

David, Part 9 1-23-22

WHO AM I?

I am excited to lead us in a meditation on some words of Scripture that are as precious as any ever uttered by the sweet psalmist of Israel. Before we read I remind you of the background for this chapter. David had recognized that the Lord, whose presence was symbolized by the ark of the covenant had no house as David did. David asked the prophet Nathan about the idea of building a temple for God. Nathan said, *Go ahead*. But then the Lord said to Nathan, *No, tell David no and tell him more*. The more is a record of astonishing grace. Verses 8-17 of 2 Samuel 7 record the promises made to David – God’s gracious covenant. 12-13 *When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.* ¹³*He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.* Beginning in verse 18 we read of David’s reaction. 18-26 *When David the king 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?”* ¹⁹*And yet this was insignificant in Your eyes, O Lord God, for You have spoken also of the house of Your servant concerning the distant future. and this is the custom of man, O Lord God.* ²⁰*Again 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 own heart, You have done all this greatness to let Your servant know.* ²²*For this reason 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.* ²³*And what one nation on the earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people and to make a name for Himself, and to do a great thing for You and awesome things for Your land, before Your people whom You have redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, from nations and their gods?* ²⁴*For You have established for Yourself Your people Israel as Your own people forever, and You, O Lord, have become their God.* ²⁵*Now therefore, O Lord God, the word that You have spoken concerning Your servant and his house, confirm it forever, and do as You have spoken,* ²⁶*that Your name may be magnified forever, by saying, ‘The Lord of hosts is God over Israel’; and may the house of Your servant David be established before You.*

David presumably says all this in private. Nathan reported the word of God to David and David went alone 18a *the king went in and sat before the Lord*. Would you expect him to shout and sing? Sometimes he does, but not here. Would you expect him to go tell his household of all God’s great promises? Well, he did not.

He went to be alone with God and he sat – plop! In Scripture we have standing prayers and kneeling prayers – this is the only one I know that is a sitting prayer. May I guess at why? Sitting is the posture of one who is stunned by some news. Have you ever sat in a chair overwhelmed by something you’ve heard? One of my earliest memories, about age six, surrounds the day my parents got a letter from their oldest daughter, the high-school valedictorian, a daughter they had sent off to Duke University on a full scholarship – and the news that came was that she was pregnant, was getting married and was dropping out. My dad probably went somewhere else to let off steam but my mother just sat in a chair, for hours, intermittently weeping. My mom didn’t sit a lot at home, but that day it was all she could do. This is why, when you break big news to people, you say, *you probably should sit down for this*. David sits, marveling and wondering – why? In his case, he is pressed down under the weight of blessing.

He said, *who am I, O Lord God?* Put another way, David says, *why me Lord?* That’s a question often asked, but usually in a different way. You lose your job and say, *why me Lord?* You get injured or ill and say, *why me Lord?* Humans do not understand their suffering and they ask, or rather complain, *why me Lord? Why little innocent ‘ole me? Why have you let calamity fall on me?* It’s a puzzle to us and so people ask the question, *why do bad things happen to good people?* Luke 13:1-2 *Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ²And Jesus said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate?” Jesus asks, “Did they suffer because they were worse than others?” The implied question is, “Did you not suffer because you were better than they?” 3-5 *I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? ⁵I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”* So, the Lord adds a new twist to the *why me* question. He says, in essence, *why not you?* You see you can ask the “why me?” question two ways. “Why did I suffer?” or “Why did I escape?” What will determine your question is your view of God and of yourself.*

Behind what Jesus says is the biblical understanding that God is an awesomely holy and pure creator who cannot tolerate sin and, as the cosmic judge, must punish sin. So, when man sins, he is liable to God’s wrath and to the miseries of such a condition. When you grasp something of the holiness of God and the great wickedness of human evil, then sorrow and suffering is no mystery.

But, I can think of no deficiency in our thinking that yields more doctrinal confusion than this – we don't understand how holy God is and how awful sin is. The real mystery is not "why do bad things happen to good people" but "why do good things happen to bad people." CS Lewis wrote, *The Problem of Pain*. John Gerstner wrote a contrasting book, *The Problem of Pleasure*. You didn't even know that pleasure was a problem, did you? Lewis asked how there can be pain in a world ruled by a loving God. Gerstner asked how there can be pleasure in a sinful world ruled by a just God. They are both good questions, but from a Scriptural perspective it is the latter question that poses the greater mystery and should capture the most attention. The problem of pleasure or the problem of blessing. This is the problem David pondered in our text and, in fact, throughout the Psalms.

