

CHAPTER 5: RESTORATION

THE BIG PICTURE

The next movement in the narrative carries significance not just for the context of 1 & 2 Samuel and the story of David, but also for the overarching story of God's relationship to humanity. God promise to David is dramatic: ***"your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me."*** God's covenant promise to David takes its place alongside the previous covenants God made with Abraham and with the Israelites under Moses. In this light, 2 Samuel 7 is one of the most important chapters in the entire Bible. It becomes a central feature in the unfolding story of scripture, and an essential feature in Israel's understanding of the Kingdom of God. All future kings of Israel will be evaluated in terms of their loyalty to the covenant of God. As the books of Samuel lead into the books of Kings, we will see example after example of kings that were appointed by God but fail to remain faithful to the covenant. David's essential loyalty to God, as we will see in the majority of narratives that follow, becomes a point of contrast for every idolatrous and unfaithful king for generations. In giving this promise to David, God has linked the future of His Kingdom on earth with the house of David, a promise that finds ultimate fulfillment in the person of Jesus 1,000 years later. The fast paced and action packed narrative of 1 & 2 Samuel is temporarily interrupted to include a lengthy oracle from the prophet Nathan and David's prayer of response. The change in pace underlines the magnitude of the new developments presented in these chapters. The theme of covenant faithfulness (*hesed*) is illustrated as David pours out the same unexpected grace he receives from God to the cripple Mephibosheth. Carefully read **2 Samuel 7-9**, paying close attention to the theme of covenant love.

ENTER THE STORY:

- I. One of the obvious themes of this section of the narrative emerges when you notice the repetition of the word "house." It is used fifteen times in **2 Samuel 7** alone. David and God each use the word differently, the contrast subtly communicating spiritual truth. David uses the word house to refer to physical structures. He has a palace, and he desires to build God a physical temple suitable to contain God's glory. God uses the word to refer to David's household, including his distant descendants in terms of a lasting dynasty. David wants to build God a house, a permanent physical structure, while God speaks of establishing the "house of David" so that his kingdom will endure forever. David's desire to build God a proper "house" is good, but God's response implies He thinks differently than David on this issue. God didn't ask any of the leaders in the past to build a permanent temple. The portable tabernacle symbolized God's choice to have His presence dwell among His people. Later, Jesus will teach his

followers that the true temple of God is the body of believers and worshippers. God is much more concerned with sanctified people than he is with sacred places. What David wants to do is good, but he is still told “no” by God.

- Have you ever wanted to do something good, but felt like God told you “no?” Why might God say “no” to something good?
- Why do you think people often associate certain places, buildings, or other physical things with worship? Are there some places that are sacred or special to you? Why? Do you think God is concerned about such things?
- Jesus was once asked about the appropriate physical place to worship God. His answer was true worshippers worship in “spirit and in truth.” What do you think that means?

II. Take a moment to carefully read God’s promise to David recorded in **2 Samuel 7:5-16**. This is a significant link in the chain of God’s evolving covenant with humankind, so it holds a very important place in the Biblical story. The promise that David’s offspring would rule “forever” would change the way that the Israelites thought about themselves from this moment on. This promise will change the way God relates to humanity – it links the kingdom of David with the Kingdom of God forever. This passage shares specific language with the previous covenant statements found in scripture, first with Abraham and then with the Israelites under Moses. David’s humble prayer of response reveals that he understands God’s favor to him in the context of God’s dealing with Israel throughout history. There is a sense of continuity between this moment and what God did for His people in the past. David does something remarkable when he receives from God such a glorious promise without allowing it to inflate his sense of self-importance. Ten times in this prayer, David calls himself “God’s servant.” God might be exalting David, but David is doing his best to remain humble.

- Read **Genesis 12:1-3** and **Exodus 19:3-6**. What do Abraham’s covenant and the covenant God made with Israel through Moses have in common with the David’s covenant in 2 Samuel? How do these covenants inform us today about what it means to be the people of God?
- Have you ever thought of your life story as part of God’s big story? How could this understanding impact the way you live?
- True humility is a rare and beautiful virtue, and David has it. He doesn’t ever seek glory, instead, he seeks humility. The Bible says three different times: “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.” How well are you keeping your heart properly ordered? How can you grow in humility?

