

All right. Let's open our Bibles tonight to 2 Samuel 7 as we continue our journey through the historical books.

We have told you often enough that the historical books are written in a narrative form, which means you get stories that God tells you from His perspective so that you might learn to know Him better. And the best way to learn in narratives and the Old Testament - like I said, the historical books and the book of Acts are written that way - is to put yourself right in the shoes of the people you're reading about, and ask yourself, "What would I have done? How would the Lord have led me in those situations?" And it's important tonight because you've been with us for a while with David, and to hear what God is going to say to David in the midst of what we know about David ought to encourage you that God has great plans in store for your life as well, even though you may not feel like you earned it or you deserve it or you're worthy of it - and you're not, none of us is. But He's worthy, and His promises are without apology or without repentance (Romans 11:29).

When King Saul died, David was not what people might have thought in his response. He was 30 years old. He'd been on the run since his early 20's from a man that wanted to kill him. He had been told, probably in his teens, by the LORD that he would one day be king. But that hadn't gone so well up to that point, and David, hearing about Saul's death and that of his son Jonathan (there at the end of 1 Samuel and into 2 Samuel), was brought to tears. He wrote a song called "The Song of the Bow" (we are told) to honor Jonathan, his friend, to teach the boys of Judah how to become proficient with bow and arrow; only the Benjamites were good at it up to that time.

In 2 Samuel 2, David is then made king over one tribe, in Hebron. He is, like I said, 30 years old. He is kept from ruling over all of Israel by the actions of a fellow named Abner (he was Saul's cousin) and others. David would spend another seven-and-a-half years - after having run for his life for seven-and-a-half years - he will now find himself really isolated in the land for another seven-and-a-half years while this fellow, Abner, the general, is the power behind the throne of a young man (one of Saul's children named Ishbosheth, who was placed in a position as a figurehead but the power belonged to the general, to Abner). Abner's and David's

armies would fight periodically. One particular one that the LORD records for us was one that David's boys prevailed. David's army was led by a fellow named Joash, which was one of three of his sister's boys, David's nephews; the other two were named Abishai and Asahel. In the battle, as David's troops began to win, Asahel, being a young man and fleet of foot, chased Abner down, caught up with him, threatened to take him out as the enemy. But Abner was a tough guy, an old guy, and he had a lot of experience, and he said to Asahel, "Why don't you just go home? Don't do this." But he refused, and so Abner killed him. It left, as you can imagine, a mark upon David - upon Asahel's brothers as well - for years to come. It weighed heavily upon some of the things that would happen (as we continue to read). But that kind of fighting went on for the better part of seven-and-a-half years.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 tell us that David eventually would come to the throne through the help of Abner, of all things, who wanted to make peace. And we read about how those things all transpired. But at 37 years old and in the year 1004 B.C., David moved his rulership from the area of Judah to, really, the capital of Jerusalem. He would take this town - it had been held by the Jebusites since the days of Joshua - and David would place his name, and the kingdom would be centered there. As David came to be king at 37 - and he would reign another thirty-three years - David's one goal was to unite the people under the name of the LORD. And they really hadn't had any spiritual leader for generations. He brought the fractured nation together. He began to conquer the Philistines who were really the largest and most powerful enemy that they had. God, according to chapter 5, led David in every battle. Every battle was different, but God was there to speak to him and direct him. And much like our relationship with the Lord, you can't presume on God on yesterday's blessings or direction; you have to stay current in your relationship with Him. For the first time, though, in many, many years - since the death of Joshua, which was about 400 years earlier - the nation finally had a godly leader who desired that the people of God, chosen by God, named for Him, would again be seeking Him. And so that began to change the public interest, and God began to make Himself known within the culture. We mentioned last time that David was a lone guy in the sense that there weren't many with him that would have said, "LORD, You can make a difference with us." But David was certainly a guy that believed God could change a culture and a nation, and so David was that man, and he did make a big difference. And we talked about that we could make a big difference. God can work by many or by few (1 Samuel 14:6). If you discount yourself, it's probably because you're not really so sure that God is so big. Because

God can; you can't, but He can. And if you're willing, a lot of times He has great plans that you probably don't know about until you get out there and begin to walk with Him.

