

2 Samuel 7:18-29, Responding to God's promises

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[0 : 0 0] of 2 Samuel chapter 7. This week we are finishing the chapter off. Good morning. First Samuel chapter 18, 7.

The King David went in and sat before the Lord and said, Who am I, Sovereign Lord, and what is my family that you have brought me this far?

And I see if this were not enough in your sight. Sovereign Lord, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant. And this decree, Sovereign Lord, is for a mere human.

What more can David say to you? For you know your servant, Sovereign Lord. For the sake of your word and according to your will, you have done this great thing and made it known to your servant.

How great you are, Sovereign Lord. There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have had with our own ears.

[1 : 0 5] And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself, and to make a name for himself, and to perform great and awesome wonders, by driving out nations and their gods, and before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt.

You have established your people Israel as your very own forever, and you, Lord, have become their God. And now, God, keep forever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house.

Do as you promised, so that your name will be great forever. And people will say, The Lord Almighty is God over Israel, and the house of your servant, David, will be established in your sight.

Lord Almighty, God of Israel, you have revealed this to your servant, saying, I will build a house for you. So your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you.

Sovereign Lord, you are God. Your covenant is trustworthy, and you have promised these good things to your servant. Now be pleased, and to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue forever in your sight for you.

[2 : 3 4] Sovereign Lord, have spoken, and with your blessing, the house of your servant will be blessed forever. Amen. Amen.

Thanks, John. Now, keep that passage open. We're going to be working our way through it together. And on the inside of your notice sheet is an outline of the sermon as well, which you might like to follow along with.

Now, really, this morning's sermon is part two from part one last week. So last week, we were looking at the beginning of 2 Samuel chapter seven. This week, we are finishing the chapter off.

And if you weren't with us last week, then let me try and super quickly get you up to speed with what we looked at last Sunday. 2 Samuel chapter seven is all about God's promise to David.

And the first half of the chapter outlines that promise as Nathan the prophet comes and speaks to David and tells him this promise. David says, I want to build a house for the Lord.

[3 : 34] And the Lord says, no, I'm going to build a house for you. I promise I'm going to give you a dynasty that will last forever. And so last week, we saw that God who is free, God can do what he wants to do whenever he wants to do it.

God is the free God, yet he binds himself to a promise, a commitment. He says, I'm going to do this. And it's a promise that's ultimately fulfilled in the sending of the Lord Jesus Christ as the eternal King of God's people.

Now that was last week. And this week is all about how David responds to what God has said to him. You'll notice at the beginning of the section that John read for us, David goes into the tent in which the ark is kept and he sits before the Lord, reflecting on what God has said.

Now to work our way through the passage together, I want you to notice first that David asks three rhetorical questions. Does anyone know what a rhetorical question is?

That was a rhetorical question. A rhetorical question, that was supposed to be a little joke, but it doesn't matter. Thanks, Joan. A rhetorical question is a question where the answer is obvious.

[4 : 47] Yeah, so you don't need to ask. It's like asking a teenager, would you like some food? Rhetorical question, because the answer is obvious. It's yes. So David asks three rhetorical questions.

Look down. Verse 18, he says, who am I? He says. Then in verse 20, he says, what more can I say? And then in verse 23, he says, who is like your people?

And the answer to all of those questions is obvious. What's the answer to all those questions? Nothing. Nothing. Who am I? I'm nothing.

I'm no one. What more can I say? I can't say anything. Who is like your people? Who can compare to your people? Nothing can compare to your people, he says. There is nothing good like what God has done.

Now, the point of that is that David realizes that what God has promised is incredible. It's out of this world. He has nothing to compare to it. It's more brilliant and more majestic, more amazing than anything else he's ever heard.

[5 : 47] Any promise he's heard before, nothing, nothing, nothing compares to this. Nothing. Now, all those nothings doesn't mean that the passage has nothing to say.

We've not quite finished yet. I want to show you three things that flow out of that nothingness, nothing to say. The first thing is this. I want you to see a humble king, a humble king.

When David asks that first question, who am I? It's not because he's reflecting so much on his sinfulness. That comes later in 2 Samuel. What he's reflecting on here is his humanity.

