
¹ These are the last words of David: “Here is the declaration by David, son of Jesse—the declaration by the man whom God raised up, whom the God of Jacob anointed, the singer of Israel’s psalms: ² “The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me. His words were on my tongue. ³ The God of Israel spoke to them. The rock of Israel told me, ‘The one who rules humans with justice rules with the fear of God. ⁴ He is like the morning light as the sun rises, like a morning without clouds, like the brightness after a rainstorm. The rain makes the grass grow from the earth.’ ⁵ “Truly, God considers my house to be that way, because He has made a lasting promise to me, with every detail arranged and assured. He promised everything that helps me, everything that pleases me. Truly, He makes these things happen. 2 Samuel 23:1-5 (GW).

"I suppose it had to come to this. Such is life."

"My wallpaper and I are fighting a duel to the death. Either this wallpaper goes, or I do!"

These are two famous quotes; the first attributed to Ned Kelly as the hangman adjusted the hood to cover his face, and the second to Oscar Wilde (although the authenticity of this quote is complicated by his deathbed conversion back to Catholicism and the fact that a priest was with him up to the very end).

If you had to think of something to say right now as your ‘last words’, what would you say? Think about it for a moment... Do you have any ‘famous last words’

When it comes to funerals we say a number of ‘last words’ over people who have died. One of those significant ‘last words’ is the obituary (that is, a summary of a person’s life). Sometimes people call this a ‘eulogy’, that is ‘good words’ about a person. And obituaries (or ‘words of remembering’) are usually laid out along the lines of: ‘birth, family of origin, baptism date, early family years, schooling, early working life, relationships, and involvements in various groups’. Then, especially if a Christian, we reflect something on a person’s character and the way faith has been evident in that person’s life. However, we do not say these words to ‘eulogise’ a person (that is, say how ‘good’ they are, and thus, by their ‘good deeds’ they are somehow ‘acceptable’ to God). Rather, these sorts of words are spoken for those who are left behind as a reminder of a saving faith at work in a person’s heart.

King David, before his death, spoke his ‘last words’. However, the ‘last words’ we have before us today are not his literal ‘last words’ (for there are many events still to follow, and words yet to be said to Solomon and others). But these are the ‘last words’ in terms of the last ‘psalm’ ascribed to David. And within this ‘psalm’ or ‘prayer’, David acknowledges God’s care of him.

At first it may appear that David is 'big-noting' himself by saying, "When one rules over people in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God, he is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after rain that brings grass from the earth." Furthermore, it may appear that David is also somewhat hypocritical – given his deeds of adultery, murder, war, and disobedience before God. But, it is important to remember that David's words are first, a word of judgement against himself; second, they are a description of God's great forgiving love toward him; and, finally, they are a promise of things to come.

Imagine you had the task of writing your own obituary. Now consider this, who would list every wrong deed, every harsh word, every sin (either of 'commission', the wrong they have done, or of 'omission', the 'good' (that is, doing what God says in His commandments)? Would you like to be remembered as a 'bad person'?

But God knows who you are. The prophet, Jeremiah says (Jer.16): "My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes." The Apostle Paul says (1 Cor.4): "My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of people's hearts." The writer to the Hebrews also says (Heb.4): "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

In the movie 'The Truman Show', the 1998 comedy-drama film directed by Peter Weir and written by Andrew Niccol, Jim Carrey plays the character Truman Burbank, an insurance salesman/adjuster. Unbeknown to him at first, his whole life has been a television show. Everyone could see what he had done. How would you cope if everyone could see everything you had done – including all those things you'd rather wish no-one else would know (especially those near to you)?

But consider this: all of the well-known of David's sins are here in the Bible, for millions of people to see. David himself recounted such words – but not with an act of pride (ie: "Look at how bad I have been, and now look at how good I have become"). Rather, they are a simple statement of fact that reminds us of the incredible grace and love of God.

