

# BaptistWay Bible Series for March 2: Unveiling the weakness of a king

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### Unveiling the weakness of a king

- 1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:1-15

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I long have been a fan of J.R.R. Tolkien's mystical Middle Earth. In his book titled *The Hobbit*, there is a scene considered by many to be the climax of the story: The reluctant hero-Hobbit, Bilbo Baggins, has stolen into the lair of the dreadful dragon, Smaug. In a conversation with the dragon, a hidden Bilbo uses flattery regarding the dragon's scaly skin to obtain a closer look at the monster's hide.

"Dazzlingly marvelous! Perfect! Flawless! Staggering!" exclaimed Bilbo aloud, but what he thought inside was: "Old fool! Why there is a large patch in the hollow of his left breast as bare as a snail out of its shell!" (*The Hobbit*, chapter XII).

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It was the discovery of this soft spot that eventually led to the death of the dragon. The seemingly indestructible foe brought down with a final arrow fired toward that unprotected place.

In this week's passage, we find the transferring of power and authority from father to son. David is nearing his death. After a lengthy battle with those who would be king, Solomon is given the throne. Solomon is described with glowing terms. Perhaps best known for his prayer for a discerning heart (1 Kings 3:9), there is a soft spot.

We see it appear in 1 Kings 3:3, "Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places." The phrase at that begins with except is the unveiling of the weakness of this great king.

Commentators are divided as to the true nature of the exception clause. Many quickly dismiss it and say it was only natural Solomon would sacrifice in those places because the temple had not yet been built.

I think that is part of the explanation. However, we cannot too quickly dismiss the exception clause. When you trace the path of Solomon's life, you find a life incredibly blessed by God. You also see a life that had such great potential taking a tragic turn at the end.

1 Kings 11:4 states "As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God." This

was not an abrupt change of heart. It was the natural progression of a weak spot left unattended.

With that said, I believe we must be mindful not to rush too quickly into judgment of the long-dead king. It would be easy to sit back and say, “What a shame he didn’t guard his heart!” A few years ago, a credit card commercial showed a quarterback walking through his day commenting on what he would have done—culminating in him watching a full grocery sack bust and musing, “I would have double-bagged it.”

Their point was simple: It’s easy to look at things in hindsight and determine what you would have done. It’s not different with Solomon’s life. It is incredibly easy to point out his weakness and bemoan his ultimate downfall. What is not so easy is examining our own lives to find our weaknesses and shore them up.

Smaug, the dragon from Tolkien’s world, would not believe he was vulnerable. In the end, an arrow found his soft spot and brought his reign to an end. Solomon had the world handed to him on a platter. Yet for all of his discernment, he did not see his weak spot that would lead him away from the God he loved. If we were to look at your life in retrospect, would we see your glaring weaknesses left unaddressed?

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