The point is that the size and the scale of God's promise does not match his mere manness, as he puts it. There is a discontinuity between the size of what God has promised and the smallness of David.

Not only does David know that he is the smallest son in an unknown family. In verse 18, he was out keeping the sheep, if you remember, overlooked even by his own father and yet now is anointed king over a united Israel.

[6 : 52] But that, says David in verse 19, is a small thing compared to what now has been promised about the future, the future of the house of your servant. In other words, David, as he looks in on himself, is empty of any reason why God would give him what he has promised.

Empty of any reason. There is nothing in me. The reason for God's promise has to be grounded in God's extraordinary generosity, not in David's strength. David sees that and he is humble before the Lord.

Actually, you see this humility all the way through the passage in the way that David refers to himself. He consistently calls himself God's servant. Nine times in the chapter, he calls himself servant, the servant king.

With any greatness that David enjoys comes from the heart of God or the will of the Lord, verse 21, to David, his servant. In other words, David is humble and empty and God's promise fills him and exalts him.

Now, the important detail to notice here is in verse 19, when David says that this promise is also a decree. Look down at verse 19 and you'll notice that. He says at the end, and this decree, sovereign Lord, is for a mere human.

[8 : 07] Literally, the word there is law or Torah. It means not so much law as in rules in this situation. It means more instruction. Instruction.

In other words, the promise that you have given, this gigantic promise to empty David, that is meant to be an instruction. It's supposed to teach that God fills the empty with glory.

And it's not just to teach David, the mere human. I think the sense here, as in your footnote in your Bible, is really it's meant to teach the entire human race. In other words, all of us this morning are meant to look at the size of God's promise and the emptiness of David and see something, learn something together.

Not simply, I think that David's humility is something that we should copy, although it is, and we'll talk about that in a moment, but rather this idea of God's promise being fulfilled in emptiness is a lesson, something that we should be looking for.

Why? Well, because as we know from the rest of our Bibles, it's the exaltation of an empty human king that brings salvation. The promise to David is a pattern that teaches us to look for Jesus.

[9 : 20] Think about it with me. Jesus is the king of kings. He's the Lord of lords. He's the glorious, eternal son in human flesh. Where do you find him? You find him in a stable, not a palace.

You find him laid in a feeding trough, not an ornate cot. But as you read that in the Gospels, you shouldn't be surprised by that because you've been taught that God's extraordinarily large promise is seen in the emptiness of humanity.

In Mark chapter 10, Jesus picks up David's language here when he says that he's not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. I am the servant of all, says Jesus, just like David.

In other words, David's humility here helps us recognize Jesus, the eternal, glorious son who empties himself of glory, taking on weak human flesh, pouring out his life on the cross, only to be filled with the glory as he receives the blessing of his father in the name that is above every name.

Let me ask you whether you see this this morning. It's wonderful if you all grasp this. I know it's a sort of abstract theological concept, but there is glory and there is wonder in this if we will just listen to it.

[10 : 38] In his divinity, the eternal son is eternally glorious. There is no glory that God has that is not belonging to the son. The son is eternally glorious with the father and the spirit in eternity past.

And without shedding any of his divinity, he takes on himself the humanity of David, empties himself and becomes mere human, to use David's words in verse 19, so that in his empty humanity through his fulfillment of the promise of God and his work on the cross, he can be filled not so much just with the divine glory, but actually can be filled with the glory of being God's appointed king.

King, the fulfillment of David, the God-man ruler of his people, the final fulfillment of 2 Samuel chapter 7. This is how Paul puts it in Philippians chapter 2.

Speaking of Jesus, he says, who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather, he made himself nothing. Literally there in the Greek, he emptied himself by taking the very nature of a servant and being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, King, Ruler to the glory of God the Father.

[12 : 09] This is the brilliance of all this. Philippians 2 is the fulfillment of 2 Samuel 7 when a thousand years before the coming of Christ a young shepherd king sits in a tent and prays and says, God, you've promised something which doesn't match my mere humanity.

And God says, doesn't he, in a way, no, no, this is how I work, watch and wait for the coming king. Now, of course then, there's a lesson for us too, isn't there, that we too should be humble, we should be empty of self-importance like David and like Jesus, that in experiencing the blessings of God in turning to him, we're not asking that God might see our potential.

