

Covenant Theology

2 Samuel 7:1-29

By [Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas](#)

Turn with me if you would to 2 Samuel chapter 7, 2 Samuel chapter 7. Last time, two weeks ago, we were looking at the previous chapter. The ark of the covenant has finally been brought into Jerusalem. There had been something of a spat between David and one of his wives, Michel, and now we come to what is perhaps not just one of the most important chapters in 1 and 2 Samuel but arguably one of the most important chapters in the whole of the Old Testament because it is from the first half of this chapter that Messianic expectation developed. The shape of what the Messiah would come for and what He would look like developed from this covenant that God now enters into with David.

Now before we read the passage, let's look to God in prayer.

Father we thank You for the Scriptures. Thank You for a Word that is able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. We ask for the blessing of Your Spirit and as we read the Scriptures together You would be pleased to hide it in our hearts for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Hear the Word of God:

Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." And Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you."

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, "Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says the Lord: Would you build Me a house to dwell in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for My dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'" 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. 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. 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, from the time that I appointed judges over My people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. 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. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 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, but My steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before Me. Your throne shall be established forever." In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

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? 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! And what more can David say to You? For You know Your servant, O Lord God! Because of Your promise, and according to Your own heart, You have brought about all this greatness, to make Your servant know it. 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. 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? And You established for Yourself Your people Israel to be Your people forever. And You, O Lord, became their God. 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. 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. For You, O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, 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. And now, O Lord God, You are God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this good thing to Your servant. Now therefore may it please You to bless the house of Your servant, so that it may continue forever before You. For You, O Lord God, have spoken, and with Your blessing shall the house of Your servant be blessed forever."

Amen. May God add His blessing to that reading of His holy, inerrant Word.

Now I want you to notice, first of all, several things about the shape of this chapter. You'll notice that it's divided into two halves. Verses 1 to 17 provides for us an account of a covenant, a promise, that God makes to David and his house. And then in verses 18 to the end of the chapter - David's response. And there's a Gospel-shaped grammar to this chapter. There is that which God does and there is that which David does in response to what God does. God shows His grace and David reveals his gratitude.

Three things have happened. First, the kingdom of Saul and the kingdom of David has now been unified. Abner has defected to David and Ish-bosheth, the final son of Saul, eligible son for monarchy that is, is now dead and effectively now there is only one nation, the nation has been unified. Secondly, Jerusalem, the city of Jebus, has been captured, the city which will now be called Jerusalem, or the city of David. And thirdly, the ark, the ark of the covenant has finally returned and is now dwelling in Jerusalem in a tent as it had been in former times.

And we begin the chapter, chapter 7, with an introduction to Nathan. This is the first time we've heard of Nathan. We all know Nathan, of course. He'll be the prophet that will speak to David following his adultery with Bathsheba. Nathan is probably David's closest confidant and spiritual advisor. He's a prophet of the Lord. And David makes this proposal to him — now that God has given rest from all the surrounding enemies, David has built for himself a palace in Jerusalem. Some years evidently have passed by. Nathan says to David, "Do whatever is in your heart." And what is in the heart of David is this anomaly, that he is dwelling in a palace but the ark of God, representing of course the very presence of God, is dwelling in a tent. God is gracious to Nathan. Nathan speaks here not as a prophet — this isn't a divine word that Nathan has been given. He's giving his own wise response to David's suggestion, but it is not the right response. And God comes to him very quickly. That's gracious of God. Otherwise, Nathan's reputation as a prophet — not all the prophets spoke as prophets all the time. They only spoke as prophets when God gave them a divine revelation. The rest of the time they depended on their own wisdom. And evidently this was a word of wisdom which was not, in fact, in accord with the will of God and God comes very quickly to prevent Nathan's reputation from being sullied.

It's unwise, I think at this stage, to impute to David improper motives for wanting to build a house for God. I think we have to take the text and its parallel in 2 Chronicles chapter 6 at face value here. The text doesn't say anything other than this was David's thought. It was a desire that the ark of the covenant, which represented God, should dwell in something more substantial than a tent. And God says, "No." Actually, God says, "Not yet."

