

David: Passion For God's Glory

2Samuel 7

Bryn MacPhail / May 22, 2011

It hardly seems necessary for me to say that prayer is a most essential Christian exercise. A Christian without prayer is like a carpenter without a saw; a plumber without a wrench; a fireman without a water hose.

I continue to think about Robert McCheyne's quote regarding prayer, which we referenced a couple of weeks ago: "What a man is alone on his knees before God, that he is, and no more."

If prayer is the measure of our maturity in Christ, if prayer is the tool that the Christian cannot live without, then it follows that we would seek to make advances in our prayer life.

Yes, prayer is something you can get better at!

We might be heard saying, "Golfing isn't my thing", or "Cooking isn't my thing" or "Cleaning up after myself is not my thing" and then we might leave these activities to others.

Prayer ought not to be considered in the same category. *Prayer needs to be our thing.*

Prayer is our method of entry into fellowship with the Almighty. Prayer is the means by which we draw close to God and experience His blessings.

Prayer needs to be our thing, and yet I confess that *it is not always an easy thing*.

I regularly have seasons where I struggle to pray as I ought. And in these seasons, I seek to draw upon the many examples found in Scripture of godly men and women calling upon the Lord and then enjoying the benefits of doing so.

My hope is that our present study of King David and this prayer will encourage and inspire us as we seek the Lord this week and beyond.

This prayer of David is, of course, but one of many prayers of David recorded in Holy Scripture. The particular significance of this prayer is that it follows an exchange between David, Nathan, and the Lord, about who would be commissioned to build the temple.

David was eager to build the temple (2Sam. 7:2), but the Lord instructed Nathan to tell David that his son would be given the task of building the temple.

Of great consolation, however, is that the Lord assures David that his throne, and the throne of his son, “**will be established forever**” (7:16).

In response to this news, *David prays*.

In David’s prayer, I’d like us to note *three essential components*, which should mark the prayers of God’s people.

First, we note David's *humble approach*.

Secondly, we observe David's *heartfelt praise*.

And thirdly, we witness David's *honourable petition*.

First, David's *humble approach*. David's prayer begins: "**Who am I, O Lord God and what is my house that Thou hast brought me this far?**" (7:18).

David is a king and an accomplished warrior; he is the ruler of Israel and is wealthy beyond measure. I have no doubt that David would be regarded as a person of great distinction in any age.

Think of how we in Nassau might respond if the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, William and Kate, were to visit here. What would the crowds be like? How extensive would the press coverage be?

That's the kind of attention King David would get. Everybody would want a glimpse of this great king.

But, how does David regard himself in the presence of God? "**Who am I, O Lord God and what is my house that Thou hast brought me this far?**" is David's prayer (7:18).

The context from which this prayer springs, leads me to make the assertion that *grace promotes humility*.

God, speaking through His prophet Nathan, has just promised David that his throne **“shall be established forever”** (7:16).

For a king, this is the best possible news. Who would have argued with David had he emerged from his house declaring, ‘Look at me! I am the mighty king of Israel! I have defeated all of my enemies, and I will continue to defeat all of my enemies—my throne will endure forever!’?

But David does not do this. Rather than boast, instead of calling a press conference, David retreats to his prayer chamber and asks, **“Who am I, O Lord?”**

Friends, may I ask, if the Lord Jesus Christ has showered you with grace, what has been your response? Has grace driven you to your knees in humble prayer?

St. Andrew’s Kirk, in many ways, has an impressive 200 year history. We worship within a rather imposing building. Men and women of the Kirk over the years have had influence in shaping the Nassau we currently enjoy.

In light of this, there might be a temptation, I think, to puff out our chest and say to those nearby, “Look at us”.

And yet, what the biblical example points us to is a posture suitable to our standing before God. Whatever success we enjoy, whatever milestones we achieve, I think it is important for us to say with David, **“Who am I, O Lord...that Thou hast brought us this far?”**

David's example teaches us that *grace is intended to promote humility*.

We see this in the apostle Paul, who says to Timothy, **"It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all"** (1Tim. 1:15).

We see this in the well-known Anglican minister, John Newton, who penned those words, 'Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.'

If we examine ourselves head to foot we may find many things worthy of adulation in the presence of our peers, but if we examine ourselves with a view of finding something to command God's esteem, we will find ourselves appropriately humbled.

