

David's Prayer

Bible Background • 1 CHRONICLES 17:16–27

Printed Text • 1 CHRONICLES 17:16–27 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 89:19–37

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: RECOGNIZE the significance of David's prayer in its historical context, ASPIRE to become faithful in the way David expresses in his prayer, and EMBRACE David's prayer as a model for our own prayers of gratitude and praise.

In Focus

Michelle worked for 40 years at the telephone company. She started working there as a high school graduate and faithfully stayed with the company. She notified her boss in October that she would be retiring at the end of November.

The week before her retirement, Michelle was in her office and had tears in her eyes thinking about how grateful she was to be employed for so long. She heard a knock on her door. Mr. Butler, a co-worker stopped by.

"Hey, the boss called for a staff meeting this afternoon," said Mr. Butler.

"Oh no! I thought I could escape before Mr. Hensley called for another staff meeting."

"OK. I will see you at 3:00 p.m." Mr. Butler left her office.

After her lunch, Michelle went to the meeting. As she opened the door everyone in the room shouted, "Congratulations, Michelle!" Michelle stood at the door in shock.

Mr. Hensley said, "Michelle, we wanted to thank you for all you have contributed to the company. I want you to come take the seat at the head of the table. On behalf of the company, I would like to present you with two tickets for a fourteen-day vacation to anywhere in the world! I hope you enjoy your retirement."

"I do not feel like I deserve all of this, but thank you," Michelle said.

How does it feel when you receive unexpected blessings?

Keep in Mind

"O LORD, there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears" (1 Chronicles 17:20, KJV).

Words You Should Know

A. House (v. 16) bayit (Heb.) — Household, lineage

B. Servant (v. 17) 'ebed (Heb.) — Slave, bondservant, subject (of a king), or worshiper

Say It Correctly

Magnificat. mag-NIH-fih-COT.

KJV

1 Chronicles 17:16 And David the king came and sat before the LORD, and said, Who am I, O LORD God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? 17 And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast also spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O LORD God.

18 What can David speak more to thee for the honour of thy servant? for thou knowest thy servant.

19 O LORD, for thy servant's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all this greatness, in making known all these great things.

20 O LORD, there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

21 And what one nation in the earth is like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be his own people, to make thee a name of greatness and terribleness, by driving out nations from before thy people whom thou hast redeemed out of Egypt?

22 For thy people Israel didst thou make thine own people for ever; and thou, LORD, becamest their God.

23 Therefore now, LORD, let the thing that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant and concerning his house be established for ever, and do as thou hast said.

24 Let it even be established, that thy name may be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel: and let the house of David thy servant be established before thee.

25 For thou, O my God, hast told thy servant that thou wilt build him an house: therefore thy servant hath found in his heart to pray before thee.

26 And now, LORD, thou art God, and hast promised this goodness unto thy servant:

27 Now therefore let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may be before thee for ever: for thou blessest, O LORD, and it shall be blessed forever.

NLT

1 Chronicles 17:16 Then King David went in and sat before the LORD and prayed, "Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? 17 And now, O God, in addition to everything else, you speak of giving your servant a lasting dynasty! You speak as though I were someone very great, O LORD God!

18 "What more can I say to you about the way you have honored me? You know what your servant is really like.

19 For the sake of your servant, O LORD, and according to your will, you have done all these great things and have made them known.

20 "O LORD, there is no one like you. We have never even heard of another God like you!

21 What other nation on earth is like your people Israel? What other nation, O God, have you redeemed from slavery to be your own people? You made a great name for yourself when you redeemed your people from Egypt. You performed awesome miracles and drove out the nations that stood in their way.

22 You chose Israel to be your very own people forever, and you, O LORD, became their God.

23 "And now, O LORD, I am your servant; do as you have promised concerning me and my family. May it be a promise that will last forever.

24 And may your name be established and honored forever so that everyone will say, 'The LORD of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, is Israel's God!' And may the house of your servant David continue before you forever.

25 "O my God, I have been bold enough to pray to you because you have revealed to your servant that you will build a house for him—a dynasty of kings!

26 For you are God, O LORD. And you have promised these good things to your servant.

27 And now, it has pleased you to bless the house of your servant, so that it will continue forever before you. For when you grant a blessing, O LORD, it is an eternal blessing!”