So David began to challenge the people in their relationship with the LORD. He began to bring spiritual reforms. One of the things that he did - kind of up close, personal and early - was to try to retrieve the ark of the LORD. It was that place that the children of Israel had carried with them in the wilderness for all of those years. It was God's presence with the people. He didn't live there in that little tent, if you will. It couldn't contain God, but it represented His presence, and He stood by it. And yet, by the time Joshua died, that relationship with God - that vehicle where you could get to God - had been set aside, for the most part, by the people. You read about it very rarely in the book of Judges except to be carried kind of as an amulet into battle, as if somehow this was "our lucky charm" rather than "this is God's presence with us." It led to the Philistines stealing this ark from them in battle. God, not wanting to be stolen by a bunch of idolaters, made sure that wherever they carried that thing, people got sick. And seven months in, they sent it back on a cart, and God miraculously led them forward. And it ended up staying in the house of Abinadab (1 Samuel 7) for twenty years, abandoned. During the time of Saul, it was really not even mentioned, so to speak. So, this ark - which used to be so important to the people - really represents the people's ability to get to God. If you want, it can be Jesus in the Old Testament, right? He's the One that provides an access for us to the LORD by His shed blood. So, the people of God no longer had fellowship with God, and now David was here to seek to make it happen.

So last week we saw, in chapter 6, the error of trying to seek God in your own manner. We looked at how they moved this ark. It was a good-intended move. It just wasn't very wise in the sense that God had very clearly delineated how this ark was to be treated because it represented God's holiness, and we are sinful men trying to get close to Him. And the blood needed to be shed, the priest needed to intervene, and it was all symbolic but necessary for us to know God's heart and for them to know as well. So they did it wrong the first time. A young man had reached out to try to steady the ark as it was tumbling on the back of a cart. He died. People went home. And it was left for a while in the house of another fellow who happened to be a priest and qualified, and God began to bless his house. David returned later in the right manner, brought the ark to Jerusalem, and the chapter ended with great joy as David sang and rejoiced in the fact that he and then God's

people could be brought to this place again where, for the first time in generations - imagine, 400 years! - people were actually gathering around the presence of God to worship Him.

Well tonight we have twenty-nine verses to look at. We're only going to confine ourselves to chapter 7. I mentioned to you earlier it's good that you know the narratives because I think by now you've known David's ups and downs. He's done well in some things. He's lost his cool and wanted to kill a guy if his wife didn't intervene. He went to play a fool in enemy territory. Trying to hide from Saul, he spent sixteen months taking him and his family and everyone else into the heart of the enemy as he was killing not really big enemies of Israel, lying about it. Just hiding, again, away from God; not in a place he needed to be. David was quick to repent when he was confronted with his sin, usually. David had great weaknesses with women; we talked to you about that. He's got more wives than he really needs, which would be more than one; but he had many, many more than one. And all of this to get to David - now in his late 30's - and to then get to this chapter and hear what God has to say of blessing to a man who has lots of serious issues, who will have a lot more in the days to come, and yet finds himself standing in the grace and in the mercy of God. With that to his side, he's short on keeping record of the wrongs of his enemies. For the most part, he's quick to repent of his sin. He certainly relies upon the goodness of God. And, like us, he stands before the LORD needing grace in his life if he's going to survive it. So, this is an amazing chapter. It's filled with God's promise of David's future. It leads us to Jesus and to the next thousand years of descendants - how God carefully shapes and watches over and makes sure that, by the time Jesus shows up, He fits right into the promises that God now makes to this boy, David, His king who is near 40 years old.