I mean, just imagine for a moment that David sits down in the tent before God and goes, finally God, someone has seen my potential. My dad always overlooked me.

He was always more interested in my brothers than he was in me. Thank you, Lord, that you've finally seen what great value I have. It would be a wicked thing for him to say, wouldn't it? Why?

Well, because God's blessing is for the self-empty, not the self-full. That's the lesson of the promise. And so for you and me and for us together as a church, it's only as we recognize our emptiness, it's only as we shed our self-reliance that we can begin to be filled with the power of God.

[13 : 32] Why should God revive the work of the gospel in Queen's Park and Kilburn? Why? Why should God give you the strength for tomorrow? Why should God rescue us from this sin-sick world for a place in eternal glory?

Who are we for such a promise? Who am I? I'm no one. I'm nothing. It's about God's generosity, taking what is empty and filling it with his power and his strength for his glory.

Let me just try and press this a little more. If you're a Christian this morning and you don't share this sense that the promise of God in Jesus Christ, the promise that he has given you in the Lord Jesus, the promise not just for this life but for eternity in his kingdom, if you don't, if you're a Christian and you don't sense like David that you are no one to deserve that, then either you don't really know yourself or you don't really know the size of the promise because it's wonderful what's been offered here and David recognises that the size of what God has promised does not match the emptiness of his humanity and so for you and me.

Second theme, the awesomeness of God, the awesomeness of God. In verse 22, David launches into praise as he tells God there is no one like him. Look at verse 22. How great you are, sovereign Lord.

There is no one like you and there is no God but you. And because God is like that, it means there is nothing like being one of his people either. No one has it as great as Israel. Look at verse 23.

[14 : 58] And who is like your people, Israel, the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself. No one else has ever been rescued like that. No one else has ever been turned from slavery to freedom for the possession of God.

No one else has received such amazing things that God has done. No one else has received this kind of forever promise that God has now given to his people in verse 24. You have established your people Israel as your very own forever, he says.

And you, Lord, have become their God. That's important to notice here that David is seeing this promise God has made him and understanding it in line with the other actions of God in history.

Notice the way that he refers to God here. It's sovereign Lord, Lord God, as it's translated. That's significant because David here is taking on the language that Abraham uses for God in Genesis chapter 15 when God spoke to Abraham and gave him a promise.

David's saying that God, Abraham's God, that God is my God, he says. This Abrahamic God, that God is the God now who's spoken to me in promise, he says. And then in verse 23, David is talking about Moses and the rescue from Egypt, saying that what has been promised to him is essentially the part B, the sequel to the Exodus.

[16:16] God is not doing something new with David, he is building on what he has already been doing, all of which are showing that God is alone in generosity, unparalleled in kindness, which has been going through the generations of the Old Testament, working out in promises to Abraham and to Moses and now to David.

Now that's brilliant, but I think to see the gold here, you've really got to notice and think carefully about what David says about God's awesomeness in those promises. So just notice these two big ideas in verse 22 and 23.

That on the one hand, there is no one like God and on the other hand, there is nothing like being one of his people. If you only see one of those, you only get half the story.

If you see that there is no one like God but you forget there's nothing like being his people, you only get half the story. If you think there's nothing like being his people but you forget that there is no one like God, you've only got half the story.

because it's not just here that God is great, right? It's not just that God is powerful or mighty. Of course, that's true. And we're used to thinking in that category. I don't know what you think about when you think about God, but maybe you just think of a great force or power or might or majesty. Well, in a sense, that's kind of true, isn't it? But it's only really part of it. Let me try and show you what's going on. Look at verse 26 and look at what David calls God. David says that the Lord Almighty is God. Literally, the God of heaven's armies is God. But notice what he adds. He says, over Israel. You notice that the Lord Almighty, the king of heaven's armies, the one who is powerful and majestic and glorious is over Israel. It's the same in verse 27. Lord Almighty, majestic, glorious, powerful, mighty God of Israel. God of Israel. Or take a look at verse 22. David knows there is no one besides God. Why? Well, because he has heard with his ears what God has done in redeeming Israel from their slavery in Egypt. And now he hears their promise, the promise of God for him. And he says, listen, I've got nothing more to say. There's nothing more to say. God in all his awesome power is for

[18:32] David, not against him. In other words, God's awesomeness is for David, right? His awesomeness is salvation for Israel. Because not only is God powerful and majestic and glorious, powerful to crush all enemies and destroy everything in his path, which is sort of good news, I suppose, in a way, and maybe how you think about God, but his greatness is seen in his mercy towards David, in his love and his kindness, that this great power is for him, not against him.