The People, Places, and Times

Redemption. The main idea of redemption is that of buying back someone from bondage, or ransoming or avenging them. God is the Redeemer of Israel (Isaiah 43:1, 14), purchasing them from their literal slavery in Egypt and their metaphorical slavery to sin. Redemption of the firstborn (Exodus 13:2, Numbers 18:15–16) was a ceremony performed to redeem the child back to his or her parents from God through sacrificial offerings and to recognize God as the owner and giver of life. Christ is the Redeemer of the Church (Galatians 3:13), redeeming us from the law. God paid an inestimable price to redeem us and restore us to a full relationship with him (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:20). Instead of silver or gold, we were redeemed with the precious blood of God’s only Son. The mission of God’s Son was to “redeem” or to emancipate from slavery to the law those who were heirs to the promise, in order that they might receive the inheritance, namely “the adoption of sons.”

Background

King David oversaw the move of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 15–16). He obeyed the law and only permitted the Levites to carry the Ark to its new location. King David incorporated praise and worship as part of the celebration. The musicians sang; played instruments such as harps, lyres, and cymbals; and gave shouts of praise as they celebrated the occasion. It was a joyful event!

David soon realized as he sat in his beautiful house made of cedar that the Ark of the Covenant was inside a tent (1 Chronicles 17:1–15). When David talked with the prophet Nathan, Nathan gave his personal opinion that David should do as he desired because God was with him. However, later Nathan had to retract his opinion after God spoke to him (cf. 2 Samuel 7:1–17). David’s son, Solomon would be the one who built the Temple (1 Chronicles 17:11, 22:6–10). God also promised “I will establish his throne forever” (17:12). This is fulfilled in Solomon and his heirs, which includes Jesus Christ (Luke 1:31–33). God was going to establish a dynasty through King David’s family. Nathan shared this promise with David. This is known as the Davidic Covenant. The following section is David’s prayer to God which in its totality is similar to 2 Samuel 7:18–29.

How does it feel when God gives you different directions than you originally expected?

At-A-Glance

1. Thanksgiving for God’s Promise (1 Chronicles 17:16–22)
2. Request for Confirmation of the Promise (vv. 23–27)

In Depth

1. Thanksgiving for God’s Promise (1 Chronicles 17:16–22) David loved God, and God loved David. When he received the promise of God from the prophet Nathan, he responded by going into the presence of God through prayer. David was a man who diligently prayed and sought God. But it is clear David was surprised by God’s promise. He opened his prayer with a question and then comments about his unworthiness to receive such blessings from God. David calls himself “servant” ten times, which gives him the designation of someone of low status, showing he is humble before God (vv. 16–18). David did not feel like an important person, but God viewed him differently.

David did not have adequate words to express his gratitude to God. But he praised God, understanding that He had promised him something unearned and undeserved (vv. 19–20). It was all God’s work. This is the same God who by His mighty power redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt. And the other nations witnessed His

power when He defeated them to make way for His chosen nation, the Israelites (vv. 21–22). David was grateful for God’s blessings throughout the generations.

Why is it important to remain humble and grateful when God blesses us?

2. Request for Confirmation of the Promise (vv. 23–27) David asks God to keep His promise concerning his house. David is hopeful but desires more assurance. In keeping His promise, God’s name will be honored and praised for eternity (v. 24). When someone keeps their word, it gives them a good reputation. God’s fulfillment of His promise would continue to do just that.

The closing words of David’s prayer speak to who God is and once again requests, if it is God’s pleasure, for God to keep His promise (vv. 26–27). Throughout the Bible, we can identify many of God’s people who doubted and asked for confirmation of God’s promises. We too may sometimes need help believing God’s Word when it seems so unimaginable and grand. Doubts are normal, but God’s plans are trustworthy.

When we have doubts, what can we rely on to restore our faith?

Search the Scriptures

1. What was King David’s posture when he prayed to God (1 Chronicles 17:16)?
2. What did God do for the people of Israel in the past (vv. 21–22)?
3. How would God’s reputation be affected by keeping His promise to David (v. 24)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. Why did David use the term “servant” so often in his prayer?
2. What parts of the prayer reveal David’s confidence in God’s promise? How?
3. Based on Psalm 89:19–37, what further information can we learn about the Davidic Covenant?

