



DOVER DAILY DEVOTIONS

On Sunday we considered 1 Kings 1 and 2 and saw both the ugliness of rebellion and the beauty of God's appointed King. Adonijah exalted himself and said, "I will be king," yet the Lord established Solomon, showed mercy to the rebel who fled to the altar, and then secured the kingdom through justice. In all of this we were pointed beyond Solomon to Jesus Christ, the greater Son of David, the true King and true refuge for sinners, who receives those who come down from self-rule, take hold of mercy, and bow before him.

Monday: The Rebel Heart

Scripture Reading

"Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, 'I will be king.'" 1 Kings 1:5a

Devotional

Adonijah's rebellion did not begin with horses, chariots, or a feast. It began in the heart. Before there was a public claim to the throne, there was a private act of self-exaltation. He said within himself, "I will be king." That is how sin works in every age. The outward act may differ, but the inward logic is the same. Sin is not merely a mistake, a lapse, or a passing weakness. At its root, sin is the soul resisting God's rule and grasping for its own little crown.

That makes this passage uncomfortably near to us. We may never attempt a royal coup, but we know what it is to resent God's commands, to resist his providence, or to insist on our own way. We know what it is to want a Savior who forgives us, but not a Lord who rules us. We know what it is to bargain with obedience, to keep back one room of the house, one habit, one ambition, one cherished desire. The human heart does not naturally say, "Your will be done." Left to ourselves, it says, "My will be done."

The mercy of this text is that it exposes us truly. God does not flatter us. He tells the

truth about our condition so that he may lead us to the true King. We do not begin the Christian life by polishing our rebellion into something more respectable. We begin by confessing it. The first grace is to see that the problem is deeper than bad behavior. It is a heart bent toward self-rule. Only then are we ready to flee to Christ, who came not merely to improve rebels, but to save them.

Questions for Reflection

1. Where do you most clearly see the spirit of “I will be king” showing up in your own life?
2. Are there commands of Christ that you quietly resent or try to negotiate around?
3. What would honest confession of self-rule look like before the Lord today?

Prayer

Lord, I confess that my heart often resists your rule. I want my own way more than I want obedience. Expose my rebellion, humble me, and lead me to Christ, the true King. Amen.

Tuesday: The King God Appoints

Scripture Reading

“And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet there anoint him king over Israel. Then blow the trumpet and say, ‘Long live King Solomon!’” 1 Kings 1:34

Devotional

Adonijah had desire, momentum, influence, and appearances on his side. He looked strong. He gathered supporters. He made his move with confidence. But the throne of Israel did not belong to the man who wanted it most. It belonged to the one God had appointed. That is the great contrast in this chapter. One son exalted himself. The other was established by divine appointment. Solomon did not seize the throne. He received it by the word and will of God.

That pattern prepares us to understand Christ. Jesus is not King because men voted for him, approved of him, or found him useful. He is King because the Father appointed him. He is the beloved Son, the promised Son of David, the one to whom all authority belongs. The gospel, then, is not a suggestion for religious improvement. It is a royal proclamation. God has established his King. The only question is whether we will receive

him with faith and glad submission, or resist him to our own ruin.

There is comfort here for the believer. The kingdom of Christ does not rest on public opinion, cultural approval, or the strength of human defenders. It rests on the settled purpose of God. That means the reign of Christ is not fragile. It cannot be overturned by hostile crowds, unbelieving rulers, or the chaos of the age. When the church looks weak and the world looks loud, the Father has not lost his throne, and the Son has not lost his crown. Our hope is not that we can make Jesus King. Our hope is that he already is.

Questions for Reflection

1. In what ways are you tempted to think of Christ's rule as optional rather than absolute?
2. How does the Father's appointment of Christ strengthen your confidence in uncertain times?
3. What would it mean for you today to receive Christ not only as Savior, but as King?

Prayer

Father, thank you for establishing your Son as the true King. Keep me from treating his rule lightly or resisting his authority. Teach me to rest in the certainty of his kingdom and to walk in glad submission to him. Amen.

Wednesday: Mercy at the Altar

Scripture Reading

"Then Adonijah feared Solomon. So he arose and went and took hold of the horns of the altar." 1 Kings 1:50

Devotional

One moment Adonijah wanted a crown. The next moment he wanted mercy. His confidence vanished when the true king was established. Suddenly he saw that self-exaltation could not save him. The man who once acted like a king now ran like a guilty man. There is something deeply instructive in that movement. When the truth breaks in and we see Christ rightly, all our boasting begins to collapse. We realize that if we are to live, it will not be by our strength, our record, or our excuses. It will have to be by mercy.

The altar mattered because it spoke of sacrifice and atonement. It was not magical. The

horns of the altar had no power in themselves. But they pointed beyond themselves to the only way a sinner can be spared. Guilt must be answered. Sin cannot simply be ignored. In the full light of the gospel, that refuge points us to Christ. He is the true altar, the true sacrifice, the true place of safety for the guilty. We do not cling to a ritual or a religious instinct. We cling to a crucified and risen Savior.

Many people want relief from consequences, but not true repentance. They want shelter without surrender. Yet the beauty of the gospel is that Christ really does receive sinners who flee to him empty-handed. He does not tell the penitent rebel to save himself first. He receives those who know they cannot stand on their own. This is why no sinner should despair of coming. Your guilt may be great, your rebellion real, your record stained, but the refuge is sufficient. The question is not whether you have fallen far. The question is whether you will run to Christ.

Questions for Reflection

1. When you feel the weight of guilt, where do you instinctively run for relief?
2. Do you want mere escape from consequences, or true mercy that comes with repentance?
3. What keeps you from clinging to Christ as your only refuge?