Well, we'll start in verse 1, and it says, "Now it came to pass when the king was dwelling in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies all around, that the king said to Nathan the prophet, 'See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains.' Then Nathan said to the king, 'Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.'" Put yourself in David's shoes for a minute. He was maybe 17 when Samuel showed up at his house, and he was the only one not brought in by his dad to present himself to the prophet; and yet he was the one God chose. It is now 20-plus years later. It has been a long road, in many ways, and yet David now finds himself sittin' as the king in Jerusalem in a beautiful house that had been built for him on Mt. Zion by the King of Tyre. (We know that from chapter 5, if you were with us back then.) They had

just blessed David; they were glad that he was there. He was good political leader as well as a good spiritual king. And so David is at home, and for the first time in as long as he can remember, life is good.

There'll be plenty more wars to fight; in fact we'll get to them in chapters 8 and 9, and our intention is to look at 8 and 9 next Wednesday night. It'll be a good night before Thanksgiving, I think, to gather together. And then the following week I want to go back to chapter 8 and look at the spiritual types of the enemies that David faces and compare them to the things that we face. Since it's narrative and it's exemplary to what we want to learn as far as our battles, I want to draw the comparison between the two. So, we're going to stay in those two chapters for a couple of weeks.

But needless to say, for now, at nearly 40 years old, David can close his eyes without having to look over his shoulder. And, for the first time in so long, he had rest, and the nation had rest; and the enemies were still out there, but there was really no war, and the sword of David was on the shelf. His combat boots were sittin' by the fireplace. Not at all unlike our lives, we constantly have an enemy that we fight against. But there do come those times when God just seems to give you victory, and everything is going your way; and hopefully you're thankful, and God is so good, and I'm so blessed, and my cup runneth over. And David, notice that his fellowship - at least now - is with the prophet of God. It is good to, I think, remind yourself that you should always make friends with those who are walking with God; they'll keep you close to the Lord. It is always easier to find friends that will compensate for your unwillingness to do that. I always have said to people - you want to know how spiritual you are, check out your best friends. Because those are the people that tolerate you. That's the level of spiritual life that you are comfortable with. If you weren't, you'd pick other best friends. So if you can find folks that just kind of blink and look away and tolerate and put up with a lot of compromise, then maybe that's your spiritual life. But here's David, who's just locked in with a man of God. Psalm 119:63 says, "I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts." Solomon wrote in Proverbs 13:20, "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed." So our friends not only make us, but they mold us; they define us, and they mold us. Well here's David, and he's doin' well, and he's hangin' around with probably the most spiritual guy around. Right? A man who is able to hear from the LORD. In this rest, in this fellowship, David finds himself with a greater desire than ever to serve the LORD. He's been blessed materialistically, if you will; his

career, his successes. Things have gone well lately. And yet, in all of that position, David is very interested in glorifying the LORD. The good thing for David was success didn't change him much. You don't find David putting on airs or separating himself from the people. The company he keeps, the accessibility to his life, doesn't change very much from his time from when he was nobody to when he was somebody. David's comments to Nathan that it didn't seem right that he would live in this mansion built with cedar wood brought down from Lebanon to look out his window and see the ark of the LORD - the presence of God - still hiding in a tent or so; and David wanted to do something about it.

King Nebuchadnezzar, by the way, the Babylonian in Daniel 4, was just the opposite. He walked out in Babylon and said, "Isn't this the great Babylon that I have built for my royal dwelling place, with my hands and with my power?" And the LORD went, "Nope" (Pastor Jack makes a sound and a motion of knocking someone down) and dealt with him.

But David was a humble guy. Nathan, the prophet, certainly had the sentiment with David that the LORD needed to be honored, and so he lifts up his voice to encourage David in his gratitude. And we know from 1 Chronicles 22 and from chapter 17 - and you can write those in the margin if you want, it is where the story gets fleshed out - that there is a continuation of this story that is not covered here but I will cover for you in just a minute. Let's just go here, though, for a minute. Nathan, the prophet - good friends with David, sittin' around, they're all talkin' about how good God is - didn't feel the need to pray as a prophet but just said to the king as he said, "Man, I gotta do something about this," that he went, "Course you do. That's awesome. Go for it. This the best idea ever." High fives and shake on it, and, "We're gonna go build a place for the LORD to dwell."

