

Introduction

The text before us this morning shows us a man of God at prayer. We can learn a lot about a person by the way they pray. But we can also learn a lot about their understanding of God by the way they pray. A man was being honored at his retirement with a painted portrait. Upon the unveiling of the portrait, the man praised the work of the artist. He said that in the future when people looked at the portrait they would not ask, "who is that man?" but "who painted that portrait?" In other words what really stood out about the painting was not the man who was being painted but the man who performed the work.

Even so as we come to David's prayer in this text, we will emerge not marveling at a great man who prayed but at the great God to whom he prayed. The Lord is both the artist who has made the man as well as the promise-keeper whose promises fuel such ardent prayers.

[Read text and Pray]

So God had spoken. David was not going to be the one to build the Lord a house, but the Lord was going to make DAVID a house, a dynasty, one that would be established forever and one through whom God's people Israel would be planted in their own place and would dwell securely being disturbed no more. We saw last week how this covenant is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ, by whose victory over death and the wrath of God the people of God of all ages will be placed under his rule in the new Jerusalem in the new heavens and the new earth, never more to be disturbed, forever to be secure. David would surely not have understood all the details. But to whatever extent he did understand the promise of God, the knowledge was staggering for David. He was overwhelmed with the goodness of God to him and the greatness of God that His goodness makes known.

So David went in and sat before the Lord. He went into THE prayer closet of the tent he had set up and he prayed. He spoke to the Lord with gratitude and praise. David highlights three of the works of God in his covenant with him and how each one manifests the glory and greatness of God. The covenant God has made with David puts the greatness of God on display in three particular ways.

The first aspect of the display of God's glory is His . . .

I. Blessing an Undeserving Person (18-22).

David declares that the blessing God has poured out in the making of this covenant is blessing poured out on an undeserving person. Consider what initially came out of the mouth of David as he spoke and opened up his heart to the Lord. "Who am I, O Lord GOD?" David is in disbelief that God has treated him with such profound privilege. How could this be? He has done nothing to deserve this. In himself he is nothing great. He is saying to the Lord, "I am unworthy. I am undeserving. I am nobody. Why would you ever choose to be so abundantly kind to me?"

David continues, "and what is my house that you have brought me this far?" His pedigree and heritage are insignificant. David is not proud. He does not boast himself. He does not think highly of himself. So he marvels that God has raised him to such a high level of recognition and esteem. How far had God brought him? Well as Nathan spoke, the Lord had brought David from the pasture to become the prince of God's people. And now he will take him even further because the Lord was promising David that his house would extend far into the future. Verse 19 quotes David, "You have

spoken of your servant's house for a great while to come." Indeed, forever is a great while to come. And what God promised was that David's dynasty would be eternal.

Then there is this possibly confusing statement. The ESV renders it "this is instruction for mankind, O Lord God!" The basic point is that David recognizes that God's covenant with him has world-wide ramifications. David is amazed God is using little old David and his come-from-nowhere dynasty to impact the world. David would have the world to see how great is the one true God he serves. Look at what he says in verse 21. "Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness, to make your servant know it." In other words, Lord you have done it and you have let me know by your promise all the greatness that will be associated with me by my dynasty. What kind of God would do this?

He answers what kind of God would do this in verse 22. "Therefore, you are great, O Lord God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears." What David has heard from the Lord completely sets the one true God apart from all others. It displays his greatness.

And to sum it up, the greatness and glory of God here is that he would bestow such honor privilege and blessing on a person who is so undeserving as is David. He is blown away by the abundant and undeserved, unmerited kindness of the Lord that overflows so abundantly on him.

Now God has anointed very few of his people to be kings on the earth, but God has specially and specifically called EVERY ONE of his people. None of us is deserving to belong to the Lord. None of us merits becoming a child of God. We are all undeserving. We are all ill-equipped on our own. But God has chosen the foolish, the weak, and the despised in the world to shame the wise, the strong, and the prized. God chose specific persons in Christ NOT because they are worthy but despite the fact that we are all terribly UN-worthy. And think of the way he has lavished his blessings on us.

Ephesians 1:3-8

God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us.

What kind of God would choose to save and keep for himself unworthy, unclean, unattractive, undesirable, and undeserving people? A God who abounds with grace, that's what kind! It does not matter who you are, or what you have done, if you have come to faith in Jesus Christ, it is not because of you. It is because of him. If it had anything to do with you, you wouldn't belong to him. There is no one like this God. He is worthy of praise. Paul declared, "Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ." David declared to the LORD, "You are great and there is no one like you!"

