

A God Who is Personal (Faith)

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[0 : 01] Now, we're going to turn to our reading for this morning, and Willie is finishing his series on 1 Chronicles 17 this morning. So let's turn that up and read together.

1 Chronicles chapter 17. If you're using one of the visitor's Bibles, that's on page 348. 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. But 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, but 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.

[1 : 35] 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 a 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 the judges over my people Israel.

And I will subdue all your enemies. 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?

[2 : 57] 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.

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's no God beside 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.

[4 : 22] 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. 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. Amen. This is God's word. I'll do turn with me to page 348, 1 Chronicles chapter 17.

Our God is a God who must become personal. And that's why the Christian message calls for faith. Now we've been camped out, as it were, for, this is our fifth time in this one chapter in the book of Chronicles, 1 Chronicles 17.

And we've been asking the question, what kind of God? Who is the God that we read about here in our Bibles, in the Christian scriptures? Who is, and what is, the God of the Bible?

[5 : 54] May seem a basic question, but of course, there are so many different ideas, aren't there, about what that word God means, G-O-D. Ask a hundred people, you may well get a hundred different answers.

And today, in our increasingly confused and secular world, I suppose many, many people would say, well, it doesn't really matter what your idea of God is, it's all the same in the end. All just different ways of talking about the same thing.

Well, not so. Certainly not so is the claim of the Christian faith and the Christian scriptures. What does the Bible say God really is like?

Well, we've sat with King David over these recent weeks and we've learned some of the things that he himself learned about God all those years ago, near 3,000 years ago.

And I think we've discovered way, way back here in the Old Testament, we've discovered some really wonderful things about the God of the Bible. The God who, of course, at last is truly and fully and completely revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the person of God, the Son, come down from heaven to earth in fulfillment of all the prophecies of the Old Testament, indeed in the fulfillment of the very promises that God gave King David about his own line here in this very chapter.

[7 : 21] What have we discovered about this God? Well, first, he is not a silent God, a hidden God, a mysterious God who is so far away and so hidden we can never be sure we can ever really understand him.

Not at all. Our God is the God who proclaims. He's the God who speaks in words to us and to King David so that we can know him, so that we can love him, so that we can have truly a relationship with him.

He's the God of revelation. He speaks to human beings. We saw that in the first few verses of this chapter. He speaks directly to David in words that he commands the prophet Nathan to speak to him.

And of course, the revelation that we have today as Christian people living on this side of the coming of the Lord Jesus, the revelation we have is so, so much greater, fuller, more complete. because in these last days, God has spoken to us in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, of course, we've discovered that our God, the true God, the God of the Bible, is not a God who is always demanding religious things, rituals and pledges and vows and so on.

[8 : 34] Our God doesn't need anything that we can give him. Remember what the Apostle Paul said to the clever philosophers in Athens. The God who made the world and everything in it, he doesn't live in temples made by human hands.

He's not served by human hands. No, our God is a God who provides. He's the God who gives to us. He's the God of grace, that is, who gives and provides all that his people can ever need.

It wasn't David who was going to build a house, a temple for this God. God said, no, no, no. It's me who's going to build for you a great future, a dynasty, a destiny.

And thirdly, we've seen, haven't we, that our God, the true God, is not a God who is capricious or unpredictable. He's not a God who is so like us. Sadly, unfaithful, failing so often to keep our commitments and our promises.

No, our God is a God of promise. He is the covenant God, as the Bible calls Him. He is faithful and will be faithful.

[9 : 47] He's been faithful in the past to all of His promises. He will be faithful to everything He's promised in the future. This God, our God, will never let His people down, even though, sadly, His people constantly let Him down.

He's true to His promises. And so last time, we also saw, remember, that He is a God who is present and will be present with His people forever.

He's a God who is so intent on His purpose of building a future for Himself and for His people, for the eternal dwelling He is making where He will dwell with His people in glory forever.

He is so determined to fulfill that that until the job is done, He's quite content to live in the midst of His people anyway, amongst the mess and the dirt and their wanderings until that journey is finally complete.

As we saw in verse 5 here, He says to David, I'm the God who's lived in a tent all these years as you've moved about from place to place. I have foregone the glory and the splendor of a fitting palace and I will do until at last I will dwell in the midst of my people in glory.

