

A God Who Promises (Truth)

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[0 : 00] Come now to our Bible reading, and you will find that in the Old Testament book of 1 Chronicles. The Old Testament book of 1 Chronicles. Chapter 17, that's on page 348 of our church Bibles.

348. We spent the last couple of weeks looking at this great chapter of the Bible, specifically thinking about what it teaches us about our great God, our covenant God, and we're back again, once again, this week.

So, 1 Chronicles 17, and we begin reading at verse 1. Hear the word of the Lord. Now, when David lived in his house, David said to Nathan the prophet, Behold, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord is under a tent.

And Nathan said to David, Do all that is in your heart. For God is with you. Well, that same night, the word of the Lord came to Nathan.

Go and tell my servant David, Thus says the Lord, It is not you who will build me a house to dwell in. For I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up Israel to this day.

[1 : 19] For I have gone from tent to tent, and from dwelling to dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people, saying, Why have you not built me a house of cedar?

Now, therefore, thus shall you say to my servant David, Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be prince over my people Israel.

And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.

And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be disturbed no more.

And violent men shall waste them no more, as formerly from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will subdue all your enemies.

[2 : 32] Moreover, I declare to you, that the Lord will build you a house. When your days are fulfilled, to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.

I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, but I will confirm him in my house, and in my kingdom forever.

And his throne shall be established forever. In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David. Then King David went in, and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I, O Lord God?

And what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? And this was a small thing in your eyes, O God. You have also spoken of your servant's house, for a great while to come, and have shown me future generations, O Lord God.

[3 : 50] And what more can David say to you, for honoring your servant? For you know your servant. For your servant's sake, O Lord, and according to your own heart, you have done all this greatness, in making known all these great things.

There is none like you, O Lord, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And who is like your people, Israel?

The one nation on earth, whom God went to redeem to be his people, making for yourself a name for great and awesome things, and driving out nations before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt.

And you made your people, Israel, to be your people forever. And you, O Lord, became their God. And now, O Lord, let the word that you have spoken concerning your servant, and concerning his house, be established forever.

And do as you have spoken, and your name will be established, and magnified forever. saying, The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, is Israel's God.

[5 : 07] And the house of your servant David will be established before you. For you, my God, have revealed to your servant that you will build a house for him.

And therefore, your servant has found courage to pray before you. And now, O Lord, you are God, and you have promised this good thing to your servant. Now you have been pleased to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue forever before you.

For it is you, O Lord, who have blessed. And it is blessed forever. Well, amen. And may God bless to us this, his word.

Turn with me, if you would, to our chapter, 1 Chronicles chapter 17. What was it? Page 348, I think, if you have one of the visitors' Bibles.

Our God is a God who promises, and we can trust his promises. We're thinking in these few weeks, as we delve deeply into this chapter, one of these great chapters of the Bible, we're thinking, who is this God of the covenant?

[6 : 21] What kind of God are we really talking about when we talk about the God of the Bible, the Christian scriptures? And we've already seen that, contrary to human religion and religiosity, the God of the Bible is not mysterious, he's not hidden, he's not silent, so we have to go searching for him.

He is a God who proclaims himself to this world and to his people. He's a God who speaks. We saw that so clearly in the first few verses where God speaks to David the king through Nathan the prophet, clear words of direction, what he was to do and what not to do, how to obey him.

And God speaks so that people can know him, so that we can come to know him and find relationship with him, so that we can obey him with confidence, without fear, not having to worry whether we really are doing what God wants us to do or not.

And our God is a God who speaks covenant words, words that abide. God's word is living. And so once spoken, his words go on speaking.

And that's why the words of scripture go on speaking to us today. All scripture, says Paul, is God-breathed. And therefore they're able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

[7 : 41] The scriptures are able also to equip us for every good work. So Peter, the apostle, says, God has given us everything we need for life and godliness in these great and precious promises.

So our God proclaims, but also we've seen that, again, contrary to so much of the ideas of man-made religion, where God is always demanding from us, we constantly have to be providing for him so that he will then respond to us.

