

Sunday January 19, 2020
 Lesson 8: God's Covenant with David
 Scripture: 2 Samuel 7: 1-17

Context:

The next covenant to examine is one a little more familiar to readers. The covenant with David is well known especially due to the term of David as the “man after God’s own heart.” The books of First and Second Samuel tell the story of the Israelites and the various kings that came to reign. The books seek to also explain how the country of Israel fell and their relationship with God during the time.

This passage alludes to David’s decision to build a house for God. The building of the Temple is probably a mixed act of genuine piety and self-serving legitimation.¹ These verses reflect what was probably an ongoing conversation as the country of Israel unified as a group of tribes.

Nathan the prophet initially acquiesces to the building of the Temple, but this comes from Nathan’s own volition. Yahweh comes to Nathan and makes clear that the permanent dwelling is not to come under David’s reign. This God will not be held in place by any religious arrangement and the idea of containing God contradicts Yahweh’s self-understanding.² Yet the understanding of building a temple also runs the risk of David misunderstanding covenant.

The speech from God emphasizes to David that the kingship will be sanctioned and defined by something other than human splendor. Yahweh is ready to authorize and benefit David far beyond the state symbol of the Temple.³ Yahweh then recounts all the ways and moments that David has flourished and risen to greatness. David is Yahweh’s creation and the past is just the beginning of the promises made to David.

Towards the latter end of the oracle does the main point get made about God’s relationship with David. There will be a time for the Temple to be built, and it will not come under David. Instead, David’s son will be the one who will have the kingdom united and then proceed to build the Temple. This passage appears to be a legitimization of Solomon and his rule.

One might speculate that this whole passage is royal propaganda to promote the monarchic interest of David’s family. While there is that tension, there is the bigger picture that this covenant is the first of its kind in the Old Testament. The Mosaic faith, sounded by Joshua and Samuel as well, is that God’s good inclination depends on Israel’s obedience.⁴ Yet in this covenant with David, the “if” disappears. God promises to be with David and that promise of love will not be rescinded.

¹ Walter Brueggemann, “First and Second Samuel,” *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (John Knox Press: Louisville, KY, 2010), 254.

² *Ibid.*, 254.

³ *Ibid.*, 254.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 257.

Application:

If you've ever been a student in any setting before, you've probably played a little "game." It is a game I've played before and it goes a little something along these lines. You've been busy doing so many other important things that you "forget" to study for a test or work on a paper. Then, when the time gets closer, you begin to panic. And then the bargains start to come: "God, if you give me an A on this paper or exam, I will go to church every week and never procrastinate again." The odds are that even if you make the A, the same "game" gets played all with the focus on the important word "if."

Thank the stars that our God doesn't play the "if" game with us. The covenant that God makes us is not bound on an "if" clause. As evidenced in the covenant with David and future covenants we will study, God continues to reveal that our God claims to be with us even when we mess up. We see as much in the story of David as the very one who builds the Temple is the son of a sultry affair as David responds to a lusty itch and commits adultery. Yet God does not abandon him or the royal line. God is with him through it all.

The covenant with David is especially helpful to us as we think of how shame and guilt play a role in our culture. Guilt is to have remorse over something that you have done. Shame is remorse about your very being, for your existence as a human. We've seen a rise in studies about shame and guilt and how they impact people.

As a pastor, I have heard people express both guilt and shame as a part of their lives that sometimes prevents them from fully living and moving forward in life. They may have guilt about something they've done or an act they committed that has caused them and others pain and suffering. Others have shame about their very beings, about ways they "fail to measure up" or appear "normal." The parents of teens will tell you that there is no shortage of kids comparing themselves physically and socially to others. Yet the same is true for adults as we hear of people and friends doing the same trying to "keep up with the Joneses." It all ties back to the fact that people want to measure their self worth in comparison to others. There is no lack of shame and guilt that gets passed around today unfortunately.

Yet the covenant today with David reminds us that there is a power stronger than guilt or shame. Our God's love and favor is not dependent on the things we do or the way we appear. God love us, warts and all. Thank God we all don't look the same or have the same gifts or attributes. That would be quite boring!

We are given something even better than what the world offers as perfection. Like David, we are given a covenant with God in which we are promised that our God doesn't need human measurements of success or vanity to prove our worth. God loves us for who we are and how God has created us. And God will never leave or abandon something that God has created. This includes the messy humanity that will continue to sin and make mistakes. Yet God will be with us every step of the way.

Why do you think that God's covenant with David is so important for life today? How does one word, "if," change how we see and understand concepts? Where do you see people struggling with guilt? Where do you see people struggling with shame? How do you think covenant helps us understand deeper truths about ourselves? Where do you see good news in God's covenant with David that speaks to where you are on your

journey today?

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