

“God’s Covenant Promise”
2 Samuel 23:1-7
(Preached at Trinity, March 15, 2020)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We’ve all seen the movie where someone is about to be killed and he is asked, “Any last words?” To this day, individuals about to be executed are granted some final words. They seem weighty. The Bible records the final words spoken by Jacob and Joshua. Paul spoke such words to Timothy. Jesus spoke final words to His disciples.
2. This chapter opens with the words of the narrator who states: "Now these are the last words of David"
David is identified as the “son of Jesse” and the “man who was raised on high.” It reminds us of the extraordinary life of David. He was God’s anointed. God promised him an everlasting kingdom. As a man he was truly one who was raised on high.
 - A. But he had a lowly beginning. He was the son of Jesse, a man of little influence. He was from Bethlehem, a town of little importance. He was the youngest and least among Jesse’s sons, a mere shepherd.
 - B. And yet, God raised him up to a lofty position. It is by God’s grace that we are what we are. He alone receives all the glory.
1 Corinthians 1:27 NAU - "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,"
 - C. God has snatched each of His elect from the firebrands of hell and raised us up to walk on high places. He uses each of us in unique ways.
Psalms 18:31-33 NAU - "or who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God, ³² The God who girds me with strength And makes my way blameless? ³³ He makes my feet like hinds' feet, And sets me upon my high places."
3. The author declares that these are David’s last words. They are not necessarily the final words David spoke in life, but they are his final address to the nation and perhaps his final psalm.
4. David’s words here are weighty. They are prophetic. Some have referred to this passage as David’s last will and testament. David speaks as God’s anointed as he describes the nature of God’s kingdom and His king. While the words of David’s song in **Chapter 22** look mainly to the past our attention is now directed to the future.
5. On one hand David is writing about his own kingship and his own kingdom. He is speaking of God’s covenant faithfulness. On the other hand, his words are prophetic. He is writing about a Kingdom that his kingdom could only foreshadow, a Kingdom that transcends every earthly kingdom. David is writing about the Kingdom of God, ruled in righteousness by the King of kings, Jesus Christ.

- I. It is a kingdom of certainty
- A. David speaks as one speaking for God, as God's prophet
- V.2** - "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue."
V.3 - "The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me"
1. David declares he is speaking what the Rock of Israel has declared
 2. And what is it that God has declared? He has declared the everlasting house of David promised by divine covenant.
2 Samuel 23:5 NAU - "Truly is not my house so with God? For He has made an everlasting covenant with me, Ordered in all things, and secured"
- B. David's Kingdom was the fulfillment of God's everlasting covenant
1. It was an unfailing promise, a sure infallible promise. God's promises are absolute. The Davidic Covenant continued to endure.
2 Samuel 7:16 NAU - "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever."
 2. David's life was characterized by both successes and failures. His failures were terrible displays of sin. His adultery with Bathsheba, murder of her husband Uriah, and his failure to uphold justice with his son Absalom were terrible acts of sin.
 3. But God's promise was not based upon David's actions but upon God's covenant faithfulness. The ultimate fulfillment is found in Christ, the King of kings, the King of God's perfect everlasting Kingdom.
- C. Is this not our blessed hope?
1. There is an everlasting, unfailing covenant
Verse 5 - "For He has made an everlasting covenant with me"
 2. It was forged in the glories of eternity, when nothing existed but God. It is a covenant bathed in God's everlasting love, a covenant that sets forth the surety of our everlasting life in Christ who has secured it in His own blood.
 3. In a world of chaos and uncertainty our hope is fixed upon a King whose Kingdom is certain.
Isaiah 9:6-7 KJV - "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

4. God's covenant faithfulness affects everything in our lives. As Greg Nichols writes:
 "God's people should walk in gospel obedience precisely because he is the faithful God who keeps covenant with those who love him and keep his commandments. Those who walk in gospel fear receive his instruction, dwell at ease, and see his covenant love and faithfulness. Christians should love one another because God loves them in covenant love. Christians should keep their word because God keeps covenant promises. Christians should imitate the love and faithfulness of our covenant keeping God. Oh that he would give Christians greater grace to face every earthly trial with peace and comfort, knowing that we have an inheritance in heaven. His covenant love has reserved this eternal inheritance for us. His covenant faithfulness will bestow it on us when Jesus comes again. Even so come, Lord Jesus."¹

II. It is a righteous kingdom

2 Samuel 23:3-4 NAU - "He who rules over men righteously, Who rules in the fear of God, ⁴ Is as the light of the morning *when* the sun rises, A morning without clouds, *When* the tender grass *springs* out of the earth, Through sunshine after rain."