[11 : 10] Our God is Emmanuel, God who is with us even in our muddle, even in our mess until our journey to glory is finally over.

He tented with Israel in the wilderness, He tented supremely with us in our own human flesh when He became man for us and dwelt among us. And He tents with us now even in our gathering as the church, the temple, He calls it, of the Holy Spirit even in our own bodies which are, if we are believers in Christ, temples of His Holy Spirit where God chooses to dwell.

even in the mess and the muddle and the grave imperfections of your life and my life until we are at last perfect, holy, a fit dwelling place as a living temple for Him forever.

All of that we've discovered in answer to our questions about God just from this one chapter alone in this book of Chronicles which most people think is just a great long boring book of irrelevant things stuck in the middle of the Old Testament.

Just one chapter. That He's a God who proclaims. He's the God of revelation. The God who provides. The God of great grace. The God who promises.

[12 : 34] A covenant God. And the God who is present, Emmanuel, with us forever. And all of that if you understand it is truly wonderful.

It is potentially life changing. But there's something else you see before we finish and conclude this chapter that we must think about. I said potentially life changing.

Actually to consider the true God to take Him seriously to hear His word of revelation is life changing. Because if you listened if you've taken seriously the things that you have heard then your life has been changing in these last few weeks.

You may not realize it but that is so. Because when God speaks to us about Himself when He reveals Himself to us His revelation always always demands a response.

In fact His revelation always evokes a response. Either in one way or in the other. Either it's a response that draws you nearer to Him or if you refuse Him if you stop your ears to His word of revelation then it is a response that drives you away from Him.

[13 : 57] Because this God you see is a God who will be personal. He will get right up close and evoke a response from you.

You can't keep knowledge of this God at arm's length. You can't keep Him away. You can't just brush it off as interesting but inconsequential. You can resist and reject Him but if you do that you are responding but in a terribly terribly wrong and fateful way.

You're making a personal statement if you do that of rejection of everything that this God is giving you. But that is not not not the response God wants from you.

No what He wants from you is something quite quite different. He wants you to receive that revelation about Himself. He wants you to make it your own personally.

He wants you to welcome all His words about Himself and rejoice in them. He wants to rejoice in all that you have found about who He is. And that response with all of your heart and all of your life that's what the Bible means by faith.

[15 : 21] Faith in the Bible you see is not what people sometimes think. It's not about a leap into the dark. It's not about a step into the unknown. It's not blind belief in something that's irrational and something unproven.

It's not taking leave of your senses. none of these things is remotely what the Bible means by faith. Now faith for the Bible is simply this.

It's a welcoming of what God tells us about Himself and it's a glad submission to Him to His words to His ways to His purposes for your life personally.

that's what faith is. It just means taking this God who is the true God and indeed the only God taking this God as your God buying the need to Him trusting Him following Him letting Him be the Lord and Master of your destiny that He is by right as your maker and as your sovereign.

and that's exactly what we see King David the great king King David himself doing in his response to God's wonderful revelation in this chapter.

[16 : 39] Verses 16 to the end of the chapter are all about that aren't we? So let's look at that clearly. I don't think you will find anywhere in the Bible a better description of what faith really means.

What it means to make God personal for you. Let me read again from verse 16. Then King David went in and sat before the Lord and said Who am I O Lord and what is my house that you have brought me thus far?

This was a small thing in your eyes of God you've also spoken of your servant's house for a great while to come you've shown me the future future generations O Lord God 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's none like you O Lord and there is no God beside you according to all that we've 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 now O Lord let the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house let it be established forever and do as you have spoken.

[18:18] you see what what real faith looks like what real trust in God is what responding to God's revelation looks like it's right here in these verses let's look at it and get it very very clear shall we first of all it begins doesn't it with a with a turning absolutely upside down of all human pride look at verse 16 David's absolutely honest isn't he about his own complete unworthiness who am I O Lord I'm nothing is his point but you should do this for me and I've done nothing he says you have done it all you you are the one who has brought me thus far everything I owe in my whole life I owe it all to you that's a hard thing isn't it for a great and mighty warrior king to admit it's a pretty hard thing for most of us to admit also isn't it we don't like to think no matter what we might say in false humility we do not like to think that we are nothing that we have done nothing that there is nothing at all in us or what we've done that should make the Lord even look at us but you see real faith that is real submission to the true and living God it deals our pride an absolutely fatal blow think of King David he had to come to terms didn't he with the great public shame

