

The Blessings Of Faithfulness

1 Chronicles 17-20

God's people are anticipating a fresh start in the promised land.

At the end of 2 Chronicles, we read Cyrus' decree, *"The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you—may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up"* (2 Chronicles 36:23).

Based upon His loyal love, God made a covenant with Israel promising them, among other things, land. The last time God's people were in the promised land, God judged them and sent them into captivity because of their unfaithfulness.

Jerusalem and the temple Solomon built were destroyed and God's people were displaced.

Although God's covenant is unconditional, God requires His people to respond to Him with obedience and faithfulness if they are to enjoy the blessings of His covenant promise. If they ignored God and failed to obey, they would experience judgment instead of blessing. In the past, God's people failed to obey which resulted in their captivity. At the time Chronicles was written, God is giving them a fresh start.

Chronicles is given as a history lesson to encourage faithfulness to God.

Both God's blessing of Israel for proper worship of Him and His cursing of Israel for improper worship

are rehearsed to motivate the chosen remnant that has returned under Cyrus' decree to worship God faithfully and obediently as they build a new temple to replace Solomon's temple which had been destroyed.

David is presented as a positive example of faithfulness

In the books of 1 & 2 Chronicles, the writer reviews both positive and negative examples from the past. His focus is on the kings of Israel. He evaluates each king based upon his attitude toward the temple, the center of worship for the nation. A king's interest in the temple and its activities was a symptom of his spiritual condition. When the king was faithful, he influenced God's people to be faithful, and together they would enjoy the benefits of faithfulness.

The writer's primary focus is on the positive example of David. David was a man after God's own heart. He desired to please and glorify God more than anything else. David demonstrated His heart for God in His attitude toward God.

David demonstrates a heart for God in his attitude toward three areas:

His attitude toward God's ark (13-16)

His attitude toward God's covenant (17-20)

His attitude toward God's temple (21-29)

Our chief priority in life should be to please God.

Last week, we observed that when David became king, his first priority was to restore the ark. He was concerned that his people worship God properly. God is pleased when we dedicate ourselves to worshiping Him. This week, as we study God's covenant with David and David's response, we learn that:

God is pleased when we dedicate ourselves to obeying His revealed will.

In the midst of this passage which reveals God's covenant with David, we see 5 blessings that result when our chief concern is to obey God to His glory and pleasure. We will point out these blessings throughout this morning's message. God promised Israel on a national level that He would bless them for their faithfulness. What was true for Israel on a national level was true also for David on a personal level. When God's people are faithful to hear His voice and obey Him, they will receive His blessings.

David and the Covenant (1 Chronicles 17-20)

David's desire to build the temple (17:1-2)

After taking the ark to Jerusalem, the city of David, the king noticed the contrast between his dwelling place and the tent where the ark of God resided. It didn't seem right to David to keep God in a tent while he lived in a palace of cedar. David therefore wanted to build a temple for the LORD. Before he does anything, he consults with Nathan, God's

spokesman. When Nathan considers what David wants to do, He assumes that God has given him this desire and encourages him, “Whatever you have in mind, do it, for God is with you.” Nathan readily affirms David’s desire to build the temple because David’s heart for God is so apparent to see. David’s dream of building a temple for the Lord couldn’t have been his own idea. Such a concern wasn’t natural. Certainly David’s heart is in tune with God’s for him to have had the desire do such a thing.

When we are people after God’s own heart, we are able to pursue whatever we desire until God redirects. When our chief concern is to obey God to His glory and pleasure:

Blessing of faithfulness #1- We can pursue our heart’s desire, confident God will make His desires ours.

Psalm 37:4– *“Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.”* When God is our delight, when obeying Him, pleasing Him, and giving Him glory is our commitment, then we can trust God to put His desires for our lives in us. We are free then to pursue our desires until God directs otherwise.

