

09-10-17 Conflict with Unanswered Prayer

2 Samuel 7 & 8

“Few great men or women live without moments of both elation and disappointment. The president who is praised one day is cursed the next. The successful investor misreads the trends and the brilliant executive gets fired. Life is a series of mountaintops and valleys, and we do not know which one we’ll experience tomorrow.

The same chapter that is the high point of David’s life also details his struggle with an unfulfilled desire. God denied him the privilege of seeing his most fond wish come true, but in return He loaded him with a series of new promises. This chapter in 2 Samuel is a picture of one man’s intimate relationship with God.” (Growing Through Conflict, E.W. Lutzer, p. 121).

Background: At this point, David is getting ready for retirement from wars and fighting with surrounding enemies. He has built up the Middle East to a place of prominence. His enemies have resigned from attacking, and David’s armies are powerful and well known. The nation of Israel is at peace. The Ark has been successfully returned to Jerusalem. David now can focus on his bucket list. Some of us may have many things we would like to do as retirement projects, and for others it may be that one big trip or a new home or playing golf every day 😊

David now has time to get direction on his heart’s desire. David’s desire wasn’t a small project, but a massive building endeavor. He was still strong and vibrant enough to pull this off. David dreamed about building a beautiful temple for God whom he loved and a permanent place for the Ark to be located. God’s presence would not have to move from place to place with the Ark. God could take up permanent residence in Jerusalem, just like He wanted all along.

2 Sam. 7:2-3 - *Then one day King David said to Nathan the prophet, “Look at this: Here I am, comfortable in a luxurious house of cedar, and the Chest of God sits in a plain tent.” Nathan told the king, “Whatever is on your heart, go and do it. GOD is with you.”* (MSG)

Sounds like a confirmation, doesn’t it. I know many people who are looking for God’s direction in their life. They all say, “The Lord is leading me to ...” But is it really the Lord’s leading? Even if you go to the pastor, he/she may not be hearing from God, but acting on intellect or feelings.

There were good reasons why this was a good desire:

1 – God wanted it done... God had chosen Jerusalem as the place that would bear His name. This was the place where the Ark would dwell. **Ps. 132:13** – *“Yes—I, God, chose Zion, the place I wanted for my shrine; This will always be my home; this is what I want, and I’m here for good.”* (MSG)

2 – David had a good motive... He wasn't looking for more fame or building a monument to himself. It was for God and His glory.

3 – He had the ability and time to do it... This would be his retirement project, his greatest challenge. This would be his best effort – for God – the desire of his heart.

“He shared the building project plans with his pastor, the prophet Nathan, and got his blessing. There are times when circumstances are so obvious and our motives so selfless that it hardly seems necessary to pray. And so, of course, neither David nor Nathan prayed. What could be more appropriate at this point in Israel’s history and David’s life for bringing glory to God? At that moment the sanctuary was as good as built.” EP

David was psyched. His desire was approved by God’s spokesman. What could be better than this? He was ready to get started ASAP. Go – Do – God is with you!

“But after a night of prayer, Nathan withdrew the building permit. What looked so wonderful in the daylight of enthusiastic but prayerless good intentions was now seen to be inappropriate.” EP

2 Sam 7:5-6 - You’re going to build a ‘house’ for me to live in? Why, I haven’t lived in a ‘house’ from the time I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt till now. All that time I’ve moved about with nothing but a tent. And in all my travels with Israel, did I ever say to any of the leaders I commanded to shepherd Israel, ‘Why haven’t you built me a house of cedar?’ (MSG)

CRUSHED!

David’s dream bubble was popped before it got off the ground. Did you ever feel this way or experience something like this? I have. I thought I knew the mind of God on a situation, but then things changed, and almost the opposite direction was God’s will. How did I miss that?

We are all subject to our own minds and desires. Our intentions may be good, but not God’s will at that time. So, He has to squash our attempts to act on something that is not right at the time. It may be good, and it may get accomplished down the road, maybe by someone else, but it’s not right for us now. This is what happened to David. He meant well, but ...

However, God never leaves us high and dry. If He shuts down one area, He opens up other areas for us to move in. This is exactly what happened with David, as we shall see.

First, God showed David why he wasn’t the one to take on this project, noble as it was.

1 Chron. 22:8 – David said to Solomon, “I wanted in the worst way to build a sanctuary to honor my God. But God prevented me, saying, ‘You’ve killed too many people, fought too many wars. You are not the one to honor me by building a sanctuary—you’ve been responsible for too much killing, too much bloodshed. But you are going to have a son and he will be a quiet and peaceful man, and I will calm his enemies down on all sides. (MSG)

So, the reason David was not allowed by God to build the temple was due to the bloodshed under his reign. The Temple was to be a place of peace and love, not killing and war. BUT - - God has already prepared David’s son, before he was in power, to be the one selected to perform this task and build the temple of God in Jerusalem. David, still on fire for this project, explained the plan to his son, Solomon.

“Though David wanted to do something wonderful for God, God turned the tables and did something wonderful for David.” (Growing Through Conflict, E.W. Lutzer, p. 123)

While David’s prayer was left unanswered, God still had compassion on David’s desire.

The Gift of New Promises:

2 Sam 7:9 - I was with you everywhere you went and mowed your enemies down before you. Now I’m making you famous, to be ranked with the great names on earth.

God promised David he would be given rest from all his enemies.

Though God would not allow David to build a house for Him, He would build a “HOUSE” for David for all generations.

