

God's Faithfulness and Covenant

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[0 : 00] But if I could, for a short while and with the Lord's help, turn back to that portion of scripture that we read. 1 Chronicles chapter 17.

1st book of Chronicles chapter 17. And if you read again at verse 11, 11 to verse 14. 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. The book of Chronicles is what you could regard as an interesting pair.

They're an interesting pair because these two volumes, 1st and 2nd Chronicles, they provide the history of the people of Israel as far back as the first man, Adam.

[1 : 23] They present to us this complete chronological order of events from the beginning of mankind right up until the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon.

Which means that these two tomes, 1st and 2nd Chronicles, they cover over 4,000 years. Because in the first nine chapters of this 1st Chronicles, we're given a family tree of Israel's history.

And we're given a family tree all the way back to Adam, who was in the Garden of Eden. However, the narrative really begins in chapter 10. In chapter 10, when David becomes king over Israel, and he's reigning as the first monarch of God's people.

In which David, he supersedes Saul to the throne, and he's anointed as the true king over Israel. And so when you begin reading these volumes of Israel's history, when you read it, it's a positive start.

The narrative begins in a good light, with good things happening. Where David, he becomes king, and David, he's captured the Ark of the Covenant from the sworn enemy of the Israelites, who were the Philistines.

[2 : 41] And David, he's claimed Jerusalem as the nation's capital city. And because of David's success in battle, and many victories over the surrounding nations, there was peace in the land of Israel.

And so it's a positive beginning. The books of Chronicles, they begin positively, in which everything is going well, and the Lord is with his people, and the Lord is on their side.

The Lord is with them. But as we know, and as we've read before, that's not the full story. Because despite the positive beginning, and the promising beginning, with David and the books of Chronicles, they reveal, eventually, the unfaithfulness of God's covenant people.

Because as the narrative unfolds, the book of Chronicles reveals this downward spiral of the people of Israel. And that it was this downward spiral which provoked God's judgment, and it resulted in their exile into Babylon.

Where Babylon was, it was to be the schoolmaster for the people of Israel. It was to be their teacher. Babylon, the foreign land under the foreign king, was the place where Israel was to learn.

[3 : 57] They were to learn not only how unfaithful they were to the Lord, in their continual disobedience and rejection of God's covenant. But the people of Israel were also to learn how faithful the Lord was to them.

And that's the purpose of these volumes of 1 and 2 Chronicles. Their purpose was to recount the history of the Lord's people and remind them that despite their unfaithfulness to the Lord, the Lord will always remain faithful to his people.

And these books, with their many parallels to the books of Samuel and Kings, these volumes were written actually during the exile in Babylon.

So they were written right at the end of the history. Looking back over the whole of Israel's history. And they were written during those years of teaching.

But their overarching intention was to remind the Lord's people of one message. That the Lord is faithful despite our unfaithfulness.

[5 : 05] The Lord is faithful despite our unfaithfulness. And this is a message which is certainly relevant not only to the Lord's people thousands of years ago, but also it's relevant to us here in Barbus tonight.

Because it's a timeless truth. It's a timeless message. The Lord is faithful despite our unfaithfulness. But what comes across so beautifully in these books is that the reason the Lord was faithful was because of his covenant.

What prevented the Lord from rejecting the people of Israel completely and casting them off all together and just saying away with you. What stopped him doing it was the covenant.

God's covenant was the foundation of his relationship with his people. And the Lord had promised that he would remain faithful to the covenant because of his love and because of his mercy.

And that he would remain faithful despite the unfaithfulness of the people. And that's what the book of Chronicles does at the very outset.

[6 : 18] It presents to us God's gracious covenant with Israel's king, King David. And as the people of Israel, as they would have read it, as exiles in Babylon, as they read this chronological history of all their own ancestors, they would have been reminded and they would have rejoiced in the fact that the Lord will remain faithful.

He has promised, he has covenanted. And that despite the exile, despite their unfaithfulness, the Lord will restore his people to the promised land.

