. What the next generation needs from us as older leaders is not criticism; it's not judgment; it's not the rolling of the eyes..."What are we going to do?" They need people that believe in them, that celebrate them. They need people to trust them. They need people that come along side of them and say, "You know we believe in you and we trust you, and we're going to hand down the mantle of leadership, and we believe God is going to do great things through you. I believe the future is bright because I believe in this next generation.

David is saying to Solomon, "Solomon, get your big-boy-pants on; this is going to be hard." Starting then in verse 5 we begin to understand more of what that means.

> **"Now you also know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner, and to Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed; he also shed the blood of war in peace. And he put the blood of war on his belt about his waist, and on his sandals on his feet. So act according to**

your wisdom, and do not let his gray hair go down to Sheol in peace. But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table; for they assisted me when I fled from Absalom your brother. Behold, there is with you Shimei the son of Gera the Benjamite, of Bahurim; now it was he who cursed me with a violent curse on the day I went to Mahanaim. But when he came down to me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the LORD, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' Now therefore, do not let him go unpunished, for you are a wise man; and you will know what you ought to do to him, and you will bring his gray hair down to Sheol with blood." (Vs. 5-9)

So David, in the final part of his charge, after he tells Solomon, "It's time to be a man," and, "Oh, by the way, there are some loose ends you're going to have to deal with." Any leader knows the experience of cleaning up somebody else's mess. It's never a pleasant journey. So David starts in: The first is Joab. Joab's always been a bit of a wild card with David. He certainly had his ups and downs, but in this case David identifies that Joab was a cold-blooded murderer. He murdered Abner and he murdered Amasa—both in times of peace and both were just senseless cold-blooded murders. If you remember, both murders were violent, bloody murders, so the blood's on his belt, his shoes and his sandals. It's a violent image, and because of that he must die. This does raise the question—maybe Solomon was tempted to say to David, "Why didn't you deal with Joab?" But we remember there was one other murder that Joab committed that did not come up, and that was the murder of Uriah the Hittite, the husband of Bathsheba. You remember the story when David committed adultery and Bathsheba was pregnant, David sent word to whom? Joab! "Kill Uriah the Hittite." Perhaps through the duration of David's reign as king, that one issue was always lingering there that prevented David from really dealing with Joab.

The next one is Barzillai. If you remember, when David fled Jerusalem up over the Mount of Olives, when Absalom was leading the revolution, it was Barzillai that was friendly to David, gave him refuge, gave him food, took good care of him, so Barzillai's sons were invited to David's table, and David is saying to Solomon, "I'd like to see them continue to eat at the king's table."

The third one is Shimei. On that same journey out of Jerusalem, up over the Mount of Olives, when David was fleeing from Absalom, it was Shimei that was up on the rocks, throwing rocks, throwing dust, yelling curses at David because he had stolen the kingdom away from Saul. Shimei was a Benjamite and was bitter that the Benjamites were not still in power on the throne. So when David came back to be king, Shimei shows up, says, "I don't know what I was thinking. I really was out of my mind; please forgive me." And in that moment David understands the kingdom is fragile between the North and the South. This is not the time to deal with Shimei, and he basically forgave him and made a vow, "I will not kill you," which at that moment certainly was the right thing to do. But he also knows that Shimei can't be trusted. He can be a little bit crazy; he's bitter that Saul and the Benjamites are not on the throne. He poses a serious risk and basically he says "You're a wise son; you will figure something out. Deal with him."

So now we are left with "Okay, keep my commandments; walk in His ways, *but* deal with Joab; deal with Shimei." It's interesting the greatest threat Solomon faced was not mentioned by David and that is the threat of Adonijah, who in the previous chapter tried to take the throne—very *Absalom-like*. It is another reminder that David, even on his deathbed, was not really able to come to grips with the truth about his own sons. The greatest threat to Solomon was Adonijah but David doesn't even mention his name. So we understand why Solomon needs to be courageous, needs to grow up. He's got some very difficult things to deal with. Verse 10:

Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. The days that David reigned over Israel *were* forty years: seven years he reigned in Hebron and thirty-three years he reigned in Jerusalem. And Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established. (Vs. 10-12)

It's very interesting—after all these chapters about the story of the great David—two simple verses: **David died**. To go back to Samuel—the other great leader in 1 and 2 Samuel—when Samuel died, 2 verses: *"He died and people mourned."* Contrast that with the fact that when Saul and Jonathan died, David took up almost an entire chapter in this magnificent tribute to Saul as king. So why that magnificent tribute to Saul recorded in the text and virtually no tribute for Samuel or for David? The answer is, "I just don't know." But it is a good reminder that, at the end of the story, there's only one tribute that matters. There's only one opinion that matters. You learn a lot about a culture when you see who they celebrate, especially who they celebrate when someone dies. The reality is there will be a lot of fuss and applause on earth for people that have lived offensive lives to God, but, at the end of the day, there's only one opinion that matters—and both Samuel and David lived as men after God's own heart, and God will pay them their eternal tribute. Verse 13:

Now Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, "Do you come peacefully?" And he said, "Peacefully." Then he said, "I have something *to say* to you." And she said, "Speak." So he said, "You know that the kingdom was mine and that all Israel expected me to be king; however, the kingdom has turned about and become my brother's, for it was his from the LORD. Now I am making one request of you; do not refuse me." And she said to him, "Speak." Then he said, "Please speak to Solomon the king, for he will not refuse you, that he may give me Abishag the Shunammite as a wife." Bathsheba said, "Very well; I will speak to the king for you." (Vs. 13-18)

No question, the greatest threat to Solomon is his older brother Adonijah. Adonijah comes to Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, and says, "I'll tell you what. Here's what I need from you." He does not come in brokenness and humility; he comes with self ambition and arrogance—still very *"Absalom-like*". And in essence what he says is, "*Everybody knows I should have been king, and all Israel wanted that. But the kingdom was given to my brother because it was Yahweh's plan."* I would suggest there's a bit of sarcasm in his statement: *"All Israel knew he should have been king; that's what everybody wanted, except Yahweh and He made Solomon king*." So he's asking for one consolation prize: Can he just have Abishag as his wife, who is the young lady in the previous chapter that became one of David's nurses, would have been considered probably a concubine even though there was no sexual relationship between them?

There's a lot of discussion about Bathsheba at this moment. There are two basic positions: One is she was kind of a simple, naïve, sentimental woman who felt sorry for Adonijah and was willing to take this message to Solomon of, "Let's at least give poor Adonijah this." That understanding makes virtually no sense to me. Bathsheba is presented in a previous chapter as a shrewd, wise, impressive woman, and I think Bathsheba knew that Adonijah had just signed his own death warrant. She's fully aware of the fact that if Adonijah had become king, he fully intended to kill Bathsheba and Solomon. As a matter of fact, that's exactly what Nathan said, and that's what she said to David. I think she's on to what Adonijah's doing, but she knows Solomon's going to figure this out, and, "Fellow, you have just signed your own death warrant." So she's kind of reacting like, "Sure, be happy to tell the king your little message."

So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah. And the king arose to meet her, bowed before her, and sat on his throne; then he had a throne set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right.Then she said, "I am making one small request of you; do not refuse me." And the king said to her, "Ask, my mother, for I will not refuse you." So she said, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as a wife." King Solomon answered and said to his mother, "And why are you asking Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him also the kingdom—for he is my older brother—even for him, for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah!" Then King Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, "May God do so to me and more also, if Adonijah has not spoken this word against his own life. Now therefore, as the LORD lives, who has established me and set me on the throne of David my father and who has made me a house as He promised, surely Adonijah shall be put to death today." So King Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he fell upon him so that he died. (Vs. 19-25)

So Bathsheba goes in, relays the message, and immediately Solomon responds. Solomon gets exactly what's going on. As a matter of fact he spells it out. He says to Bathsheba, "*Why don't you just ask for the whole kingdom for Adonijah, because that's what he's doing?"* Number one: he's the older brother, so people would expect him to be king. Number two: he has Joab as the commander on his side. Number three: he has Abiathar the priest on his side. All he has left is Abishag, one of the king's concubines, which in the minds of the people would give him a right to the throne. So he immediately understands that as long as Adonijah is alive, there is no possibility for peace in the kingdom; there's no possibility for *shalom*. He is an *Absalom*. He will ultimately make his play for the throne unless he is put to death. So he has him executed. Verse 26:

Then to Abiathar the priest the king said, "Go to Anathoth to your own field, for you deserve to die; but I will not put you to death at this time, because you carried the ark of the Lord GOD before my father David, and because you were afflicted in everything with which my father was afflicted." So Solomon dismissed Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD, which He had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh. (Vs. 26-27)

So Abiathar was the priest that went with Adonijah, so he's next in line. Solomon says, "You deserve to die; you were treasonous, but because of your long history of being faithful to my father David, I'm simply going to fire you." So he was officially fired from the priestly line, sent back to his home to basically die as an old man. The text also tells us this was the fulfillment—all the way back when Eli was judged in 1 Samuel—and part of the judgment was eventually your priestly lineage, your priestly line, will come to an end. Abiathar was the last in Eli's family line that would ever be priest, fulfilling that promise. Verse 28:

Now the news came to Joab, for Joab had followed Adonijah, although he had not followed Absalom. And Joab fled to the tent of the LORD and took hold of the horns of the altar. It was told King Solomon that Joab had fled to the tent of the LORD, and behold, he is beside the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, "Go, fall upon him." So Benaiah came to the tent of the LORD and said to him, "Thus the king has said, 'Come out.'" But he said, "No, for I will die here." And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, "Thus spoke Joab, and thus he answered me." The king said to him, "Do as he has spoken and fall upon him and bury him, that you may remove from me and from my father's house the blood which Joab shed without cause. The LORD will return his blood on his own head, because he fell

upon two men more righteous and better than he and killed them with the sword, while my father David did not know *it*: Abner the son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah. So shall their blood return on the head of Joab and on the head of his descendants forever; but to David and his descendants and his house and his throne, may there be peace from the LORD forever." Then Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and fell upon him and put him to death, and he was buried at his own house in the wilderness. The king appointed Benaiah the son of Jehoiada over the army in his place, and the king appointed Zadok the priest in the place of Abiathar. (Vs. 28-35)

So the next threat is Joab. Joab knows he's next, runs to the tabernacle and grabs hold of the horns around the altar just as Adonijah did in the previous chapter. The Law basically stated that that was a place of refuge, a place of safety until things could be sorted out, *unless* you were a murderer. If you were a murderer, there was no place of refuge and so Samuel sends his commander to kill Joab. The commander calls Joab to come out; he won't let go of the altar, so he goes back to Solomon, says, "Here's the deal; he won't come out of the tabernacle." The law actually had a provision that if someone would not release the horns of the altar, they could be put to death at the altar, so that's what Solomon is referring to, "Then do it there." So he goes in, kills him there; he has a proper burial, and that is the end of the Joab story. Benaiah becomes the commander and Zadok becomes the priest.

Now the king sent and called for Shimei and said to him, "Build for yourself a house in Jerusalem and live there, and do not go out from there to any place. For on the day you go out and cross over the brook Kidron, you will know for certain that you shall surely die; your blood shall be on your own head." Shimei then said to the king, "The word is good. As my lord the king has said, so your servant will do." So Shimei lived in Jerusalem many days. But it came about at the end of three years, that two of the servants of Shimei ran away to Achish son of Maacah, king of Gath. And they told Shimei, saying, "Behold, your servants are in Gath." Then Shimei arose and saddled his donkey, and went to Gath to Achish to look for his servants. And Shimei went and brought his servants from Gath. It was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and had returned. So the king sent and called for Shimei and said to him, "Did I not make you swear by the LORD and solemnly warn you, saying, 'You will know for certain that on the day you depart and go anywhere, you shall surely die'? And you said to me, 'The word which I have heard is good.' Why then have you not kept the oath of the LORD, and the command which I have laid on you?" The king also said to Shimei, "You know all the evil which you acknowledge in your heart, which you did to my father David; therefore the LORD shall return your evil on your own head. But King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD forever." So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he went out and fell upon him so that he died. Thus the kingdom was established in the hands of Solomon. (Vs. 36-46)

So one more loose end—what to do with Shimei? The big concern is he's still bitter in his own heart. If he goes to the tribe of Benjamin, he's likely to stir up a revolution, so Solomon comes up with a plan: Build a house in Jerusalem; stay there—you're basically not to leave Jerusalem. If you cross the Kidron Valley, then that would be an indication you're headed back to Benjamin, and at that point you're subject to death. So Shimei says, "That's a good plan...agreed!" So that's the plan and it works for three years. Then his servants leave and go back to Gath, the home town of Goliath. For whatever reason, Shimei goes, gets them, retrieves them, brings them back, but

Solomon hears that he has paid a visit to the Philistines so he approaches Shimei, tells him, "This was our agreement; you've violated the agreement, therefore you must die." The challenge was how does he deal with Shimei and still somehow be true to David's vow? The people would see that Shimei basically violated the vow and brought this on himself, so he is ultimately executed, followed by the statement, "*This officially begins the story of Solomon,"* ...which will have to be for another day and another time.

It's very interesting to read the commentators on this final chapter, because they are all over the board concerning whether Solomon was right or wrong in the actions he took. It all sounded so clear: **Walk in His ways. Obey His commands**. But what is he supposed to do with these situations? So for example, Adonijah: what is he supposed to do? Is he supposed to just naively believe that Adonijah will behave himself? He's very Absalom-like. He will start a revolution and how many hundreds and even thousands of people must die? So what is he to do with Shimei?