And it's clear that David — and I want you to see this initially — that David wants

to build God a house but God wants to build David a house. It's a play on the word house. The kind of house that God wants to build David, of course, is a dynasty. It's a name that will survive generation after generation after generation. It's a display of immense grace on God's part. David wants to do something for God, and God — and it's it so like God — isn't this the God we know? Isn't this the God we recognize? Isn't this the God Justin was referring to earlier, that always seems to want to do us good things? And it's at this point that God, in saying to David that it's not him who will build this house, this temple; it will in fact be his son Solomon; that God now takes this opportunity to pour in, not just grace but grace upon grace, astonishing grace. Depths of revelation that still today we ponder — is there more? And is there more to what God was promising to David? He enters into a covenant with David.

Now the word covenant doesn't occur in the passage, to be sure. You know we talked about the covenant with Noah and the covenant with Abraham and the covenant with Moses and we talk about the Davidic covenant — the covenant with David.

This is the chapter. This is the covenant. If you were to turn — we won't do so tonight — but if we were to turn for example to Psalm 89, which reflects on 2 Samuel 7, it's a psalm about the covenant that God enters into with David. And four times in that psalm this event is referred to as a covenant. God is making a solemn, binding covenant with David and with his house. It's of the same magnitude as the covenant with Noah and chapter 15 of Genesis, the covenant with Abraham, and the covenant with Moses at Mount Sinai, or the new covenant that you read of in Jeremiah 31 and 33 and in the prophet Ezekiel. God is stepping into the progress of the history of redemption and He's now revealing more and more concerning that promise that He had made in Genesis 3:15, that the seed of the woman would crush the head of Satan. How would that be? How would that seed come? Where would that seed come from? Now we're being told that it's going to come from the house of David, from the lineage of David. David's kingdom, David's kingdom is going to last forever.

Now, there's more in this chapter than I possibly have time to deal with. It's one of these chapters you could spend two or three hours dealing with. I do recommend that you go to Ligon's covenant theology lectures on the First Pres website in which there's one lecture exclusively devoted to the Davidic Covenant. If you want answers to all the minutiae and little details, you'll find it in his lecture.

I want to take a big picture approach to this chapter along two lines of thought — what God did and what David did. What God did and David's response.

I. What God did.

God made a covenant with David and his house. He establishes a kingdom. He

establishes a kingdom. And several things, five things, emerge from this covenant treaty that God enters into with David. The first, and you'll see it there in verse 12, that his own flesh and blood will occupy the throne. "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." It's the beginning of the dynasty of David's kingdom. His son will reign after him. Later, He's going to say this kingdom is going to be forever. Now David's kingdom would last four hundred years. It would last all the way down to Zedekiah. You remember Zedekiah, the final king of Judah, whose sons, you remember, were killed? It was the last thing that Zedekiah saw before he was blinded. The very last thing that he saw was the slaying of his two sons. And you remember he was taken blinded in chains off to Babylon. That was the end of the Davidic dynasty — four hundred years. And David is being promised this house, this dynasty. God is going to establish a kingdom in the line of David.

Where has God been until now? David wants to build a house for God and God says, "Where have I been all these years from the time of the exodus, from the time of the wilderness wanderings, from the time of the conquest of the land of Canaan?" Where is God? God has been in a tent. God has been with His people. Wherever His people were, that's where God was. He wasn't a God who was far off. He wasn't a God who was distant. He had always been a God among His people.

That's just a great thing. That's the kind of God we have. This is the kind of God David is dealing with. This is the kind of God that you and I have — a God who comes down and dwells where we dwell, who becomes incarnate, who's born in a stable in Bethlehem, who moves among His people, who takes on flesh and blood in the person of Jesus Christ. "Don't forget," God is saying to David, "I've always been there with you. I've always been there with you." And now He is saying, "I'm going to be with you in the future. You've seen past grace. Let me show you future grace. You've seen My presence with you in the past. Let Me show you My presence with you in the future." His own flesh and blood will occupy the throne. That's the first thing.