And that's what I'd like us to look briefly at tonight. This foundation of God's people, the foundation of God's covenant with David. And this covenant, it's foundational, you could say, for two reasons.

Because as we have read in this passage, God's covenant with David was the foundation of two houses. It was the foundation of God's house and it was the foundation of David's house.

And that's the key word in this passage. The word house. The word house is the key word. Because in this passage, David's concern is to build God a house.

[7 : 36] And God's covenant involves building David a house. So it's all about houses. David's concern is to build God a house.

And God's covenant involves building David a house. And so that's what I'd like us to consider this evening. Just two things. David's concern and God's covenant. David's concern and God's covenant.

So we'll look firstly at David's concern. David's concern in verse 1. Just read with me. 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. And as we said earlier, David's reign was the positive start.

[8 : 39] And that from the moment David was made king over all of Israel, things were going well for the nation. For in King David they had a true leader of God's people.

He was, after all, he was the man after God's own heart. He was the young shepherd who had not only defeated Goliath, the giant Philistine, but he had been anointed to be Israel's king.

And everything was going well for David and the people of Israel. For David's army, it was growing. And all the men of Israel, they wanted to fight for their king. They wanted to stand side by side with their king.

And the Lord was on their side. And the Lord was defeating all their enemies. And the Philistines, when they were defeated, the Ark of the Covenant was captured.

And they brought it back to the city of Jerusalem. Which at that time was a new city. The city of Jerusalem was new. David had just built all the new houses in Jerusalem.

[9 : 39] And he had built his palace. And he'd established Jerusalem as the capital city of Israel. And when the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem, the Ark of the Covenant, that box which symbolised the Lord's presence amongst his people.

When the Ark came to Jerusalem, David had the tabernacle erected. And he placed the Ark of the Covenant inside the tabernacle in the Holy of Holies.

And in the previous chapter, in chapter 16, if you read it when you go home, we see David, he's celebrating the homecoming of the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark coming into Jerusalem.

And which David, he gives thanks to the Lord. And he writes this song of thanksgiving. And there's this great feast. And the people are praising the Lord for his faithfulness towards the people.

But after the celebrations and after the feasts, after everything's over, we're told in the very last verse of chapter 16, we're told, Then all the people departed, each to his house.

[10:49] And David went home to bless his household. Everyone went home. Everyone went home. The people living in Jerusalem returned to their newly built houses with all their modern furnishings.

And David went home to his newly established palace with all its beauty and its expensive fixtures and fittings. But when God had come home, he came to dwell in an old, dusty tent.

In fact, it was the tabernacle which God had commanded Moses to build 500 years earlier.

And so when we enter this chapter of 1 Chronicles 17, we see that David has a concern. And his concern is that his house is in a far better condition than the Lord's house.

Because he says in verse 1, 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.

[12:00] And what we see here is that David's concern arose when he was sitting, you could say in his armchair, in his brand new palace.

And this beautiful palace, where he had fitted everything out with all the modern fixtures, and yet the Lord is living in a 500 year old tent. And David says, I dwell in a house of cedar.

And cedar wood, it was the strongest and the most expensive wood which was grown in Israel.

Cedar trees, they were the best of the best. And that's what David had used for his own house.

But his concern was about the Lord's house, and the Lord's dwelling place, where he says, The Lord, he lives under a tent. He's like a pilgrim.

He's like a nomad with nowhere to go. And David was concerned for the Lord's house, because he wanted the Lord to have the best. And a tent that was so old, it wasn't suitable for the Lord.

[13:04] It wasn't a permanent residence. And David wanted the Lord to live in a house that was far greater, and far superior to his palace. And what's clear is that David's concern, it arose out of a love for the Lord.

The reason David took any notice of this contrast between his house and the Lord's house is because he loved the Lord. And he gave the Lord the position in his heart that the Lord deserved.