David’s Covenant Established (17:3-15)

God informs David he isn’t the one to build the temple (3-6)

3-4- *“That night the word of God came to Nathan, saying: ‘Go and tell my servant David, This is what the Lord says: You are not the one to build me a house to dwell in.’”*

Through Nathan, the LORD reveals to David that He has a different plan. The Lord doesn't criticize David's desire, nor does He criticize Nathan for encouraging David to do what he had in mind to do. What David wanted to do represented a godly desire, but he is not the one to carry out the plan. What God had for David's life was incompatible with having him be the one to build the temple. Because David's chief concern was to obey and please God to His glory, God makes Himself responsible for directing or in this case redirecting the desires of such a person. When our chief concern is to obey God to His glory and pleasure:

Blessing of faithfulness #2- We can count on God to accept responsibility for directing or redirecting our path.

We often make pursuing God's will more complicated than it needs to be. When God is our heart's delight, when obeying Him to His glory is our chief commitment and concern, following His will is simplified. We simply pursue the desires in our hearts. If God has something different for us, we can count on Him to direct and redirect us as necessary.

Up to this point in time, God chose to dwell in the

midst of His people and reveal Himself by means of a tent. God had not yet indicated to any leader of Israel that he planned to do otherwise. God's dwelling would soon change from a tent to a temple, but it wasn't His plan to have David build Him a temple of cedar. He would have David's son Solomon build Him a temple instead.

Though it was not God's will for David to build the temple, this does not mean that God did not have a great plan for David's life. What is this plan?

Instead of letting David build Him a house, God will build a royal house for David.

10- "I will also subdue all your enemies. I declare to you that the Lord will build a house for you."

Even though David's plan to build the temple was not God's plan, his desire brought positive results.

David is promised:

***a great name**

17:8b- "Now I will make your name like the names of the greatest men of the earth."

*** a home for God's people free of enemy oppression**

17:9-10a- "And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also subdue all of your enemies."

- * his son would build the temple he wanted to construct**
- * God will maintain David and his family on Israel's throne forever**

God would exalt David and his house and that promise would not end when David died. It would extend to his children as well. One of his sons, later identified as Solomon, would be confirmed to the throne. He would carry out David's dream of building a temple and God would establish his throne forever.

Solomon would enjoy fellowship with God, as a son with his father. As a father loves his child, God would not abandon him, nor take away His unfailing love. God promised to preserve Solomon's throne forever.

1 Chronicles 17:11-14— "When your days are over and you go to be with your fathers, I will raise one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his father and he will be my son. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor. I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever."

God took the initiative in giving this guaranteed, unilateral promise to David. God assumed the responsibility for carrying out this promise. Even when David or his descendants would fail, God will

still do all He has promised.

How does David respond to God's redirection of his path?

David's response to God's covenant promise: WORSHIP (17:16-27).

He praises God for what He will do. David gives the right response. All that he cares about is that the job get done and that God be glorified when it was. He trusts God's wisdom and praises God for His plan.

When our chief concern is to obey God to His glory and pleasure, when we are people after God's own heart:

Blessing of faithfulness #3-We don't have to worry about who does the job and who gets the credit for it—we are free to concern ourselves only with being faithful to God.

How freeing it is to live with a focus on pleasing God. When we clamor to be noticed, when we want the glory, we enter into the fray of comparing ourselves with and competing with others which is no way to live.

How we compare with each other is not the basis for God's evaluation of our lives. Faithfulness is what God is concerned about. He is concerned that we be faithful to accomplish what He has determined we will do. Paul says in Ephesians 2:10— "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, to

do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” God has a plan for what He would have each and every one of us to do.

God’s plan for my life is not the same as His plan for yours. God is concerned that I walk in a manner that accomplishes the good works He has prepared in advance for me to do. God is concerned that you do the same with the unique works He has given you to do. We don’t need to compare with one another. We aren’t in competition. We don’t need to be clamoring for prestige or position. We don’t need to worry ourselves with making sure we receive our due credit. Rather, we are blessed with the privilege of simply focusing on being faithful to complete the work God has for us in order that He alone might be glorified.

When David hears of God’s promise concerning the future of Israel’s throne and the blessings of God on his house, he praises God.

Notice how David addresses God throughout his prayer of praise— “O LORD God.” Now notice how David addresses himself- “your servant.” Yahweh is God and David is his humble servant ready and willing to do what God wants. God is pleased when we dedicate ourselves to serving God, ready and willing to obey His revealed will.

