

“Our Transcendent God”
2 Samuel 7:1-13
(Preached at Trinity, February 3, 2019)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 7** opens with David declaring his intention of building the Temple of God. He determined it was unconscionable for him to live in a lavish house while the ark of God still did not have a permanent structure.
2. While David's heart revealed his love for God, God quickly corrected his thinking.
2 Samuel 7:5 NAU - "Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in?"
1 Chronicles 17:4 NAU - "Thus says the LORD, "You shall not build a house for Me to dwell in"
3. David erred on a couple levels.
First, David wanted a permanent house for God, but he presumed to be the one who would build it. God tells David that his son would be the one to build the temple.
 - A. We can be guilty of presuming to know the mind of God, of thinking that our plans are God's plans. Sometimes, our best intentions are found contrary to God's purpose. David was moved by lofty motives, but he had not been instructed by God.
 - B. God corrected David, telling him he was not the one who would build the Temple.
4. Second, David erred in his carnal understanding of God. God cannot be confined to an earthly location. He doesn't need an earthly house. David was concerned about providing a lasting dwelling place for God, but God cannot be confined to an earthly house.
2 Samuel 7:6 NAU - "For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt, even to this day; but I have been moving about in a tent, even in a tabernacle."
5. David's problem is the problem we must all guard against. Human beings are notoriously guilty of comparing God to a man. God is not like us. He is outside our experience. He is transcendent. Philosophically this means the God exceeds the limits of human experience. He is beyond our comprehension. God exists outside our material existence.
Romans 11:33 NAU - "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!"
6. The problem of man has always been to bring God down to our level. We think we can approach Him at our discretion and serve Him on our terms.
7. When Joshua preached his final sermon he made posed a serious question to Israel.
Joshua 24:15 NAS - "choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

- A. Their answer exposed their inadequate understanding of God.

Joshua 24:16-18 NAU - "The people answered and said, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; ¹⁷ for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. ¹⁸ "The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God."

- B. They had good intentions but good intentions can never be a substitute for following God in holiness.

Joshua 24:19-21 NAU - "Then Joshua said to the people, "You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins. ²⁰ "If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you." ²¹ The people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the LORD."

- 8. Joshua's point was that serving God is impossible apart from the grace of God. This is why the Gospel is essential. Most people try to approach God without the Gospel. They try to come on their own terms. They set their own standards.

- A. Human standards are always too low. We think God is satisfied with our worldliness as long as we are religious.
Most people in the US have a form of religion but it makes little impact upon their lives.
- B. Robert Bork was President Regan's Supreme Court nominee in 1987. He failed to pass the Senate confirmation, and Anthony Kennedy became the SCOTUS justice.

In 1996 he wrote a book describing the undermining of moral standards in America titled, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*. He wrote: "While most people claim to be religious, most are also not comfortable with those whose faith is strong enough to affect their public behavior. Americans are the most religious people among the industrial democracies; 90 percent of Americans say they believe in God, over half report they pray at least once a day, and more than 49 percent claim to have gone to church in any given week. The truth is that, despite the statistics on churchgoing, etc., the United States is a very secular nation that, for the most part does not take religion seriously. It is increasingly clear that very few people who claim religion could truthfully say that it informs their attitudes and significantly affects their behavior."¹

Bork's statement merely describes the prevailing low view of God in America.

- 9. David's heart was right. He saw the incongruity between his magnificent house and the tent housing the Ark of God. He saw it as shameful, disgraceful. Could he live in luxury while God dwelled in a tent? David wanted to build God a magnificent, permanent Temple.

¹ Bork, Robert H. *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996) pages 277, 279.

10. David's problem was in looking at God as one would look upon a man. God is not like a man. He doesn't desire the things of man
2 Samuel 7:7 NAU - "Wherever I have gone with all the sons of Israel, did I speak a word with one of the tribes of Israel, which I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'"
11. We are still plagued by a low view of God. We approach Him without consideration of who He is.
 Tonight, I want us to expand our minds to seek to comprehend the incomprehensible.

I. God is infinitely immense – This must impact how we approach Him, how we worship Him.

A. God is infinite

1. God cannot be confined. He cannot be limited
2. God transcends our experience. God is infinite, yet everything in our experience is capable of being a bit more. A powerful hurricane could be more powerful. A fast rocket could be a bit faster. The sun is hot, but beyond compare.
3. David saw God as being confined, local, spatial

In **Chapter 6** we read that David worshipped before the Lord

2 Samuel 6:14 NAU - "And David was dancing before the LORD with all *his* might"

What David was doing was worshipping before the Ark

4. The Ark and the Tabernacle were God's condescension – Placing the Ark in a building was not providing a house for God. The Tabernacle was only a symbol of a greater reality – God in the hearts of His people through Jesus Christ.