- III. For those familiar with the New Testament and the story of Jesus, it is easy to see Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of David's covenant promise. It is no accident that the genealogy of Jesus includes David. Jesus is the greatest Son of David and he establishes the only true eternal throne as Lord of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is the one who ultimately builds God's temple when he establishes the church as the new people of God. David couldn't have imagined Jesus or the Kingdom he would bring to earth. When the Jewish people hoped for a Messiah (a word that came to mean God's anointed deliverer) in the time of Jesus, they were hoping for someone like David. They had endured a long history of oppression at the hands of foreign armies, and they hoped for a warrior like David that would set them free. They thought their problem was political and geographical, but Jesus knew the real problem was spiritual. Jesus brought spiritual freedom and a release from the curse of sin. Jesus did establish a Kingdom, but not the one they expected.
- From what you know about Jesus, what do David and Jesus have in common? What differences do you see between Jesus and David?
 - When the Jewish people in the time of Jesus imagined the restoration the Messiah would bring, they looked back to their golden era under David. How was the Kingdom that Jesus brought unexpected? How is the Kingdom Jesus established better than the kingdom David established?
- IV. The normal fashion of history writing in antiquity would spend considerably more time exploring the exploits and accomplishments of David listed in **2 Samuel 8**. Here, the author goes over David's victories very quickly. The credit is given to God, not David's battle prowess or might. There is no room in God's Kingdom for hero worship, only true worship of the One True God. David remains faithful to this ideal when he dedicates the plunder and wealth of these victories to the Lord. The events of **2 Samuel 8:11-12** are a stark contrast to Saul, who once claimed the spoils of war reserved for God for himself. David knows his fame and his success come from God's favor, and so his heart remains humble.
- Our culture tends to over-celebrate our accomplishments. We now have celebrations when children graduation from kindergarten and elementary school, and we give trophies for participation. How could learning from David's heart toward God correct this imbalance in our culture?
- V. The unexpected and undeserved favor that David receives from God is the motivation for the amazing display of love that David shows Mephibosheth in **2 Samuel 9**. This story showcases David's character and highlights his faithfulness to God's covenant. David has seen his enemies defeated, his throne secured, and his empire established.

As a result, he is in a position to fulfill the covenant obligation to his friend Jonathan. We studied the pact between Jonathan and David in **1 Samuel 21** previously. Now, David returns the *hesed* (a Hebrew word that means “covenant love,” though most English translations of the Bible use the word “kindness” in this passage) he was shown by Jonathan. Jonathan had given help to David when he was driven from the king’s table. Now David can return that help by inviting Jonathan’s son to his own table along with the gift of security, honor, and wealth. **David’s display of *hesed* to Mephibosheth completes one of the most beautiful stories of friendship ever written.** This story should prepare our hearts for our own story of grace. ***Just as David related to Mephibosheth on the basis of his covenant with another, out of covenant love for His Son Jesus God has lavished his grace on us.***

- We were first introduced to Mephibosheth in **2 Samuel 4:4**. Like this boy, all humanity has been spiritually broken because of a fall. Do you relate to Mephibosheth’s story of brokenness in any way? How?
- Mephibosheth likely lived in hiding, convinced that David would want him killed as a potential rival for the throne. David knows his kingdom is established by God, so he is free to show surprising kindness to Saul’s descendants without fear. How can truly trusting God to establish your position and your worth change the way you relate to others? Should there be rivalry between members of God’s family?
- Have you ever been guilty of hiding from God? The good news called “The Gospel” is that we don’t need to hide from God because of our relationship with Jesus. What does it mean to relate to God through Jesus?
- We can live out the beautiful story of God’s covenant loyalty and undeserved love for us every time we show undeserved kindness and mercy to others. Who are you challenged to love in this way?
- Where Mephibosheth expected execution, he received grace. More than simply being allowed to live, he was given wealth and prominence. It has been said that **mercy** is withholding the harm you know you deserve, while **grace** is receiving what you know you do not deserve. How is your relationship with God characterized by getting much better than you deserve? What specific examples can you identify of God’s grace and mercy?
- Mephibosheth spent the rest of his life eating at the king’s table. Can you imagine if he rejected the king’s offer out of resentment, fear, or pride? Have you ever let such things prevent you from being in God’s presence?