

Don't do as I do ... do as I tell you.

1 Kings 2:1-8

My father taught me how to drive as indeed he taught my mother and sister. He discovered that it isn't a good idea. Someone once said that the quickest way to the divorce courts is teaching your wife to drive! The worst trait my father had was that when he drove, he never did many of the things he taught me were the correct and safe way to drive!. When I reproached him for it he simply replied "don't do what I do, do as I tell you!"

When I read this first I could almost see my father in David as he gave his instructions to his regent before he died. We saw how David, later in life followed his lusts, got a man murdered, indulged a couple of his his sons and nearly lost the throne to one of them. Foolish man! He gave him four instructions. All of them were things that he should have done whilst he was able to yet never did. They represented failings on his part, and it was going to be down to his young successor to rectify them.

Why? Because if he left them his rule would be undermined, he would lose the confidence of those with whom he governed, and people would not follow him. It was about his integrity and Christian leaders can learn from this and there are lessons generally we all can learn.

Let's start with v2 - TEV *"My time to die has come. Be confident and determined NIV - I am about to go the way of all the earth," he said. "So be strong, act like a man. KJV – show yourself to be a man. Message – show them what you're made of!*

This wasn't about being macho, it was to show that he was going to be determined to do the right thing before God and for his people.

So be strong and act like a man .“Play the man”

In 1555, Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley walked out of prison for the last time. They both were condemned to be burned at the stake for refusing to recant their personal faith in Jesus Christ. As they approached the stake, Latimer uttered these unforgettable words to his good friend:

“Be of good cheer, Ridley. Play the man! We shall this day light such a candle, by God’s grace...as I trust shall never be put out.”

What makes the difference for a Christian leader? By showing the right qualities in our service of God. Similarly as ordinary people, we need to display the sort of qualities that will make a difference to the lives of people around us and through which they get a positive experience of Jesus.

1. Obedience to God is the foundation of good leadership and of the Christian life

Is that obvious or what? As we've seen in past weeks, both men started with this determination but ended up breaking this most basic of principles. If we don't do what God commands us to do then we should not expect things to go particularly well! In fact, expect things to unravel.

Obey all his laws and commands, as written in the Law of Moses, so that wherever you go you may prosper in everything you do. 4 If you obey him, the LORD will keep the promise he made when he told me that my descendants would rule Israel as long as they were careful to obey his commands faithfully with all their heart and soul.

And of course, successive Davidic kings failed in this and Israel went from being a great kingdom to two and then one ever-shrinking kingdom before being wiped out by Nebuchadnezzar. Did they ever learn anything? Apparently not.

If we are honest, obedience to God is not the strong suit for most of us. Yet for us the message of David to Solomon is still the same. Jesus said this: *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

2. Do that which is just - even if the mess isn't yours!

We live in a world that seems to be so short of justice. We see the massacres in Syria and feel powerless to do anything (we should pray!). It's so unjust! We see injustices in our land, in our community and even in our land and in our families. A consistent message to God's people is to act justly. It was a charge to this

young leader. It's a characteristic of leadership – we need to deal justly – even if we didn't create the problem.

Solomon's problem was his father's inability to deal with Joab. Guzik - Joab was loyal but not obedient. He was David's army captain and one of the family – he was David's nephew by his sister Zeruiah. David knew that the blood of innocent men was on his hands – Abner, Amasa, Amnon and Absalom (did he just not like people who's name started with an "A"?) Then there was the treason of trying to appoint Adonijah king. He had escaped justice because David seems to have been unable to bring justice. We can only speculate why this may be the case – too weak physically? Joab had too much on him e.g. That he ordered Uraiah's death?

For Joab to remain alive represented real political danger to Solomon as well as being a travesty of justice. Joab had to pay for his murders.

One of the difficult areas in the OT is over blood justice. People met violent ends. It's a difficult one to answer. We need to recognise the stage in history of the human race which is difficult for us to conceive of in the 21st century where values are post-resurrection and our culture is so different.

Another person to whom justice should have been meted out was Shimei. David should have been dealt with earlier but David made a vow not to kill him. Solomon didn't have to keep that vow because he hadn't made it.

Our responsibility is to act justly. There is much we can do in a country such as ours – pray, go, use the system, preach the good news.

3. Recognise those who are of honour.

Finally David Charged Solomon to respect those who are of honour. For whatever reason David had not rewarded Barzillai who supported him so well when he fled Jerusalem. *7 "But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai from Gilead and take care of them, because they were kind to me when I was fleeing from your brother Absalom.*

We need to affirm those who prove themselves to be honourable. Sadly another characteristic of our society is that we don't rate and recognise those who act with integrity. Don't hesitate to affirm those who act with integrity or who just do a good job. It's little things that improve people's morale and builds them up.

As we come to communion, let's come in confession, asking forgiveness for our failure to obey and for our failure to act justly.

Confession

Let's affirm one another with the peace.

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