

Prayers

To God

Give thanks to God for His love for you, and praise Him for the many ways He shows this.

For myself

Weekly theme: social media

God Almighty, we need Your power and Your love. We speak to our friends over the internet and we find out our information from websites. We use emails for all our communication, and we do not seem to know where else to go to interact with people or the rest of the world! Come amongst us afresh Lord Jesus and meet us face to face. Make our encounter with You real, and bless us as we seek to find You as a truly real person who loves and cares for us. AMEN

For others

Pray for all who are going through difficult times at the moment, pray for any you know who are having to leave a job or move to another country. Bless them through your prayers.

Meditation

Lord God, Almighty Father, Rock of ages,
Inventor, Designer, Engineer, Musician and Artist.

Flood all my senses with the ecstasy of life,
And overpower the torrid agonies of my mortality.

Irradiate me with the brilliance of Your light,
And absorb the darker evils of my selfish being.

Energise my enthusiastic soul with love,
And purge me from the somber paths of gloom.

Stretch my mind with the intricacies of truth,
And burst the myth I believe of my supremacy.

Lord God, Almighty Father, Rock of Ages,
Principal, leader, colleague, friend and aide.

Excite me by how much I truly need You,
And paint me with the brighter hues of godliness.

Bible Passage

2 Samuel 7:18-29

¹⁸ 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 this far? ¹⁹ And as if this were not enough for You, O Lord God; You have also spoken of Your servant's house for a long time to come. Is this Your plan, O Lord God? ²⁰ What more can David say to You? For You know Your servant, O Lord God! ²¹ For the sake of Your Word, and according to Your will, You have done this great thing and revealed it to Your servant.

²² How great You are, O Lord God; for there is no one like You, and there is no God except You, just as we have been told. ²³ Who is like Your people Israel? Is there any other nation on earth; redeemed by God to make Himself known, doing great and awesome things for them by clearing away other nations and their gods before his people? ²⁴ You established your people Israel as You very own, and You, O Lord, became their God.

²⁵ And now, O Lord God, confirm for ever the prophecy You have spoken about your servant and his house. ²⁶ So that Your name will be great forever. People will say, 'The Lord of hosts is God over Israel'; and the dynasty of Your servant David will be established before You. ²⁷ For You, O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have revealed this to Your servant, saying, 'I will build You a house'; so your servant has found courage to offer this prayer to You.

²⁸ And now, O Lord God, You are God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this good thing to Your servant. ²⁹ Now therefore please 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 the house of Your servant will be blessed forever.'

Review

The beginnings of this humble prayer submitting to God lie in a simple request. David had asked the prophet Nathan whether he could build Temple in Jerusalem for the Ark. It seemed a foregone conclusion; this was what David and all Israel wanted, because a Temple would be a great sign of the unity of God's people. Of course, it was right to consult Nathan, the prophet in Jerusalem at the time, in order to be sure, but at first Nathan had no objections.

God, however, had other plans, and told Nathan in a dream. The prophet had a vision as radical as anything we have read in the Bible so far!

Our passage today is David's response to the Lord's amazing and emotionally charged response to this request. No, David could not build a Temple, but instead, God wanted to live within a different sort of 'house', the 'dynasty' of David! Moreover, He wanted to be with His people in the person of David's 'Son', his successor on the throne in Jerusalem (7:12f.) He promised to anoint David physical and spiritual heritage (7:12-14), and this was the beginnings of Israel's hopes for a Messiah, and the Christian faith in Christ!

We could imagine David being utterly frustrated at God's response, but there is no hint of this. David had been more than patient so far, and God was redirecting David in ways he did not expect (7:19). David was amazed at the message revealed to him (7:20,21), and Scripture reveals he responds in pure personal worship, using words not found in Scripture before. David addresses God as one with whom he has a relationship; not even Moses or Abraham spoke with God in the personal terms found in verses 22 to 24! This is pure praise!