What is the story of your life...? What is the *real* story of your life...? There's a well know saying, "Honesty is the best policy." When it comes to our life before God, honesty *is* the best policy, for nothing is hidden from God's sight. One day your life on this earth will be over. That's the simple reality. One day we all will face death (unless the Lord decides to return before that time). And the reality is that we all are sinners. If you refuse to admit that you are a sinner you will be without eternal hope on the day of judgement. Jesus Himself says (Mark 2:17, etc), "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

There is something really beautiful about the 'last words of David' (and again, there are many "last words of David" in the Old Testament. For example, 1 Kings 2:2-4, 5-9; 1 Chronicles 22:7-16,17-19; 28: 2-10, 20-21; 29:1-5, 10-19; 23:27). When it comes to 'last words from a king', King David is unique in this regard — there are no recorded last words for any of David's royal successors! So why is David accorded so many chances at having the final word?

At one level these 'last words of David' remind us that God had chosen a shepherd-boy, the youngest son. And God raised him up to be a king. God anointed him, prepared him, and put him in the place He wants him to be. God speaks to David and God speaks through David. "The Rock of Israel said TO me..." (23:3) and "the Spirit of the Lord spoke THROUGH me..." (23:2) And the Lord says (2.Sam.23:3-4), "When one rules over people in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God, he is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after rain that brings the grass from the earth." God affirms David's role. When he leads with righteousness and the fear of God, the land is blessed with fruitfulness.

Luther says of these 'last words of David', that they are actually a prophecy of Jesus. Jesus is the exalted and anointed one (cf. 2.Sam.23:1). Jesus is the one through whom the Spirit of the Lord spoke (2.Sam.23:2. Cf. Lk.4:18). Jesus is the Rock upon which the church is build (2.Sam.23:3; cf. 1.Cor.10:4). All of the words of David ultimately point us to Jesus. And Jesus also had several 'last words'.

Jesus' last words on the cross were, "It is finished." Jesus last words are, "You will be baptised with the Holy Spirit." Jesus 'last word' to you is, "I am with you always, to the end of the age." God gives the gift of faith in baptism. God strengthens faith through His Word and sacrament. God enriches your faith in your deeds of love. Through Jesus, God spoke to us with finality (Heb. 1:1–4), revealing the fullness of himself through the Word of God who became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Through Jesus, God will restore justice—and not merely for one lifetime, but Jesus will restore justice for the rest of eternity. Jesus will serve as the righteous ruler whose justice shines like the sun and nourishes like the rain. David's last words point us in the same direction as the rest of David's reign—to the eternal kingdom of Christ. Meditating on this kingdom helps us develop right expectations for what can be accomplished in this life.

David then dies at the age of 70, after reigning a total of 40 years following the death of Saul. But that, of course, is not the end. For he will one day rise again, at the resurrection from the dead, into the Kingdom of God to reign over Israel once more (see Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 37:24). But he will then live and reign as a perfect being, as David himself well knew, once having prayed to God, "As for me, I will see your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness" (Psalm 17:15).

Christ's kingdom will renew us. The One who is and was and is to come will bring grace and peace. He will make us a kingdom, priests serving God and one another. Every one of us longs for the One who will make our lives complete. Christ invites us into his kingdom, now and forevermore.

What are the last words you are going to speak before you die, what final statement will you prepare when you go? Right now you are 'writing' the story of your life that will be 'remembered' by someone. How would you like to be remembered? Would you like to be remembered as 'a good person'? How about also for a living faith in Jesus?

David, at the end of his life, saw with clarity that God had been with him throughout. And he saw that all his own greatness had come from the Lord, and he even saw that God was with him in the midst of his struggles. And his last words, his final thoughts were not on the pains of the world, which he had faced and which were many, but rather they were on the God who brought him through these pains.

Let us work in our lives to remember to give God the glory. Let us know that the pains of this world aren't going to be the things that we remember in the end. And let us live lives that are inspired by David's love for God and David's faithfulness. Let us try to be people who are known to those around us as someone after God's own heart.

One day you will say your 'last words'. One day 'last words' will be spoken over your body. But God's 'last word' to you is, "Your sins are forgiven." God's 'last word' to you is, "You have the gift of eternal life." God's 'last word' to you is, "I am with you always."

As David has said (2 Sam.23:5, NLT): "God has made an everlasting covenant with me. His agreement is arranged and guaranteed in every detail. He will ensure my safety and success." Through the Holy Spirit's power, let us always rejoice in Jesus, our God and Saviour. Amen.