We read, in verse 4, "But it happened that night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, 'Go and tell My servant David, "Thus says the LORD: 'Would you build a house for Me to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?" ' ' ' " Now, Nathan goes home that night, and the LORD calls him on his presumptuous nature of his word. Remember, he was a prophet; prophets speak for the name of the LORD. You misrepresent God, you

die. Old Testament (Deuteronomy 18:20). Right? Not that people didn't misspeak, but God wanted to be sure that He was properly represented. And so Nathan goes home - not under threat of death - but the LORD is going to say to Nathan, as we'll read in Chronicles, "Tell him no. He cannot build Me a house." David was a man of war. He had shed much blood. In 1 Chronicles 22:8, David will say to his son, Solomon, "I've shed too much blood, I've made great wars. I can't build the LORD's house. In His sight upon the earth, I've killed a lot of people, and God said, 'You don't qualify. I'm not gonna use you.' " But He is going to allow his son to build it. In 1 Chronicles 17:4, the LORD said, "Go tell David he cannot build me a house." So Nathan goes home, and the LORD wakes him up and says, "Bad move, man. I don't know what you're thinkin' about, but that's not My plan whatsoever."

So, here's the picture. In the purest of senses David, who had his socks blessed off, just wants to do something good. He wants to treat the LORD and His name and His person and His presence in an honorable way. "Let's give Him honor. Let's build the most beautiful place we can have Him inhabit." Nathan, who is a prophet of God that God greatly used, feels exactly the same way; and they're both missin' the boat. Good motives, pure intentions, and they're both disallowed; which tells me that our motives can be pure, but yet if the Lord isn't leading, it isn't acceptable to Him. And it isn't that God doesn't take notice. In fact, there's a Scripture in 1 Kings 8 where Solomon is speaking at the dedication of the Temple, and he begins to describe how this all came to be. And then he said, in verse 17 of 1 Kings 8, "God knew the heart of my father, David, that the LORD said to my father, 'Whereas it was in your heart to build Me a house, you did well that it was in your heart, but I'm not going to let you do it.' " He acknowledges the pure heart of David in this endeavor. God doesn't miss your desires. It just wasn't His will. And so here we have a king who's blessed, who's got a great idea; we have a prophet who's speaking for himself, even though his heart is pure; and then we have the LORD, who wants to put a brake on this, will direct it to Solomon who would be allowed to build. In fact, David will spend literally ten years of his life puttin' stuff in storage so that Solomon can come around and go, "All right. We've got all the stuff. Let's go build it." And everything is ready for Solomon except for putting the thing together.

So Nathan has to head back in the morning. "Good morning, David. I got good news and bad news." Now he tells David, here in verses 6 and 7 (and you can, like I said, read the complete discussion between him and the LORD in 1 Chronicles 22), that God has never requested a permanent house; that His preference had always been

to be among His people. "Wherever they went, that's where I want to be. Wherever they settle, I want to settle. I'd rather be with them in an uncomfortable situation than to be blessed Myself while they're out there on their own." The heart of God. He would rather be with you than where you might think that He would rather be. God goes on, and He speaks about the past and the present. He tells David, "Look, I've never asked anyone who's been in charge to build Me a house." Better a tent in the will of God than a mansion outside of it.