Here, David repeats back to God the substance of the revelation given to him (7:25f.), thereby showing that he accepts God's will. God will bless his 'dynasty', so asks the Lord's blessing on his own 'house' (7:29), his 'dynasty', his 'beth' (Hebrew - dwelling place, or home). He knew God was in charge of something far bigger than he.

Going Deeper

The spiritual life of David

The first thing we notice here is the spiritual life of David. The words in this prayer are not written in poetic form, as are many of David's psalms (e.g. Psalm 23), nevertheless, there are some similarities with the Psalms. To begin with he frequently uses a phrase for God, 'O Lord God' (7:18,19,20 etc), a phrase found frequently in the Psalms (59:5, 68:18, 80:4, 84:8, 89:8, etc.).

The whole of David's prayer is one of worship and submission to Almighty God; it is an extraordinary insight into the mind of David and his spiritual life. As a prayer of obedience it does not question God in any way, but focuses entirely upon David's sense of awe at the magnificence and mercy of God. David began by asking God to do something that would be carrying on what he believed to be right, as king of Israel. God's answer was that he had to do something far more different, and important, and he was overawed at the thought that God would honour his heritage. He knew that Abraham was the forefather of the nation and Moses was the man whose ministry and leadership defined Israel, and now he was to be the father of a lineage that would represent God's presence with His people! He said in awe, *'you have spoken of Your servant's house for a long time to come. Is this Your plan, O Lord God?'* (7:19)

Celebrating the truth about God

The central verses of our passage, from 7:22 to 7:24 speak about the greatness of God in what could be called a model prayer of praise to God. Here, David celebrates God's uniqueness, as something that has been handed down from one generation to another, *'just as we have been told'* (7:22). The task of the evangelist is put clearly here in the Old Testament in the mouth of David, who knew how important it was for the news about the One True God to be passed on from one generation to another.

Like all true Jews, David believed without question that the children of Abraham were God's own people on earth (7:23), but he describes them as a 'redeemed' people. The last time we read words like this within Scriptures was when Moses spoke of God's 'redemption' (Ex

15:13) of Israel through the freedom He granted them from Egypt. While 'faith' is often the key Christian concept used today to define what it means to be a follower of Christ, 'redemption' was used by Israel as the one way of explaining God's undeserved salvation of Israel from Egypt. Israel had no 'right' to salvation, God redeemed His people without their deserving it, and now David recalls this sense of being unworthy before God's supreme act of salvation. He says, *'Who is like Your people Israel? Is there any other nation on earth; redeemed by God to make Himself known, doing great and awesome things for them?'* (7:23)

While faith is an essential concept for Christians, we do well to ensure we do not lose sight of what the word 'redemption' means, because it reminds us that God has saved us, undeserved, by means of the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Accepting God's prophetic word

From verse 25 onwards David noticeably accepts God's word through Nathan, and asks for it to be '*confirmed*' (7:25). Here is an interesting development. We only think of prophecy as being tested and checked out from advice given in the New Testament (e.g. John 4:1f.). But throughout the Old Testament, prophecy is constantly challenged and assessed; Deuteronomy says that a prophet is tested by whether what he (or she) says comes true! (Deut 18:18f.)

The principles that emerge from David's prayer are interesting. First, David honours God as the one who is behind everything; instead of the ideas coming from himself or from others, he acknowledges that the right idea for God's presence with His people comes from God alone (7:26), and then they can say truthfully, *'The Lord of Hosts is God over Israel'* (7:26). Second, revelation from God results in Him requiring people to do things they did not first want. Here, the house for God's presence, meaning the Temple (7:27), is to be built when God says so, and no sooner. David asked whether he could do this and was told 'No'. Now he must wait for his son to do what he wanted to do. Many men will not do this; David was a man of God and did.

