

# **The Life of David**

## **David and the Covenant of God**

*2 Samuel 7:1-17*

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July 12, 2020

# David and the Covenant of God

## Scripture

Today we come to 2 Samuel 7 in our series on “The Life of David.” This is one of the most important chapters in Scripture as it deals with the Lord’s covenant with David.

Let’s read about David and the covenant of God in 2 Samuel 7:1-17:

<sup>1</sup>Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, <sup>2</sup>the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” <sup>3</sup>And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you.”

<sup>4</sup>But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, <sup>5</sup>“Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in?’ <sup>6</sup>I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. <sup>7</sup>In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’” <sup>8</sup>Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. <sup>9</sup>And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. <sup>10</sup>And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup>from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your

enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. <sup>12</sup> When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, <sup>15</sup> but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. <sup>16</sup> And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.' ” <sup>17</sup> In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David. (2 Samuel 7:1-17)

## Introduction

I was talking with a friend recently about how long different monarchs reigned. You may recall that Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom reigned for more than 63 years. Her great-great-granddaughter is Elizabeth II, the current monarch of the United Kingdom. She has reigned for more than 68 years and is still going strong! But Queen Elizabeth II is not the longest-reigning monarch. The longest-reigning monarch of a sovereign state is Louis XIV, who reigned for more than 72 years!

David became king in about 1010 BC and he reigned as king for about 40 years. Even though David died, God promised David that he would “establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Samuel 7:13). This amazing promise of God to David is known as the “Davidic covenant.” An astonishing amount has been written about this covenant that the Lord made with David. We could profitably spend many weeks examining the various facets of this covenant. However, today I want us to focus not so much on the covenant but on the covenant God, or, as Dale Ralph Davis writes,

“not on the promise but on the Promiser.”<sup>1</sup>

## Lesson

Second Samuel 7:1-17 teaches us several truths about God. Let's use the following outline:

1. God Is Sovereign (7:1-3)
2. God Is Condescending (7:4-7)
3. God Is Gracious (7:8-11)
4. God Is Indefectible (7:12-17)

### I. God Is Sovereign (7:1-3)

First, we learn that God is sovereign.

It is likely that the events recorded in 2 Samuel 7 took place later in David's reign as king. Verse 1a of chapter 8 says, “After this David defeated the Philistines and subdued them.” The writer of Samuel had a tendency to group things together thematically rather than chronologically. So, we read in verse 1 of chapter 7, **“Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies....”** The reason the writer of Samuel put this after chapter 6 is because chapter 6 is about David bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem.

Then David built a beautiful palace for himself. We can almost picture David sitting in the cool of the evening on his porch surveying Jerusalem and his palace and the happy palace attendants. Then **the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you”** (7:2-3). This is the first time we are introduced to **Nathan the prophet**. Nathan was to David what

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<sup>1</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 83.

Samuel was to Saul. He was God's prophet speaking God's word to the king.

You remember that the **ark of God** represented the visible presence of God in the midst of his people. It was an extremely important piece of furniture that Saul had neglected for decades. But as soon as David became king, he wanted the ark of God placed in Jerusalem, which was to be the political and spiritual capitol of the people of God. So, Nathan affirmed the heart's desire of David, who wanted to build a permanent edifice to house the **ark of God**.

The lesson here is that God is sovereign. David was a teenager when God promised that he would become king. David experienced many difficulties as he served Saul. I believe Saul tried to kill David sixteen times, and that is apart from the times that David was in danger on the field of battle. Eventually, however, **“the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies.”** To be sure, difficulties still lay ahead for David. Some of them were of his own making but others were not. Nevertheless, in this time of respite, the Lord had fulfilled his promises to David.

I read about an old Jewish story that once upon a time there was a four-year-old boy named Mortakai who refused to attend school and study Hebrew. Whenever his parents tried to immerse his mind in the Torah [or the Word of God], he would sneak away and play on the swing set. Every form of persuasion failed. Mortakai remained stubborn and defiant. The exasperated parents even brought him to a famous psychiatrist, but that also proved futile. Nothing changed the young boy's heart, which seemed to grow more distant, lonely, and hardened every week.