Prayer

Merciful Savior, I have no refuge in myself. Thank you for being the true altar and the true sacrifice for sinners. Teach me to flee to you honestly, humbly, and without delay. Amen.

Thursday: The Rebel Lives When He Bows

Scripture Reading

“And they told Solomon, ‘Behold, Adonijah fears King Solomon; for behold, he has laid hold of the horns of the altar, saying, “Let King Solomon swear to me first that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.”’” 1 Kings 1:51

Devotional

The turning point in Adonijah's story is not merely that he ran to the altar. It is that he was brought down and bowed before the king. That detail matters. It is possible to feel fear, to sense danger, even to speak pious words, while the heart still clings to self-rule. But life begins where rebellion yields. The rebel lives when he bows. That is true in this chapter, and it remains true in the gospel. Christ does not save us in order to leave us on the throne. He saves us by bringing us down and teaching us to kneel.

This is why repentance is more than regret. Regret can weep over consequences while still loving the sin that caused them. Repentance is different. Repentance renounces the false throne. It stops defending itself. It comes down from self-rule and places itself under the lordship of Christ. That can feel costly, because our pride dies hard. We like to keep some measure of control. We want mercy, but we often want it on our own terms. Yet Christ will not be reduced to a religious helper attached to an otherwise self-governed life. He is Savior and Lord together.

And yet there is no cruelty in his kingship. To bow before Christ is not to lose life, but to find it. His rule is not the tyranny of a selfish ruler. It is the wise and holy reign of the One who loved us and gave himself for us. The hands that hold the scepter are the hands that were pierced. When he calls us down, he is not trying to diminish us. He is rescuing us from the misery of trying to rule ourselves. The path of surrender is the path of peace.

Questions for Reflection

1. Is there an area of your life where you want Christ's mercy without yielding to Christ's lordship?
2. How can you tell the difference between regret over sin and true repentance from sin?
3. What would it look like for you to bow before Christ more honestly in daily life?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, forgive me for wanting mercy while resisting your rule. Bring me down from every false throne in my heart. Teach me to bow gladly before you, trusting that your reign is good and full of life. Amen.

Friday: Mercy and Justice Meet

Scripture Reading

"And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon." 1 Kings 2:46b

Devotional

Chapter 2 reminds us that a king must do more than show mercy. He must also do justice. Treachery cannot be allowed to remain hidden beneath the surface while everyone pretends there is peace. David had too often left rebellion unanswered. Solomon had to finish what had been left unfinished. That is a sober truth, because it shows us that peace without justice is not peace at all. It is only delay.

That helps us understand why the gospel is never soft with sin. God does not pardon rebels by pretending rebellion is small. He does not call evil harmless, or guilt imaginary, or treason excusable. The Bible never invites us to minimize our sin. Instead, it shows us both mercy and justice in their proper brightness. And nowhere do they meet more clearly than at the cross of Christ. There the judgment rebels deserve is not ignored, but borne. The sword falls, but it falls on the sin-bearing Son. Christ secures the kingdom not by setting justice aside, but by satisfying it.

This means the believer's peace is solid. It is not built on divine forgetfulness or sentimental indulgence. It is built on righteous atonement. Christ can receive guilty sinners because he has dealt with guilt fully. He can justify the ungodly because he has borne their condemnation. This gives the trembling conscience somewhere firm to stand. If your hope rested on God simply overlooking your sin, you could never rest. But if your hope rests on Christ crucified, then mercy has depth, justice is honored, and peace is real.

Questions for Reflection

1. Are you tempted to think of your sin as smaller than Scripture says it is?
2. How does the cross help you see both the seriousness of sin and the greatness of mercy?
3. Why is it comforting that your forgiveness rests on justice satisfied, not justice ignored?

Prayer

Holy God, thank you that in Christ mercy and justice meet without contradiction. Keep me from making light of my sin or taking your grace for granted. Help me to rest in the finished work of Jesus, who has secured true peace for his people. Amen.

Saturday: Come Down and Live

Scripture Reading

“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.” Psalm 2:12

Devotional

We have seen the rebel heart, the rightful King, the refuge of mercy, and the necessity of justice. Now the matter presses on us personally: What will we do with the King God has appointed? That is never a theoretical question. Christ is not one option among many, nor a religious addition to an otherwise self-ruled life. He comes to us as King. The call is not merely to admire him, but to bow before him.

This summons is urgent because self-rule is deadly, even when it looks respectable. A man may be moral, polished, and admired, yet still resist the lordship of Christ. A woman may speak warmly of Jesus, stay close to church life, and still keep a private throne in the heart. The gospel will not let us hide there. It calls us into the open. Come down. Stop clinging to pride, excuses, secret sin, or cherished autonomy. Take hold of mercy while mercy is offered.

This summons is also hopeful, because the King who reigns is the King who receives rebels. He is not reluctant to save. He does not despise the contrite. The same Christ who rules with all authority is the Christ who died and rose for sinners. No one who comes to him in truth will be cast out. So the Christian life remains what conversion was at the beginning: a continual coming down, a continual taking hold, a continual bowing low before a gracious King. And where that happens, life flourishes under his reign.

Questions for Reflection

1. Where are you still trying to preserve control instead of yielding fully to Christ?
2. What excuse, fear, or attachment most hinders you from wholehearted obedience?
3. How can you respond today to Christ's call to come down, take hold, bow low, and live?

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the true King, and I confess that life is found only under your rule. Give me grace to come down from self-rule, to take hold of your mercy, and to bow before you in faith. Keep me near you, and teach me to live gladly as your servant. Amen.