The blessing of God

The climax of David's prayer is his own acceptance of the Lord's favour upon himself and his 'dynasty' (v25,26,27). This finishes with an affirmation of David's faith in the truth and faithfulness of almighty God. Wonderfully, God's blessing now lies on those who do His will; on those who hear His prophetic word and do as He says; *'Now therefore please bless the house of Your servant, so that it may continue forever before You'* (7:29), and continuing, *'for You, O Lord God, have spoken, and with Your blessing the house of Your servant will be blessed forever'*. Now that God's Word has been accepted and the Lord worshipped, blessing is freely available!

It is very difficult to summarise in any accurate way the spiritual nature of such a prayer. You could say that it demonstrates an extraordinary 'piety', but this sounds as if the prayer makes David out to be far more of a 'saintly' figure than his life in general would suggest. Some think the prayer was a later composition, 'made up' to suit the occasion. But David's prayers are unique in Scripture. For example, although David's son Solomon prays with similar fervour at the opening of the newly built Temple (1 Kings 8), Solomon's prayers are strongly ritual and formal in nature, and David's prayers in our passage today are fluid and lack any sense of formality, apart from their general outline and the overwhelming sense of praise to Almighty God. They show David the man, anointed by God for a task beyond any mortal. Yet David was willing to be obedient and faithful under the most extreme of conditions. He can teach us much

Discipleship

Application

How did this prayer come about?

It is best to sit lightly to all ideas about the origins of this prayer of David. As presented here in Scripture, it is an extraordinary example of what happens when a human soul pours out love and thanksgiving to God. If you read the prayer several times, you may discover, as I have done, that you lose any sense of contact with the earthly issues at stake, such as the building of the Temple or David's immediate lineage, and become caught up in the wonderful praise of God offered by David. This is one of those passages of scripture in which the words invite the reader to be caught up by the Holy Spirit in the awesomeness of praise and wonder at the mighty works of God, and the wonder of His plan for the salvation of humanity.

The working of praise

That is how praise works. It is inherently infectious when it truly happens, and what is passed off as the worship of God in some churches is a poor reflection of praise by comparison with this prayer of David. Scripture shows us here and in many other places that true worship happens when the believer is caught up in wonder, and worldly matters become seen in a different light whilst the awesomeness of God's presence is expressed in the simplicity, beauty and repetition of the words used in praise.

It is little wonder that David is seen as the author and sponsor of so much praise within the Old Testament; you will find this majestic combination of praise and words within so many of the Psalms ascribed to him. For all the wars he fought, the victorious battles and the testing court intrigues with which David was involved throughout his life, here is evidence of the true spiritual nature of the one who was chosen and anointed by God to found the lineage from which our Saviour Jesus would come. God could only give David a glimpse of this, but it was enough for him to be 'lost in wonder love and praise' (a powerful description of the same kind of praise captured by Charles Wesley, thousands of years later, in his great hymn 'Love Divine').

Ideas for what to do

- Have you heard people speak of having a revelation of God and of acting upon it? Ask them how they checked this out - people sometimes find it hard to submit to others in church; but here, David submits to Nathan's prophetic vision, and Nathan submits to God (he thought differently about David's request after God had spoken to him! How do you check out what God says to you?
- Read through this passage several times and write down what it teaches you about personal prayer.

Questions (for use in groups)

1. Which part of this great prayer caught your attention when you first read it? What other part now stands out?
2. Which features of the life of Israel are recalled by David in this prayer, and why?

3. How is the dynasty of David preserved throughout the ages? From your general knowledge of scripture, trace this as far as you can through to beyond the life of Christ.

Final Prayer

Merciful Lord, when we do not feel like praising You, fill us with a spirit of gratitude for all You have done for us; when we do not feel like confessing to You, fill us with a spirit of remorse which draws us towards Your throne; when we do not feel like forgiving anyone, remind us by Your Spirit of the forgiveness You offered us from the Cross. Return our hearts to the praise of Your Holy Name, O Lord. **AMEN**