Finally, in utter desperation, Mortakai's parents brought him to the local rabbi, a warm and wise spiritual guide. As the parents explained their plight, pouring out their frustration and despair, the rabbi listened intently. Without saying a word, he gently picked up Mortakai, took him in his arms and held him close to his chest.

The rabbi held Mortakai close enough and tight enough so the young boy could feel the safe, rhythmic beating of the rabbi's heart. Then, still without a word, he gently handed the child back to his parents. From that point on, Mortakai listened to his parents, studied the Torah and, when it was appropriate, he also slipped away to play on the swing set.<sup>2</sup>

David believed that God is sovereign. He clung to God so that he could sense the safe, sovereign heartbeat of God.

How about you? Do you believe that God is sovereign? Are you experiencing God's rest in your daily life?

## II. God Is Condescending (7:4-7)

Second, we learn that God is condescending.

After his visit with David, Nathan went home. **But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, "Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"' ' "** (7:4-7).

After the people of God left Egypt under the leadership of Moses, God gave them directions for the construction of the ark of the covenant as well as for the tabernacle, which was to house the ark of the covenant. That was hundreds of years earlier. Never once did God instruct his people to build him a permanent dwelling. And the reason he did not do so was because his people were not yet properly settled. And so God travelled with his people.

I love the way Dale Ralph Davis summarizes what God is

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2014/may/7051214.html>.

doing here. He writes:

Do you see what Yahweh is saying about himself? He is the God who travels with his people in all their topsy-turvy, here-and-there journeys and wanderings. Do his people live in tents? So does he. Are they a pilgrim people on their way to the land of promise? So he is the pilgrim God, sharing the rigors of the journey with them.<sup>3</sup>

God is condescending. He stoops to help his people in need. He says to his people, **“I have been moving about in a tent...with all the people of Israel.”** What a beautiful picture of our condescending God.

Dale Ralph Davis tells a story about Sam Rayburn during his tenure as Speaker of the House. The teenage daughter of a reporter Rayburn knew died suddenly. The next morning the reporter heard a rapping on his apartment door, opened it, and found Rayburn standing there. “I just came by to see what I could do to help.”

The reporter, stuttering and trying to recover from his surprise, indicated that he didn’t think there was anything the Speaker could do—they were making all the arrangements.

“Well, have you all had your coffee this morning?”

The reporter confessed they hadn’t had time to do that yet.

“Well, I can at least make the coffee this morning.”

Rayburn went in and made his way to the kitchen in search of coffee. While Rayburn was busy with coffee-making, the reporter remembered that Rayburn usually had a stated weekly appointment on this particular morning. So he half-inquired, “Mr. Speaker, I thought you were supposed to be having breakfast at the White House this morning.”

“Well, I was,” Rayburn admitted, “but I called the President and told him I had a friend who was in trouble, and I couldn’t

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<sup>3</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 85.

come.”<sup>4</sup>

God knows that his people are in trouble. He condescends to help them in their time of need. He will not enjoy rest until he gives rest to his people.

My dear brother and sister, our God still condescends to help us today. Whatever our difficulty, know that he still helps us today.

### III. God Is Gracious (7:8-11)

Third, we learn that God is gracious.

In verses 8-16, God makes a promise to David. This promise is profound and it is in reality a covenant. In fact, it is called a “covenant” in other places in Scripture (cf. 2 Samuel 23:5; Psalm 89:3-4, 28). A covenant may be defined as “an agreement between two parties.”<sup>5</sup> This covenant is known as the “Davidic covenant.”

The Hebrew text of verses 9-15 contains ten “I will” statements by God. Each one highlights a different aspect of God’s promise to David, his offspring, or Israel. We won’t look at all of them, but I want to highlight just three of them.

*First, God promises David a great name.* We read in verse 9b, **“And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.”** God promises to make great David’s immediate reputation as well as his enduring legacy. David is the greatest king of Israel, and he is still revered today.

*Second, God promises David a place for his people.* We read in verse 10, **“And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more.”** God promises security for his people.