"Why me?" That can be asked by one embittered at God over his lot in life. Or it can be asked by one overwhelmed with gratitude. This is David. 18 *Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far?* Most of us walk through life expecting flowery beds of ease. Our pride makes us think we deserve our treasures and privilege. Christians have this problem. RC Sproul said, "we have grown accustomed to God's grace." We take it for granted and actually think we deserve it. Donna Summer once sang a ludicrous song that said, *give me your unconditional love, the kind that I deserve*. Jesus sticks a pin in that mental balloon when he says, *unless you repent you will perish*.

Thankfully, David did not expect grace or take it for granted when it came. If you work hard, you may expect to be promoted. It's no surprise when it comes. In fact, you'll gripe if it doesn't; but if you've been lazy and you still get promoted you will say what? "Why me?" That's where David is. He says, "Who am I" out of a profound sense of unworthiness. 18 *Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far*. Well, who was he? He was the giant-killer. David, the great general, the godly musician. Most in David's shoes would have looked at themselves and said, "no wonder God is blessing me. I'm really something." But not this man. His position and achievements suggested to him no merit. Instead, he was overwhelmed by a sense of personal unworthiness. What he says in verse 18 is not meant to impress anyone with his humility. He truly felt this way. The text notes that he said it, "before the Lord." In David's own eyes he was a lowly shepherd boy who was a sinner. What made David so amazed was the contrast between where he came from and where God had brought him. Nathan had brought him God's word which included this line: *I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel*. David said, "who am I?" He could see nothing in himself that would incline God to so exalt him. Do you? Do

you see anything in yourself that would incline God to pour out blessings on your head? Oh, I hope not. I hope not. I hope you have seen yourself as David did. I hope you have this profound sense of being unworthy for where God has put you. I tell you, if those in leadership in business or the church don't have this same attitude I fear for them. I know just as a local church pastor I find myself saying, "who am I?" When you receive praise or promotion or esteem do you feel amazed as David did? Do you feel amazed at just the privilege of being God's son, God's daughter? I pray you do and that you share with David this profound sense of gratitude, rooted in your sense of unworthiness. The old hymn, *Beneath the Cross of Jesus*, contains this line – *and from my smitten heart, with tears, two wonders I confess, the wonders of redeeming love and my unworthiness.*

This sense of unworthiness met up in king David with the promises of God, and "whammo!" the result was one king of Israel overwhelmed by gratitude. We don't find here, David the psalmist laying out the most eloquent praise. He was not emotionally able. Sometimes when we most desire to express ourselves, we are unable to do it. David simply recalls what God has done – raising him to power and prominence. He does on in **19ab** *And yet this was insignificant in Your eyes, O Lord God, for You have spoken also of the house of Your servant concerning the distant future.* As if making me king wasn't enough, look at what you have promised me! **20a** *Again what more can David say to You? For You know Your servant, O Lord God!* The eloquent poet is shut up in the speechless wonder of unexpected grace. To him, at this moment, all words seem magnificently inadequate. What do you say to the grace of God? "Thanks."?? That seems so poor.

Maybe you have felt the inadequacy of words to express thanks to another person who has helped you – the mother who has nursed you, fed you, clothed you, comforted you. The father who has taught you, encouraged you, provided for you. The friend who share Jesus with you and opened to you the truth. The spouse who loved you faithfully for decades through all the joys and trials. What do you say? *Thanks Mom? Thanks old buddy?* Words fail us. How much more when we confront the grace of Christ. After that glorious eighth chapter of romans which so beautifully sets forth the benefits of Christ's work, Paul says, **8:31a** *What then shall we say to these things?* What can we say? We feel helpless as David. Spurgeon said: *Such thoughts as those in David's mind break the backs of words and stagger speech.* So, the poet writes: *Come thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace, streams of mercy never ceasing call for songs of loudest praise. Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above.* Human language, you see, just cannot suffice. Maybe in heaven we will have such words.

Spurgeon points us to heaven where our capacities will be magnified and he quotes from John Berridge: *Then my tongue would fain express all his love and loveliness; But I lisp and falter forth//broken words not half his worth. Vex'd I try and try again, still my efforts all are vain; living tongues are dumb at best; we must die to speak of Christ.*

Well, David here took comfort in one fact – that although words failed him, God knew the secret language of the heart. 20 *Again what more can David say to You? For You know Your servant, O Lord God!* God knows the praise of his heart when all David could muster was, “why me.” I can never read this story without relating it to a similar experience of my own on the day I packed up my things and left the trailer where I had lived for two years while attending the University of Florida. I went in to pray by that bed where I had prayed for two years. It was to be a brief prayer I thought but as I knelt there and considered what God had done for me in those two years I became blown away by grace. For about an hour I knelt there and gave thanks and I wept and I gave thanks. In that moment of deep appreciation of the grace of God I said something I will never forget. I said, “Lord, I owe to you every split second of my life, even every thought that goes through my mind I dedicate to you.” Then I rose up, and drove home singing praises all the way. It was for me, one of those, “why me” moments that I have had throughout my life. A big part of it for David and for me was this Spirit-wrought realization of how undeserving of God’s favor I really am. I don’t always maintain that conviction. I don’t always grasp from the heart the magnitude of grace, but when I do, I join with David, and lose myself in wonder, love and praise. What a sweet, sweet place to be! And this, I am convinced, will be our condition for all eternity.