2 Sam. 7:12-16 - Furthermore, God has this message for you: God himself will build you a house! When your life is complete and you’re buried with your ancestors, then I’ll raise up your child, your own flesh and blood, to succeed you, and I’ll firmly establish his rule. He will build a house to honor me, and I will guarantee his kingdom’s rule permanently. I’ll be a father to him, and he’ll be a son to me. When he does wrong, I’ll discipline him in the usual ways, the pitfalls and obstacles of this mortal life. But I’ll never remove my gracious love from him, as I removed it from Saul, who preceded you and whom I most certainly did remove. Your family and your kingdom are permanently secured. I’m keeping my eye on them! And your royal throne will always be there, rock solid.” (MSG)

The house God would build for David would be an eternal legacy. David’s son, Solomon, would be the one to build the temple for God. God would care for him all his days, even disciplining him if he goes astray (and he did). But, His favor would be with him no matter what.

A more distant promise was also given... v. 16 – God would permanently secure David’s family reign forever – in Christ (the descendant of David and savior of the world).

Even though David’s family didn’t literally reign over all of Israel since that time until now, through Jesus, that family line still reigns and will continue until He returns.

Lk. 1:32-33 - *She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. But the angel assured her, “Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus. He will be great, be called ‘Son of the Highest.’ The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; He will rule Jacob’s house forever— no end, ever, to his kingdom.”* (MSG)

Jesus Christ will someday rule over all the earth in a new kingdom established by God.

David wanted to build a temple, but God was going to build an everlasting dynasty. David’s plans would be temporary, but God’s plans would be eternal.

2 Sam. 7:18 – *King David went in, took his place before God, and prayed: “Who am I, my Master God, and what is my family, that you have brought me to this place in life?”* (MSG)

“God says, “yes” to us as often as His purposes allow Him to; but when He does say, “No,” He comforts us with His promises.” (E.W. Lutzer, p. 127)

New Intimacy

Our intimacy with God will sustain us during those times of doubt and unanswered prayer.

The author says this... *“Our greatest need is for God; if we learn to find Him fulfilling, our unfulfilled dreams become bearable.”* (E.W. Lutzer, p. 127)

“David learned that God can substitute for anything, but nothing can substitute for God.” (E.W. Lutzer, p. 128)

“There are two ways God can make us content. One is by answering our requests, the other is by making us satisfied with less and showing us Himself.” (E.W. Lutzer, p. 129)

2 Sam. 7:19-21 -*But that’s nothing compared to what’s coming, for you’ve also spoken of my family far into the future, given me a glimpse into tomorrow, my Master God! What can I possibly say in the face of all this? You know me, Master God, just as I am. You’ve done all this not because of who I am but because of who you are—out of your very heart!—but you’ve let me in on it.* (MSG)

A New Project

David was not allowed to build a physical temple for God, but he could help make it happen by training his children in the ways of righteousness. This would be a lineage, a house for God. We all have this same privilege today. You are not going to build a physical dwelling for God, but all of us can build a spiritual dwelling for God by training our children up in His ways. We can leave a legacy of righteousness behind in the next generations.

David said, **1 Chr. 29:2-3** – *“My son Solomon was singled out and chosen by God to do this. But he’s young and untested and the work is huge—this is not just a place for people to meet each other, but a house for GOD to meet us. I’ve done my best to get everything together for building this house for my God, all the materials necessary: gold, silver, bronze, iron, lumber, precious and varicolored stones, and building stones—vast stockpiles. Furthermore, because my heart is in this, in addition to and beyond what I have gathered, I’m turning over my personal fortune of gold and silver for making this place of worship for my God...”* (MSG)

“David learned that when God says “no” to one of our desires, He often give us the opportunity to help someone else fulfill our dream.” (E.W. Lutzer, p. 130).

New Conquests

Even though David was not selected to build the temple of God in Jerusalem, he was granted favor from God in other tangible ways...

In the days that followed, David struck hard at the Philistines— brought them to their knees and took control of the countryside.

2 Sam. 8:1-3 – *He also fought and defeated Moab. He chose two-thirds of them randomly and executed them. The other third he spared. So the Moabites fell under David’s rule and were forced to bring tribute.*

On his way to restore his sovereignty at the River Euphrates, David next defeated Hadadezer son of Rehob the king of Zobah. He captured from him a thousand chariots, seven thousand cavalry, and twenty thousand infantry. He hamstringed all the chariot horses, but saved back a hundred. (MSG)

So, in summary, we read...

Thus David ruled over all of Israel. He ruled well—fair and even-handed in all his duties and relationships. (2 Sam. 8:15 – MSG).

God led and protected David in all his endeavors to protect Israel. This was God's will.

Unanswered prayer is often an invitation to a more intimate relationship with God.

Your Unanswered Prayer

David's experience teaches us about our unanswered prayer times and disappointments with God. We need to consider God's blessings and other answered prayer in the past. Maybe God's "no" now can be compared to His many "yeses" of the past.

"The good intentions we are not allowed to fulfill are still precious in God's sight." (E.W. Lutzer)

Ps. 16:5,8,9 – My choice is you, God, first and only. And now I find I'm your choice! Day and night I'll stick with God; I've got a good thing going and I'm not letting go. I'm happy from the inside out, and from the outside in, I'm firmly formed. (MSG)

"God said "No" to David's request, but promised him the gift of His presence and blessings in a distant future" (E.W. Lutzer, p. 134).

Have you experienced times of unanswered prayer? You're not alone. This has been an issue from the beginning of time. So, what do you do about it? That's the question.

At times like this, when we feel God has left us high and dry, we need to press in all the more. We are having a time of corporate prayer on Thursday, Sept. 21 here in the sanctuary. We will be focusing on our unanswered prayers. Come together and bring your requests to God. We will be praying for our church direction, the search for a new senior pastor, and your own personal requests. It will be a time where we can come together and unite as the body of Christ to support each other and the needs of our church.