No, no, no. Our God is the great provider. He gives to us. He's the God of grace. And again, we've seen that so clearly in this chapter where God says today, but it's not what you are going to build for me.

It's what I am building for you, a destiny, a future, a great inheritance. But today we find that another thing about this God of the Bible that surprises us because it's so unlike the way we are ourselves is that he is the God who promises and who keeps promises.

He promises a future for his people and he is totally committed to fulfilling everything that he has promised. He is a God, therefore, that you really can trust.

[8 : 59] This God is the very antithesis, the very opposite of human infidelity. He turns our concepts of loyalty, our concepts of commitment, right on his head.

Because when we're honest, we as human beings, we treat loyalty very differently. We're loyal, usually, as long as we get what we want out of the arrangement. Isn't that right?

So workers are often loyal employees as long as they get what they want, the pay they want, the pensions they want, the conditions they want, and so on. Otherwise, whether they go and strike or else they leave.

And employers, by the same token, are loyal to their workforce as long as it suits, as long as they're making profits for them and so on. Otherwise, they'll lay them off. That's why we need so many laws, so many regulations about employment all over the place, isn't it?

Because infidelity is deep down in the human heart. And where there is infidelity everywhere, it leads to a great loss of trust. And that's why we see so many problems that we see in the world today, in society all around us.

[10:14] Not just that we as human beings can't be faithful to God, we're not very good at being faithful to one another either. That's true in the business world today, isn't it? There's a great loss of trust in so many places.

There have been so many corporate scandals. That's one of the things that has undermined so many aspects of the economy. And it affects millions of ordinary people, doesn't it? We read in the papers about pensions crises, where what workers have thought they've been paying in for for all these years all of a sudden turn out not to be there anymore because the funds have been used for something else.

You can't trust your pension plan. We've seen it in so many of these misselling scandals where people merrily are told to buy these things and then later on they discover, well, we were being sold a dummy.

Used to be said a few generations ago of those that worked in the business world, certainly in the city and the financial world and so on, that your word was your bond. But nowadays the truth is not even your bond is your bond sometimes because companies default on their bonds.

Don't even governments default on their bonds. It's the same in the world of public life and politics. There's so much cynicism. There's so much apathy around today.

[11:28] Well, why is that? Why can't you get people to vote? There's more people vote, I read, for Britain's Got Talent than vote in the local elections and the European elections. Well, why is that?

Because people have lost trust in their vote, in their politicians. They've lost trust in their promises. They won't do what they say they were going to do. And we're seeing that all the time at the moment.

Everybody's furious, aren't they? Because Brexit doesn't mean Brexit. It means brino or it means something else. Nobody's happy. We see it also, very sadly, don't we, in the world of human relationships.

So often, we're faithful only for as long as our satisfaction is being catered for and guaranteed. If not, well, we'll just give up.

And that's the story, isn't it? Sadly, in so many marriages, in so many love relationships today. All in all, the promise is really a very, very devalued currency in our world today.

[12:31] But all of that, friends, is in absolute and total contrast to the utter faithfulness of the God that we are speaking about in the Christian Bible.

And we can see that so, so clearly just in this chapter alone. Verses 5 and 6 there, you see, God is speaking about his utter faithfulness to Israel right from the very beginning, ever since the day that he brought them out of Egypt, despite all their unfaithfulness, all their grumbling, all their rebellion. And he was always with them, nevertheless, always providing for them, never complaining, never deserting them, never asking for them to build him a house, content to remain in a tent to be faithful to his people.

Read the story from Exodus right through the end of 2 Samuel. You will see how extraordinary the faithfulness of God to his people really was. And in verse 8, you see, God talks to David about his extraordinary faithfulness to David himself.

I've been with you wherever you have gone despite David's sinfulness. And David was sinful, made big mistakes. But God knew all about that and was still absolutely faithful to David.

