

2 Samuel 7

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Sometimes, the most significant events of our lives aren't events that we recognize as significant at the time. For instance, during the summer of 2000, I worshiped with the brethren of the Kleinwood church of Christ. One Sunday evening in the lobby of the Kleinwood building, I met a young lady named Lauren Richardson. I had no idea that about four and a half years from that meeting, she would become my wife.

When we read the Bible, it's apparent to us that many of those men and women of old didn't have any idea when significant things happened in their lives either. Just to pick one example of many, when Saul of Tarsus set out on the road to Damascus, he didn't have a clue that he was about to see a vision of Jesus, become a member of the very sect he was persecuting, and gain eternal fame as the apostle Paul. We see at least one similar incident in the life of David. The Israelite king came up with a plan for serving God, but God's answer to his plan altered his life, his family's destiny, and indeed the destiny of the human race. This morning, let's look at the story of this surprisingly significant event in 2 Samuel 7.

David's Plan

Unlike many chapters in Scripture, 2 Samuel 7 doesn't really have a whole lot to do with the chapters on either side of it, so our study of this context can begin with the moment when David hatches his plan. To all outward appearances, this plan is **A GOOD IDEA**. We see what happens in 2 Samuel 7:1-3. The story to this point is fairly simple. David doesn't have a war on his hands, so he decides that just as he has built a palace for himself, he is also going to build a temple for God, so that the ark doesn't have to stay in a tent anymore. He mentions his plan to Nathan the prophet, who quickly endorses it as a good idea.

Within this text, we have a lot to learn from David and Nathan, both positively and negatively. First, we have to appreciate the direction that David's thoughts take him here. When his enemies have left him alone, there are a lot of things that he could have done. He could have built another wing onto his palace. He could have added to his wife collection. For that matter, he could have gone out and picked a fight with one of his neighbors. However, he started looking for ways to serve God.

In this, at least, we do well to imitate him. Sometimes, our lives are so busy that we can barely keep our heads above water, but none of us spend all of our days in frantic chaos. From time to time, all of our lives enter more tranquil periods. We can use that free time to read or watch TV, we can use it to start some home-improvement project, but it is best of all if we use that free time to serve the Lord. Even, say, fifteen minutes that we devote to him can be useful. We can use it to seek His blessing through prayer. We can use it to knock out a daily Bible reading. We can use it to call and encourage a struggling brother. Those things only take a few minutes, but they have eternal significance. The next time, then, that we have even just a few minutes to ourselves, let's look for ways to spend those few minutes for God.

David, then, has a heart that wants to serve. He's even careful to clear his temple project with God's prophet before he starts building. However, Nathan makes a mistake that easily could have gotten both of them in trouble. Nathan presumes to speak for God without checking with God first. He endorses David's plans for the temple, even though God has given him no reason to believe that God wants a new temple.

Today, friends, we must be careful to avoid similar presumption. If somebody who truly, sincerely wants to serve God comes to us with some new idea about what the church should be doing, we can't endorse that simply because their hearts are right. We need to do what Nathan didn't do. We need to check with God. God isn't dumb. He knows what He wants us to do, and we need to listen to Him.

Predictably, the presumption of both Nathan and David leads to **A REBUKE FROM GOD**. Read with me from 2 Samuel 7:4-7. I believe the way that God handles this issue is quite illuminating. In v. 4, He begins with a rhetorical question: Should you, David, be building me a temple? Then, God points to the evidence David needs to answer the question. Exhibit A is the practice of the past. Ever since God brought the Israelites up from the land of Egypt, the ark has resided not in a temple, but in a tent. Exhibit B is God's revelation. God hasn't ever spoken a word to Israel telling them to build Him a temple. From this, the conclusion that God wants David to draw is clear. Because there is no previous pattern of temple-building,

and because God hasn't told David or anybody else to build him a temple, it's not David's place to take that on himself. Nathan's endorsement notwithstanding, God does not want David to build a temple.

