A Servant Receives God’s Promise

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: God promised that He would give His people the true King they needed and fulfilled that promise in Jesus.

MAIN PASSAGE: 2 Samuel 7:8-16

On July 4, 1952, Florence Chadwick, age 34, stepped into the cold waters of the Pacific Ocean off Catalina Island to go swimming. This was not a recreational swim but a challenge swim: She wanted to be the first woman to swim the twenty-one mile channel between Catalina Island and the California coastline. The physical challenge was daunting. The visible and invisible sea creatures, including the sharks circling her, were intimidating. But the fog hemmed her in. She could hardly see her support boats that carried her mother, her trainer, and her support staff, and though they encouraged her to keep going, the fog ended her challenge. After swimming 15 hours and 55 minutes, exhausted, she asked to be taken out of the water. Sitting in the boat, she found out she only had a half-mile left to reach her destination. Later she told a reporter: “Look, I’m not excusing myself, but if I could have seen land I know I could have made it.”

Why might it be difficult to fix our eyes on eternal things instead of what is immediately before us?
Group Time

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

8 “So now this is what you are to say to my servant David: ‘This is what the LORD of Armies says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, to be ruler over my people Israel. 9 I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. I will make a great name for you like that of the greatest on the earth. 10 I will designate a place for my people Israel and plant them, so that they may live there and not be disturbed again. Evildoers will not continue to oppress them as they have done ever since the day I ordered judges to be over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies.

When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt centuries before, God promised that He would take them out of a land of slavery to a land that had rest on every side. Now, generations later, the Lord brought rest to the battle-scarred, blood-soaked land through King David (v. 1). But as we see in God’s promise to David, God had something much more profound in mind for His people. The rest that they were experiencing was incomplete. It was a shadow of the substance that was yet to come.

How can we be at rest physically but still spiritually restless?

Taking God’s promises to David here as a whole, otherwise known as the Davidic covenant, we see that rest would come through someone in David’s lineage. This rest would begin in this life and reverberate into the next (2 Sam. 7:13). We know that the descendant who would provide this rest is Jesus Christ, the son of David (Matt. 1:1). And we know that Jesus did not come just to provide this rest for the nation of Israel but for all who trust in Him as Savior and King.

What are some ways we attempt to work for eternal salvation as if Christ’s work on the cross were incomplete?

Voices from Church History

“Awake, you everlasting spirit, out of your dream of worldly happiness! Did not God create you for Himself? Then you cannot rest till you rest in Him.”

–John Wesley (1703-1791)
Point 2: God promises to establish an eternal kingdom (2 Sam. 7:11b-13).

11b “The LORD declares to you: The LORD himself will make a house for you.
12 When your time comes and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up after you your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.
13 He is the one who will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

The promise made here first came to fruition through David’s son Solomon, but only partially. Solomon would be the one to build the temple that David wanted to build (1 Kings 6–8), but Solomon’s throne was not forever. Besides the fact that Solomon died, his kingdom was torn in two on account of his disobedience, yet his son would reign after him over part of the kingdom because of God’s promise to David. A greater king was needed to bring about perfect peace and establish the eternal kingdom God spoke of. This promise could only be fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

What are some Old Testament prophecies we have already studied that find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ Jesus?

Church and Kingdom: The church and the kingdom of God are closely related, though not identical. When the Bible speaks of the kingdom of God, it is referring to the reign of God in the world. The church is the ________________ of God who live under His loving rule now, anticipating the full manifestation of God's kingdom in the future. The church's ________________ is to witness to God's kingdom, proclaiming God's message of salvation through ________________ and demonstrating the power of the ________________ through good works so that others may be brought to live under God's reign.

What is your attitude toward the church?

Distrustful   Apathetic   Committed   Loving
Point 3: God promises to provide an eternally beloved son (2 Sam. 7:14-16).

14 I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will discipline him with a rod of men and blows from mortals. 15 But my faithful love will never leave him as it did when I removed it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 Your house and kingdom will endure before me forever, and your throne will be established forever.’”