Accordingly, when we come to God in prayer it is important that we come with a *humble approach*.

The next mark we find in David's prayer is *heartfelt praise*. We find this in verses 20 through 24 and, again, in verses 27 through 29.

It is important to remember that the Lord refused David's request to build a temple. The Lord refuses to grant David his request, but this does nothing to quench David's desire to praise Him.

David begins by praising God for His character, **“Thou art great, O Lord God; for there is none like Thee, and there is no God besides Thee”** (7:22).

After praising God for His character, David then praises God for His mighty acts; he praises God for **“Thy people (Israel) whom Thou hast redeemed for Thyself from Egypt, from nations and their gods. For Thou hast established for Thyself Thy people Israel as Thine own people forever”** (7:24).

David is an example to us because he did not vacillate in his affection for the Lord when his request was not granted. David’s view of God remains steady as he meditates upon the Lord’s character, and upon what the Lord has already done for him.

Similarly, the follower of Jesus should often be meditating on the character of God, and bringing to mind that great work of God accomplished for us at Calvary, by our Saviour’s precious blood. Meditation upon these things will inspire our heart to praise the Lord and will keep us from grumbling and complaining.

I worry that there may be some who hinge their devotion to God on His willingness to conform to our hopes and plans. This is a grievous error.

Prayer is not an exercise whereby we seek to compel God to conform to our will. But rather, prayer is an exercise of humble submission, whereby God begins to shape and conform our will to His.

This leads us to the third element of David's prayer: *honourable petition*.

After having his original request denied, *David changes his petition*. David had originally prayed, 'Lord, allow me to build your house.' The Lord responded, 'You will not build my house, but your son will. And, one more thing, your throne will be established forever.'

Having now learned the will of the Lord, David changes his petition to match the will of the Lord. David prays, **"Now therefore, O Lord God, the word that Thou hast spoken concerning Thy servant and his household, confirm it forever, and do as Thou hast spoken"** (7:25).

Friends, when we pray in The Lord's Prayer, **"Thy will be done"**, this is very close to David's prayer, **"do as Thou hast spoken"**.

But, here is a pivotal question: Do you know what the will of the Lord is? *Do you know what the Lord has said?*

Because if we do not know what the Lord has said, if we do not know what the Lord has promised to do, then to pray **"do as Thou hast spoken"** is to pray in the dark.

Furthermore, if we pray **"Lord, do as Thou hast spoken"** without really knowing what He has said, how will we ever know if God has answered in the affirmative?!

So you see, it is of massive importance to know what the Lord has said and promised. And only to the degree that we know what the Lord wants to do will we be capable of bringing honourable petitions before Him.

That which God wants to do is revealed, in large measure, in the Bible. This gives you and me the opportunity to learn what God has said, and then to offer our honourable petitions accordingly.

King David provides us with an excellent pattern for prayer—not an exhaustive pattern, but he does model important principles for us to implement in our own prayer life.

Our prayers, following David's example, should include a humble approach, heartfelt praise, and honourable petitions.

I would like to say one more thing about David's heartfelt praise. The adverb 'heartfelt' may appear to be included only to serve the alliteration of humble, hearfelt, and honourable. This is only partly the case.

If we look at verse 27, we get a glimpse of David's motivation for prayer when he says, "**O Lord of hosts . . . Your servant has found it *in his heart* to pray this prayer to you.**"

Here David says something that is of central importance regarding the origin of prayer: *Prayer must come from the heart.*

For some, prayer begins in the mind, and then it passes through to the lips, without ever touching the heart.

For others, prayer has its origin in a liturgical routine; this is when our engagement in prayer becomes purely robotic or mechanical.

The English Puritan, Thomas Watson, maintains that there is a big difference between *saying a prayer* and *praying*, and he reminds us that one of the early church fathers succeeded in teaching his parrot to pray The Lord's Prayer.

(As we similarly learned from Hannah) I want to encourage you to pray from the heart and to pour out your soul to the Lord. And like David, I want to encourage you to have a humble approach, to offer heartfelt praise, and to make honourable petitions to God the Father.

I don't know what your prayer life is like. If it is at all like mine, then you know what it is to struggle with prayer from time to time.

My hope is that this morning, and this message series, is inspiring you to "keep at it". We can make advances in prayer...

And as we do, I am confident that you we experience sweeter fellowship with the Lord who has called you to be His. Amen.