It's also important for us to notice what's absent from this logic. God never says, "I forbade you to build the temple," because God never issued such a decree. Nowhere in the Law of Moses does God say, "Don't you dare build a temple for Me!" To this point, God has been silent on the issue. However, God expects His silence to be understood prohibitively rather than permissively. Because God hadn't said anything, David should have understood that God didn't want a temple.

Friends, this glimpse into the mind of God could not be clearer. Like David, we have the commandments of God. Like David, we have the history of what God's people did to please Him. David displeased God when he failed to reason from those things to determine what God wanted him to do. Likewise, when David presumed that God's silence gave him permission to act, he was mistaken.

If we want to please God, if we want to be right in our religious observances, we have to do what David didn't. We have to consider the commands and examples of Scripture and reason from them to determine what God wants us to do. Likewise, when the Scripture is silent, we cannot act. God's message to David is clear: if I'd wanted you to do it, I would have told you to do it. In the 3000 years since He said this, God's nature has not changed, and we have no reason to believe He expects anything different from us.

Instead, God reminds David of **HIS PAST PROTECTION**. This appears in 2 Samuel 7:8-9. David is looking to help God out, but God reminds him instead who has really been in charge all along. Before God intervened, David was a shepherd. Without God, he may well have spent his entire life staring at sheep. God, though, took him out of the pasture and made him king. Of course, once David received this elevation, all of a sudden he had all kinds of enemies he didn't before. David wasn't responsible for the defeat of all of those enemies. God was. Likewise, David now has a great reputation throughout the entire Middle East. That's not because David won that name for himself. It's because God blessed him.

God doesn't spell out his point here, but it's clear from context. All the way through David's life, God has been in control. All of the good things that have happened to David happened because of God's plan, not David's plan. When David tries to take control in building the temple, he's abandoning the very pattern that has been responsible for all of his previous success.

None of us today are as prominent as David, but we are still every bit as reliant on God. In a physical sense, we have the houses we live in, the food we eat, and the very air we breathe because God has blessed us. In a spiritual sense, we owe everything to His wisdom and love in sending His Son to die for us. We haven't gotten ourselves to this point. God has. Why, then, would we possibly want to abandon God's providence and God's plan because we think we have a better idea? That can lead only to disaster.

God's Promise

In place of David's plan, God makes a promise to him instead. The first part of this concerns **GOD'S FUTURE PROTECTION**. 2 Samuel 7:10-11 tells the tale. First, God is going to establish His people. Up to this point, ever since they settled the land and throughout the time of the judges, the Israelites have been oppressed by their enemies. God says that time is coming to an end. Now, His people are going to be able to dwell securely in the land. Likewise, David himself is going to have rest from his enemies.

Finally, though, and most importantly, God flips David's original intention on its head. David wanted to build a house for God. God says instead that He is going to make a house for David. Of course, this is a wordplay. God isn't talking about making David a building to live in. Instead, God is going to establish David's household. David's lineage isn't going to die out. Instead, it will continue forever.

Today, friends, we have every bit as much reason to rely on God's future protection as David did. Like the hymn says, "Tis grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home." We can measure what God will do by what He has already done. I hope that none of us would be so foolish as to claim that we are where we are due to our own strength and wisdom! I know that in my life, such a claim would be plainly untrue. God has brought me through things that I've seen destroy the lives of others, and I'm sure every Christian here would say something similar. He deserves the glory, not us. Now, if we're so precious to God that He has already done all these things for us, can't we rely on Him to take care of us through the future? God is faithful, and if He's gotten us this far, He's certainly not going to abandon us now!

So far, everything that God has said is something that we might expect Him to say, but His words take a dramatic turn when He starts talking about **A PROMISED KING**. Consider 2 Samuel 7:12-14 with me. Before we begin exploring this passage in particular, we first must consider the way that God operates in prophecy. Many of the prophecies of Scripture have only one fulfillment, but some of them are fulfilled not once, but twice. 2 Samuel 7 is the poster child for this kind of double prophecy.

