TOPIC: Father's Day, Christian Men

“Prove Yourself A Man!”
I Kings 2:1-4 (NKJV)

Please open your Bibles to the Old Testament Book of I Kings, chapter two. And let's read verses 1-4.

I Kings 2:1-4 (NKJV)

1 Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying:

2 “I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man.

3 And keep the charge of the LORD your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn;

4 that the LORD may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul,’ He said, ‘you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’

P R A Y E R
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INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION: Several years ago David Murrow wrote a book entitled: “Why Men Hate Going To Church.” I would like to share an excerpt from that book:

“Cliff is a man's man. On the job he's known as a go-getter and a very hard worker. He's a good provider who loves his wife and kids. He's well-respected by his neighbors. Cliff drives a humongous four-wheel drive pickup. He loves the outdoors and takes every opportunity for a little hunting and fishing. He enjoys a cold beer and a dirty joke. He does not go to Church.

Ask him why he doesn't go to Church, and he'll offer up words like boring, irrelevant and hypocrite. But the real reason Cliff doesn't go to Church is that he is already practicing another religion. That religion is masculinity.

The ideology of masculinity has replaced Christianity as the true religion of men. Today's masculine man must prove to the world he is a man and that means avoiding anything that might call his manhood into question. Cliff believes deep in his heart that Church is something for women, children, and non-masculine men, but not for real men.

Although males have not completely abandoned the Church, manly men like Cliff have all but disappeared. Tough, earthy, working guys rarely come to Church. High achievers, alpha males, risk takers, and visionaries are in short supply. The rough-and-tumble men don't fit in with the quiet, introspective gentlemen who populate the Church today. Today's churchgoing man is humble, tidy, dutiful, and above all, nice.

What a contrast to the men of the Bible! Think of Moses and Elijah, David and Daniel, Peter and Paul. They were lions, not lambs---take-charge men who risked everything in service to God. They fought valiantly and spilled blood. They spoke their minds and stepped on the toes of religious people. They were true leaders, tough guys who were feared and respected by the community. All of these men had an intense commitment to God.
What would our Churches be like if the majority of the worshipers were men? Not just males taking up pew space, but strong, earthy men who were truly alive in Christ. Men who were in Church not just to please their wives, but men who were there to rock their world! Impossible you say? Just read the Book of Acts. The Church was like this once; it can be so again.” (edited by R.A.B.)

(WHY MEN HATE GOING TO CHURCH by David Murrow. Thomas Nelson, Inc. Nashville, TN)

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BACKGROUND TO SCRIPTURE

In our scripture text this morning, King David talks to his son Solomon about what it means to be “a real man.”

As this second chapter of I Kings begins King David is now a seventy year old man lying on his deathbed. Long gone were those quiet, serene years of his boyhood when David tended his father's sheep in the pastures of Judea.

David's life has been filled with lots of highs and lows. As a young man in his teens he had the privilege of playing his harp for King Saul. When he was around fifteen or sixteen he killed Goliath, the Philistine giant and literally became a “superstar” throughout Israel. Also when he was sixteen he was anointed as the next king of Israel, although he would have to wait until he was thirty before he actually took the throne. And on top of all this he wrote most of the beautiful Psalms we find in our Old Testaments.

But then there were all those years when David lived as a fugitive in the wilderness because King Saul was out to kill him. And of course there was his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba that rocked his political career, and the death of his son born out of that sinful relationship.
And as far as his personal life, well let’s just say David would never have been nominated “Father of the Year.” David had what was arguably “the most dysfunctional family” in all the Bible. David's son Amnon raped his own sister Tamar. Then David’s son Absalom killed his brother Amnon for the terrible thing he had done to Tamar. Later Absalom led a rebellion and tried to take David's throne away from him.

Although David is called in the scriptures, “a man after God's own heart,” as a father and husband he was a failure, and his political career was rocked with scandal and rebellion.

And now, as David's life is about to draw to a close and he prepares to pass the mantle of kingship, he calls Solomon, his son and successor to his bedside.