The second thing is — you see it in the second half of verse 12. David's son will be the one who will fulfill David's desire. David's son — verse 13 — "He shall build a house for My name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." He shall build a house for My name. What David had desired will be fulfilled but it will be fulfilled in his son, in Solomon. We'll have more to say about that in a minute.

The third thing is that his heir will stand in a unique relationship to God. Look at verse 14 — "I will be to him a Father and he will be to Me a son." And you say well, "So what? We know that. It's everywhere in the New Testament. We are children of God. He is our Father. We come before Him in prayer and we say, 'Our Father, who art in heaven.'" But this is 2 Samuel 7. Never before in the

pages of Scripture has it been made that clear, that clear, that the relationship that God will have with Solomon will be like a father to a son and that relationship between God and Solomon will break out in the pages of the New Testament so that we will be called children of God and heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. There's a glimpse here in this promise, in this covenant that God is making with David, of such a close relationship with God that we may call it — this God who, in the previous chapter, had struck Uzzah dead, this holy, righteous God. And He says, “I will be to Solomon a Father and he will be to Me a son.”

And the fourth thing is that David's heir can expect discipline if he commits iniquity. The second half of verse 14 and into verse 15 — “If he commits iniquity, I will chastise him, but” — look at verse 15 — “My steadfast love, My covenant love, My hesed love, Calvary love, will never depart from him, not like Saul.” Well, my friends, there's grace, and then there's this. There's grace and then there's this promise — “My steadfast love will never depart from him.” We read it this morning in Philippians chapter 1 — “Having begun a good work He will complete it.” He will complete it. Yes, He'll discipline. Yes, He'll chastise. Yes, He'll rebuke, as we do our children. “But My steadfast love will never ever depart.”

And then fifthly in verse 16 — “Your throne shall be established forever.” But David's throne, how long did it last? Four hundred years? But look at the text. “Your throne shall be established forever.” Now forever is not four hundred years. Four hundred year is a long time. I've been away two weeks and that's a long time, but four hundred years — it's a long time, but it's not forever.

So when God is speaking to David here about Solomon, about his dynasty stretching down, He's not just talking about David. He's not just talking about kings sitting on thrones in Jerusalem. He's thinking about the new covenant. He's thinking about you and me. He's thinking about His relationship with His people that begins here with David and it's going to stretch forever and forever and forever — forever.

You see why I say this is perhaps, well, one commentator that I have been enjoying in these sermons on 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel says this chapter is “the single most significant role of any Scripture found in the Old Testament in shaping the Christian understanding of Jesus.” That's a profound statement. This chapter is perhaps the most significant chapter in shaping the Christian understanding of Jesus, that from the line of David — Peter cites 2 Samuel chapter 7 on the Day of Pentecost and he's citing 2 Samuel chapter 7 to prove the resurrection, the resurrection, because if David's line is going to last forever Jesus has to rise. He can't be dead because He's the Son of David. Peter had read this chapter and he saw in this chapter the resurrection of Jesus. The author of Hebrews in chapter 1 read this chapter and from it he lifted that statement — “I will be to him a Father and he will be to Me a son” — speaking of Solomon. But

the author of Hebrews says, “No, He was speaking about Jesus, that the Messiah will be a Son to God the Father.”

Did David understand all of that? No, probably not. Did the author of Samuel understand all of that? No, probably not. They wrote beyond their own comprehension. They wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They wrote for you and me that God's hand in redemption, in Gospel promise from Genesis 3 all the way through the Davidic dynasty and beyond to a day when great David's greater Son would be born and through Him a covenant, a covenant that would last forever — forever.

Now that's, and as I say, check out Ligon's covenant theology lectures because there's more here than I have time to deal with, but I want to look at the second half of the chapter because now there's David's response because God says no to David. And it's not just a question of being wrong. It's not that David was wrong. God comes to David and He says to him, “I'm going to say no to you and I'm going to say yes to your son.” And David has to accept it.

