

One Last Thing!

“When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon his son. “I am about to go the way of all the earth,” he said. “So be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go, and that the LORD may keep his promise to me: ‘If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.’”

I remember the days I played Little League baseball. We were warming up on the field when it was five minutes before game time. The coach would call us into the dugout for some last minute instructions. He didn't have much time, so what do you think he would say to us? It would be silly if he talked about how it was a nice day and he was going to wash his car after the game, or what we thought about the price of corn. The game is about to begin, so he would give us some last minute instructions on how to win. “Remember, always hit your cut off man.” “Watch out for that number two hitter; he will always steal if he gets on base.” “This pitcher is a little erratic so always take the first pitch.”

I feel like that coach right now. In a few minutes the game begins. You will make your promises before God. Practice time is over; it is now time for you start the next stage in your Christian life. So, we are huddled up before the game. What could I or anyone say to you at this moment? I will let David speak for me. The advice he gave his son Solomon is very good advice for you right now. ***“Walk in his ways.”*** Why? So you may prosper in the Lord.

I. Walk in the way of the Lord.

Let's say you are attending a wedding. A five year old ringbearer goes up to the groom before the wedding. He has some advice for him. “When you make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for your wife, always remember to cut the crusts off the bread.” This advice might be cute, but it will probably do little or anything to help this couple have a blessed marriage. But if the groom's mother or father approaches him with some advice, then it is a different story. His parents have been married now for twenty or thirty years. They experienced all there is to married life, the ups and downs, the good and the bad. They had their share of fights and times to make up. Precious is the last minute advice they can give.

David is the perfect person to give his son, Solomon, some last minute advice before he becomes king. Anything he can say comes from the experience. Study the life of David from 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Kings. It will feel like a roller coaster ride. In one chapter David is a perfect example of a believer, and in the very next chapter he is the perfect example of a sinful person. The eyes that marveled at the Ark of the Covenant were also the same eyes that couldn't stop gazing at his best friend's wife in lust. The same mouth that sang all those wonderful psalms also spoke out in anger and with curses. Those hands that defeated God's enemies in battle also were used to commit sin. That heart that so often looked to God in trust and praise also spilled out selfishness and greed.

David looked back on his life and he saw what it was like when he simply trusted God and he saw what his life was like when he ignored God and went his own way. So what can David say to his son? “. ***“So be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses.”***

I like the word translated here as “observe” as when it says “observe that the Lord requires.” It means to do more than watch or pay attention. It is used for a guard who doesn't sleep but keeps his eye on everything. It is also used for the gardener. He doesn't just plant his seed in spring, and come back in October. No, he tends to his garden every day, looking for insects, removing weeds, watering when needed. It is also used for the shepherd keeping watch over his flock. He doesn't read a book or play on his phone. He is constantly watching over his sheep, counting them, watching out for wolves or predators.

Confirmands, you have just finished three years of catechism instruction, not to mention all those years of sermons and Sunday School. You looked up and read hundreds of passages. You know what the Bible says about Baptism and Lord's Supper and creation and Jesus Christ. You learned how to examine yourself before Communion and the difference between the law and the gospel. In a short while you will confess you believe this and will follow everything God says in his Bible.

So, before the game begins, what is your last minute instructions? Just what David says here. Observe carefully everything the Lord says so that you can walk in his ways. This means being a gardener who checks his garden constantly. If you don't, the weeds of things and this world and worry will start to overtake your life. Insects will start to eat away at your faith. Your faith will shrivel up from a lack of water.

So, walk in the way of the Lord as you have learned it. Now listen to what the Lord promises you.

II. Then you will prosper in all you do.

“... so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go.”

What does prosperity mean? A student is prosperous when he gets good grades and many scholarships. A businessman is prosperous when he receives a very high salary. An athlete is prosperous when he is named MVP or by the number of NBA championship rings on his hand. But we would be fools if we always equate prosperity with dollars or trophies. The word here is very interesting. It has the idea of seeing something and understanding it.

Let me give you an example. You want to work on your car engine. If you took a handful of tools and start tearing it apart, you will make a big mess out of it. But if you can see and understand an internal combustion engine, then you will succeed. Once you understand the function of the spark plugs and fuel injector and motor oil and torque and how it all works together, then you will prosper as you work on your engine.

David had that kind of understanding. From the Lord he understood what was the problem in his life and the lives of others and the world, for he saw that he was sinful from birth, sinful from the time his mother conceived him. That's why he had many problems in his life. His way was not the Lord's way. Like a Ford Focus, he has left the road and is bogged down in the ditches and muddy fields along the road.

But David prospered for he also understood the Lord's way. As he confessed, ***"Hide your face from my sins and blot out my iniquity. ... The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. ... Save me from my bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness."*** The Lord's way is to blot out sin in one's life, to actually not look at it. In other words, God's way is to save the sinner.

So, David prospered. He saw the bad moments in his life and understood why he had them through sin. He saw the Lord's way where the Lord forgave him his sins. The Lord even used him to sing about his Savior, Jesus Christ, who would come centuries later. The Lord moved him to describe Jesus in Psalm 22 down to how they cast lots for his clothing. He also described him suffering to pay for our sins so the Lord could look the other way and blot them out of his memory. Highway 169 is closed going to Mankato. How do you get around? They mapped out a way by Highways 99 and 13. Because of sin, the way to the Lord is blocked. But the Lord mapped a way through Jesus.

And we will prosper in all we say and do on the Lord's way. Allow me to give you just one little example. Let's say you get mad. Maybe you are angry with a brother or sister, parent, your future husband and wife. The normal thing to do is argue, makes sure they know you are right, and hold a grudge. But what is the Lord's way? You forgive. The truth is, if anyone hurts you, they do not deserve to be forgiven, but you forgive because God forgives you and Jesus died for that sin as well. The world would say forgive a few times, but God's way is forgive an endless amount of times. That's the Lord's way. Now I ask, which is prosperous, holding grudges or forgiving as the Lord forgives? Which will make a marriage flourish, your relationships at work, the family? You will prosper in everything. You can find contentment which is not dependent on how much you have in the bank. You will find joy even in the face of disaster.

There is an old phrase: youth is wasted on the young. If older people who are wiser can be young again, think of what we can do. If Solomon could learn from his older father, if he could just follow the Lord's way from youth, oh how he would be so much better off.

So confirmants, listen to these old guys, guys who know what it means to forget the Lord and turn from him. Listen to them now. I like the picture of sin as a bird. You can't keep it from flying over your head, but you can keep it from building a nest in your hair. Until we are glorified in heaven, we are always weakened by our sinful nature. We can't keep sin out of our lives now. But we can keep it from building a home in our lives. David let sin build nests in his hair, but by the grace of God broke his heart so he could offer his broken heart to God for forgiveness. Don't let youth be wasted on the young. You understand why people fight, wars are waged, why there is death, but you also understand a way out through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And look at the prosperity you bring to your family. ***"...and that the LORD may keep his promise to me: 'If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.'"*** I know how proud your believing parents and grandparents are today, to see you confess your faith today. And I am not talking about today, but all the days after today as you live your life to the Lord and because of Jesus Christ. That's prosperity.

Well, the coach's pregame huddle is over. That is about the only thing we can say to you now. Walk in the Lord's way as you have learned it from his Word, and you will prosper Lord willing for generations to come. Amen.