I was brought up with a strong bent against the doctrines of grace and God's predestinating choice. I remember first hearing about it from my high school French teacher, of all people. I strongly disputed him. As I was maturing in the faith and getting a deeper understanding of the Bible, these doctrines seemed almost irrefutable. But again I resisted them. I would pray and say to God something like this: "I know this is not true, but if it were, then I would be rendered speechless." I really did want my point of view to be aligned with the word of God. So I decided to just read the

Bible starting with page 1 to see if these things were true or false. I didn't make it out of the book of Genesis before I finally threw in the towel and I gave up fighting. I said to the Lord, "I give up!" It's true. The reason I believe in Christ and the reason I love you is because you loved me first. And now I am speechless because I know that I believe not because of me but because of you! And it does not make me proud. It does not make me arrogant and cocky. It makes me say to you, "Who am I, O Lord GOD, that you would love me? Why did you set your love on me when I am so undeserving?" I joined in the chorus of those who sing "Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me" with overwhelming astonishment and gratitude and praise to the one who is God and there is no other ... to the God who rescued me from myself and lavished blessing on me. I once was lost but now am found. I was blind but now I see. And it is not because I was smarter than others or better than others. The reason is because God came to me in grace; it is because he made me alive when I was dead. It is because he came looking for me. It is because he gave me a new heart and new eyes to be able to see him and love him and trust in him, when otherwise I would not.

These are the kinds of things David was expressing in the first section of this prayer. And these are the kinds of things that every child of God should know about himself and express back to God in praise. And it impacts the way we live, love, and look at others. We can't look down and judge those who are just like we were before God saved us. How can we think ourselves better when the only explanation for our faith in Christ and our belonging to God as children is God's grace lavished upon undeserving persons?

The second aspect in David's prayer of the display of God's glory is His . . .

II. Redeeming a Chosen People (23-24).

Here the focus shifts from God's grace upon David and his dynasty to God's grace and blessing upon his chosen people Israel. They were chosen through Abraham before they were a large nation. As the house of Jacob, they went down into Egypt a measly 70 some odd persons. There they were oppressed, mistreated, and taken advantage of by the mighty and powerful nation of Egypt. So resistant was Pharaoh, king of the Egyptians, to the command of God to let the people go that he was willing to experience plague after plague that decimated the land. God warned Moses it would be this way when he called him to lead the people out. God raised up Pharaoh to resist him in order that God might display his power.

In just these couple sentences David summarizes the history of Israel. God redeemed, he delivered, this people from Egypt and drove out the nation and the gods who filled the land of promise, and here they are. Israel is the ONLY nation, the ONE nation on earth whom God went to redeem. He did great signs and awesome works to bring them out. He established this people to be his people forever and to be their God forever. It is the same kind of point as the first one. This nation is what it is because God came to them. God saved them. God has planted them in the land. No other nation was treated in this way. In Deuteronomy 7(vv. 6-8) Moses instructed the people about their relationship to the Lord. He said, "You are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

Let us as New Testament believers understand that God's redemption of Israel and planting of the people in the promised land is a picture of his redemption of the church. We were held under the

bondage of Satan through our sin and we walked according to the prince of the power of the air. In fact God has permitted Satan to resist him with such hostility and so stubbornly in order to display his own power. The LORD has brought sinners out of satanic domination through the blood of his Son just as the people of Israel were brought out through the blood of the Passover lamb. And he has made us to be a kingdom in his son Christ Jesus.

So David marvels that God has chosen him to be father of an eternal dynasty of kings as a part of his great plan to redeem and preserve a nation for himself and for his name. See the phrase sandwiched in the midst of verse 23—making himself a name. God reveals his name—he reveals his greatness and glory—through the redemption of his people. He made himself a name by the power he put on display through the weak and by the mercy poured out upon an unworthy nation. Again it is God who does the choosing. And it is God who does the work. And it is God who gets the glory. He demonstrates his glory by the amazing way in which he works.

And now we see a revelation of his mystery in the church. And that is who we are. In this place we are a representative of the body of the saved who are called out from the world, who have been redeemed by the mighty work of God at the cross of Jesus Christ and by the might of his power demonstrated at Christ's resurrection. We are His people. We are chosen by him and blessed by him because he is rich in mercy. He has reconciled both Jews and Gentiles to himself for his glory in one body through the cross. Through the church the manifold wisdom of God is made known according to his eternal purpose. God's eternal purpose was not Adam and Eve in the garden but redeemed sinners in the new heavens and new earth communing with Christ our king and LORD.

What a glorious, wise, gracious, and powerful God we serve! If you are not serving him, then why not join his joyous band of reconciled sinners! The privilege and task of the church in this world is to glory in and proclaim the name of Christ and to call sinners to leave their sins and their hopelessness and come by faith and rest in and follow the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and king. We who are followers summon you in his behalf this very morning to flee to him who saves and follow him who loves and whose commands are wonderful and right.

There is one more aspect in David's prayer of the display of God's glory.
It is His . . .

III. Fulfilling a Promise Made (25-29).

Now that David has gotten beyond his astonishment of God's grace to him and the critical role it plays with regard to all mankind in general and to God's redeemed people in particular for all eternity, he makes his request known. He beseeches God. He calls upon the Lord for action in his behalf. And the essence of David's prayer is this: LORD, Do what you have said you are going to do.