The first fulfillment of this prophecy is obviously David's son Solomon. Solomon was indeed the physical descendant of David, and he reigned over a kingdom that God had secured for him. Because he was a man of peace, God allowed him to build the temple, and when Solomon strayed, God disciplined him to turn him back to the way of righteousness. With Solomon, God's prophecy checks out.

However, this prophecy isn't only about Solomon, and this is the truly significant part of the story that David wasn't expecting. As we know from the first gospel sermon in Acts 2, this prophecy isn't only about Solomon. It's about Christ. Once again, the prophecy checks out line for line. Christ was the physical descendant of David. Even today, He reigns over the kingdom of God's people. Indeed, those very people Jesus has built up to be a holy temple to God. Similarly, God literally was Jesus' Father, and Jesus was literally God's Son. It is even true that God scourged Jesus for iniquities, even though Jesus only bore those iniquities because God had laid our sins on Him. This prophecy is important for what it predicts about Solomon, but it is extraordinarily important for what it predicts about Jesus.

Indeed, because God knows that Jesus will fulfill this prophecy, even though David probably doesn't have any idea what God is talking about, God is able to promise **ETERNAL PROTECTION** for David's lineage. In this regard, let's read 2 Samuel 7:15-17. This, friends, is a whopper of a promise! To the righteous kings of Israel and Judah, nothing could be more important than God's promise to establish their lineage after they themselves are gone. To men who had only a shadowy conception of eternity, their descendants were as close to immortality as they could get. David had more of an idea of the afterlife than most, though it's not clear how much he knew at this time, but he still cared deeply about his house.

God tells David, though, that even though Saul's descendants lost the kingdom, David's descendants weren't going to. Instead, his descendants and his kingdom were going to be established forever. In earthly terms, this is frankly impossible. During David's day, there were all kinds of kings and kingdoms in all kinds of places, but today, one thing is true of all of them. They have all been extinguished. We know too that if the earth continues, all the nations of earth today, from the smallest to the mightiest, are going to pass too. How, then, could God possibly say that David's house and kingdom will be established forever?

This mystery is only revealed in Christ. David's descendants are going to reign forever because Jesus is going to reign forever. David's kingdom is going to last forever because God's promise finds its spiritual fulfillment in the kingdom of Christ, a kingdom which cannot be destroyed. To human wisdom, God's promise sounds impossible, but through His wisdom, God knew just how He would fulfill it.

Today before the Lord's Supper, let's reflect on the sheer majesty of God's plan for our salvation. Here, as we so often do in the Old Testament, we encounter a prophecy that makes no sense in an Old-Testament context but makes perfect sense to us. Either these prophecies are a bunch of nonsense that somehow happened to line up perfectly with the story of Jesus, or they are proof that hundreds of years before Jesus was even born, God's eternal wisdom determined that He would live and die and rise and reign, all for our salvation. God set this awe-inspiring plan in motion for our sakes, giving even His only begotten Son to rescue us from ourselves. Let's ponder these things as we partake.

David's Prayer

In response to this unexpected and extravagant promise from God, David replies with a noteworthy prayer. The first portion of this prayer contains **HIS REPLY** to God. We can find it in 2 Samuel 7:18-21. The first impression that we get from this prayer is one of profound humility. "Who am I," David asks, "That You should have done all these things for me?" To David, the mere fact that God has made him king shows that God has already blessed him far beyond what he deserves. However, even such a great blessing wasn't enough for God. God has assured David not only of His blessing on David throughout his life, but His blessing on David's descendants forever. David says, in effect, "What more could You possibly do?"

Like David, we too have every reason to go to God and say, "What more could You possibly do?" None of us have gotten what we deserve from God; otherwise, we all would be dead and in hell. Despite our

sin, God allows us to continue living, He blesses us with all the good things we enjoy in this life, He offers us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places through Jesus Christ, and He gives us the opportunity to spend eternity with Him. The difference between what we deserve from God and what we get is staggering!