*And third, God promises David a dynasty.* We read in verse 11b, **“Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make**

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<sup>4</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 86.

<sup>5</sup> Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1989), 631–632.

**you a house.”** Instead of David building a house for the Lord, the Lord will build one for David. However, the word **“house”** in this instance is not a physical structure but a dynasty. Or, another way to say it is that God will establish David’s kingdom.

Do you see how God is gracious? Biblical grace is “unmerited favor.” David was the recipient of God’s unmerited favor. That is, David did absolutely nothing to earn or merit the favor of God. God’s grace is unconditional.

In *What’s So Amazing about Grace*, Philip Yancey recounts this story about C.S. Lewis:

During a British conference on comparative religions, experts from around the world debated what, if any, belief was unique to the Christian faith.

They began eliminating possibilities. Incarnation? Other religions had different versions of gods appearing in human form. Resurrection? Again, other religions had accounts of return from death.

The debate went on for some time until C.S. Lewis wandered into the room. “What’s the rumpus about?” he asked, and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity’s unique contribution among world religions. Lewis responded, “Oh, that’s easy. It’s grace.”

After some discussion, the conferees had to agree.

The notion of God’s grace coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity. The Buddhist eight-fold path, the Hindu doctrine of Karma, the Jewish covenant, and Muslim code of law—each of these offers a way to earn approval. Only Christianity dares to make God’s grace unconditional.<sup>6</sup>

God is gracious. Have you come to know the grace of God in your life?

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<sup>6</sup> Philip Yancey, *What’s So Amazing about Grace?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 11.

#### IV. God Is Indefectible (7:12-17)

And fourth, we learn that God is indefectible.

The word “indefectible” means “not liable to fail, end, or decay.” It also means “perfect; faultless.”<sup>7</sup>

We come now to the heart of the Davidic covenant. God says to David through the prophet Nathan, **“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”** (7:12-14a). God’s promises often have two fulfilments, one in the short-term and the other in the long-term. The short-term fulfilment of this promise refers to Solomon, whereas the long-term fulfilment of this promise refers to David’s Greater Son, Jesus Christ.

Verse 14b-15 refer to Solomon when God said, **“When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.”** Solomon did commit iniquity, for example, by having hundreds of wives and concubines.

God’s summary of his covenant to David is found in verse 16, **“And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”** There were good kings and bad kings who came after David. Eventually, the physical kingdom collapsed when Judah was taken into exile by the Babylonians in 586 BC. But, David’s seed and line continued until the birth of Jesus Christ. And he shall reign forever and ever!

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<sup>7</sup> Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, eds., *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

## Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the account of David and the covenant of God in 2 Samuel 7:1-17, let us be sure that we are participants in God's covenant.

In the Bible, there are essentially two major covenants. We call these the "covenant of works" and the "covenant of grace." There are two parties in both covenants.

In the "covenant of works," the two parties are God and Adam. God promised Adam life upon condition of obedience and threatened death if he disobeyed. Adam disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit. So, he experienced death. As our federal head, all those who are "in Adam" fell in him. We are "in Adam" by virtue of our natural birth. And so all of us experience death and condemnation because we are in Adam.

In the "covenant of grace," the two parties are God and the second Adam, that is, Jesus Christ. God promised Jesus life upon condition of obedience and threatened death if he disobeyed. Jesus perfectly obeyed God. He did experience death, but not for his own sin. Jesus paid the penalty for all the sin of all of those who would believe in him. As our federal head, we are "in Christ" when we experience the new birth. We are then given faith in Christ, and we will be with Christ in glory for all eternity.

The Davidic covenant is an expression of the covenant of grace in that it tells us that David's Greater Son, Jesus Christ, will rule on his throne for ever and ever. His kingdom is an eternal kingdom. And we enter into that kingdom by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

So, let me ask you: are you in the kingdom of God? Have you trusted in Jesus for your salvation? If you have never done so, let me encourage you to do so today. Amen.

# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church  
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and membership in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike maturity,  
equip them for their ministry in the church  
and life mission in the world,  
in order to magnify God's name.*

## Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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