[13:50] And what this chapter is displaying, you see, is just what you'll find in every part of the Bible from the very beginning to the very end. that our God is a God who has promised. And where he has promised, he has always, always been faithful in the past.

And that means that we can be sure and certain of his every promise for the future. This truly is a God that you can trust. Verse 8, notice, I have been.

I have been with you wherever you've gone and I will make for you a name and so on. Whenever you get financial adverts, you know, for investments and pensions and all that sort of thing, there's always that caveat at the bottom, isn't there?

Past performance is no guarantee of the future. Investments can go down as well as go up. And of course, that's true, isn't it? They can't guarantee the future. But, if you're investing your pension for your future, you certainly do not want to invest with somebody who's got a track record as long as

your arm of losing money every single year for his investors, do you?

You want somebody who's got a track record over the long term. And certainly in human behavior, the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior.

[15:13] That's why if you're ever taking anybody on in a job, the single most important thing is not the interview, but the reference. Although in our crazy world today, so often you only get asked for references after somebody's already been appointed to a job and had an interview.

What a mad world we live in. Are you crazy? You need to know somebody's history, don't you? If you want to have any hope of how they're going to be in the future.

Well, this God has a long, long, long history. And the reference that he gives us tells us, I have been all of these things and therefore when I say I will be, I will be.

What will he be? Verse 8, I will make for you a name, he says. Verse 9, I will appoint a place for my people. Verse 10, I will subdue all your enemies.

verse 12, I will establish the throne of his kingdom, his descendants of David forever and ever. This is a God who promises a future for his people and he will do whatever he has promised, whatever it takes because that is the kind of God he is.

[16:31] There's a word in the Bible that just encapsulates all of that. And it's covenant. A sure and certain personal promise.

His word is his bond. A covenant is quite literally a bond made in blood. It's an oath sworn on the life and God's oath is sworn upon the life of God himself.

It goes right back to the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 and Genesis 15. If you read that chapter 15 you'll find that there was a great ceremony where God told Abraham to cut up several sacrificial animals and put them in halves.

And that was the ceremony of making a covenant. That's why they called it cut a covenant. And in that chapter what we see is God himself in the smoking fire goes through and he himself takes upon himself all the responsibility for keeping that covenant.

What he's saying is this promise that I make to you is sealed in my blood upon my very life as God. He's the covenant God. He's the God of promise.

[17:46] When he promises a future for his people he will fulfill it whatever it takes. That's what God is making clear to David in this very chapter. But I want to ask two questions.

What is that covenant all about? And secondly how is that covenant going to be fulfilled in God's promise? Well what is God's covenant promise?

God is promising to David here be very clear something far far more than just about his own personal situation and his family future. Not just about his faith not just about his future or about yours or mine.

Now God is talking about a promise for the future of the whole world. That's what God's covenant has been about since the very start. Right back since the time of Abraham Paul says in Romans 4 God promised to Abraham and his offspring that they would be heirs of the cosmos the universe the whole world and that through his seed God was going to bless the whole wide world all the families of the earth with a great multitude that no one could number.

it's very very important for us to understand that David knew the scope of that promise very very clearly. If you just turn back a page to chapter 16 you'll see in the great psalm that David sings here it's all about God's covenant.

[19:12] Look at verse 14 He is the Lord our God His judgments are in all the earth. Remember His covenant forever the word He commanded for a thousand generations the covenant that He made with Abraham His sworn promise to Isaac which He confirmed as a statue to Jacob as an everlasting covenant to Israel.