So suddenly, God's power is not something that David is terrified of, but is something he loves and delights in. Let me just try and illustrate what's going on here. I want you to imagine for a moment that you're stuck in the mud, okay? I don't know how you got there, but it's your fault, right? You're up to your waist in the mud. You can't get out. You can't move. You're going to just be there forever and ever in the mud, right? You're stuck. It's a terrible situation. Your life is in danger. You're going to die in the mud. And just as you think this cannot get any worse, it gets worse, because through the mud is driving a huge digger towards you. And you're stuck, right? So you can't get out. You've got no hope of getting out of the way of the digger. So what's going to happen when the digger comes to you? It's going to crush you right over the top of you, and you can't get out of the way. So listen, I put it to you that the bigness of the digger while you're stuck in the mud is not good news, is it? It's not, is it? You're terrified of the digger because you're stuck in the mud. It's not good news. It's bad news. The size of the digger is bad news. This is the end. I'm lost. But then you look carefully and you notice that the driver of the digger is your dad. That's my dad there. And you know that your dad loves you. He has a heart for you. He wants to rescue you.

And he's coming to use the power of the digger to lift you from the mud. What do you think then about the size of the digger? Well, you're singing about it, aren't you? Oh, how mighty you are, digger. I love you digger. Your scooping power is great. I love it. All of a sudden, what was terrifying to you is brilliant news. Why? Why? Well, because you know that the one in whose hand is that power loves you, loves you. And that's what's going on in our passage. David knew that God was great, but what he finds out in the promise is that God loves him and is for him. That's the great news of 2 Samuel chapter 7. Now, of course, if David could see that about God from what he has heard in 2 Samuel chapter 7, how much more can we see that as we see the fulfillment in Jesus Christ? You know, who is like the God who stoops down from the glories of heaven to take on himself in the person of the Son, frail human, empty flesh, to die on the cross to save us from our sin, from slavery, not in Egypt, but to sin and death, dying, rising. Who is a God like that? Who is a God like that? Who has a name as great as that name? The greatness is not crushing but saving. It's not far off or distant. It's not something I read about in a dispassionate way as if, oh, yeah, yeah, God's great, isn't he? It's something that I know is close by me and I love it that God in his triune awesomeness, Father, Son, and Spirit moves towards me in the person of the Son to scoop me out the mud of my sin and lift me to glory.

What great news. No one like that God and there's nothing like being one of his people, which brings us to the final point, which is about saving faith. I don't know whether you noticed this as John read the passage for us earlier, but there's only one request in David's prayer. Did you notice that?

It's there at the end of verse 25. Notice it. It's do as you promised. It's the only thing that David asked. Do as you promised. It's an amazing thing when you think about what's been going on in the story. Here's David. He's sat in this tent before the Lord. God has spoken to him through Nathan the prophet, said all these amazing things to him, and in effect, his prayer is something like this. Praise you, Father. The only thing I want is you to do what you said you're going to do. The only request I have is, Lord, just do what you've promised. That will be enough for me, Lord, if you will do what you promised. That promise, that promise that you've made that I've heard through Nathan, that's what I want, Lord. I don't want anything else. That's what I want. That's what I need.

[23 : 29] David goes on to explain why he's asking for it. If you look down at verse 27, see what he says. It's because God has said, I will build a house for you that he has courage to ask. It's because God's words are true and trustworthy in verse 28, and he has promised a good thing. So David speaks to God and says, please do what you've promised. Please do it. See, listen to this, because this is really important for us this morning as we come to a conclusion. This is what it is for David to have saving faith in God. There are two aspects to it. One is David looks at God and goes, I can trust you to do what you say. I know, God, that you are trustworthy. But that's not all, okay? He says, I know, God, you're trustworthy. But the second part is, he says, your promise, you keeping your promise is all that I want in life, all that I need. Imagine it like this. I don't know whether this might happen in your family when you had smaller children, or if you're a young person this morning, this may still happen in your house. It does happen in ours from time to time. Imagine that you and your siblings are fighting over a small chunk of chocolate.