A. David speaks of a kingdom of perfection

1. David is speaking of a kingdom of righteousness ruled over by an excellent king.
2. He rules in the fear of God. In other words, He rules according to the pure expectation of God. It is a kingdom of holiness.
3. This kingdom is a fruitful kingdom – ever growing and increasing with multitudes turning to it.

Isaiah 60:3 NAU - "Nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising."

B. David uses vivid imagery

1. light, sun, grass springing forth, sunshine after rain.
2. He is describing the renewing effect of the ruler's reign
3. God has promised great fruitfulness
V.5 - "For all my salvation and all *my* desire, Will He not indeed make *it* grow?"

C. This "Ruler" refers to the Messiah - "He who rules over men righteously"

1. David was well aware of his failures
 - a. **Verse 5** is translated in various ways – most set it as a question with a positive answer presumed.
 - b. The KJV/NKJV poses it as a negative statement
Verse 5 - "Although my house *be* not so with God"

¹ Nichols, Greg. *Covenant Theology, A Reformed and Baptist Perspective on God's Covenants*. (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books (2011), pages 296, 299.

- c. David understood that God's covenant did not rest upon his faithfulness but upon God's faithfulness.
David's reign was not perfect
Solomon's reign would not be perfect – nor any who followed after him. But there was coming one whose reign would be perfect.
2 Samuel 23:3 NAU - "The Rock of Israel spoke to me, 'He who rules over men righteously'"
2. God's covenant blessings ultimately rest upon the Son of David
Matthew Henry: "David's house was typical of the church of Christ, which is his house. Suppose this be not so with God as we could wish, suppose it be diminished, distressed, disgraced, and weakened, by errors and corruptions, yea, almost extinct, yet God has made a covenant with the church's head, the Son of David, that he will preserve to him a seed, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against his house."²
 3. Jesus is our Covenant Head. His Kingdom is perfect. The King is perfect
The citizens of this Kingdom are ruled according to Divine perfection
 4. This King is glorious. He attracts His people to His light.
This is the nature of the Gospel. We are attracted to Christ.

III. It is an exclusive kingdom

A. David draws a great distinction

V.6 - "But the worthless, every one of them will be thrust away like thorns"

V.7 - "they will be completely burned with fire in *their* place."

1. It is a righteous kingdom. The inhabitants of the kingdom are of a particular sort.
2. Nothing defiled will be allowed into the gates. The wicked are described as "worthless" using the word בְּלִיעֵל. The KJV translates it literally: "sons of Belial." It was the word used to describe the sons of Eli and it was used to describe Nabal. It is the worst possible title. It describes a condition of worthlessness.
 - a. The author compares it to a nasty weed that has no value—a nuisance the farmer has to contend with. They have no value and are pulled up and cast into a burn heap.
 - b. The farmer uses a special implement to carry it to the fire to avoid being injured.
2 Samuel 23:7 NAU - "But the man who touches them Must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, And they will be completely burned with fire in *their* place."

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 476.

- c. Jesus describes such weeds in His parable of the wheat and tares. **Matthew 13:40-42 NAU** - "So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ "The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, ⁴² and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
- B. This is strange to the ears of modern man
1. In our egalitarian society it is not fashionable to draw distinctions. All must have absolute equality. To declare Christianity as the only way of salvation is labeled intolerant.
 2. Most people believe they have a right to the blessings of heaven. They feel it is their due. There must be no talk of sin or judgment.
 3. Even the local church sometimes refuses to make distinctions.
 - a. Everyone in the church is considered Christian no matter how much their lives contradict the Gospel. We are nervous about announcing the radical nature of our Lord's Kingdom.
 - b. The Gospel message is watered down by the proclamation of God's universal love. Few would expect this God to be a God of wrath.
 4. The Kingdom of God makes distinctions. **Matthew 10:35 NAU** - "For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law"
 - a. The word "set" does not adequately express the original
 - b. The KJV is better: **Matthew 10:35 KJV** - "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law."
 - c. The word is διχάζω – "strictly *divide in two, separate*;" – Jesus came to bring division, a great divide. **Matthew 24:40-41 NAU** - "Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹ "Two women *will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.*"
 5. The Kingdom of God is a righteous kingdom. **F. F. Bruce** writes: "*Holiness is not an optional extra in the Christian life but something which belongs to its essence. It is the pure in heart, and none but they, who shall see God. Those who are called to be partakers of God's holiness must be holy themselves.*" ³

³ Bruce, F. F., *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), page 348.

Conclusion:

1. David's words were comforting to him and they are comforting to us. God's covenants are sure. He is faithful to a thousand generations.
2. As this world seems to be wallowing in sin and corruption God's faithfulness will never falter.

Lamentations 3:22-23 NAU - "The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. ²³ *They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.*"

1 Chronicles 16:14-15 NAU - "He is the LORD our God; His judgments are in all the earth. ¹⁵ Remember His covenant forever, The word which He commanded to a thousand generations,"