One of the most disturbing qualities I discover in myself and others is ingratitude. Few things distress me so. It truly is horrid. Dostoevsky defined man as *a creature that walks on two legs and is ungrateful*. Have you even seen ingratitude as being mankind’s root and primal sin? Think about it. Eve in the garden sinned only after she became ungrateful for all the Lord had supplied. Satan got her to feel deprived because one tree was off limits. God had place Eve in a paradise, a garden, full of trees and their fruit, but Eve chose to focus not on the abundance she had, but the one thing she did not have. What do her children do today? I remember, as a parent, observing this unseemly ingratitude in our children, and wondering where they got their enormous capacity to take so much for granted. Are you a creature who walks on two legs and is ungrateful? At least David was not. *Hey, David, why are you so grateful?* What would he say? *How can I not be? Look at what the Sovereign Lord has done for me.*

Has He done anything for you Christian? Do you have any blessings to compare to David's? Ephesians 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.* That's all! Try to follow this lengthy quote from brother Spurgeon: *I should like to sit down and leave you to muse upon what the Lord has done in bringing you hitherto—up from the pit of destruction, up from the miry clay of your depravity, out of the horrible prison-house of your dread of divine wrath, away from the Egypt of darkness and bondage into light and liberty. What an almighty work it was that brought you from darkness into light, from death into life. Bless the Lord for this. Praise Him for your calling when effectually He drew you, and you ran unto Him weeping and singing. Praise Him for your pardon when He washed you in the blood and you were clean, and you knew you were. Wonder of wonders is this! Praise Him for your justification, when He took the robe the Savior wrought, and decked you with it, as never was bride arrayed by the most loving bridegroom. Praise Him for your regeneration, when you were born into a new world, praise Him for being set apart for holy uses, admitted to new company, filled with holy joys, instructed in heavenly truths, and dedicated to sacred duties. Praise Him for sanctification, which has made you fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Praise Him for the preservation from sin which you have hitherto received, and the education for eternity which has so happily commenced, for the provision so bounteous with which He has furnished a table in the wilderness, both temporally and spiritually, and for the protection with which He has warded off the arrow that flies by day, and the pestilence that walks in darkness.*

Yes, God has taken you from hell and made you his child. He says you will reign forever as a king and a priest unto God. What shall we say to these things? David said 23 what one nation on the earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people and to make a name for Himself, and to do a great thing for You and awesome things for Your land, before Your people whom You have redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, from nations and their gods? Who are blessed like the people of God? John Newton wrote that lovely line: *Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God! The hymn ends with this -- Savior, if of Zion's city, I through grace a member am, Let the world deride or pity, I will glory in Thy name; Fading is the worldling's pleasure, All his boasted pomp and show; Solid joys and lasting treasure None but Zion's children know.* Who am I to be among the children of Zion? Do you feel this dear people, amazement at the grace of God? Our hymns are full of this. *Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's*

blood! Died he for me? who caused his pain! For me? who him to death pursued? Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me? And when I think that God, His Son not sparing; Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in; That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing, He bled and died to take away my sin. What did David say? 22 For this reason You are great, O Lord God; for there is none like You. How great thou art!

I often wonder why, why, why don't people, professing believers, why don't they have a heart to serve Christ? Why so little motivation? I can only guess that they don't understand what Jesus has done. They are not blown away by grace. Paul said, "*the love of Christ constrains me to serve him. His.*" The sweet chains of gratitude that make us His servants. Spurgeon said: *Nothing weighs a man down like a load of blessing.* Why do we PBJ? Why do we serve Christ? How can we not? Behold his love for unworthy me. Isaac Watts wrote: *Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small; love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.*

By the way, why did God love David? Hmm? Why did God so bless him? 21 *For the sake of Your word, and according to Your own heart, You have done all this greatness to let Your servant know.* David says, *no reason that I can see – it was just God's heart so to do.* How wonderful is that? Rather than question God's election, we could just revel in it as did Paul who wrote in Ephesians 1:5 *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.* And then in verse 11 *In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.* God loves us because he loves us and I am very glad he needs no other reason.

Have you heard or seen a glimpse of that love? Do you take your gratitude to God in prayer? Maybe you can leave here and go somewhere to sit in awe before God's mercy. But we will close with some adoring worship and may our Father grant us, by the movement of His Spirit to be adoring children who are blown away by his grace.