And so we read, in verse 8, " 'Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel. And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who are on the earth.' " ' " So God begins to tell David, "Look, I don't have a place to dwell like you would want, but here's what I have done. I've made you an amazing man, I've worked in your life, I've poured out My Spirit upon you. You have been a blessed man. In fact, here are the words, "I've been with you every step of the way." Isn't that good to know that God has been with you every step of the way? I remember when I was 17. I should have been killed. I got in some bad places, and God spared me, and here I am. I believe that to be so. Two years ago, I had a stroke. I was just in Kingston, Jamaica. That wouldn't have been a good place to have a stroke. I don't believe Bob Marley's family would have helped me. It was not the best place to be sick. I had just gotten off my motorcycle with my granddaughter on the back, twenty minutes earlier, and then I went "bing." And God sent me to a hospital, and there was a doctor who knew us very well, and they brought in a team of surgeons to do brain surgery - all within 45 minutes. And they found a brain, thank you. (Laughing) And here I am. God has a way of just.....to think that He's walked with you every step of the way. You didn't luck out. You didn't get lucky, "Oh, good breaks." No, no, no. God has been watching over you. And He says that to David, "I know you want to do good things for Me. I want you to know what I've done for you, how I've taken you through all of these things." Which means that David was with Him when his own brothers didn't want anything to do with him. God was with him when he was fighting Goliath. God was with him when he was backsliding in Gath for those sixteen months, in compromise and downright disobedience. God had not forsaken David one step. Even though we've seen David do some pretty dumb things, God was there all along. He didn't give up on his person, on his daughter, on his son, here, on the king. He doesn't give up on you. I've talked to a lot of people, and I don't know if it's the holidays people get



depressed, but..... "I don't know if God loves me." No. You're the only one He doesn't love. It's weird. (Laughing) The whole Book is full of people He loves, but you.....hmmmm.....not so much. And people believe that! You believe it until you read the Bible. And here's David, young man. But he's gone through a lot. "I've been with you wherever you've gone. I've taken care of all of your enemies. I've raised you up to be a man great upon the earth."

Verse 10, " ' ' 'Moreover' " ' ' ' (if that isn't enough) " ' ' 'I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house.' " ' ' " "From the day that I brought you forth until today, we've never had a permanent place to stop, to stay. Always been on the move. Yet, when the time comes, we'll stop, and I'll stop with them." But notice in the middle of verse 10 that God then stops in mid-sentence and directs the words to the future blessings of God upon David and those that will follow in his family. He's going to give him a house.

In fact, He goes on to say, verse 12, " ' ' 'When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will 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 his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.' " ' ' According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David." "You want to build Me a house? I've got a better idea. How 'bout I build you one? Your son will build Me a physical dwelling place. He'll be a son to Me and a ruler that will come from your throne. He will come from a family that will sit upon the throne forever." David clearly understood this promise. He didn't throw much weight into a son yet to be born, didn't really have much anticipation for his children, so to speak. He had plenty of them. But he heard what God was saying and that the Messiah, the promised Savior, would one day come through his loins and through his family. When Peter stood up in Acts 2, and he preached the first sermon to the thousands that were gathered in Jerusalem, he mentions this very oath that God made - that the fruit of David's body, according to the flesh,

would raise up Christ to sit on the throne. And Peter understood. Here, in 1000 or so B.C., God speaks to this young man in his, maybe, 40-year-old situation and says, "Thank you for wanting to do what you're doing for Me, but let Me tell you what I've done for you, and let Me tell you what I'm gonna do for you." And He gives to David the ultimate, if you will, honor of being a family through whom He would send His Son to save man from his sins.

It so blew David's mind that if you read verse 18, and you read again in 1 Chronicles 17, David literally runs out of Nathan's presence. He went, "Thank you very much. You gotta go now." And he wants to be alone with the LORD. In fact, if you read 1 Chronicles 17 - beginning in verse 16 through verse 27 (won't do it tonight, but you can go and read it on your own) - you'll have the exact things that David says to the LORD in response to what he realizes God is saying to him. The words don't come easy, but David's heart is eternally and permanently moved by the goodness of God. You don't hear him saying, "You mean I can't build You a house? But I have great plans!" What you find is a young man, overwhelmed, with a thankful heart.

I think it is good - if you go back to verses 8 and 9 - to never forget where you once were, how far you've come. You've come a long way, haven't you? You've got a long way to go. But you've come a long way. You were in death, now you're in life. So you've made most of the journey already. But God has done glorious things in your life. And in mine. The way I lived, the things I decided to do, I'm amazed that God wanted to use me at all.