You know, whose is it? And you're squabbling and fighting. And then your mum comes in, maybe this takes a bit more imagination, because this never happened in my house. But imagine your mum comes in with a giant kilo bar of chocolate and says, listen, I promise to give this to you. I promise to give it to you. What happens to the fight about the little chunk of chocolate? Suddenly it evaporates, doesn't it? Why? Well, because the promise is way better than the thing you were really concerned about before. It's eclipsed, isn't it? Your fight over the chocolate is eclipsed by the kilo bar promised to you. And all you want is your mum to keep the promise. Please just keep your promise, mum. Please keep your promise. And you will stop fighting. Now that's what's going on here. David is suddenly consumed by the promise of God. And David was thinking, oh, I'm going to build a temple. I'm going to kind of make Jerusalem like the place that I really want to be. I've built my own cedar house.

Now all I really need is to get that Ark of the Covenant out of a tent and into a nice cedar building itself so that we can make Jerusalem nice and cosy. Let's bed in. Let's settle down. Let's get comfortable. Let's build heaven here. Let's build the eternal kingdom here. Maybe this is what being God's people is about. It's about building home here and enjoying it.

And God comes and says, no, listen, listen, my promise is for something much, much better than that. My promise is not the chunk. It's the kilo bar. My promise is not just for the short time now.

My promise is for ever. I am not talking about a short kingdom here in Jerusalem. I'm talking about an eternal heavenly kingdom. I'm not talking about a place where you're king, David. I'm talking about a place where I'm king. I'm not talking about a place where you live for a short time and then you die. I'm talking about a place where you live forever and ever and ever. I'm not talking about a place where you cry and weep and mourn and suffer. I'm talking about a place where every tear is wiped away and you live forever with me in a world remade by my power and my glory forever and ever and ever.

[26 : 46] And David says, oh, that's what I want. That's what I want. And that's saving faith. Being a Christian is not just saying a sinner's prayer with your mum by the bedside and then just getting on with life.

I think some of us think that, don't we? You know, we pray, Lord, please forgive me for my sin. And then I'm just gonna carry on with life as I was living before, as if that's what it's all about. You know, building heaven here, trying to get a career, trying to get a house, trying to get enough money to live.

Asking God to help me do what I want to do and fulfill my plans. But being a Christian in 2 Samuel chapter seven is not like that at all. Being a Christian in 2 Samuel chapter seven is saying, yes, I'm sorry for my sin and I turn from it.

I trust you. But Lord, what you promise is what I want. I don't want anything else. If I cannot have that, I want nothing.

Because that's what really matters. The promise is better than anything else we travel over. So let me say to you this morning, whether or not you'd call yourself a Christian, have you seen that?

[27 : 58] Have you seen that? Until you see that this promise of God made in Abraham, Moses and David, fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, until you've seen that that really is the only lasting treasure, then you've not really understood what God is saying here.

So have you seen it? Do you know that? Have you seen that in life and death, the only treasure of any value is knowing God through Christ, his King, that we are empty of any reason in ourselves to receive that, that God in his awesomeness scoops us up, gives us this amazing promise that now by faith we're invited to reach out and take hold of living life and dying death with something bigger than our own dreams and aspirations driving us.

Well, let me pray and then we'll sing in response to what we've heard. Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray.

Let me pray. Let me pray. Heavenly Father, we want to say with David, please, Lord, do as you have promised.

What you've promised in the Lord Jesus Christ is better than anything that we could do for ourselves, better than anything that we have planned for our lives. Lord Jesus Christ, knowing you, trusting you, eternity with you in a world remade by your power and your glory forever and ever is better than any of the simple little things that occupy us now.

[29 : 35] Please, Lord, fill our hearts with the great treasure that it is in knowing you and do as you have promised, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.