- a. Solomon would later express it well when the Temple was dedicated.

1 Kings 8:26-27 NAU - "Now therefore, O God of Israel, let Your word, I pray, be confirmed which You have spoken to Your servant, my father David. ²⁷ "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!"

- b. Or Isaiah

Isaiah 66:1 NAU - "Thus says the LORD, "Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest?"

B. God is incomprehensible

1. LBC 2:1 – "The Lord our God is but one only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of Himself, infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself . . ."
2. Incomprehensible means God is beyond our ability to comprehend or understand Him.
3. God condescends to man by describing Himself in ways that we can comprehend but in reality are vastly different from God.
 (anthropomorphisms, anthropopathisms, etc.)
 Our confession rightly describes God as "without body, parts, or passions")

4. David presumed to know the mind of God, yet the only thing we know about the mind of God is what God has been pleased to reveal.

Romans 11:33-34 KJV - "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! ³⁴ For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?"

- C. The entire universe is but a speck before God
 1. The whole earth is nothing before God. Isaiah described the nations as a drop in a bucket—insignificant before the eyes of God.

Isaiah 40:15-17 NAU - "Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust. ¹⁶ Even Lebanon is not enough to burn, Nor its beasts enough for a burnt offering. ¹⁷ All the nations are as nothing before Him, They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless."

- a. Whole continents are as a speck as viewed by God

Isaiah uses the word **דָק** {dak} which describes something of the smallest size – should God desire, He could lift the continents as though they were grains of dust

- b. Isaiah adds - all of the nations are counted as “less than nothing.” As we place value upon material things the smallest value would be 0 – nothing. Anything less than that would be a liability.

- c. There is nothing upon the earth worthy of His glory

Verse 16 - Lebanon was famous for all of its prized cedars – Hiram provided cedar for David’s house and would provide the wood for Solomon’s temple. But they mean nothing to God.

2. God does not need us
 - a. He does not need our labors – though He commands it
We are highly blessed in the privilege of serving
 - b. He does not need our money – though He demands it
All wealth comes from Him
 - c. He does not need our worship – though He will be worshipped
3. God ordered Moses, and then Solomon to build a dwelling place for Him, but the purpose was to teach us of our need for His presence. The ultimate fulfillment of the Tabernacle is Jesus Christ, Immanuel—God with us. Jesus as our Mediator brings us into the presence of God.

II. God is infinitely sovereign

- A. God reigns over all of His creation

1. God is continually seen as sitting upon a throne

Isaiah 6:1 NAU - "In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple."

Psalm 45:6 NAU - "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom."

Psalm 93:2 NAU - "Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting."

- 2. God's display of Himself upon the earth has been about kingdom building.
God is the sovereign Potentate over all of His creation
God is seated upon a throne over all the earth. He has the command of all the creatures
- B. The ultimate display of His dominion is Jesus Christ
 - 1. God is declaring to David that He is establishing His throne. The Davidic monarchy would be everlasting.
2 Samuel 7:12-13 NAU - "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."
 - 2. This finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ
God is infinitely sovereign. He rules, He governs. He is accomplishing His purpose upon the earth.

III. God is infinitely gracious

- A. Observe how tenderly God deals with David
 - 1. The only way David could know the error of his plan was by Divine intervention.
 - 2. God commands Nathan to bring His word to David. Yet, God doesn't correct David's error with harshness but with pity and grace.
He refers to David as "**My servant David**" – **Verse 5**
He referred to David as belonging to Him – "**My servant**"
 - 3. He reminds David of the source of his throne – it was God's doing.
2 Samuel 7:8 NAU - "hus says the LORD of hosts, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel."
 - 4. God reminds David of how He has ever been caring for and protecting David
2 Samuel 7:9 NAU - "I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth."
 - 5. Then God graciously enters into covenant with David
- B. God has been gracious with fallen humanity.
 - 1. He has come down. He has been pleased to reveal Himself by way of His covenants. The Abrahamic Covenant, Mosaic Covenant, and now the Davidic Covenant were all gracious acts of God in redeeming His people through His Covenant head, Jesus Christ.
 - 2. LBC: Chapter 7 – *Of God's Covenant* – Paragraph 1 – "The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to Him as their creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of life but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which He hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.

3. God continually displayed His covenantal graciousness towards Israel
2 Kings 13:23 NAU - "But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them and turned to them because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them or cast them from His presence until now."
4. This grace finds its fulfillment through the Gospel in the New Covenant.

Conclusion:

1. God is infinite and incomprehensible. Fallen man is an infinite distance from God. But God has condescended to us. He has entered into covenant with us through Jesus Christ.
2. God tells us that if we will know Him we must trust His Son.
Matthew 11:27 NAU - "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*."