Now some of you can enter into this because you don't like being said “No” to. Am I meddling? Do you understand what I'm saying? You have your goals and your hopes and your dreams and your ambitions and things that you want to do and if somebody says no, the hackles begin to rise. David has to accept it. When God says “No” it doesn't necessarily mean discipline. It can mean, it can mean redirection. Imagine the guilt trips that David now could have entered into. “What have I, what have I done wrong? Lord, show me my sins that You're not willing for me to do this.” And God is saying to him, “I'm just saying ”No” to you, David. Your son will do it. I'm saying “No” to you and I'm not going to tell you why I'm saying “No.” You just have to accept it.”

II. David's response.

Now I want you to look at verse 18 because it's beautiful. It's staggeringly beautiful. David went in and sat before the Lord. He's just been told no by God and what does he do? He goes and sits in the presence of God like a child. He sits there. He begins to think. He begins to meditate. He begins to pray. He begins to pour out his heart. He says some astonishingly beautiful things. He doesn't pout. I think I would have pouted. I think I would have had a case of the sulks. I think I would have been offended. But David, it's beautiful.

David takes the posture of a little child. This is the David that we love. This is the David who will write all these psalms. This is the Holy Spirit in David. This is the godly David. This is why we can understand that Jesus would come from the line of David. Look at the humility. “Who am I? Lord, who am I? You've done all these wonderful things. You're now giving me these extraordinary promises in my son and in the future.” And instead of saying, “But why don't you let me do what I

want to do for You?” No, he doesn't say that. He says, “You have been so kind to me. You have been so gracious to me. You've shown Your favor to me. You've revealed the Gospel to me. Who am I? I'm such a blessed man. You have spoken to Your servant of Your servant's house of a great while to come and this is instruction for mankind and what more can David say to You, for You know Your servant, O Lord God.”

Do you see what he's doing? God has just said no to him and he's pouring out his heart in gratitude. He worships. You know, that is always the solution when you find yourself in difficulty with God. When it's your will and God's will. You know the scenario. There's what you want and there's what God wants and how do you resolve? You know we read books now and have conferences and seminars about conflict resolution. Usually inter-marital conflict resolution or inter-church conflict resolution. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about conflict resolution with God. When God says “No,” what do you do? You worship. Do what David did. Go and sit before Him. Think about how great He is, how full of loving kindness He is. He's counting his blessings. That's what he's doing, counting his blessings. Oh, it would have been wonderful for David to have been able to build this house for God. It was a — let's take it at its face value — it was a genuine desire on David's part to give God glory, but it wasn't God's will.

I'm asking you tonight, in the quietness of your own hearts and minds, what is it that God has said “No” to, to you? Some ambition, some dream, some aspiration — and it may have been perfectly laudable in itself. It wasn't an evil thing, it wasn't a bad thing, it was a good thing, but God said “No.” Or what about — ah, what about the case when God says no to you and says yes to your children? What about when your children advance more than you do? Do what David did. Go and sit before Him and ponder Him and meditate on Him and do what David did. Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done. Do you see at the end of chapter 7 — it reads like a psalm, doesn't it? This is the David we know. This is the David who writes all of these beautiful psalms full of worship of God. It's almost as though, as he contemplates God, his heart just stops before the greatness and majesty of God.

You know, Hudson Taylor was a missionary to China. He was to speak one time at a large Presbyterian church in Sydney in Australia. And the person introducing him began to say the most extraordinary things, the accolades, how wonderful Hudson Taylor was, all of his achievements. And he introduces him finally as “our illustrious guest.” And Taylor stood up and there was a long pause and he said, “Dear friends, I am a little servant of an illustrious Master. That's what I am.” And I think that's David's spirit here. He's just a little servant here to do whatever God wants him to do and to be content with what God wants him to do and to pour out his heart in worship of the living God.

Well, it's a beautiful chapter. The indicative and the imperative — grace and gratitude. It's Gospel-shaped. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You tonight again for the marvel of Your Word and of Your promise and of Your covenant with David that his kingdom would last forever. We are part of that kingdom tonight here in this building. By grace through faith we have been brought into the same family, the family of God. We may call You Abba Father. We are Your children, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Father, it ought to take our breath away as You have made a promise that will last forever. Help us tonight in whatever circumstance we find ourselves in to do what David did and worship You, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Please stand. Receive the Lord's benediction. Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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