Again, Solomon is the first person in mind here, the builder of the Lord’s temple. Imagine the blessing of being described as God’s child with an everlasting love. (Do you have to imagine?) Solomon did turn aside from following the Lord and was disciplined as the Lord said (1 Kings 11–12). Yet Solomon remained in God’s love as a son while he suffered the consequences. And one day the greater and perfect Son of David, the unique Son of God, would come to be disciplined, not for His wrongdoing but for ours.

Why might we view discipline from God as a lack or loss of love from our heavenly Father?

**JESUS IS THE UNIQUE SON OF DAVID, THE SON OF GOD**

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<th>Matthew 26:64</th>
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God didn’t just send us information or steps to follow to find salvation. God sent us a Person—His own Son. And He didn’t send His Son merely as a messenger but as the message Himself. Through Jesus’ sinless life, sacrificial death, and resurrection, the Father has provided all we need to believe and experience forgiveness of sin and have eternal life with Him in the eternal kingdom He promised to David in Jesus Christ.
My Mission

Because we have experienced the mercy and grace of our King, we offer ourselves fully to His service so that we might reveal Jesus Christ to the world that others would find everlasting rest in His kingdom.

• How will you respond to the Son of David, the Son of God—Jesus Christ—who laid down His life to save sinners?

• How can your group encourage and challenge one another to live with an eye on eternity rather than merely on today?

• Who is struggling with spiritual restlessness with whom you can share this week about the rest found in Jesus by faith?

Voices from Church History

“If the Lord be with us, we have no cause of fear. His eye is upon us, his arm over us, his ear open to our prayer; his grace sufficient, his promise unchangeable.” 3

—John Newton (1725-1807)
There are passages in Scripture that give us pause, passages that we might not even like. This is one. It’s difficult for us to understand, let alone appreciate, what happened to Uzzah. As the ark of God was being wheeled across Nacon’s threshing floor, the oxen pulling it stumbled, so Uzzah took hold of the ark in order to steady it. That seems like an honorable thing for Uzzah to do. It is what we may have done had we been standing next to Uzzah that day. But instead of God blessing Uzzah, He was angry with him and struck him dead on the spot for irreverence (v. 7).

If you read this and are at least uncomfortable, you’re not alone. Look at how David responded: he was angry (v. 8). Now, we are not sure if David’s anger was toward God for doing something that seemed to be unfair or if it was against Uzzah for doing what was irreverent to God, but either way, we see that David struggled with this encounter.

So what do we do with this passage? How do we begin to understand it? The key is to consider what God found to be irreverent. It was not Uzzah’s desire to keep the ark from falling. Uzzah did that because of an act of reverence. But Uzzah was reverent toward the wrong thing: the ark instead of God. Would it have looked disgraceful for the ark of God to fall onto the ground? Yes. Without a doubt. But how much more disgraceful was it for Uzzah to reach out and touch the ark after God had expressly forbidden it (Num. 4:15)? Uzzah’s act of reverence toward the ark was simultaneously an act of irreverence toward a holy God. Like Uzzah, there are times when we act with what seems to be the right intentions, but we must always consider the greater question: What will bring glory to God the most?

In what ways might your good intentions clash with God’s glory and His revealed will for you?
Day 2: Read 2 Samuel 7:1-7

Uzzah acted with good intentions, but he failed to heed what God had commanded about the ark. Here we see David with similar good intentions, though desiring to act without first seeking God. David saw that it was not good for him to live in a palace while the ark of God sat in the tabernacle, a tent. His heart was in the right place, and Nathan, also without asking God, gave his blessing for David to launch a building program. Nathan was a prophet, but his role was to speak for God, not in place of God. And curiously, David sought Nathan’s input without consulting God directly, as he had done before.

In this we are reminded of our need never to take our actions for granted. We must always take our decisions before God, earnestly seeking His guidance. But let’s not learn this lesson from David alone; let us consider Christ Jesus, who expressed such dependence on the Father throughout the Gospels.

What decisions are you weighing that you need to take to God for direction?

Day 3: Read 2 Samuel 7:8-11a

The covenant God made with David contains a mixture of what could be called “near” and “far,” or “short-term” and “long-term,” prophecies. We see this duality especially in verse 11, where God promises rest. This promise has to be read in light of verse 1, where we are told that David had rest from his enemies. While God could have been speaking of continued rest from the pagan nations around them, it seems better to see a deeper promise in mind here—a greater rest that would sustain all military and political rest. This would be the rest provided through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—the rest that comes from trusting in His victory over our greatest enemies of sin and death.