Liberating Lesson

King David’s intention to build a house for the Ark of the Covenant was admirable. He did not desire to live in a beautiful house while the Ark was in a tent. But God had other plans. Sometimes we have to change our plans because God desires to go in a different direction. It is better to yield and accept His will rather than follow our own ideas. King David felt humbled by the blessing, praised God, and accepted His decision. When we have to give up our plans to follow God, God wants us to trust Him. Based on God’s faithfulness to us in the past, we can be guaranteed He will keep His promises now and in the future.

Application for Activation

Think about an occasion when God bestowed on you an undeserved blessing. Discuss how you felt. Did you share your testimony about God’s blessing with others? Write a prayer of thanksgiving and praise using King David’s prayer as a model.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

1 Chronicles 17:16–27 David, the sweet psalmist of Israel prayed to the Lord in a manner similar to his songs and psalms (e.g., 1 Chronicles 16:7–36). David’s prayer has three movements: (1) submission to God’s will (17:16–19), (2) confession about God’s person (17:20–22), and (3) petition for God’s fulfillment of His promise (17:23–27). David’s prayer is in response to God’s declaration that David could not build a “house” (temple) for God, but that God would build a “house” (dynasty) for David. Although previously content to inquire of the Lord through Nathan the prophet (17:1–2), David is so moved by God’s promise to build a “house” for him that he does not respond to God through the prophet. Instead, he responds directly to God.

16 And David the king came and sat before the LORD, and said, Who am I, O LORD God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? 17 And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast also spoken of thy servant’s house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O LORD God. 18 What can David speak more to thee for the honour of thy servant? for thou knowest thy servant. 19 O LORD, for thy servant’s sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all this greatness, in making known all these great things.

These introductory words are significant as they indicate David’s position and his posture. This is but the second time that the chronicler mentions David’s position as king, saying, the king “sat before the Lord.” David is acutely aware that he is in the presence of the true King of Israel, the One who not only rules his life, but also the lives of his people Israel.

Since standing or lying prostrate were the more customary positions for prayer, some have questioned whether sitting was an appropriate posture for David to assume. There are a couple of ways to understand this posture, though. First, David might have sat down as one might collapse into a chair at hearing some astounding news. He was blown away at God’s great news and could not support himself on his own feet anymore. Otherwise, David also might have taken a kneeling position, sitting down on His feet. This posture is easily recognized today as a worshipful one and was then as well. David provides a great example to us of the posture that we should assume when we pray. It should be the spiritual posture of seeking God’s will and then submitting to it even when it may not be in alignment with our desire.

In the ancient world, a king could render no greater service than to build a house for his god as an act of homage to the deity responsible for establishing him on the throne. Therefore, it was natural for David to seek to honor his God in like manner and build a house for Him. Additionally, David was ashamed that the true King of Israel was confined to a tent-sanctuary (17:1), while he lived in a magnificent house of cedars (17:1). During Israel’s grand celebration while bringing the Ark to Jerusalem, David danced before the Lord in praise (15:29). After the formal installation of the Ark of the Covenant, all the people went to their homes, and David returned to his home (16:43). David told the prophet, Nathan, that he wanted to build a permanent house for the Ark (17:1). It can probably be assumed that the return of the Ark and the celebration of praise played a role in David’s desire to build a permanent sanctuary for the Lord. The covenant that God made with the house of David (17:3–15) is heightened in light of Israel’s covenant renewal with God once the Ark, representing God’s covenant and presence with His people, was now formally installed in Jerusalem.

The movement of the Ark to Jerusalem leads thematically to the establishment of God’s covenant with David. Although David’s desire was to honor God with a permanent temple, he was not permitted to build a house for God (17:4). On the other hand, it was God’s expressed desire to honor his servant by building a house for David. “House” is the Hebrew bayit (BAHyeeth) and is a key term, occurring fourteen times in 1 Chronicles 17. David’s “house” would be a royal house, a dynasty that would originate with David but would never end. His kingdom and throne were to be understood as permanent (17:14). However, the Davidic Covenant gave the promise of kings from David’s lineage. This was also a fulfillment of a provision in the Abrahamic Covenant that “kings will come out of thee” (Genesis 17:6). Both covenants find their ultimate fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ, Son of David and Son of Abraham the friend of God, the One who will reign and rule forever.