Once a neglected young boy, watching his father's sheep in the hills above Bethlehem, he now goes from these lowly beginnings to now being told he has royal blood in his veins. He was part of a race of rebels, and now he's in the lineage of the Savior. "You were lost, but now you're found." And if the Lord comes tonight, we're all goin' to heaven.....unless you're not saved. And if you're not, I would just say get saved, man. What're you doin'?! You're the biggest gambler I've ever met! Don't do that! Especially when God so much wants to give you life. "One day called in by his father, an old man stood there whose face lit up when he saw you, and he anointed you to be king. And today you sit in the place of greatest blessing that I've spoken about. I've been with you wherever you've gone. You faced Goliath, and I was with you. You fought the Philistines, and I was with you. You backslid time and again, and I was there as well. How often you might have died - been caught by Saul - but you were not. I've kept you. I've watched over you. I've taken care of you. And now, I take credit for all of your victories, for your enemies' defeat. I've

established you as great upon the earth." This wasn't an easy life to get to David's journey. God's laid it out so much, we have literally everything you'd want to know. But when he later writes (Psalm 23:4), "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil because I've learned You're with me," that's exactly what God said. "I haven't left you." Good to know. Right?

God has brought us this far, but He hasn't brought us this far to quit on us. Because walking with the Lord won't make you immune from trials, but you'll be assured that God is able to get you through it, and He's got a purpose. The difference between you and those in the world is not the number of trials you face but in the fact that you know, as you go through them, that the Lord is with you, and you're not left alone. Psalm 34:19 says, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all." Pretty good who we are and what we have. So the LORD said, "This is what I've done for you," and then He says, "But this is what I'm gonna do. You think that's cool, wait." But wait, there's more. If you call in the next ten minutes.....no.....that's not it. (Laughing) I think it's pretty neat when the Lord says to your plans "No" because then He's obviously got some better plans than mine. He said to David's plan, "No," but then He does this. And hearing a "no" from God should not be a curse, it should be a blessing; God has more important things in store.

So He makes him these promises. In the short-term, his son, Solomon, will build. In the long-term, the LORD will establish David's descendancy forever. His throne - far beyond Solomon - looks to the coming of Jesus Christ. And although, verse 15, Saul had been rejected by God through his disobedience, David is assured, because of God's mercy and grace, that his lineage will be allowed to continue; the throne would stay in his family. Not because he was a better guy, or more faithful, or had better kids, but simply because God would establish the throne of His Son by the mercy that He extended to us, and Jesus would secure it forever. You get to Jesus, and it's secure. What a promise made to David! God had better things in mind. In so doing, the legacy of David and his descendants was established forever. So when Matthew begins his gospel in chapter 1:1 to the Jews, he starts by saying, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." Or when the angel Gabriel comes to speak to Mary about God's plan for her life, he talked to her about Jesus, and he said (Luke 1:31), "Call Him Jesus. He's going to save the people from their sins, and He's going to be great. He's going to be called the Son of the Highest. Of His kingdom, there will be no end. And He'll rule over the house of Jacob forever." Forever! And God makes this

promise so that you and I can see that God knows what He's talking about. All we have to do is page ahead twenty-five generations, and we get 1,000 years down the road, and there He is! Just as He promised He would be.

Well, David was overwhelmed by this. I mean, he got it. He got it. And maybe sometimes we forget how much we have. But we should remind ourselves. I think communion helps us to do that. So he leaves Nathan to go sit by himself in the awe and in the wonder of what God had promised him. And he's left struggling for words to thank God and to express his joy. He's a poet, but, man, he's havin' a hard time getting it out.