For David, he may have been king, but the Lord was David's king. And so David had this desire to build the Lord, this permanent residence in Jerusalem.

Not only because he loved the Lord, but because he loved the Lord's house. And he wanted the Lord to have a lasting and permanent dwelling.

He wanted a permanent place of worship. David wanted a building that would be suitable for all of the Lord's people to gather at and to worship.

[14:13] And David wanted it to last for generations to come. And in David's heart and mind, he could see that the tabernacle in the wilderness, it had served its purpose.

It had faithfully served the Lord's people as they had journeyed through the wilderness and into the promised land. But now, out of a love for the Lord and a love for the Lord's house, David thought that it was time for a new house.

It was time for a change. It was time for upgrading. That's what we're seeing here. And looking at it, I can't help but think that that's the reason for our gathering this evening.

We are all here, gathered in the Lord's house, to discuss and plan the reslating of the Lord's house.

Not just because we think it needs it, but because of our love for the Lord, and our love for the Lord's house.

And we're here because we want this lovely dwelling place, where the Lord meets with us week by week in the gospel. We want this house of God to be suitable for the people of this community, to gather in it and to worship in it, to worship the Lord in his house.

[15:30] And we want it to last for generations to come. That after we are gone, and we've passed from the scene of time into eternity, our desire is that not only our children and our grandchildren will use this house as a place of worship, but our desire is that our friends and our neighbours and

our colleagues and all the members in this community will congregate here and exalt the name of the Lord.

Our love for the Lord and our love for the Lord's house is such that we want to see it filled to capacity. Is that not your desire? Is that not what you want?

You want to see this place used to its full potential. We want to see the Lord glorified in his own house. And that was David's desire too.

He wanted to see the Lord glorified in his own house. But what's surprising here is that David was told he wouldn't live to see it.

David had the desire to build a house for the Lord, but the Lord said no. The Lord said no. Verse 3, 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.

[17:00] Nathan the prophet had said that David's desire was right, but the Lord confirmed his timing wasn't right. David's desire was correct, but his timing was wrong, and the Lord told David that he wasn't to build the temple.

And the reason for this, as it says in 1 Kings chapter 5, The reason for it was because David was a man of war, and he had shed men's blood.

He was a warrior, and the Lord didn't want him to be involved in building his house. But what we see here with David is his faith.

It's his faith that when the Lord said no, he didn't ask any questions. He didn't ask any questions. David didn't question why the Lord said no to him.

He didn't counter motion the Lord's plan. He didn't get upset, and he wasn't allowed to build the Lord's house. David just took the Lord at his word, and he submitted to the sovereign plan of the Lord.

[18:08] And he was willing to move according to the Lord's timing. And you know, we can learn a lot from David here. That when the Lord says no, it's for a reason.

It's always for a reason. And that we need to wait upon the Lord to discover that reason. Which, my friend, as you know, is one of the hardest things to do.

It's the hardest thing to wait patiently upon the Lord. Especially in times of trial and circumstances that are difficult. It's hard to wait.

And especially in our fast-paced and super-fast and instantaneous lifestyle that surrounds us, where we can get what we want immediately.

But with the Lord who knows best and who knows what's right for us, he teaches us patience. And that's a hard lesson. And everyone, I'm sure everyone in here, we all love Psalm 40.

[19:14] But Psalm 40 begins, I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear. We love those words. We often sing them.

But how much do we live by them? How much do I live by them? How often do we have a desire to do things and we do it on impulse. We don't wait on the Lord.

We just jump to it. Maybe without thinking. Without praying about it. But what David is teaching us here is that we need to learn to wait upon the Lord.

Because there are things, we often might think they sound good. We might feel that it's the right thing to do. Or we might think that this is where the Lord is leading us in our heart.

But like David, our confirmation always ought to be a word from the Lord. And that when the Lord speaks, we ought to have the faith to trust that the Lord knows best.

[20:13] And we ought to have the obedience to do what the Lord says. And so what we see here with David's concern is that David's concern was right, but his timing wasn't right.

