

# Facing Change

# 1 Kings 1:38-51

Change. It's something that faces all of us from time to time. Sometimes it is the change that comes in the cycles of life – a wife or husband, a new job, a change of direction – or there are the changes forced on us – ill-health, something dramatic happening, a bereavement, loss of a job.

How do we respond to change?

To some people, change is taken in their stride, to others it's something inconceivable. As a Minister, I am familiar with the principle of new places and challenges, but I know many people here in Felixstowe that almost never go out of town, let alone out of the county.

David was coming to the end of his life and there was the question of succession. 1 Kings opens with this sick man hanging on to power in any way he could – although his medicine wasn't exactly unpleasant! We saw last week how neither David or Solomon got any wiser with age – quite the reverse. David's failure to act, his indulgence of Adonijah and unfairness to Solomon were all uncharacteristic of a man who had been such an inspirational leader in his time. In fact over the two books of Kings Ray Stedman has suggested it could be re-named "How to lose a kingdom". In general the Davidic line was a disaster as was the line of the kings of Israel after the split, and they didn't get any more sensible for either age or experience!

This story is a good example of how not to respond to change. Here are my examples from this passage not just from David but from the other characters too on "How not to respond to change".

## 1. Bury your head in the sand

David just didn't do anything about the fact he was coming to the end of his life. He had promised that Solomon would be crowned king, but when he needed a regent, he did precisely nothing. We can only speculate why he was indecisive – perhaps not to cross Joab, or cross Adonijah.

Whatever, he did nothing. When we are faced with difficult situations in life, how do we react? Do we act or do we freeze? You've got to be wise as to what and when to act. David had been a wise man in his time. Look at his Psalms. But there is the complete absence of one action in this chapter until Nathan pushed him to it. David never spoke to God. In fact, the impasse was broken when the prophet Nathan came to him to remind him of the promise made to make Solomon king.

In a quandary? Paralysed by indecision? Nothing is not an option, but praying is essential!

## 2. Look after number one.

He'd also grown apart from the leader of his army, Joab. Joab knew how to look after number one! Himself. He and David were once brothers in arms, but Joab had a ruthless streak and killed generals like Abner and Amasa who he wanted to make peace with and of course he had killed Absalom. David may not have liked it but these people had crossed Joab and so they had to die: you didn't mess with Joab.

In some ways I can understand Joab wanting to promote Adonijah as king. He was everything a king should be – handsome, strapping and probably quite experienced. He was the obvious choice to a man like Joab because he would guarantee a good comfortable life for Joab – numero uno again. But there was another reason for Joab to act. With the end of David's reign, there were a whole generation of younger men going to run the country – the likes of Benaiah, Zadok and the like. It wasn't going to favour old warriors like Joab. He knew scores would be settled and he wanted to protect himself.

Sometimes politicians can misread a situation so badly that they make decisions that are completely out of step with the people and the situation. Examples Neville Chamberlain and appeasement, Margaret Thatcher and the poll tax.

Adonijah and Joab did so here. They thought he would just take power. Unfortunately they hadn't bargained on David taking action and appointing Solomon instead. He might have been a sick man, but this time David had the mood of his people spot-on. As we read, it was an incredibly popular choice and the coup dissolved rapidly.

So we're faced with decisions. On what do we base them? Usually we base them on our needs. But is that God's way? Let's look at a verse: Heb 12:2 *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* What was Jesus motive – love. He put the needs of others before his own.

When faced with an issue or just the future, the best decisions follow the principle of agape – putting

the needs of others before our own. It's a great principle to deciding whether something is right and of God. Things with agape in them usually show we are pointing in the right direction.

### 3. Hang on to our traditions

How did Adonijah respond when the game was up. He went and hung on to the horns of the altar because he surmised (correctly) that Solomon wouldn't kill him there. He was right, but Solomon only did so on agreement that Adonijah would remain loyal to him.

How do we respond to change? For our church and for the Seafarers Centre, change is coming. How do we respond to it? Do we try to hang on to what we have? History is full of examples where Christians have battled to hang on to their traditions against change. Sometimes it has been justified; usually where the tradition is firmly based in the word of God. Other times we are like Adonijah hanging on to the traditions like the horns of the altar.

True spiritual change does come. Adonijah should have seen it coming and been loyal to Solomon. We'll find in chapter 2 that he wasn't. When change comes, we need to discern whether it is of God irrespective of how we feel and then follow our Lord loyally. In my life, some of the most difficult experiences as a Christian was abandoning things I'd been brought up with which I realised were a good idea but just weren't of God. The worst things I held on to were things taught me by respected men so I assumed that they were correct and scriptural, but I'd never looked for myself!

Are we resisting change tonight? Maybe we know there is something our lives that's wrong and we need to do something about it? If we've heard the Lord's voice then we need to act.

Maybe we're facing change and we don't know what to do. There is one course of action that we definitely should take – pray. Then ask the question, where is Jesus in this situation?

*Prov 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, he will direct your paths*

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