These are the decisions—the difficult, courageous decisions that leaders must make. Part of the reality of leadership is that this world is evil; sin is real. There were very real situations that Solomon had to deal with and there were thousands of peoples' lives on the line. One of the things you have to understand is: if you're going to sign up to be a leader, you are signing up to be criticized; you are signing up to be judged. If you are a people-pleaser and you don't want anyone to dislike you, please don't sign up because part of what you are signing up for is to be criticized. There are people that will not know. There are people that will not understand. There are people that don't know both sides of the issue and, frankly, there are some times when leaders just biff it and make mistakes, and they are criticized, and rightfully so. But that is part of the story. It is difficult; it is complicated, and it takes courage. Evil is real and it's powerful. If you're going to be serious about being a Christ-follower—you passionately desire to influence from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light—you have to understand: that is a declaration of war, and the war is real, and the war is powerful.

For whatever reason, we as 21st century Americans seem to struggle with the concept of evil in the world. Many are still convinced if we just love each other and give each other a hug, everything's going to work out. But that would be contrary to the teaching of the Bible. This is war. People are sinful; evil is real and it's powerful, and part of leadership is to deal with difficult situations that involve sin and evil in the world. We as American Christians have it pretty easy, but once again in 2017—by an overwhelming margin—the most persecuted, slaughtered demographic in the world today is Christians. There's nobody else close. If you watch the nightly news, there's so much talk about needing to be so delicately careful with the Muslims and the other religions in the world, but nobody talks about the fact that Christians around the world are persecuted and slaughtered at an unimaginable rate. I can't understand that even Christians seem so sensitive to the mistreatment of Muslims and other religions in the world, but seem indifferent about the fact that around the world our brothers and sisters are slaughtered for the cause of Christ. They are engaged in a war that is real, and it's devastating. They have counted the cost and they have said, "I am in," and for many of them it is "in" to the very death. It is critically important to understand that if you're going to be a serious Christ-follower, Jesus could not have been clearer, "You better count the cost, 'cause it's not going to be easy." It's time to get your big- boy-pants on because this is war. It's time to grow up; it's time to get courageous; it's time to get engaged in the fight. But if you're willing to count the cost, and you're willing to say, "I'm in," I'll tell you this: "When you get to the end of this one life that you have been given, you will know with all your heart, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that you have lived for the things that matter forever. I can assure you no regrets. You will know you've been a part of something that really matters." But if you're going to say, "Yes" to the call, never, never forget—*It Does Take Courage to Lead!*

Our Father, we are reminded again that the call to leadership is not an easy call. There are many, many in this room this morning who are serious about their relationship with Jesus. They are passionate about influencing people out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. They've counted the cost and they're ready to say, "I'm in." And, God, You are going to use them to be world changers and, Lord, at the end of their lives, we will look back and know that we were part of something that will matter forever. God, raise up an army of world changers among us for Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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May 27/28, 2017

It Takes Courage to Lead

Courage to Lead

1 Kings 2:1-46

Pastor Bryan Clark

Opening Discussion

1. What makes leadership so hard? Why does it require courage?

2. What has been one of your best leadership lessons? How did you learn this?

Bible Study

1. Read I Kings 2:1-11. Compare David's words with what God told Joshua 1:1-9. Also compare Jesus' words in Matthew 10:16-23; 16:24-27. Why does it take courage to lead?

2. Why do you think II Samuel records such a beautiful tribute to Saul and Jonathan but no real tribute to Samuel or David when they die?

3. Read I Kings 2:12-46. David left some unfinished business Solomon has to address to establish his kingdom. What were the issues with each one and do you agree or disagree with what Solomon did? What were the alternatives?

4. David was charging Solomon as the next king of Israel. What are some practical things we can do to keep transitioning leadership influence from one generation to the next?

5. It's easy to say, "Walk in His ways," and "Obey His commands." However, trying to determine what is the right thing to do in certain circumstances can be very difficult. What are some practical things you can do to make wise choices in confusing circumstances?

6. How was David's ascent to the throne different than Solomon's ascent to the throne? Why do you think Solomon ultimately ended so badly? Looking at your own story, are you more of a David or Solomon in terms of what you have today? Did you have to survive in the wilderness and fight your way along or were you handed most of what you have today? Neither option is right or wrong or better or worse. However, it does help to think about what are the risks of my story and the leadership influence I've been given?

Application

1. What are the top 3 lessons you've learned from our study of I and II Samuel?

2. What practical things can you do to make sure you lead well?

3. What do you believe to be your own greatest risk as a leader? What can you do to minimize that risk?

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