It is important to note that the Ark of the Covenant represented the presence of God as well as the corresponding blessings that flowed to God's people. For example, when the Ark was in the home of Obed-edom, God blessed his household (1 Chronicles 13:14). After installing the Ark in Jerusalem, "David returned to bless his house" (1 Chronicles 16:43), and now it is God who will bless the "house" or family of David (17:27). Similarly, when the presence of God abides fully and freely in our homes and hearts (2 Timothy 2:21–22), when we honor God with clean hands and pure hearts (Psalm 24:4–5), when we prepare our bodies as a fit dwelling place to "house" the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19–20), then we are in a position to receive unexpected, unsolicited blessings from the Lord.

This first movement in David's three-fold prayer highlights his submission to God's will. David is undoubtedly disappointed by the divine "no" that he received to his request to build a house for his God. God simply stated that He does not require a temple to be built for Him (17:5–6). After all, even the heavens cannot contain Him (1 Kings 8:27). Consequently, David's prayer does not have the usual features of exuberant thanksgiving (cf. 1 Chronicles 16:8–9). Nevertheless, there is excitement as David is awed and humbled by God's divine, unsolicited promise to build David's house. So he begins his prayer by asking three rhetorical questions that reflect his humility and awe at God's promise: (1) "Who am I," (2) "What is mine house," and (3) "What can I speak more to thee for the honor of thy servant?" David is in awe, recognizing that he has done nothing to merit the honor God bestowed on him. Although he is king, he is genuinely surprised that God is treating him like someone great. In fact, David expressed his humility by calling himself God's servant four times in this section (vv. 16–19), and six times in the last section (vv. 23–27).

The Hebrew word for servant is 'ebed (EH-ved) and can refer to a slave, a bondservant, a subject of a king, or a worshiper. In speaking to Nathan, God referred to David as his servant twice (17:4, 7), and David willingly affirmed his role as a servant for he was indeed a loyal subject of the true King and a true worshiper of God. This is the example we too must follow. Like King David, King Jesus willingly took on the role of servant and humbled himself by being obedient to God's will to die on a cruel cross (Philippians 2:7–8, Mark 10:45). Therefore, all who want to be great in God's kingdom must become the servant of all (Mark 10:43–44). It is an imperative, not an option. After all, the highest commendation anyone can receive from God is, "Well done good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21, 23). One of the requirements of a faithful servant is submission to the Master's will, especially when, like David, God says "no" to our request and provides little explanation. Even if we are disappointed, our response must be, "Father knows best," realizing that our loving God always acts with our best interest at heart.

20 O LORD, there is none like thee, neither is there any god beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 21 And what one nation in the earth is like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be his own people, to make thee a name of greatness and terribleness, by driving out nations from before thy people whom thou hast redeemed out of Egypt? 22 For thy people Israel didst thou make thine own people for ever; and thou, LORD, becamest their God.

In this second movement of David's prayer, there is a distinct shift. If it were a song, this is the point where the song begins to build and gets louder. Here David moves from talking about himself and looking inward, to talking about God and looking upward. David's twofold confession is focused and intense. First, he unequivocally declares that there is no one like the Lord (17:20). He lifts up and exalts the God of Israel as the only true God, emphatically stating that there is not even a mention of anyone that can compare to Him. The second part of his declaration increases in intensity as he asserts that there is no other nation like Israel whom God specifically chose as a people for Himself (17:21–22). He did it by delivering them from the horrors of Egyptian bondage, and by faithfully bringing them through the wilderness into the Promised Land. There He fought for them, conquering nations that were stronger than Israel, keeping His covenant promise to Abraham, and giving them the land of Canaan as their possession. This selection of people for Himself was not temporary. God made Israel his very own forever, just as the selection of David's house was forever.

God's desire to have a people for Himself is a key part of redemptive history. When God entered into a covenant with Abraham, He promised that Abraham's descendants would be His people and He would be their

God (Genesis 17:7–8). When God came to Israel in Egypt, He promised that “I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God” (Exodus 6:7). God instructed Israel to set up the tabernacle in the wilderness for this grand purpose, “that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8). When the Tabernacle was completed, God’s glory descended (Exodus 40:34–35), and therein His sanctuary, He would dwell among His people and be their God (Exodus 29:45). And when Solomon completed the Temple, this same Shekinah glory “filled the house of the Lord” (1 Kings 8:11).

