

OBEDIENCE

Psalm 132

October 11, 2009 – Grace Covenant Baptist Church

In this psalm we have a commemoration of David's zeal for the house of God. It was most likely written at the dedication of the temple as an appeal to God in David's name. It then is a song that contains the dream of the sanctuary that began with King David (2 Sam. 7) and came to fruition under his son, Solomon. In this psalm we see an ascent from a cross to a crown, from **"Remember David's affliction"** to **"I will cause the horn of David to spring forth"** and **"his crown will shine."**

The story within the story is one of obedience. Obedience is according to God – not us. One of the consequences of man's depraved nature is the desire to do things his way when he wants to. There is a passion to do the wrong thing in the wrong way. The redeemed man is able to recognize this as sin, though he too still has this desire at times.

But perhaps more dangerous to the believer is a desire to do the right thing in the wrong way, to have a true longing for the glory of God and the worship of God and yet approach Him and serve Him in ways that he has not prescribed or commanded. We call it overzealousness. As we noted last week, Eugene Petersen described unruly ambition as "aspiration gone crazy." To borrow from that analogy, I would suggest that overzealousness is "good intentions gone crazy." It is to have a longing to do what is right for God yet overshoot the runway, to go beyond what is commanded or required. And though it is not as easy to recognize, it is still sin.

Obedience to God is nothing short or nothing more than doing the right thing in the right way—both "rights" as defined by God. God prescribes both the right things and the right ways. What we see in our text this morning is that God requires that we obey Him—according to His way and in His time.

I. David's Oath to God (132:1-10)

As we said earlier, this psalm was written by Solomon at the dedication of the temple. Verses 8-10 are quoted in 2 Chronicles 6:41-42 as part of Solomon's prayer of dedication on that day. Here he looks back at David's relationship to God and God's relationship to David. This relationship was established and maintained by way of covenant. The Davidic Covenant was a conditional covenant—obedience brought blessing and disobedience brought curse. This is spelled out in terms of the required obedience of the heirs to the throne. What led to this covenant is recalled in the opening half of this psalm where David, in his desire that God have a suitable place to settle among His people, makes an oath, a vow to God to accomplish it.

1. Spoken (vv. 1-5)

Solomon begins by asking that the Lord **"remember... on David's behalf."** He appeals to God to **"remember"** this covenant with David. We know Solomon is not requesting that the Lord **"remember"** something that He had forgotten. God never forgets. He is the all-wise God who knows perfectly all events and all people, all contingencies and every possibility – past, present, and future. Part of His covenant promise to His people is that He will never forget them, leave them, or forsake them.

So what does this word “**remember**” mean as used here by Solomon? It is a request for God’s covenant blessing. We see this frequently in association with God’s people as He demonstrates His lovingkindness.

- **Genesis 8:1** – God *remembered* Noah
- **Genesis 19:29** – God *remembered* Abraham
- **Genesis 30:22** – God *remembered* Rachel and Hannah (1 Sam. 1:19; 2:21)
- **Exodus 6:5-6** – ⁵ “I have *remembered* My covenant. ⁶ Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.’”
- **Psalms 136:23** – Who *remembered* us in our low estate, for His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Specifically, Solomon asks that the Lord “**remember**” or bless David because of “**all his affliction.**” Consider David’s trials throughout his life. His own brothers mocked him when he sought to preserve God’s honor in the face of Goliath’s mockery (1 Sam. 17). He wandered and ran as he was pursued by Saul as the object of jealousy and hatred. He suffered quietly as Shimei cursed him and through stones and dirt at him (2 Sam. 16:13). We recall the emotional affliction David faced in losing his dearest friend Jonathan (2 Sam. 1). And we have numerous psalms where David cries out for the Lord to deliver him from his enemies.

Despite all these sufferings, however, David did not become apathetic when the Lord did deliver him, in his times of rest. Instead, he was even more intent to serve the Lord and worship him. O. Palmer Robertson points out, “He could have exploited his kingship by seeking relaxing pleasures for himself. But when he began experiencing some prosperity he stuck by his commitment to the Lord.”¹

What was that commitment? What had David vowed to do as described in this psalm? David said that he would not rest until he built a dwelling place for the Lord (vv. 2-5). He obviously spoke figuratively: He did enter his house; he did sleep in his bed. But what he does is declare his priority. Above all the daily necessities of life he was more intent on glorifying God. We read of his intentions in 2 Samuel 6-7 and 1 Chronicles 13-16, where we are told that it was not David who built the temple, but Solomon. David only collected the materials for its construction. There, we do not read of this oath, only his zeal to build the temple. This is the only place the vow is mentioned in the Old Testament. However, James Montgomery Boice suggests, “David is not remembered here for his excessive zeal; he is remembered for his good intentions. He was motivated by a desire for God’s honor.”²

You see, David was right in wanting to have the ark returned to Jerusalem. More on that in a moment. Where he was wrong, where he was overzealous, was in his desire to build a more permanent place *for God*, and to build it himself.

1 Kings 6:11-14 – ¹¹ Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon saying, ¹² “Concerning this house which you are building, if you will walk in My statutes and execute My ordinances and keep all My commandments by walking in them, then I will

¹ O. Palmer Robertson, *Psalms in Congregational Celebration*, 389.

² James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 107-150*, 1153.

carry out My word with you which I spoke to David your father. ¹³ I will dwell among the sons of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel.” ¹⁴ So Solomon built the house and finished it.

2. Accomplished (vv. 6-10)³

These verses provide a historical account of accomplishing in part the oath David had made concerning the ark of the covenant. The ark was a wooden box covered with gold about a yard long and a foot and a half high and deep. The box contained the tablets of stone on which the Ten Commandments were written and given to Moses at Mt. Sinai, and it was closed by a solid gold covering called the mercy seat, the place where the high priest sprinkled the blood of a sacrifice for the people of God one time a year on the Day of Atonement. The ark's regular home was in the area of the tabernacle called the Holy of Holies, a place only to be entered by the high priest on this occasion. The people would have been ascending the mount to celebrate this day and would have sung this psalm along the way. The ark and its movements were carefully prescribed by God while the people were in the wilderness.

When the people came to the Jordan River prior to entering the promised land, the priests led the way carrying the ark. When they reached the river and the priests touched their feet into it, the river parted and the people crossed over on dry ground. The ark was deposited at Shiloh (Josh. 18:1) and following at Bethel (Judg. 20:27), Mizpah (Judg. 21:5), then for twenty years at Keriath-jearim (1 Sam. 7:2), the place referred to in this psalm in the singular as “**Jaar.**” According to David in 1 Chronicles 13:3, it is at “**Jaar**” that the ark was apparently forgotten during the reign of Saul.

1 Chronicles 13:2-5 – ² David said to all the assembly of Israel, “If it seems good to you, and if it is from the LORD our God, let us send everywhere to our kinsmen who remain in all the land of Israel, also to the priests and Levites who are with them in their cities with pasture lands, that they may meet with us; ³ and let us bring back the ark of our God to us, for we did not seek it in the days of Saul.” ⁴ Then all the assembly said that they would do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people. ⁵ So David assembled all Israel together, from the Shihor of Egypt even to the entrance of Hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kiriath-jearim.

After a long search the ark is found, and the details of what happened next are recorded in 2 Samuel 6 and 1 Chronicles 13-16. The fact that so much space is given to record the details of the ark and its movements shows how important the ark was to the people of God and helps us to understand why David would make this vow to have the ark brought back to Jerusalem. Again, however, we see David's overzealousness. First, David attempted to fulfill his vow on his own, loading it up and hauling it on a cart drawn by oxen. While this would have been a common sense way to transport things in his day, it was not how *God had prescribed* for the ark to be moved. It was to be carried by, and only by, the priests. Last week we noted what happened when Saul took the priestly duties of sacrifice upon himself. He lost the kingdom! Well, as the oxen were pulling the cart they stumbled, and a man named Uzzah, again, in a common sense movement, reached out to steady the ark and was immediately struck down for his irreverent act and died on the spot (2 Sam. 6:7). David became angry, and do you remember who he was angry at? God! (2 Sam. 6:8). And the ark remained where it was for three months in the house of Obed-Edom. Friends, the irony is too much. God blessed “the servant of Edom” because of

³ This section a summary of Boice, 1153-1154.

the ark's presence. You think that got David's attention? When David heard that Obed-Edom was being blessed, he tried again to move the ark, this time, however, in the way that God had prescribed.

That is what the phrase in v. 9 our psalm, "**Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness**" refers. We find the historical account of this in 1 Chronicles 15:11-15:

1 Chronicles 15:11-15 – ¹¹ Then David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab, ¹² and said to them, "You are the heads of the fathers' *households* of the Levites; consecrate yourselves both you and your relatives, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel to *the place* that I have prepared for it. ¹³ Because you did not *carry it* at the first, the LORD our God made an outburst on us, for we did not seek Him according to the ordinance." ¹⁴ So the priests and the Levites consecrated themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. ¹⁵ The sons of the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles thereon, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD.

So the ark came to Jerusalem at last. "**And let Your godly ones sing for joy.**"

"For the sake of David Your servant, do not turn away the face of Your anointed" (v. 10).

II. God's Oath to David (132:11-18)

1. Spoken (vv. 11-12)

The original account of the Davidic covenant we read earlier in our reading in 2 Samuel 7. Those verses promise that God will establish his people in the land that He had given them. He further promised that he would give David a successor as an heir to the throne, that he would bless him, though He promises to discipline him if he is disobedient. That heir, God said, would build the temple that David requested to build and was denied. And God promised something more, something very important – the throne of David would be established *forever*, **2 Samuel 7:16**, "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever."

Here we have what has been called a prophecy that contains dual fulfillments. It had two levels of meaning—one for the present and one for the future. The first was this promise to David and his heirs. The promise was that as long as they obeyed, as long as they kept God's statutes and ordinances, they would not cease to occupy the throne. The second is a promise of Christ as Messiah, the one alone who would perfectly keep all of the requirements of the law and rule forever. The promise of the Messiah is always behind the promises found in the Davidic covenant, but here it is expressly stated in vv. 13-14, ¹³ "**For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation.** ¹⁴ **This is My resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it.**"

Now we see the problem with David's desire to build a permanent habitation *for God*. His intent was good. His heart was right—only so far as the ark was concerned. You see, God never intended to dwell in a temple made with hands. This covenant stipulates that God has chosen a people for Himself—"Zion"—and He desires to take up residence in His people—"forever." How did Paul put it in **1 Corinthians 6:19** – *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?*

2. Confirmed (vv. 13-18)

The closing verses look forward to the day of the coming of Christ to take the throne of David. It is God's response to Solomon's prayer in vv. 8-9 where he prays that God would take up His resting place. Here God not only answers that prayer, but far exceeds it with His answer.

Ephesians 3:20-21 – ²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹ to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

The people asked that the ark, which was a mere representation of the presence of God, come to rest in Jerusalem. God said that He Himself would come in the person of Christ, the temple, and take up His throne. They asked for righteousness for their priests; God promised to clothe His priests with righteousness. They request to sing for joy; God promises they would sing for joy forever because of the salvation in Christ.

At just the right time, hundreds of years after the Davidic line was established, Christ came to this earth. At just the time when the Davidic dynasty seemed to lose the throne, Christ came proclaiming that the kingdom, His kingdom, was at hand. In Christ, the oath that God made with David continues forever to be fulfilled. David's descendant continues as King and Head of the church and He rules and reigns today through the hearts of His people.

You see, God's old covenant relations with His people were mere shadows of the reality of the kingdom of God to come. They pointed to a greater outworking of God's promises in the New Covenant, which is unconditional—only because of the obedience of Christ. We live eternally not because of our works, but His. He fulfilled all of the covenant stipulations of those old covenants so that we might experience the blessings of the new. And what are those blessings?

1) Provision (vv. 15-16) – The Lord promised to provide for all and satisfy the need of the poor with bread. Psalm 37:25 states, “I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread.”

But again, much more is promised than was prayed for. As we mentioned earlier, there is the promised righteousness of the priests and salvation and shouting for joy by those who are devoted to Christ. That does not mean that God's people will not face times of difficulty. If the world hated Christ, the believer should expect some opposition. But God will never leave His people to themselves. Even in trials, no, especially in trials, the people of God can hope in Christ and experience the joy of their salvation. Zion has no silent saints.

2) Strength (v. 17) – God promises to establish His throne in Zion. Spurgeon said, “Jehovah has chosen His people; thus, they are His people. He has chosen the church, and that is what makes it as it is. David and Zion, and Christ and His church, go together. As David is for Zion and Zion is for David, the interests of Christ and His people are also mutual.”⁴ And in v. 17 we see God's promised strength for God's people to persevere in those interests in the picture of **“the horn of David.”**

Time does not allow but for us to consider one more thing. In v. 18 we see the triumph, the absolute triumph, the sovereignty of the mediator in the covenant of grace. And the Psalmist uses several metaphors and one of which is the budding of the horn. And the horn, of course, is a symbol of power in the Old Testament. And then another metaphor of a glistening crown that

⁴ Spurgeon, 1357.

shines, and it's speaking primarily of the One who sits on the throne of David forever and ever, who has all power and all authority and who will triumph and who will be all glorious.

That is God's covenant with David and its accomplishment. And note v. 11, "The LORD has sworn to David a truth from which He will not turn back." We noted in our sermon in Esther 2 last week that one of the downfalls of the decrees of the Mede-Persians was that they were irrevocable. Sinful men make unwise decisions as demonstrated by the Persian kings. In anger and drunkenness decrees were made that could never be changed. But the unchangeableness of God's decrees is different because His judgments are always right. There is no shadow of turning with Him!

Conclusion

1. Do you obey God as He has prescribed? Do you have a proper zeal for God's work?

Not overzealousness, focusing on the right thing in the wrong way. The people of God at this point in their history needed somewhere in order to worship God in some physical locality and David was determined to do that for God. But God said, "No." And I wonder if there are things that weigh heavily on your hearts and that you aspire to do for God and you long to do it for God and for the very best reasons and the very best intentions. Your motives are pure and clean and God steps in and says, "No." In providence, in answer to prayer, he blocks the way. And I wonder what your response is to that. David's response, you remember, was a beautiful response. He never once stopped encouraging his son Solomon and insuring that his son Solomon would indeed build that temple. David saw it as the providence of God or the will of God, and this time he refused to get angry and to sulk and to pout. Spurgeon – The Lord shows the acceptance of what we want to do by permitting us to do something else that is better for us and more honoring to him.⁵

2. Do you know the cost of discipleship? If you are really going to be out and out for God, there's going to be a certain cost for that. In his commentary on 1 Peter Calvin wrote, "God has so ordained the church that the Cross is the way to victory and death is the way to life." So it is through many hardships and many tribulations that we enter the kingdom of God.

3. Do you have the passion to obey at all times?

⁵ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 1354.