

# Yes, There Is Grace in the OT

## Sustained by Grace Frankton – 6/28/15

Scripture: 2 Samuel 12.10-13 Nathan accuses and David confesses

Proposition: The grace of God has no load limits.

Today we continue a series I have titled [SLIDE] “Yes, There Is Grace in the Old Testament.” Many people look at the New Testament and see a God of love, then they look in the Old Testament expecting to see that same God of love, but all they see is a god of wrath. I think they are so wrong. First, we talked about Abraham finding God grace in being chosen to be the recipient of God’s promise, even though he may not have been so worthy of the promise. Last week, we talked about Rahab and how she was rescued by grace. Today, we find through the life of King David that we can be sustained by grace.

Our story begins back when David was just a boy, the youngest of seven sons born to a man named Jesse. The prophet Samuel was told by God to anoint one of Jesse’s sons as the next king of Israel, even though Israel had a king named Saul. God would nudge Samuel about which son was to be named king. Samuel went to Jesse and Jesse gathered his six eldest sons, but Samuel didn’t feel God’s nudge. He asked Jesse if this was all his sons, to which Jesse told Samuel about his youngest son David, who was really just a boy who was out tending sheep out in the fields. Samuel waited for David to be brought before him and when he was, Samuel felt God’s nudge. Samuel anointed David with a few drops of oil and scripture says: [SLIDE] *And the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David from that day on.* [1 Samuel 16.13] And David went back to being a shepherd, after all, he was still just a boy,

So why David? What had he done to deserve to be anointed as king of Israel? Nothing. Not a thing. And apparently his family agreed. They hadn’t even invited him to his own coronation. Besides, a new king should be from the family of an old king. David wasn’t. Yet God picked him. He picked him in spite of his family and in spite of his being the youngest son, not the oldest. That’s grace.

God allowed Saul to rule Israel until David was ready. Providentially, David gained notoriety by killing the giant named Goliath (hopefully you know that story). After that David went to live with Saul, but unfortunately, Saul began to have misgivings about David. He tried to kill David three times with a spear, and missed each time. So David finally took the hint and left the palace for the wilderness near the Dead Sea, 25 miles from Jerusalem. He hid out from Saul in the wilderness for 14 years being hunted as a fugitive as Saul tried desperately to have him killed. During this time, he gathered a bunch of other outlaws and misfits and he became their leader.

In one episode, David lied to the priests in the village of Nob in order to get some provisions for his men. His claim to the priests was that he was on an errand from King Saul. The priests got David and his men some provisions. When King Saul heard that the people of Nob supplied David with provisions, he had everyone in the village killed. In spite of David’s lapse in judgment, David was still destined to become king of Israel. God’s promise to David would stand. [SLIDE] God’s

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promise was not anchored in the behavior of the recipient, but by the grace of the God who had made it.

David eventually did become King of Israel. He helped make the nation one of the strongest nations of the day. With the country's wealth and power now secure, David decided it was time to build God a temple. The prophet Nathan told David that God did not want David to build the Temple. But also he told David something else very important. Nathan relayed to David God's promise of an everlasting kingdom, where one of his descendants would reign forever. God's promise to David was rooted in God's grace, not David or his family's performance. There were no "if you, then I" conditions attached to God's promise. It was unconditional. Jews came to interpret this promise that the Messiah will come from David's lineage. Christians agree, noting the Jesus was of the house and lineage of David.

David and Israel continued to prosper until that one fateful day. You probably know which day I mean. It's the day that David met Bathsheba. Most people know the story so I'll just give you the Reader's Digest Condensed version. David sees Bathsheba and finds out that she is the wife of one of David's finest army men. Regardless, David has her brought to the palace, sleeps with her, and then dispatches her home. She becomes pregnant. David has a choice: he can confess or he can conceal. He chooses to conceal. He brings her husband, Uriah, home from the war and tries to get him to sleep with Bathsheba. In deference to the men on the front lines, Uriah doesn't sleep with her. David then sends a note to his army general to put Uriah at the front and then pull back. This was a death sentence for Uriah – and also the scores of Israelite soldiers around Uriah. David knew that. This was a colossal abuse of power. This was murder, murders, really. After Uriah's death, David took Bathsheba to be his wife and got away with the cover-up, he thought.

The prophet Nathan comes back into the picture. He tricks David into agreeing that David was wrong, whereupon David admits his sin. It is believed that David wrote Psalm 51 because of this episode. The psalm's opening line is: **[SLIDE]** *Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love.* David understood that grounds for redemption and forgiveness were to be found exclusively in God's unfailing love. His only hope was grace, which happens to be one of God's greatest characteristics. Even though David confessed and repented, Nathan was direct with David about the discipline to come. He told David three things. 1) Nathan told David that the child in Bathsheba's womb would die. 2) Nathan told David that his family would always be fighting each other. 3) Lastly, he also said that David's wives would be given to someone close to him.

Everything Nathan said came true. 1) The child did die. 2) The infighting if the family soon began and lasted a very long time. Here's how it started: David's oldest sons raped his half-sister, one of David's daughters. Another son, named Absalom, avenged the rape by murdering the rapist. Absalom then fled the country. Several years later, he comes back and sets out to steal the kingdom from David, which he temporarily succeeds at doing. David skedaddles out of Jerusalem before Absalom could kill him. Absalom has himself installed as king and, to show the country who is in charge, he publicly sleeps with David's concubines, which was the third thing Nathan told David about. Absalom then begins to hunt down David which backfires because David's men kill Absalom and David is reinstated as king.

David recognized his own contribution to Absalom's rebellion and the carnage that followed. He had failed as a father. He had failed as God's agent of justice. He had refused to hold his own

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family accountable. He had placed himself and those closest to him above the Law. David understood that all of this was part of a much bigger picture, one framed by his disobedience to the God who had promised him so much. David had only himself to blame. By every imaginable standard he had disqualified himself from the blessings and promises God gave him.

Yet not even David's blatant disregard for God's extravagant blessings would stress God's grace to the point of breaking. [SLIDE] If grace had limits, David's behavior would have exposed them. But God did not withdraw his promise of an everlasting kingdom from David. He did not rescind his offer. No change of mind. Besides this was never really about David. This was about God's unfailing love. This was, and always will be, a story of grace. Grace that has no limits. Grace that knows no boundaries. As the old hymn states, "Grace greater than all our sin." Even the sin of King David.

Knowing what we have just talked about of David's life, if we, or maybe some Hollywood screenwriters, were to write the story of the last part of his life, we would probably write it much differently than it actually turned out. Perhaps the biggest difference in the two versions would be the role of Bathsheba. In our version, she would probably be barren the rest of her life as punishment for betraying her husband. Or perhaps grief over the loss of her child would drive her to suicide or a life of seclusion. Nothing like that actually happened. David and Bathsheba had a second child and they named him Solomon. He followed in his father's footsteps as the third king of Israel. As king, he led the nation into what is considered to be the golden age of Israel. He built the Temple that David had wanted to build. He is considered by many to be the wisest man to ever live. And he wrote at least three books of the Bible. Yet, apart from David's sin, Solomon would never have been born. One could argue that Solomon shouldn't have been born. But not only was he born; he was the son God chose to carry on the legacy promised to David. That's grace. Unbelievable, underserved, unexpected, unexplainable, unmerited grace.

While the details of our lives may overlap very little with David's, there is one thing in common. We've all put God's grace to the test. We have broken his law. We have been irresponsible with his blessing. We have confessed a sin only to turn right around and repeat it. It's those occasions when I begin to wonder, "How many times? How many times can I expect God to forgive me for the same sin?" All of us in our own way have wondered, "Where does grace end and retribution begin? When does grace end and we get cut off from anymore?" [SLIDE] If David's story is any indication, grace has no end. So regardless of that you've done, regardless of how far you've strayed, regardless of how long it's been since you addressed God directly, regardless of what you've been told, regardless of how you feel, grace awaits you. Grace that is far greater than all your sins.