Jesus would be the Prince of peace, who would bring peace in three ways: peace with God, peace with others, and peace within. But we cannot miss the primacy of the first peace. Peace with others, such as military and political rest, and peace within are impossible as long as we lack peace with God. And that peace only comes through the finished work of Christ.

Do you tend to see yourself at rest with God or still struggling against God? Why?
Day 4: Read 2 Samuel 7:11b-13

When you think of the heroes of the faith in Scripture—the spiritual giants who came before us—David is near the top of the list. While it is right and fitting for us to recognize David in this way—God did give us the “hall of faith” in Hebrews 11—we cannot stop there. We need to look at David so we can look through him.

David did some incredible things, but he was by no means without sin. His affair with Bathsheba and consequent murder of Uriah proved this. But God still used David in a mighty way, as we see in this passage. David was a great king, a man after the Lord’s heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22), but God did something far greater through him than his contemporaries ever saw. Through David, God sent the Messiah. So we don’t fix our gaze on David as we recognize his life of faithfulness. Instead, we turn our eyes and fix them on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, the one true Hero (Heb. 12:2).

What is the danger of fixing your gaze on the people of the Bible? What might you miss if you fail to consider them at all? What encouragement might other people be seeing in your life?

Day 5: Read 2 Samuel 7:14-29

God had made spectacular promises to David. The king had desired to build a temple for God, but in God’s rejection of his plans, He showered him with a blessing he could never fathom in this covenant. We should pay careful attention to David’s response.

“Who am I?” It is a fitting question, a proper response to God’s good news. We need to be careful here and not see this question asked in the same way Moses asked it years before. Moses’ question was one of doubt—“You have the wrong man.” David’s question was one of awe—“What did I ever do to deserve this?” And that is why it is the proper response, the only reasonable response, to God’s grace. Because the question demands the proper answer: You are no one. You have done nothing. This is entirely out of the kindness and grace of the Lord.

How do we tend to receive the Lord’s blessings? Is there any part of us, even the smallest fraction, that receives God’s gifts in a posture of expectation? We can have none of that because even the slightest amount of pride obliterates our understanding of grace.

In what ways have you felt, at times, that you deserve blessings from God?
Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- God promises to give His people eternal rest (2 Sam. 7:8-11a).
- God promises to establish an eternal kingdom (2 Sam. 7:11b-13).
- God promises to provide an eternally beloved son (2 Sam. 7:14-16).

How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?

Do you feel rested? Why or why not? What measures can you take to ensure you and your group are living out of a healthy understanding of rest, both physically and spiritually?

What are some ways you tend to lose sight of the church's existence as an extension of God's kingdom? What can you and your group do to elevate your view of the local church and its importance in God's plan?

Notes

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In this volume of *The Gospel Project*, we cover the roughly one hundred and twenty years of Israel’s heyday: the united monarchy. After decades of the devastating cycle of sin and deliverance and being ruled by a series of judges, the Israelites called on Samuel to appoint a king for them—one like those of the nations around them. God warned His people that what they were requesting would lead to heartache and trouble, but they insisted. So God, in His kindness, gave them what they wanted in order to teach them to trust Him.

What followed was a series of three kings: Saul, David, and Solomon, each ruling for about forty years. In some ways, these kings provide us with examples to follow: the fierce determination of David not to stand for anyone impugning God’s character; the mercy and kindness David showed to a foe and his family; the wisdom of Solomon. But we also discover that each of these three men fell woefully short of being the king God’s people wanted and needed, each one proving God’s warnings true. Bookending God’s people crying out as one for a king at the start of this volume, by the time we finish, we encounter God’s people being divided into two kingdoms.

Our takeaway is clear: The hope of humanity does not rest in any human king or leader but is fixed solely and securely in the King of kings, Jesus Christ. But at the same time, we see that God delights in using His people despite their failings. God would fulfill His covenant with David, even though he committed adultery and murder. This reaffirmed the promises God had made to Abraham generations before. And though Solomon would succumb to polygamy and idolatry, God used him to build the temple, a place for God’s people to worship and be in relationship with God.

So consider as you study: What might God do through us?