

A King of Promise

THEOLOGICAL THEME: The gracious promises of God are meant to humble us and stir up gratitude in our hearts.

One of the most troubling words in the English language is the word *enough*. Many of us constantly wonder whether we've been good *enough*, worked hard *enough*, or loved our families *enough*. And when we start applying that tricky word to our relationship with God, things get even messier. How much *is* enough for God?

? When have you felt tired in your walk of faith? What situations led you to feeling burned out or exhausted?

The desire to do more and more for God was what prompted David to build God a house. But David soon discovered God had a different idea for him instead. God's plan was not for David to *do* something but to *receive* something, and this gives us a glimpse into the heart of God for the world.

In this session we see God reaffirming and expanding the covenant promises He made to Abraham—this time to King David. God promised to give David rest from his enemies and to build an eternal house through one of David's descendants. In response to God's unfailing promises, David expressed gratitude and humility, and this is the appropriate response for all believers in light of God's faithfulness.

Voices from the Church

"The reality that all of history has been driving toward, is the Son of David on the throne of the universe."¹

—Nancy Guthrie

1. God promises to give His people eternal rest (2 Sam. 7:8-11a).

We catch up with David in 2 Samuel 7, where he was living large as the established king of Israel. From his palatial balcony, David looked down and saw the travel-worn tabernacle that served as God's house. So David made a commitment to build God a beautiful new house. In response to David's seemingly generous act, God flipped David's script. Instead of accepting David's offer, He wrote one of His own:

⁸ 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. ⁹ 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. 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. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ^{11a} from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies.

God reminded David that every step of the way—from the pasture to the palace—He was orchestrating David's steps. In keeping with a common pattern in Scripture, God reminded David of His faithfulness before He made His promise.

When we read this passage, we ought to ask ourselves: *Are we not just as quick as David to consider ourselves independent and self-sufficient? Have we forgotten how God has brought us to the place we are now?* In times of plenty, we are less likely to throw ourselves on the mercy of God than when times are bad.



Why do you think we are less likely to acknowledge God during seasons of wealth and success than in seasons of crisis and suffering?

Essentially, God said to David: “My power establishes you, and you will always be My debtor. Your life will be lived in grateful response to Me.” The house that God would build would not bear the inscription “Built by David for God” but “Built by God for David.”

Grace—it seems so simple. It’s a gift, costly for the giver but free for the recipient. Yet this is where so many people stumble. We’re hard-wired to ask: “How much is *enough*? How often do I need to come to church? How much money do I have to give?” These questions will *never* get you to the gospel. The gospel begins with God’s extravagant gift. Jesus’ blood—and Jesus’ blood alone—is *enough* for your weary, guilty soul.

Christianity is not about you living a good life and then giving your record to God; it is about Jesus living the perfect life and then giving His record to you as a gift. He lived the life we were supposed to live and died the death we should have died. His life is ours, but only if we receive it. The story of God flipping the script and making a promise to King David sets the stage for that glorious gospel.

With David’s perspective corrected, God began giving promises to David. The first three conclude with God declaring that peace will come to Israel. Israel had been in wars and battles for many years, so this was welcome news. And if we are honest, we all admit we want a place to rest—a place of security, no longer worrying if something bad or tragic is just around the corner.

For the Christian, our rest is found in Jesus Christ. In John 15:9, Jesus commanded us to make our home in Him. His name and His presence are the “rest” we’ve been looking for. He who keeps His word is sure to make good on the promise to grant rest to His followers (Matt. 11:28). When we make our home in Him, He will display His glory through us to the world.



How does the gospel of Jesus Christ grant rest to those who believe it?



How does our inability to rest in Christ hinder our witness?

2. God promises to build an eternal house (2 Sam. 7:11b-17).

^{11b} Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. ¹² 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. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

¹⁴ 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, ¹⁵ but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” ¹⁷ In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

Here we see God promising to build David an eternal house. This is a promise that ultimately refers to the Messiah who would come and reign forever. But one detail immediately strikes a lot of readers as odd: “When he commits iniquity. . .” If we’re talking about Jesus here (which we are), then what is this about iniquity? Jesus never sinned!

It is helpful to remember that most biblical prophecies have a dual meaning. There is an *immediate* meaning, and then there is an *ultimate* one. From the perspective of the prophets, of course, it was often difficult to untie the two, but they remain distinct. Think of it like the experience of seeing a mountain range in the distance. When you first spot it, you might see two distinct peaks, seemingly right next to each other. It’s only as you get closer that you see these peaks are miles apart.

The first fulfillment of this prophecy was David’s biological son Solomon. Solomon’s name literally means “rest,” so in many ways he would exemplify this promise. His reign would extend *rest* throughout Israel, and it would be on his watch that Israel constructed the temple (the subject of a later session). Still, Solomon would do some patently foolish things—some “Saul-like” acts, as God put it here—such as having 700 wives and worshipping idols (also covered in a later session). But even so, God would keep His promise and would not strip the kingdom from him completely.

Voices from the Church

“God’s chosen king, the one to whom he promised an enduring dynasty, had faults and occasionally needed divine humbling. God himself would have to provide a king who would have no faults.”²

—Michael Williams

Yet this prophecy points *through* Solomon to another king—Jesus. He was the descendant of David whose kingdom would last. He was the descendant who would establish the ultimate temple, not a building constructed with human hands but the temple of His own body. And after His ascension to His heavenly throne, He would send His Spirit to make us—His people—the temple of God.

Unlike Solomon, Jesus would not need to be disciplined with the stripes of men. Instead, He would be bruised for *our* iniquity, and by His stripes, we would be healed (Isa. 53:5). The *real* Son of David would build the *real* temple of God and establish God’s *real* presence with His people—forever. And He would not just be David’s son. He would be God’s own Son, building the house of salvation for God’s people on earth *all by Himself*.

Wrap your head around that—God would build His own house, and He would *become* the house He promised to build. *In Jesus, God would be the fulfillment to His own promise.*

 Why do you think it is important that God promised to reign through a human being?

 In what ways does the church fulfill the role of being God’s temple?

99 Essential Christian Doctrines

16. God Is Faithful

God’s faithfulness means He keeps His word and always fulfills His promises (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:13; 1 Pet. 4:19). God’s faithfulness is demonstrated in His fulfillment of the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The apostle Paul linked the attribute of “faithful” to God’s coming through on His word: “He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it” (1 Thess. 5:24). We reflect God by keeping the promises we make to Him and to others.

3. We respond to God's promise with gratitude and humility (2 Sam. 7:18-26).

¹⁸ Then King David went in and sat before the LORD and said, "Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?" ¹⁹ And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord GOD. You have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind, O Lord GOD! ²⁰ And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord GOD! ²¹ Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness, to make your servant know it. 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. ²³ And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods? ²⁴ And you established for yourself your people Israel to be your people forever. And you, O LORD, became their God. 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. ²⁶ And your name will be magnified forever, saying, 'The LORD of hosts is God over Israel,' and the house of your servant David will be established before you.

This is the key to salvation. Asking "How much is *enough* for God?" is the wrong starting point. Instead, salvation starts with knowing what God has already done—which leaves us sitting in stunned awe in the presence of God. Yes, trusting Christ will lead you to *do* things for God. But everything you do is only ever a grateful *response* to what He's already done for you.

We often think that the world is supposed to look at Christians and say, "What impressive works they've done! They must really love God." But as God shows us here, our witness to the world should leave them saying, "Wow, what great things *God* has done *for them!*"



Have you ever been part of a movement where it was evident to everyone there that God was working? What characterized that time in your life?



What was distinct about that particular movement?

What God told David is just as true for us. Our kingdoms will fail. Our businesses will fail. Our loftiest ambitions will fail. Even our families will not last forever. Jesus is the only thing that will last forever. And the greatest privilege of our lives is asking God to show us where we can join Jesus. He doesn't need us, but He will use us for eternal value. He can make our miniscule lives into something beautiful, precious, and everlasting. For far too many of us, our lives are just so small. We think of God as a personal assistant, someone to get us out of a jam. What He desires for us is so much bigger, so much richer, so much more profound than any of us realize.

Voices from the Church

"In the hearts of the people is a groping, inarticulate conviction that if the right ruler would only come along, the world would be healed of all its wounds. Creation is headless and desperately searching for its head."³

—Richard Lovelace

But that greatness begins in humility. It is one of the great paradoxes of the Christian faith: If you desire greatness for yourself, God will oppose you, but if you desire God to be great, your life will have eternal value and miraculous power. Don't waste your life building houses for yourself, or even building houses for God. Rest in His all-sufficient work, and answer Him when He calls.



In what ways do ingratitude and pride hinder us in our mission?



Why are gratitude and humility necessary qualities for us as we share the gospel?

Conclusion

How do we go about expressing our gratitude to God? What does God-honoring, generous giving of our resources look like?

First, we should remember that God does not need us. God is not now (nor has He ever been) looking for “helpers” to assist Him in saving the world. That doesn’t mean He isn’t calling us to give of ourselves generously to that mission, just that He’s not looking for people to supply His needs. He’s not short on money, talent, or time. He never commands us to go save the world *for* Him; He calls us to *follow* Him as He saves the world *through* us.

Second, we should want to give back to God. We have to balance the truth that “God doesn’t need us” with this truth: God still wants us to give back. After all, David wasn’t rebuked for his attitude. God commended it: “Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for my name, you did well that it was in your heart” (2 Chron. 6:7-8). David wasn’t trying to buy God off; he wanted to do something great for God because of God’s great love toward him. And if we think “God doesn’t need us” means we can just spend all of our time and money on ourselves, that only proves we haven’t met the real God.

Third, we should offer ourselves to God and do what He tells us to do. When we think that the weight of the world lies on our abilities and our decisions, it leads to paralysis. But when we instead offer ourselves to God, we can do what He calls us to and rest in that. When we allow the Spirit to guide us, we can finally avoid the pressing guilt of not doing *everything*. We can throw ourselves into that corner of God’s mission that He leads us to instead of being torn apart by all of the causes in the world.

CHRIST CONNECTION: God promised David that future kings of Israel would come from his family and that his kingdom would last forever. God kept this promise by sending Jesus as one of David’s descendants. All of history is driving toward the day when Jesus, the Son of David, will be recognized as the King whose kingdom is everlasting.

HIS MISSION, YOUR MISSION

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: God calls us to offer ourselves fully to Him so that the mercy and grace we've experienced will go out to others.

1. How might the message of eternal rest in Christ resonate with people in the culture around us?

2. What "temple-building" practices and attitudes do you need to confess and repent of in order to focus more and more on Jesus, *the* temple?

3. Because of what Jesus has done, what dreams are stirring in your heart for the advancement of the gospel in your area?

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