I think my favorite part of this section, though, is the last one. David's logic begins with the assertion that God knows David. God understands him completely. God, though, doesn't want merely to know. He wants to be known, so to reveal Himself to David, He purposed in His heart to bless him, promised that He would bless him, and kept His word. By considering these things, David can know God.

Today, friends, we should come to understand God in the same way. God doesn't shower all these blessings on our heads just because. He does it because He wants us to come to know Him too. The Scripture reveals that God's heart is filled with compassion, love, and yearning for all His children. His promises show His purpose for us, and His constant blessings show His faithfulness. Every day, whether we look into the word or at the beauties of a late summer day, we learn more about God, and this process continues until we pass from this life and dwell eternally with Him in heaven.

All of these things reflect **GOD'S GREATNESS**. David proclaims this greatness in 2 Samuel 7:22-24. He points out first of all that God is innately great. Neither in heaven nor on earth is there anybody else like God. This is an idea that we culturally have trouble with. Americans are very egalitarian. We prefer to believe that everybody is just as good as everybody else. There's a sense in which that is true with respect to human beings, but it is emphatically not true with respect to God. He is our superior, and we are His inferiors, period. For some, that's hard to swallow. I suspect that a lot of atheists are that way because they bridle at the notion of a supreme, omnipotent God. For us, though, it's something that we must acknowledge. God is God, so He is necessarily entitled to our worship and our obedience.

Similarly, David observes, Israel is great, but they are only great because God chose to make them great. He redeemed them from Egyptian bondage, He claimed them for His people, and He allowed them to claim Him for their God. That relationship with God, David says, makes Israel unique.

Today, we can say the same thing about the Lord's church for precisely the same reason. Often, though, we do not. A lot of Christians are shy about talking up the Lord's people because they worry that it makes them sound arrogant. That reserve, though, actually prevents us from giving God the glory He deserves. We have every right to describe ourselves as a holy nation—but only because God made us that way. We have every right to call ourselves a royal priesthood—again, because God has made us so. It is not arrogance for us to claim to be God's chosen people. That's fact. We shouldn't be embarrassed to say that. We should boast about it, because such boasting is really in the God who redeemed us and made us His own.

Finally in this striking prayer, we come to **DAVID'S PETITION**. It is contained in 2 Samuel 7:25-29. This is really gorgeous language, but it boils down to one simple thought: God, all I want you to do is to do what You've said. God has told David that He will bless his house forever; David asks God to keep His promise. If God will do that, David's enduring house will ensure God's enduring glory. There are all kinds of other things David could have asked God for, even things that he had the right to ask. However, the way David sees things, as long as God keeps His promises, that's enough for David.

Here's an interesting thought: How much different would our prayer lives be if that prayer were our prayer? What if all our prayers consisted of, "God, thank You for all You've done, and all I want from You in future is for You to keep Your promises"? There are a lot of things we wouldn't be praying for anymore. We wouldn't be praying for that promotion at work, because God never promised anybody a promotion. We wouldn't be praying for prosperity, because God has never promised us that. We wouldn't be praying for healing for earthly illnesses, because healing isn't part of the deal either. In short, we wouldn't be praying for earthly happiness, because earthly happiness is not what God has promised to His people.

Here's what we would be praying for. We would be praying for food to eat and clothing to wear. We would be praying for wisdom. We would be praying for joy in suffering. We would be praying for peace that surpasses understanding. We would be praying for our labors in the kingdom to bear fruit. We would be praying for forgiveness of sins. We would be praying for Jesus to return. We would be praying that God will receive us into the eternal dwellings. All of those are prayers for things that God has promised, and when we compare the two lists, we must admit that what God hasn't promised is far outweighed by what He has.

I don't mean to suggest that it's wrong to pray for earthly blessings. However, we should make sure that our prayers concern mainly God's promises, because our lives should mainly concern them too.