See how he expresses it in verse 25. "And now, O LORD God, confirm forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, and do as you have spoken." Put succinctly, David is saying, "Lord, fulfill the promise you have made." It is a prayer akin to the line from the disciples's prayer. The disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray and here is an important part of what he taught. Here is what you pray, says Jesus: "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." David is not trying to change the mind of God. He is submitting to it. And this is the way our prayers should be.

Notice David is now referring to himself as the Lord's servant. It happens 10 times between verses 18 and 29. In the first three verses of this chapter David is referred to as "the king." When the Lord

addresses David through the prophet Nathan, the Lord refers to David as his servant. And now David over and over and over refers to himself as the Lord's servant. It is key to David's prayer.

The servant understands the servant-master dynamic. He understands that he serves the purpose of the master. He does not question the master. He does not tell the master what to do. The servant says, like Eli told Samuel to say: "Speak Lord, for you servant is listening." And when the master promises good to the servant, the servant is overwhelmed and astonished because he does not deserve the good. But being the servant, he delights to plead for the goodness of the Lord as he promised. We should not pray to change God's mind. We should pray in glad surrender to his will as a servant whose delight is to glorify the master.

Why should our prayers be this way? Well, David explains. Look at verse 26. "And your name will be magnified forever." When God keeps his word, when he fulfills his promise, his glory is made manifest. And it is not only by keeping his promise but also the promise that he keeps. David sees and knows that the Lord does what he does for his own glory. And he is happy to be the servant of such a glorious God. You know there are many times we do not have answers to questions about why God does what he does. Why does he let me suffer? Why does he allow loved ones to die untimely deaths? Why does God not bless with success my every endeavor for him?

Until we are glorified in his presence, we will not be completely able to answer all the why's and wherefore's. But there are some things we can know. Psalm 119:67 says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word." Verse 71 says, "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes." Psalm 84:11 tells us, "No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly." In 2 Corinthians 12:9 the Lord speaks to his servant, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness," and the servant Paul says, "Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

We CAN BE SURE that God does what is good for his people AND he does what he does to magnify his name. And that is right! We should pray in keeping with the promises of God because of the greatness of those promises and how they display the greatness and glory of God. It is for this reason that the psalmist says, "A day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness." And so we should pray in accordance with his will and his promises.

Now let's pose this question: How can a servant be so bold as to pray for his own good? If a servant is truly humble-minded and the glory of his master is his highest pursuit, then how does he dare pray that the master will benefit him? David answers that question in verse 27: "You O LORD of hosts have made this revelation to your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house.' THEREFORE, your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you." David dares to pray so boldly because God has made him a promise.

The promises of God are the foundation of bold and confident prayers. The promises of God should be the foundation of the things we ask for from God. His promises show us his delight and as his servants his delight is shared by us. And so we pray like David, even with these words from verse 29, "Now therefore may it please you" to do what you have spoken.

To pray according to God's promises is to pray in faith. Taking him at his word, we believe what he has said. Therefore we pray according to his will and we may know we have the requests we have asked of him. This truth connects us to 1 John 5:14-15. "... this is the confidence we have toward

him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him." God's promises reveal his will and fuel our confidence as we pray.

Now I do not say that we should not ask what seems impossible. There are times when our circumstances seem hopeless, but God. Think of the hopelessness of a hundred year old man and his 90 year old barren wife. But God had promised! Paul puts it this way in Romans 4: Abraham "did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead ... or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised." And God delivered! When we pray according to God's promises, we express an unwavering faith in the God who made those promises. And so we may be bold and confident as we ask that he be pleased to do what he has said.

God has spoken. And it is with his blessing that his servants will truly be blessed. Brothers and sisters, this prayer of David assures our hearts. God answered this prayer when he raised up his son from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church." Jesus rules forever as king according to God's promise AND according to David's prayer that the Lord bless his house that it may continue forever.

Such prayer glorifies God and magnifies his name. Let us pray in the same way. Your kingdom come and your will be done.

Conclusion

As I mentioned at the outset this morning, when we consider the personal prayers of a man or woman, we not only learn about them, we also learn about the God to whom they pray. As we close this morning, may I ask you to consider your own prayer life? What does it say about you? Are you God-focused? Are you confident and bold because of his promises? Do you submit to God's will? Do you believe His glory is paramount?

And what does your prayer life say about God? If I were to develop my understanding of God based on what I heard in your prayers, what would he look like?

I would exhort us this morning often, like David, to go in and sit before the Lord and open our hearts. And I would exhort us to be enthralled with the grace of God and the glory of God and the greatness of God and the promises of God as we do. May we seek what pleases him, knowing that his promises indicate to us what that is. May we implore his blessing with the willingness to sacrifice self but with the certainty that God will withhold nothing that is good from his people.