

Series: Life's Defining Moments

VBC

Pastor John Johnson

March 22-23, 2014

2 Samuel 17

“When God Says No”

Atrophy always happens at the top

- decline begins after the highest point
- it sounds counterintuitive—but we are most vulnerable when we are at our peak—achieved our greatest accomplishments

In 2 Samuel 7—David was at his peak—he would have to be careful

- the years of running and hiding in the desert, of fighting for recognition, of waging wars on multiple fronts, of establishing his kingship are behind him
- Goliath is dead—Saul is dead—and David is alive—and on top*
- he has solidified his following, built his house, and established his reign
- he can finally relax—God has given David rest
- but David is not the type to sit for long—he is not content to keep things as they are
- he is a man about great undertakings—life is not a dress rehearsal—you only live life once
- he is going to create a new s-curve lest he begins to regress
- he is going for it—read verses 1-3

-David has recovered the ark and built his palace—one with cedar paneling and hardwood floors

-and that is just the problem

-there is an incongruity that troubles David—he looks out his window and realizes he has a better living standard than God

-David is comfortably at rest in his permanent, palatial mansion—but God is stuck in a temporary goatskin shelter

-something must be done—so David decided to do what kings do to show their piety—build something for God

-maybe there were other motives—beyond honoring God

- ancient kings often built temples to revere their gods, solidify their power, obtain blessing
- maybe David hoped that making a permanent residence would guarantee God's presence
 - ensure that this God who seemed to move about in the desert by fire and by cloud would stay put—*maybe help tame the wildness*
- maybe David wanted to guard against atrophy
 - but 2 Chronicles 6:8 tells us David pursued this with a good heart
 - hence—David's pastor was all in*

- illustration—the other night, after challenging a small group to be involved, a man came up and said—I'm In—I can help—here's what I want to do for God
- pastors aren't so used to people wanting to do something *for* God—people usually want something *from* God—healing, blessing, forgiveness
- we are quite ready to give affirmation
- Nathan immediately gave his blessing—and David probably went to bed, having called his best architects, project engineers, and finest craftsmen
- the next morning he would meet with his wives to work out colors, patterns, and designs -there's something really exciting about building something for God
- this would get David up in the morning—energize the base—create economic growth—provide needed jobs
- who wouldn't want to win a God account?
- everything was ramping up...until God spoke—read verses 4-7

- one can almost hear God saying to both David and his pastor—“Did either of you think to check in with Me?”
- David, heady with success, had his plans—his assumptions that God would be in them, bless them
- but his assumptions were wrong—on several counts—

1. David assumed he had the time—but in reality—there were wars to still be fought—and as Scripture later tells us—it was not the time to build temples—I Kings 5:3
2. David assumed he was the one most qualified to build a house for God
 - but God's response in vs 5—“Are you to build” informs David that he was the wrong man
 - and it will be his son—in part because there was too much blood on David's hands—I Chronicles 22:8
3. David assumed he knew what God wanted—what God needed—without stopping to ask
 - but as verses 6-7 underscore—a tent worked well for a mobile God—He never asked for a permanent residence
 - in fact—the curtained canopied tabernacle was God's design in the first place—He had never suggested otherwise
 - in all of this—one can hear God asking—“*Are you trying to localize, domesticate Me? Buy Me off as your patron god?*”
 - this is the same God who will one day declare—“*Will God indeed live on earth? Even heaven, the highest heaven cannot contain Him, much less a temple*”—I Kings 8:27

- but something else might have been behind this

4. David assumed he was necessary to getting things done
 - something God addresses—read verses 8-17

-in these words—God turned everything on its head—completely reversed the subject of the verbs

-God uses the first person in the next 23 verbs to make a point—that this is really His story

A. HE EXPLAINS OUR PAST

1. we are where we are because of Him—there isn't one area we are self-sufficient—vs 8
2. any triumphs have come because of Him—vs 9
3. any security we have is because of Him—10
4. any space, any rest we experience is because of Him—11a
-*David is assigned no merit—given no credit*
-his resume—like ours—is not the account of our doings—but God's—all the initiative is with Him—He is the One necessary