There are many things David could have talked about, but the thing that was utmost on David's mind and heart was to remind Solomon of the importance of being A REAL MAN.......A REAL MAN OF GOD!

Let's look at this three-fold challenge David laid before Solomon.
First of all....

I. David Challenges Solomon To BE STRONG (vs.1-2a)

1. Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying:

2a “I go the way of all the earth; be strong

1. David's charge to Solomon is very similar to the charge Moses gave to Joshua as he prepared to hand the leadership of the Israelite people over to him.

Moses told Joshua three times in Joshua 1:6-9 to be “strong and courageous.”

2. Now as David prepares to hand the mantle of kingship over to to his son, he tells Solomon to BE STRONG.

David isn’t suggesting to Solomon that he start working out or lifting weights. He’s not telling him he needs to “go to the Jerusalem fitness center and get bulked up.” But he is telling Solomon he needs to “toughen up.”

3. You see, David and Solomon weren’t anything alike. Remember he had lived as a fugitive in the Judean wilderness for over a decade. And he had been a warrior king, leading the Israelites into battle many, many times. David was a rugged, tough, battle-hardened man.

Solomon on the other hand had lived his whole life in the palace surrounded by women, which might explain why he later surrounded himself with seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines.
So David was surrounded by soldiers and Solomon was surrounded by women. Solomon was “soft.” Solomon was “a sissy.” That is why David told him to “BE STRONG.” Or in the words of Foghorn Leghorn, “You gotta.......I say you gotta toughen up son.”

4. Men, listen to me! Godly men are not sissies! It takes a lot of strength and courage to be a godly man in this godless world. Look at the strength of God’s men in the Bible.....

- Look at MOSES going before the mighty Pharaoh of Egypt demanding that he let God’s people go.

- Look at JOSHUA and CALEB taking their stand of faith against those ten cowardly Israelite spies.

- Look at DANIEL in that den of lions.

- Look at SHADRACH, MESHECH, and ABEDNEGO refusing to bow the knee to Nebuchadnezzar’s idol, choosing instead to be thrown into the fiery furnace.

- Look at GIDEON going into battle against the Midianites with just three hundred men armed with torches, clay pitchers and trumpets.

- Look at SAMSON going into battle against 1,000 Philistines armed with nothing but the jaw bone of a donkey.

- Look at ELIJAH bravely confronting the 450 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel.

- Look at JOHN THE BAPTIST boldly rebuking King Herod for his unlawful relationship with his brother Philip’s wife.

- And look at JESUS hanging on the cross for the sins of the whole world.
5. When we look at the lives of these men and many others in the scriptures it bears out this one powerful, undeniable truth: **GODLY MEN ARE STRONG MEN!**

6. Men, the challenge to all of us today is to **BE STRONG!**
   Godly men are strong men! Godly men are not afraid to take a stand! Godly men are not “fence straddlers.”

   **Godly men are strong HUSBANDS and strong FATHERS.**

6. **MEN, LET US BE STRONG!**

Secondly.......

II. **David Challenges Solomon to PROVE HIMSELF AS A MAN (v.2)**

2 “I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man.

1. Let me go back to a point I made earlier. Even though David had told Solomon many years earlier he would be his successor, David was not fully confident that Solomon was the right man for the job.

   Remember Solomon had lived in the palace. He had never set foot on a battlefield. He had been surrounded by women his whole life. He was “a softie.”

   David had really wanted his son Adonijah to be his successor. Adonijah had “proven himself to be a man” on the battlefield. But the prophet Nathan had persuaded David to choose Solomon as his successor because Adonijah could not be trusted. He had a rebellious streak in him, just like his brother Absalom, who tried to take the throne from David by force.
2. And when you read farther down in this second chapter, David tells Solomon one of his first duties as the new king will be to put JOAB and SHIMEI to death. Both of these men had once been David’s closest friends and political allies, but they betrayed David by joining with David’s son, Absalom when he tried to oust David as King.

3. Now you understand why David challenges Solomon to “prove himself a man.” David wants Solomon to prove to him and prove to himself that he's got what it takes to be a king.