And it's very clear isn't it all the way through this if you read on it's not just for Israel look at verse 23 Sing to the Lord all the earth tell of His salvation from day to day declare His glory among the nations His marvelous work among the peoples If you go back to the beginning of it there in verse 8 and read on from there you'll see that He's talking about Israel and Israel's place as God's servants to serve that great covenant promise Give thanks to the Lord call on His name make known His deeds among the people says verse 8 Verse 13 there speaks of Israel His servant the sons of Jacob His chosen ones they are the messengers of His covenant to the whole world David knew that God's promise was to bless all nations to bring heaven and earth together under His rule and the chronicler who's writing this recording this teaching this the first time to the people of Israel after

the exile he knew it just the same because the prophets had declared what God was going to do for the whole world and to create a whole new heavens and a new earth for them everybody knew how great

God's promise was it's really important isn't it that we as believers today understand just how great is the scope of God's promise this is no small thing for a little group of people far away or even just for a little group of people here this is for the whole wide world well how then is that promise that God makes to bless the whole wide world how then is it going to happen that was the question well again David knew and the people here knew a very great deal it goes all the way back to the very beginning in Genesis chapter 3 God promised that there would be a deliverer that a seed of the woman would come to destroy the serpent to crush the evil one they knew of course that seed would come from the people of Abraham the people of faith in fact way back as early as Genesis they knew that that deliverer would come from the tribe of Judah because when Jacob blessed his sons on his deathbed he spoke of Judah and the scepter never departing from Judah until all the peoples would obey him and bow to him but now

God is revealing something even more to David about how that promise is going to be fulfilled he's telling him it will be through a son of David himself through the seed of his family that a descendant of this king David would be the great king the long promised shepherd of all his people the one who as verse 10 of chapter 17 says will subdue all their enemies the one who will shepherd God's people into that place of safety forever and ever God's telling David that the future of his household his progeny is going to be tied up with the fulfillment of God's promises for the whole wide world look at verse 14 it's very plain one day he says your household will give rise to a king whose throne will last forever it will be established forever that was something very staggering wasn't it for David to be told

I think David is clearly staggered at the implication that's why in verse 16 we're told he sat down quite an unusual thing in the Bible to read about that you read about people kneeling down or bowing down not very often about sitting down I think David sat down he was absolutely staggered oh my God he's saying how can this be but he understood clearly what God was saying look at verses 16 and 17 see he says there doesn't he Lord what you've done thus far from me personally just for my household that's a small thing in comparison to this enormous thing this great revelation of your purpose for the whole of humanity you've shown me he says future generations you'll see there there's a footnote in the Bible saying that the Hebrew phrase there is a little uncertain probably the force of it is this you have shown me Lord to be the future the destiny for all the generations of this world what's dawning on David you see is that God has chosen his household to be the vehicle of fulfilling all God's covenant promises that's a staggering thing to be told

[24 : 24] I think what it would have meant for David to have that extraordinary promise through all the tough times that would lie ahead for him for all the dark days of his life that followed all the battles that he was still to face all the enemies to have that extraordinary promise to hang on to I think what it would mean for the the chronicless congregation here as the people of Israel had returned from exile with all the promises that the prophets of God had given about a wonderful future and yet still not seeing that great restoration but they had the knowledge that God had given that great abiding promise to David and that he will fulfill everything that he's promised only a certainty about that promise of God could possibly keep them in faith couldn't it waiting and waiting and waiting down the generations through the darkness waiting for that consolation of Israel that the prophets promised waiting for that son of

David who at last would somehow usher all nations in to join the people of Abraham only knowing and trusting truly that God of promise whose words would never fail only that could keep a people of faith alive until and at last you turn over the last page of the Old Testament and read in Matthew's Gospel chapter one but at last came one who was born a son of David a son of Abraham Jesus Christ the Lord one who did come and fulfill all of those promises in his life in his death in his resurrection in his ascension to glory where his throne is now established forever and ever they knew you see they they trusted the covenant God and that faith is what sustained those people of old all through their lives all through the long years of waiting waiting to see what God had promised come to pass and friends only knowing this same

God the God of promise the God of covenant only knowing him can sustain you through the days of darkness that will lie ahead in your lives the battles that you will have everything that you will have to face until the final fulfillment of all that he has promised when the Lord Jesus comes again but