The temple was going to be built in the Lord's timing, through the Lord's provision. And David had to wait upon the Lord because he knew that the Lord's way was perfect. And the same is true for us here tonight.

Not only in our plans of renovation, but in all our plans, in all our purposes. We have to wait upon the Lord. We have to seek his guidance. And that's what David learned.

That's what he confessed as we were singing in Psalm 18. For perfect is the way of God. No flaw is found within his word. To all who put their trust in him a shield and refuge is the Lord.

So that's the first thing we see here. David's concerned. But secondly, we see God's covenant. God's covenant. Look at verse 11.

[21 : 21] It says, When your days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever.

What we see in these verses, from verse 7 and down to verse 14, is that the Lord speaks to David once again through his prophet. And when the Lord speaks to David, he affirms to David his covenant.

And when we speak about a covenant, or we refer to covenantal language, we're referring to a contract. We've all got contracts, maybe with our phone. And when we refer to contracts, they have terms and conditions.

And the terms and conditions, they have to be met by both parties entering into the covenant. And the terms and conditions of the covenant that has been spoken of here was faithfulness and obedience.

But what was marvellous about the contract into which God entered with his people is that God, he bound himself to the covenant.

[22 : 32] He bound him, God bound himself to the covenant, which means that there was nothing that could ever break or nullify the contract.

Nothing could ever nullify the covenant. It was an everlasting covenant. And it would prove to be everlasting because of the disobedience and the unfaithfulness of the Lord's people.

And the Lord's disobedience, the Lord's obedience and faithfulness to his covenant. And here the Lord assures David of his covenant faithfulness towards him and his people.

Because he first of all, he recounts the history of David's life. And in doing so, the Lord is emphasising his faithfulness, not only to his people, but to David.

Because he says, I took you, in verse 7, I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep. I took you from being a shepherd away in the hills of Israel.

[23 : 32] And I made you a prince over my people, Israel. And it's interesting that the Lord calls him a prince over his people. Which implies that God was always the king.

And he was the prince. God was always the true sovereign. But the Lord not only assures David that he has been faithful towards him, he assures David that his presence has always been with him.

Because he says in verse 8, I have been with you wherever you have gone. And I 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.

But the climax of the covenant comes at the end of verse 10 where the Lord says, I tell you that the Lord will build you a house.

I tell you that the Lord will build you a house. And this is the wonder of the passage. That David's concern was to build God a house.

[24 : 36] But God's covenant involved building David a house. I tell you that the Lord will build you a house. And the Lord says to David that the timing of this house will also be his timing.

It will be built in the Lord's time. And the house of David will also be established long after David has died. Because he says in verse 11 when your days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers when you die he said I will raise up your offspring after you one of your own sons and I will establish his kingdom.

And so the Lord's promise of a house is in the future. It's a way in the future that the house of David will be established through his seed through his ancestry through his lineage.

But what comes across so beautifully in this passage is what the Lord then says in verse 12 He shall build a house for me and I will establish his throne forever.

He shall build a house for me and I will establish his throne forever. forever. And what the Lord makes clear to David in this covenant promise is that the house is not a building but a person and the promise and the covenant which accompanies this person it's eternal.

[26 : 07] It's an eternal promise. It's forever. It's everlasting. He shall build a house for me and I will establish his throne forever.

And this covenant that the Lord issues to David it's then signed. The Lord signs it with the signature of the covenant promise. I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son.

That's the signature. That's the signature of the covenant because that's the phrase that the Lord used when he issued the covenant to Abraham and then he issued it again to Moses and now he's

issuing it to David.

It's the stamp of royal authority. It's the king's special seal. I will be to him a father. He will be to me a son. My friend the eternal nature of this covenant is that it's all bound up in this specific portion. This one portion. That's why he goes on to say in verse 14 I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever and his throne shall be established forever.

[27 : 18] And as you can see the he is a specific portion in which this covenantal figure is a son of David. He's a royal son.