4. We are living in a time when the traditional definition of manhood is being attacked and challenged on all sides.

Our Colleges and Universities now teach there are five sexes, not two. They are teaching there are: heterosexual men, heterosexual women, homosexual men, homosexual women, and transgenders.

And this godless philosophy is also being propagated by the liberal news media, and television, and the movie makers. Never before in the history of this country has the American male suffered such an identity crisis.

5. Men, remember when we were little boys how we were always trying to “prove our manhood?” We got into scraps with our classmates on the playground at recess or we challenged other boys to an arm wrestling duel, or we boasted about who could hit a baseball the farthest, or who’s dad was the strongest. We were trying to “prove ourselves to be a man.”
6. And as we got older we never really stopped trying to “prove ourselves to be a man.” We just do it in different ways.

- Some try to prove their manhood by lifting weights and bulking up.

- Some try to prove their manhood by driving the biggest, baddest pickup around.

- Some try to prove their manhood by owning the most powerful hunting rifle, shotgun, or pistol.

- Some try to prove their manhood by swearing like a sailor or by guzzling down more beers than their buddies, or by chewing tobacco and spitting on a fire ant hill twenty feet away.

- Some try to prove their manhood by their sexual conquests with women. And some try to prove their manhood by abusing women and children.

**DO THESE THINGS TRULY “PROVE US TO BE MEN?”**

7. Men, listen carefully! Some of the manliest men who ever lived are in the Bible; and the way they proved their manhood was through their incredible faith in God......their moral character......and their integrity.

The late Billy Sunday once said, “You can't measure manhood with a tape line around his biceps, but with what is in a man's heart.”
III. David Challenges Solomon to **WALK IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD** (vs.3,4)

3 And keep the charge of the **Lord** your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn;

4 that the **Lord** may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul,’ He said, ‘you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’

1. David wanted Solomon to understand that being the king of Israel was “more than a job” it was **a calling from God**.

2. And David wanted Solomon to understand that his success as king wasn't dependent upon his domestic or foreign policies or his prowess as Commander-in-Chief of the Israelite army. His success as king was dependent upon **WALKING IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD**.

3. **Walking in the ways of the Lord** involved four things:

   **Keeping God's Statutes, Commandments, Judgments, and Testimonies.**

   * **STATUTES** = God's unchanging laws

   * **COMMANDMENTS** = God's instructions for daily living. Think of commandments as “God's written Constitution to govern His people.”
* **JUDGMENTS** = God's laws to determine justice in legal matters and disputes.

* **TESTIMONIES** = These are the things that bore witness to God's providential care in the Wilderness that were placed inside the Ark of The Covenant.” (The Ten Commandments, Aaron's Rod, and The Manna)

4. David was reminding Solomon that as Israel's new king, not only did he bear the responsibility of being Israel's political leader, he bore the responsibility of being Israel's spiritual leader, and and as long as he “walked in the ways of the LORD” God's blessings would be upon him as king.

5. Men, the same is true of you and me. We are called by GOD to be the physical, emotional, and spiritual leaders of our families. That means we must walk in the ways of the LORD, and as long as we faithfully do that, God's richest blessings will be upon us and upon our families.

**BUT MEN BE WARNED!** If you do NOT walk in the ways of the LORD......if you live in sinful disobedience.....not only will you suffer, your wife will suffer, and your children will suffer, and even your grandchildren will suffer.

Exodus 34:7 talks about “the sins of the father being visited upon his children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”
E.M. Bounds has said:

"What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Spirit can use. The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods but through men. He does not come on machinery but on men. He does not anoint plans but men.

Natural ability and educational advantages do not figure as factors in this matter; but capacity for faith, the ability to pray, the power of thorough consecration, the ability of self-littleness, an absolute losing of one's self in God's glory and an ever-present and satiable yearning and seeking after all the fullness of God - men who can set the Church ablaze for God; not in a noisy showy way, but with an intense and quiet heat that melts and moves everything for God.

God can work wonders if He can get suitable men."

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Men, the challenge before us is clear........

Let us BE STRONG........

Let us PROVE OURSELVES AS MEN.......... 

And let us WALK IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD !