

Delighted by Grace

Seven and one-half years after David became king of Israel, he secured Jerusalem as his capital city. Shortly thereafter, he settled in a fine cedar palace and was enjoying a long season of rest from his enemies. But, something seemed out of sorts, almost inappropriate. God had blessed him abundantly, and the king felt a burden to somehow respond. From his own fine home, it did not seem right to David that *YAHWEH*'s ark continued to be situated in the tent that he had erected for that purpose. He shared his desire to build a temple for the LORD with the prophet Nathan.

The LORD revealed to Nathan that His plans for the king did not include a temple-building project. Instead, He emphasized that His work in David's life, past, present and future involved the establishment of an everlasting kingdom. To what degree David knew at this point in time that this meant the kingdom of *Messiah* is not clear. Still, when Nathan disclosed what God had revealed back to David, the king "went in and sat before the LORD" (2 Samuel 7:18a). This probably means that he entered the tent that housed the ark. David uttered a lengthy prayer that includes the following preamble of praise:

"Who am I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?
¹⁹And as if this were not enough in your sight, O Sovereign LORD, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant. Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O Sovereign LORD?
²⁰What more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Sovereign LORD. ²¹For the sake of your word and according to your will, you have done this great thing and made it known to your servant. – 2 Samuel 7:18b-21

It has been said often that a proud heart can never be a thankful heart. David acknowledged freely that his life had been one unmerited gift after the next. He was a shepherd before he was a king. Though his predecessor Saul had sought to kill him, God preserved David's life time and again. Finally, God had ushered this former shepherd to Israel's throne. But, that wasn't enough. God was now promising to make a dynasty of David's line.

The record is clear that David was far from a perfect man, but at least at this early point in his reign, he knew his place. He never forgot that he ruled only by the good favor of God. Saul had become proud. He thought that he could hold onto his power even after the Lord rejected him. David did not suffer from such delusions of grandeur. All real prayer must begin with a proper grasp of who the parties are. One is holy God. The other is not.

When we approach God, there is nothing about Him that we can take for granted, even though His kindnesses to us are beyond numbering. In fact, it is impossible for us to fully appreciate God's gifts to us if we are not sensitive to the chasm that He has to bridge every day just to be our Provider. We do not deserve mercies that are new every morning, but God gives them freely.

So what if God has not promised to produce a line of royalty out of our children. Each of us still has a reason to pause and to be rendered speechless. Perhaps, a habit worthy of development is that of sitting still and silent in God's presence and simply wondering, "Why?" Why did He provide us salvation in Jesus Christ? Why is He so patient with us when we are so slow to conform to the righteousness into which He calls us? Why does His heart tenderly reach out to us when we are wounded or bitter or hurting or tempted? Why does He provide for our physical needs? Why does He use feeble folk like us as He pursues His remarkable purposes in the world? Why does He give us promises that touch eternity?

Any of us could rightly ask, "Who am I O Sovereign LORD ... that you have brought me this far?"

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