He has royal blood and his purpose is to sit upon the throne of David and establish the kingdom of God. But this is no ordinary throne because it's an eternal throne and it's no ordinary kingdom because it's an eternal kingdom.

He shall build me a house and I will establish his throne forever. And you know what I find so amazing about this historical book this chronology of the Old Testament that centers on the faithfulness of the Lord towards his people.

What I find so amazing is that this book the second chronicles it closes with the people of Israel and it's telling us that they're returning from Babylon returning from exile with no king with no kingdom and with no temple.

No king no kingdom and no temple. That's how the history finishes. But when Matthew opens his chronology of the events of the New Testament he begins with the words the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David.

[28 : 47] And what Matthew is so keen to point out to us is the fulfilment of God's covenant with David. Matthew saying here is the royal son.

Here is the eternal son of God who was born to be king. But not only that Matthew makes it clear as to why this royal son has come.

Because he records in the first words that Jesus uttered when he began his public ministry the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the gospel. And as Matthew opens up his gospel to us and he reveals his chronology about the good news he wants us to make no mistakes as to the identity of Jesus Christ.

And he wants us to see that Jesus is the fulfilment of this covenant promise with David. But not only that. Not only that.

[29 : 49] Matthew not only says here is the king here is Jesus Christ the son of David and he not only says here is the kingdom established in Jesus Christ the son of God but Matthew also tells us here is the temple.

Here is the temple. Here is the Lord's house. Here is the Lord's house before you. Because what was the prophecy which Jesus issued to all his enemies?

What did he say? Destroy this temple. Destroy this temple that is made with hands and in three days I will build another.

I will build another. And of course the temple which Jesus referred to was himself. He is the temple. He is the Lord's house. He is the church not made with hands.

Not made with hands but made through a cross and an empty tomb. My friend the house that Jesus built was his church.

[30 : 55] And when Jesus built his church he established his church. He made it permanent. It has been established forever.

And those who are in his church are in it forever. And the Lord said did he not to the apostle Peter upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

And that's the promise of this covenant king. He will be faithful to his church. He will be faithful to his church. And you know I believe that years later Peter the apostle Peter he got a glimpse of what the Lord had promised to him.

Because Peter said in his letter to all those congregations who were weak and struggling away Peter said to them if you have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious if you have come to him as a living stone if you're converted you may be rejected by others but you're chosen by God and precious.

And this is what's wonderful Peter says about those who have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious he says you as a living stone you are being built up as a spiritual house holy holy to offer up spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[32 : 31] Isn't that wonderful? You are being built up as a spiritual house to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

It's a wonderful passage. And so what we see in this passage is that God's covenant with David was the foundation of two houses. David's concern was to build God a house, the temple but God's covenant involved building David a house, the church of Jesus Christ.

Not the building but the people. And what's clear from this passage is that building the Lord's house, it was meaningless without the promise of building David's house.

Building the Lord's house was meaningless without the promise of building David's house. Building the temple was going to be ineffective unless the promise of the Lord's faithfulness to build up a spiritual house.

And that spiritual house is founded upon our chief cornerstone, Jesus Christ. And because of this eternal covenant with David, the Lord's faithfulness assures us that despite what the world may think, say and do, he will continue to build his house, to build his church on the gates of hell, will not prevail against it.

[34 : 13] May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us unite our hearts and pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for the great promises of thy truth.

Help us, Lord, to see that each and every one of them are yea and amen in Christ. That thou wouldst bless us, we pray thee. Enable us, Lord, to be built up, not only in our faith, but to be built up, one with another, as a spiritual house, one that is holy and acceptable in thy sight.

Do us good, then, we pray thee. Bless us in our conversation, O Lord, that thou wouldst lead us and guide us, that Christ would have the preeminence, that thou wouldst have the glory, and we, O Lord, would receive the blessing from thee and from thee alone.

Do us good for Jesus' sake. Amen.