Peter tells us doesn't he in his second letter that God has given us all that we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness through these he says he has given us these very great and precious promises and we have even greater and more precious promises than anything king David even had and god is able to say to us look back look back at what i've done how much more can you look forward and trust me on what is still to come because we can look back on so much more yes it's true we do still need to trust god for the future we don't yet see everything under his feet and human beings restored to the true image of god and ruling the world and his righteousness we don't see that as we look at the news today do we but as the apostle says in hebrews chapter 2 we do see jesus christ we do see him raised from the dead crowned in glory and we can look back on everything that god has accomplished in christ he has disarmed authorities and powers and triumphed over them in his cross he has subdued the great enemy forever he's established his kingdom he's been enthroned on high he's been given the throne of the son of david forever and ever god has triumphed and the whole of heaven already sees his great glory and that's been witnessed hasn't it by hundreds of people who saw the risen lord jesus christ by those who saw him ascend into the glory of the father and went out to proclaim that message to the world and wrote the message in the words of the scriptures that we have so that we can trust and be sure that all god's promises will be fulfilled not one of his promises has ever failed he has fulfilled his covenant and he's broadcast it to the whole world now in the gospel of the risen lord jesus that is our god he's the god who promises he's the god of covenant and that means you can trust him do you really think god can't handle your personal future david was right all that god did for david the extraordinary things we read about in the book that was a tiny tiny little thing on the canvas of the one who is remaking the entire heavens and the earth and yet even these tiny little personal things in david's life and in your life and in my life they are filled also with the promises of our promising god what is it that peter said in the day of pentecost the promise is for you and for your children and for all afar off whom god will call because he's that kind of god a god who promises a future for his people maybe you just need to be reminded today of the utter certainty that we have as christians because our god is a god who promises because he is the covenant lord and what it really means that we are standing forever on those promises of god our savior i certainly need to be reminded that all the time maybe you're quite a new christian and you're thinking well i've got such

a long time to go still i've got such a long journey with god and maybe you're just beginning to discover that life as a christian is actually quite hard the first joy and the flush of it is beginning to wear off and you're realizing that there's criticism there's hardship there's mockery to follow jesus today well jesus told us that that would be the case didn't he in this world you will have tribulation well maybe you understand that now you're wondering will i have the strength will i be able to make it will i last well you have the promises of a god who has a proven history of keeping his promises here's one of them he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion on the day of jesus christ says paul in philippians 1 verse 6 and so as hebrews 10 says keep going because that's a promise let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful you can trust god to guard and keep you just look at his track record maybe you're a parent of young children and you worry for them because it's hard to bring them up it's hard to prepare them isn't it for life and for the future with all the pressures and snares and temptations we seem to get more and more and more so it'd be easy wouldn't it to be fearful all the time we look at our world today but friends god doesn't want us to bring up our children in fear he wants us to bring them up with him in faith and trust and we can trust him because you know what the psalmist says the loving kindness of the lord is from everlasting to everlasting to those who fear him his righteousness to children's children for those who keep his covenant that's a promise of course we must fear him we must keep covenant we mustn't flout him or presume on his word that's why god gives us as parents not just his promises but his commands as well we are to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the lord we must help we mustn't hinder our little ones from coming to jesus they need our prayer they need our example they need our teaching but god says plainly as we walk in trusting faith we can bring our children to jesus with faith and with confidence on the strength of his promises of grace the promise is for you and for your children and we can trust his promises and and as parents we must trust his promises we must trust and obey god not distrust and disobey him perhaps you're somebody who likes assurance you find it just so hard to believe that that god could really accept somebody like you you really wonder am i am i truly saved by him perhaps you fear a lot of the time that you're not and the more you look at yourself and your own