So we read, in verse 18, "Then King David went in and sat before the LORD; and he said, 'Who am I, O Lord GOD? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far? And yet this was a small thing in Your sight, O Lord GOD; and You have also spoken of Your servant's house for a great while to come. Is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?' " "Who are we, that You would bless us this way?" True humility. Thinking of all of this floored David. You're goin' to heaven. Do you deserve that? Doesn't that blow your mind? I look at some of you and go, "They shouldn't go." (Laughing) No, I don't do that. I think that, but I don't do that. I don't think I should go most of the time. But God is good to us. We don't deserve it. Yet we have a hope that the world doesn't have. Who am I? I love that question. Who am I, that You would bless me so? "You heard my cry. I waited patiently for the LORD. You brought me out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay. You set my feet on the rock. You established my steps" (Psalm 40:1-2). "You put a new song in my heart." Who am I? "Many shall see it and fear, and trust the LORD" (Psalm 40:3). Who am I? Amazing, isn't it, what God has done for us. And David, in no small sense, had that same wonder. You look yourself over from head to toe, you really find anything remotely redeemable in you? I don't. And I don't think we're alone. When Jesus questioned Peter after his denial of Jesus (John 21), He said, "Peter, do you love Me?" and Peter said, "You know I love You," and he didn't really respond on the same level. And three times, the Lord asked, "Do you love Me?" and Peter finally went, "Lord, you know. You know I'm not gonna be able to measure up to that. You know I'm not gonna be able to stand on my own two feet. You know what I'm all about." He was very aware of his incapacity to measure up to what God wanted. Jacob, in chapter 32 of Genesis, when he wrestled with the LORD, he said to Him, "I'm not worthy of the least of Your mercies and of Your truth. And yet now You've brought me across the Jordan with two companies of families." He couldn't believe the blessings. Paul was able to say

to the Lord, "I'm born out of due time, I'm the least of the apostles, I'm not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Corinthians 15:8). "I'm the last of all." What was worth saving in you and me, do you think? God could have chosen the mighty and the great and the powerful, but He settled for us. Look what He has brought us. Look what He has done. And David certainly was no angel. I mean, he's the guy that wrote, "Don't remember the sins of my youth" (Psalm 25:7), but yet he stood in the grace of God. And nothing will humble you more and make you more grateful than when you realize the mercy of God. The LORD said through Jeremiah, in chapter 31:3, to the people, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you." Once you get that, once you get how much God loves you, I don't think you'll miss church, and you certainly won't put your Bible away. Because you'll be amazed, you'll be blown away. You won't even know what to say! How much God loves us. Far more than anyone that knows us. It was true for Isaiah. "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King" (Isaiah 6:5). Peter (Luke 5), in the boat with Jesus after fishing all night, finding nothing, has the Lord get in and give the fishermen orders on how to fish. And I'm sure Peter was just tired of it. If you read the account in the gospels, you'll read Peter saying, to his buddies, "I got it. You guys just keep cleaning your nets. This is just gonna take a minute. Ol' Jesus thinks He's a fisherman, and He ought to stick to preachin'." And when He said, "Let's throw the net on the other side," and the thing filled up with fish, and the boat began to tip and maybe sink, Peter, a light went on in his head. "This is no ordinary man. This is God." And then he got on his face, "Get out of the boat. Depart from me, I'm a sinful man." He saw it. He couldn't believe it, and neither could David. Blew his mind. What God has done for us.

If that isn't enough, verse 19, David says, "Now You speak of these future blessings that I can't even begin to fathom, that You've laid out for me, that You've laid up for me, and You say it's an easy thing." Well, it is easy by comparison to salvation. Do you ever feel so blessed that you wonder what's gonna go wrong? (Pastor Jack laughs) I've had a couple of those days. "Everything's goin' right. I'm pretty sure everything's gonna go wrong in a minute." The psalmist wrote in Psalm 116:12, "What shall I render to the LORD for all His benefits toward me?" Or, if you want, "What can I give God for everything He's given to me?" And you might want to read that and then say, "Well, I hope there's a list there." Well, there's not. Because the next verse says this, "I will take up the cup of salvation." In other words, "I'll gladly, and by faith, receive what He's offered me," and then "I

will call upon the name of the LORD." "I'll surrender Him my life. I'll just believe what He's done, thank Him for it, and surrender Him my life." That's all He's looking for. That's what you can give back to God. Notice David says, here in verse 19, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?" "Is this how man asks?" No, no, no. Only God can do this. This is so beyond us - to forgive, to continue to bear rebellion, to offer mercy, to be provoked and respond in love. Only God. And I'm glad that He treats us that way.