I suppose of being the great king who doesn't build a temple for his God like every other great king and warrior king in the ancient world we had to be humble and recognize that not his triumph it's not his decision it's not his word it's not his will it's God's work all of it on his behalf his way all through the Bible you read story after story that show us that that is the meaning of real faith a total humbling of all our human pride one of my favorites is that great story in the time of Elisha do you remember the story of Naaman the great warrior general of the Syrian army and his little Hebrew maid his wife's maid says to him because he has leprosy a terrible disease he says if only you would go to the God of Israel he could heal your leprosy off he goes to the king of Israel and says you can heal my leprosy and the king panics and thinks my goodness is he trying to make war with me who am I to heal his leprosy and they send him off instead to the man of God the prophet Elisha and off he goes in his great warrior train thinking this great man will come out and wave at him and offer sacrifices and incantations and maybe he'll be cleaned

Elisha doesn't even come to the door sends out his his young lad and says oh the prophet just says go and wash over there in that river that river that filthy muddy river Jordan yes that one over there are you kidding haven't we got dozens of rivers in Syria far greater and more wonderful than that who do you think I am he turned tail and rode off until one of his servants said to him remember sir you've got leprosy it's going to kill you isn't it worth humbling yourself to do as the prophet says is it so great a thing and in the end he did humble himself didn't he went and washed seven times in that dirty river as the word of the Lord had said to him and he came up out of the river a healed man and a humbled man and the first step of real faith is a step down down off the perch of our own pride to recognize that we are nothing that we do nothing it's all God's doing to bring us thus far and to take us wherever we're going to go that's what the Lord Jesus explained isn't it when he taught on the Sermon on the Mount and he was teaching people what it means to enter the kingdom of God what did he say blessed are the great and mighty and powerful and wonderful blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven the greatest kingdom in the universe blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted blessed are the meek they are the ones who will inherit the earth and blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness from God because they know they have none they are the ones who will be filled a great humbling second notice in verses 17 and 18 that David in his expression of faith recognizes that it is God who has sovereignly and alone opened his eyes and his ears to understand this great word of salvation to grasp the plan that he has for all future generations that is to grasp and understand the gospel of his kingdom verse 17 you are the one who has shown all of this to me the future and yet as verse 18 says you know you're a servant you know who I am you know what I'm like you know what I've done and yet you have have shown to me this extraordinary future plan and he realizes in verse 19 do you see that that God has chosen him not for his own sake but according to his own heart it's God's sheer sovereign grace and mercy that has done all of this not David's pedigree not David's achievements not David's merits nothing and all real faith all real knowledge of

God understands that that God is the one who is truly sovereign any Christian believer knows that they know that that their choice to follow Jesus was really all about the Lord Jesus calling them to follow him sometimes some Christians get in an awful tangle and a mess wondering about whether God can really be sovereign is God really sovereign of course God is sovereign just another way of saying God is really God the king is really the king that's why in that hymn we sang oh happy day that fixed my choice on you my savior and my God he goes on he led me and I followed on charmed to confess the voice divine every true believer knows that God is truly sovereign and Lord of all things including Lord of our lives and then thirdly you see in verses 20 to 22 David David names the Lord clearly doesn't he as the unique and only

God and savior there is none like you oh Lord no God beside you a unique God a unique people verse 22 God's Israel the only people he has made his people forever there's only ever been one God there's only ever been one way of salvation and that is to belong to God's own people his people of faith and David's time of course that people was largely that Israel of God was largely focused around the nation of Israel but even then way back from earliest times in the Old Testament there were many others outsiders who wanted to belong and wanted to come in to belong to the people of God right from the very beginning God said to Abraham I will bless those who bless you and from earliest times we read of those who want to who see the one true God and want to be part of his people even though they're not born with the privileges that the

[26 : 45] Israelite people had so go back to the time of the conquest and Joshua and the great battle of Jericho do you remember Rahab the harlot who threw in her lot with the people of God and said I want to be part of your people and she was saved do you remember the daughter in law of Naomi the Hebrew woman coming back to her land from the land of Moab and her Moab her foreigner daughter Ruth saying your God will be my God and your people will be my people I want to be part of the people of the one true God but of course the wonder the joy the extraordinary amazement of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ the son of David who is promised in this chapter the one who would rule over all his people forever the wonder is that God's Israel has now thrown open its doors to the whole wide world as far away as the billions of people in