heart and look inside of yourself the more you fear because the more you see your own sinfulness that is a terrible lie of the devil it is never god who tempts us to despair that's satan we sing it don't we satan tempts us to despair and tells us of the guilt within not god what has god promised no condemnation no condemnation for those who are in christ jesus don't listen to the devil's lies trust the sure promises of god our savior what did jesus say whoever believes in me has eternal life he has passed from death to life john 5 24 whoever comes to me i will never cast out john 6 verse 37 that's a promise listen to the apostle john in first john 2 let what you have heard from the beginning abide in you if what you heard from the beginning abides in you then you too will abide in the son and in the father and this is the promise he made to us eternal life you get that if that is you if you if you fear that you really belong to him stand on those promises not on your feelings and certainly not on the lies of the devil you love the lord don't you well trust the lord james says god has promised the crown of life to all all who love him if you love him there is nothing to fear maybe you just despair about the state of the world today you wouldn't and maybe you just find it so hard to believe this world will really ever change you wonder perhaps if jesus actually will ever return again in glory maybe he was mistaken perhaps you've read books that say oh jesus expected to come again soon and he didn't so he was mistaken but remember our present hope rests on a vast proven history of god's promises which can be trusted read second peter chapter three if that's your fear because it prepares us for all of that doesn't it peter says people will mock and scorn in the last days what will they say where is this promise coming it's all just nonsense the world just rolls on and on and on no says peter god is not slow to fulfill his promise he is patient he's giving time for people to repent for people to find life doesn't that give a different slant on what god tolerates in the world today on all the the the mess that we still see think of god's enormous priority that human beings should find him and repent and find eternal life but don't be mistaken says peter according to his promise we are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth the home of righteousness his promise will never fail however patient he may be what did jesus himself say fear not little flock it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom that's a sure promise from the god of promise himself whose every promise has always been kept or maybe for some of us it is the very real and natural fear that we are nearing the end of the road in our life maybe illness is rearing its head perhaps it's just the weakness of of increasing age may well be some of us here this morning are very conscious of that dark veil of death that is creeping up on them but you have the promise of god i am a resurrection and the life said jesus whoever believes in me though he die yet shall he live i will come again to take you to myself that where i am you will be also not even death can separate you from the promises of god nothing in all creation says paul not even death itself will be able to separate you from the love of god in christ jesus our lord that's a promise i could keep you here all day

[38 : 46] going through promises like that from the scriptures the bible is so full of promises of our promising god not vain promises not empty words but promises from old promises from right back at the beginning every one of which has been proved true time and again in history in the lives of god's people that's why if you're here this morning wondering what the christian faith is all about that is why we who are christians love the god of the bible made known in our lord jesus christ he is the covenant god of promise and he is our savior who has promised from the dawn of time to be the one who will guard us and keep us and bring us his salvation the lord jesus christ in whom the apostle paul says all god's promises are fulfilled all come to a zenith of glory all god's promises in him are yes and amen so let it be and so the promises that we have today as christian people they're far better promises even than these amazing promises god gave to david in this chapter because in jesus christ every promise every promise to abraham to isaac to jacob through mooses through david and the prophets everyone has come to its fulfillment in christ and he has done what he promised to do in bringing salvation through dying on the cross and taking our sins far away and in his resurrection and in his ascension to glory he has declared to the whole world at last that all his saving work is done it's complete it's finished nothing now possibly can ever frustrate his purpose to bless all his people to bring them forever to a place of safety and peace and beauty and love nothing nothing can therefore keep us from the salvation that is being kept in heaven even now for us to be revealed on the day the lord jesus returns nothing can prevent that not ever already says paul because jesus christ is risen already we are more than conquerors through him who loved us because our god is a god who promises none of his promises has ever fallen to the ground none of his promises to us in the lord jesus christ will ever ever spoil or fade or fail this is the god that we worship this is the god of the bible this is the one god and the only god made known to us in

jesus christ the son so don't be led into despair by anyone who would misrepresent him or by your own heart being taunted by the evil one no rather let god's own words about himself as he proclaims himself to us as the god who provides for us as the god who promises us his glory let these words lead us always into his deliverance into his delight trust him and stand on his promises and he will never never let you down let's pray almighty god who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men grant unto thy people that they may love the thing which thou commandest

and desire that which thou dost promise that so among the sundry and manifold changes of the world our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen amen amen