It is this intense desire of God, this promise, that is at the heart of the New Covenant that was declared through Jeremiah the prophet, “[I] will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33). This was fulfilled in the Messiah who came as Immanuel, “God with us,” dwelling among His people. Before ascending to heaven Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to be with us always (Matthew 28:20). The Apostle Paul reminds us that this promise is fulfilled in us today because we are the “temple of the living God.” This is the grace God has granted to us, to have His perpetual presence with us always. In return, our reasonable service is to honor God’s presence by maintaining our temples as a fit dwelling place through worship in Spirit and truth, profuse praise, and a willing sacrifice that is acceptable to Him. Ultimately, this promise will be fully accomplished when the New Jerusalem descends from heaven with this grand announcement, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Revelation 21:3).

23 Therefore now, LORD, let the thing that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant and concerning his house be established for ever, and do as thou hast said. 24 Let it even be established, that thy name may be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel: and let the house of David thy servant be established before thee. 25 For thou, O my God, hast told thy servant that thou wilt build him an house: therefore thy servant hath found in his heart to pray before thee. 26 And now, LORD, thou art God, and hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: 27 Now therefore let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant that it may be before thee for ever: for thou blessest, O LORD, and it shall be blessed for ever.

This is the third and final movement in David’s prayer. It begins softly with his submission to God before building in intensity in his confession about God and then reaching a crescendo in his petition to God. This section has two parts: (1) the petition itself (17:23–24), and (2) the acknowledgment of divine blessing (17:25–27). Verse 23 begins with the words, “Therefore now, LORD,” indicating the climatic conclusion that leads to the outcome David desires. Verse 23 also contains the single imperative in the prayer: do as thou hast said. After expressing what was in his heart in the first two movements, David now petitions the Lord to do as He promised, which is to establish David’s dynasty forever so that everyone will acknowledge that the Lord of Hosts is the God of Israel. The name of God will be honored and established forever just as David’s dynasty is forever.

The crescendo in this prayer centers on the name of the Lord. In essence, David raises his voice and cries out, “thy name may be magnified for ever.” To magnify is the Hebrew word *gadal* (gaw-DOLL) that means to become great or important, to praise and promote, to make powerful by doing great things. Therefore David invokes the supreme name for God ten times throughout his prayer. Then he magnifies His name by giving Him praise (17:20), and by promoting the great deeds He accomplished in delivering Israel from bondage, defeating her enemies, bringing her into the land of Promise, and establishing Israel as His people (17:21–22). The name David magnifies is the Hebrew name Yahweh (YAH-way).

The name Yahweh speaks of God’s eternal self-existence. Additionally, the name is related to God’s relationship with His people as the covenant-keeping God (Deuteronomy 7:9). Therefore, it is significant that this is the name David chose to use throughout his prayer. It signifies his absolute trust in the Lord, and His ability to do the great things for David that He said He would do. Because the Lord is undeniably trustworthy, David acknowledges that the future blessing that He has promised is certain to be fulfilled. Therefore, with a strong sense of confidence in God, David magnifies the Lord by closing his prayer with this noteworthy

proclamation, “bless the house of thy servant that it may be before thee for ever: for thou blessest, O Lord, and it shall be blessed for ever.”

Jesus Christ is indeed the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). He hears and answers the prayers of the righteous by doing great things that ultimately bring glory to His name (1 John 5:14). Therefore, when you cry out in prayer to the covenant-keeping God, praying according to His will and in the name of Jesus, you too can rest assured that you will receive that which you have requested of the LORD (John 15:16).

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

God's Forever Covenant with David
(Psalm 89:19–37)

TUESDAY

The Lord Will Build David's House
(2 Samuel 7:11–17)

WEDNESDAY

No God Like Our God
(2 Samuel 7:18–22)

THURSDAY

No People Like Our People
(2 Samuel 7:23–29)

FRIDAY

David Selects Materials for Temple
(1 Chronicles 22:2–5)

SATURDAY

David Orients Builders about Temple Construction
(1 Chronicles 22:14–19)

SUNDAY

David's Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving
(1 Chronicles 17:16–27)