Asia North India China South America the whole world Europe Scotland God's Israel is a vast global people from which he is gathering his people one by one from all over the world Jew and Gentile male and female old and young slave and free but still there is only one household of salvation only one offspring of Abraham as Paul says all those who are in Christ Jesus through faith and trusting in him and all true faith recognizes that and determines to belong to the people of God the one household of faith the church of Jesus Christ because they know that there is no salvation anywhere else in the whole world than in his name and to be called his people and so you see verses 23 and 24 the true believer will receive

God's word of promise and claim it as his own David says let it be so for me in verse 23 he's saying I want this I want to be part of this story let it be so for me let the word you've spoken be established forever do as you have spoken verse 25 for you my God have revealed this you're my God that's faith receiving the word of the promise of the gospel for what it really is not the word of man but the word of God himself calling his people trusting that what God has said will be will be verse 24 that your name will be magnified forever and the house of your servant will be established before you I know it's true that's what he's saying I've seen it you've shown me and

I rejoice in it and I want it so that's what he does he gives God all the glory for the great things that he's done that's such a characteristic isn't it of real faith the Lord Jesus says in John chapter 3 that whoever believes comes into the light out of the darkness to be in the people of the Lord Jesus so that it can be clearly seen that what has been done has been done not by us but through God and David recognizes in verse 25 that he can only pray because of what God has revealed to him therefore he says your servant has courage to pray to you do you see verse 25 because you have revealed this to your servant because verse 26 you have promised this good thing to me verse 27 because you have been pleased to bless your servant the true believer you see the person of real faith is one who understands that the gospel is all about

God what he has done not about me but about you to whom be praise and glory people are so so wrong when they think Christian faith is a matter of finding a crutch to prop up your sad and your feeble life or think it's some sort of spiritual massage or some sort of cure for your loneliness it is not a little private matter about you and getting your prayers answered and your needs met it's all about God it's all about his great story for the future it's all about his great glory for this world and for his people and faith faith simply means that your eyes have been opened to that to see him to see his great story the story of a God who has chosen a people to be his own forever who has promised to be their God forever to establish a kingdom of glory forever and to share that glory with his people forever faith just means you've seen it and you've grasped it and you understand it and you are determined to make it your own you say in your heart with

[32 : 21] David yes I believe verse 23 let it be let it be for me as you've spoken and you confess with your mouth like David in verse 26 now you oh Lord you are God you're my God you have promised good things to your servant to me you're my God and you've promised this to me it's become personal that's the gospel of God and that is the response of faith it's the revelation of the true God of who he is and what he is doing and where he is going with his people he proclaims himself as the great provider the great promiser the one who's present with his people and the response is yes amen let it be let it be for me there's only ever been one God there's only ever been one gospel there's only ever been one church

Abraham's God and gospel Moses God and his gospel Jesus God and his gospel Paul God and his gospel and we've seen that glorious revelation to David but what a greater more marvelous revelation we have in the fullness of our Lord Jesus Christ the word become flesh the revelation is so much greater so much more wonderful but the response the response he calls for is still just the same just the same as David's to believe in our heart and the promise do as you have spoken and to confess with our lips his lordship you oh Lord are our God that's faith listen listen to what the apostle Paul says in Romans chapter 10 where he's telling us that his gospel is the same gospel as has always been preached he says this if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved but with the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved this is a

God who will be personal he has revealed himself friends to you in these words these last weeks but he does so so that you will respond to him he must become personal to you and none none must ever think that cannot be so for them listen to how Paul goes on for the scripture says everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek the same Lord is Lord of all bestowing his riches on all who call on him for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved we've seen together over these weeks who the

God of the Bible truly is we've seen what he is truly doing and what he is doing is calling men and women and boys and girls to make it personal so that they can be taken up into this the greatest story ever told don't let his call pass you by let's pray Savior hear our humble cry while on others you are calling do not pass me by Lord you are a great God and Savior and you so loved the world that you gave your only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life so dear

God and Father may we this morning all be those who make it personal respond in joy and gladness as David did this your word of salvation hear us and help us for we ask it in Jesus name Amen and good God he went on example