B. HE EXPLAINS OUR FUTURE

1. it is God who does the building—11b-13
2. what He is building transcends our small plans—13b-16

-and then Nathan finished—verse 17

-it all amounted to a withdrawal of the building permit

-Peterson (Leap Over a Wall) puts it this way—

“The kingdom that I am shaping here isn't what you do for Me—but what I do through you. If I let you fill Jerusalem with the sights and sounds of YOUR project—carpenters' hammers, masons' chisels—everyone will become caught up with what YOU are doing, and not attentive to what I am doing”

APPLICATION—sometimes God withdraws our building permits

-sometimes our dreams are from God—and sometimes they are not

-and when they are not—they won't come to fulfillment—*nor should they!*

-and maybe it is because they are too much about us

pt—if you're going to do something for God—serve overseas, leave your profession to give your last chapter to the kingdom of God, take your gifts to attempt something great for God—or simply start your day—make sure He is in it

-it's not about starting the day and asking God to bless our plans—it is about consciously and intentionally stepping in to what He is already doing

-it's not about what we are building for Him—but what He is building for us

-it's a lesson repeated often in Scripture

-“The plans of the heart belong to man—but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord”—Proverbs 16:1

-and sometimes the answer is no—

-Paul learned this in his attempts to go to Bithynia (Acts 16:7)

-Israel found this out when they decided to prematurely go into the land—but “the ark did not move”—and they were beat all the way back to Hormah—Numbers 14:44

-Moses wanted to be the warrior to lead Israel into the land, but God said—"You can look, but you can't go in—someone else will take it the rest of the way"

illustration—when I first set out for seminary—I told everybody what I was going to do for God

-I set the boundaries—I will not get hung up with doctrine—I am going to just study the Bible

-I will never be a pastor—I will come back to San Diego

-that all changed

-hearing great preachers, missionaries stir in us a fervor to go out and attempt great things for God—I started making plans for what I would do FOR God with all of my training

-I continued to set the margins, draw up the plans

-*as I am still prone to do so*

-but sometimes God steps in and says—NO

-David will have a better chance winning Warren Buffett's billion dollar NCAA bet—than building God's temple

-but here's the really good news

-here is the unmistakable lesson of this story—God's no must never be mistaken for a dead end—*it is always a redirection*

-God has a better direction—something better in mind—much better—His no is necessary for His yes

-in David's case—God said no

-and then said—I will build you a house

-it will be an everlasting throne—a line of descendants forever—verse 11

-a promise that Israel will hold on from this point forward—the reference point for the hope of Hebrew prophets when everything appears lost

-one that points to Jesus—the coming Son of David—who fulfilled the yearnings for a king like David

-it all set up David's defining moment—one we must come to as well—read verses 18-22

-up to verse 18—David's posture has been one of standing—more than standing—racing—a man on the move, planning, strategizing—and now David sits

"When we sit down, the dust raised by our furious activity settles; the noise generated by our building operations goes quiet; we become aware of the real world. God's world."—Peterson

-in the real world—we begin to see things differently—

1. we move from self-awareness to God—awareness

-we begin to see that it is less about our presence—more about being in His—18

2. we move from self-accomplishment to God accomplishment

-from the self-confidence of “I am the King” to “Who am I...that You have brought me this far?”—18

3. we move from a small world to a much larger world—19
4. from a God we can control to a God who is beyond us—22
5. from all about our making to all about His making—23
6. from our reputation to God’s reputation—26
7. from a sense of loss and disappointment to a sense of gain and wonder of God’s promises—27

CONCLUSION

Divine “no’s” are defining moments—and all of us experience them

-it may come at the end of a relationship

-on the heels of a job search

-at the end of a proposal—at the end of a long work

-at the end of a longing for God to heal

-and it feels like the end of a dream

-that’s why this text is so critical—it prompts us to ask some very necessary questions—

-is this God’s plan—or is it really mine?

-is this God’s no—and if so—am I trusting—am I open to His redirecting?

LG Questions

1. Have you experienced a divine no?
2. What generally happens when you find yourself ahead of God?
3. What was the significance of David sitting (vs 18)?
4. What is your takeaway from this text?