Verse 20, " 'Now what more can David say to You? For You, Lord GOD, know Your servant.' " "What can I say?" David, the ultimate poet, is reduced to being inarticulate. "I don't know what to say. I can't fathom what You have done." He's wiped out. Emotions profound enough, lesson learned so deep enough, that words were inadequate to express them. I'm sure you've felt that way..... "I don't know what to say, Lord." David was having one of those moments. Like Peter. "Lord, you know." I suspect in heaven there will be great times of silence where everyone will just stand in awe. Paul wrote in chapter 2 of the book of Ephesians, verse 7, "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." In the ages to come. You think you get it now, but wait till you get there and the Lord goes, "Let Me show you one more thing." Ohhhh. I think we'll get wiped out again. For a thousand years..... "Ohhhh. All right, do it again." The Lord has much to show us. Ultimate worship reaches its ultimate place, I think, when you have nothing you can say, when you're speechless. And I feel sorry for you if you don't ever feel that way because then you haven't grabbed hold of what God has promised to do. In fact, I would suggest if you don't ever get to that point, then get your Bible out. And instead of just reading it, read it for you. Read it personally. Put your name in the text. Underline everything that pertains to you. "What else can I say?" David says. "Lord, You know. There's nothing I can say."

Verse 21, " 'For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, You have done all these great things, to make Your servant know them. Therefore You are great, O Lord GOD. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And who is like Your people, like Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people, to make for Himself a name - and to do for Yourself great and awesome deeds for Your land - before Your people whom You redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, the nations, and their gods? For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; and You, LORD, have become their God. Now, O LORD

God, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, establish it forever and do as You have said. So let Your name be magnified forever, saying, "The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel." And let the house of Your servant David be established before You. For You, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, have revealed this to Your servant, saying, "I will build you a house." Therefore Your servant has found it in his heart to pray this prayer to You. And now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness to Your servant. Now therefore, let it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue before You forever; for You, O Lord GOD, have spoken it, and with Your blessing let the house of Your servant be blessed forever.' " David ends this encounter with the LORD by saying, "There's certainly nothing in me that could have produced this. God, this is Your character. There's none like You. There's no one that could make these promises and mean them and be able to fulfill them. You've chosen Your nation. You've chosen Your people. You've delivered us from the other nations and from their gods. You have made us Your own. You've chosen us by Your own will. You've blessed us, You've cared for us, and You've given us an everlasting future." And then he says, "So I believe it." And ultimately what pleased the LORD, I think, most in all of this is David believed it. "I'm gonna pray that You bless this house that You've promised," verse 27.

How often in your prayer life do you quote back to the Lord the promises He makes in His Word? If you don't do that as a practice, I would encourage you to try. When you go pray, go find some Scriptures that God addresses exactly what you're praying about, and remind the Lord of it. Oh, He'll remember. But you're the one that needs to be reminded. What did it say in Numbers 23:19? "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" That's all David is saying here. "God, I believe You. I'm blown away, but I believe You, and I desire no more than Your promises that have been made. I expect nothing less than what You've said." I think nothing honors the Lord more than you take His Word on something. Remember that Scripture in Romans 4, where it talks about Abraham's promise of a son when he was old, and it says, "He didn't waver at the promises of God through unbelief, but he strengthened his faith, and he gave glory to God" (verse 20). That blesses the Lord more than anything else, that you believe Him, and you honor Him with faith. The promise of a house and a throne forever obviously points to Jesus. The grace of God left David speechless; the goodness of God, "I'm not worthy, but He is."

We have Thanksgiving week this week. Easy to be thankful. "Oh, I'm so thankful for so many things." Yeah, you'd better dig a little deeper. Maybe get alone with the Lord without distraction. Maybe go read that commentary in 1 Chronicles 22, there. Take inventory of how you've been blessed. Maybe you can do it before you go to bed tonight. You used to be out in the pit, man. In the miry clay. And look at you now. You've got angels now wondering about - how in the world are you gonna make it? And then applauding Jesus. Amen?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
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