David recognizes he doesn’t deserve the blessings God promised to him and that God

alone deserves the glory (17:16-19).

David and his family were common people. God took an ordinary person like David and by His grace turned him into a great king whose throne would be established forever. This promise was made to David, not because he deserved it, but because it was according to God's will. For such a great work, God alone deserves the glory.

David praises God for doing the same thing with Israel as had been done for him (17:20-22)

Yahweh alone is God. There is none like Him.

Likewise, God's people are unique. No other God has ever redeemed His people from slavery nor liberated them from their enemies by great and awesome wonders as Yahweh has. God took His people from a place of insignificance and transformed them into a great nation with which He has identified Himself as their God. Why did God give Israel the privilege of being made His very own people? He did it to make a name for Himself—in order that He might receive all the glory.

David asks that God's promise be fulfilled to His glory and expresses confidence it will be (23-27)

David's greatest concern is God's glory above everything else.

23-24- "And now, LORD, let the promise you have made concerning your servant and His house be established forever. Do as you promised, so that it will be established and that your

name will be great forever. Then men will say, 'The LORD Almighty, the God over Israel, is Israel's God!' And the house of your servant David will be established before you."

When our chief concern is to obey God to His glory and pleasure, when we are people after God's own heart:

Blessing of faithfulness #4—We learn what worship is all about—It is about God and His glory, NOT US

When we come away from a time of corporate worship, how do we evaluate how it went? Too often, our evaluations start off with the word "I." I liked this. I didn't like that. We all have personal preferences, that's normal, but when our evaluation is based on these, we tend to focus on ourselves, when our focus should be squarely on God.

Worship is all about how our audience of One evaluates how we do. Our basis for evaluation should be: Was God glorified? Was God pleased? Was God the focus of our attention? Was a heart for God demonstrated? True worship is directed to God alone. We don't worship style, songs, or people, but God alone. We come to God to worship Him, to glorify Him, to give praise to Him. Did you notice that David's praise to God here is not expressed in a corporate worship service? It is an expression of individual worship. David, as a man after God's own heart, worshiped God as a way of

life as should we. David's life was focused on God—on pleasing and glorifying Him. True worship is a lifestyle. It occurs seven days a week and not just on Sunday.

David concludes His prayer of praise with an expression of confidence that God will do as He promised.

26-27- "O LORD, you are God! You have promised these good things to your servant. Now you have been pleased to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue forever in your sight; for you, O LORD, have blessed it, and it will be blessed forever."

While God's promise is unilateral and unconditional and will be fulfilled as David anticipated it would be, in order for the nation of Israel and the dynasty of David to experience God's blessing, they need to identify with Yahweh so He is recognized as their God and that He is glorified in their lives. When Israel and her king are faithful to Yahweh, the people prosper. When they aren't, God judges them. In 1 Chronicles 18-20, we read of the blessing Israel experienced under David's leadership as king.

David is blessed by God with military victories (18-20)

David is faithful to Yahweh and God blesses Him with victory everywhere he goes.

18:6- "The LORD gave David victory everywhere he went."

18:13- "The LORD gave David victory everywhere he went."

Report of victories:

Over the Philistines & Moabites (18:1-2)

Over the Arameans (18:3-11)

Over the Edomites (18:12-17)

Over Ammon (19:1-20:3)

Over Philistines (20:4-8)

David doesn't take advantage of his victories to enrich himself or to bring him glory. Therefore, God blesses him for it (18:7-8; 10-11).

The kings of David's time would customarily take the spoils of war to enrich themselves and would flaunt them as a testimony to how great they were in battle. David recognized that he was victorious because of the LORD and dedicated the spoils of war to Him. Likewise, when congratulated by Tou, king of Hamath, for victory in battle with items of gold, silver and bronze, David dedicated these articles to the LORD as well.

David learns to trust God fully and God brings results only He could accomplish (19:1-13; 20:5-7)

In chapter 19, we read of an important lesson David learned in regards to trusting the LORD alone for victory. Before becoming king of Israel, David made friends with a number of Israel's traditional enemies. When he became king, David wanted to maintain these friendships and use them to his advantage. One such case occurred when Nahash, the king of the Ammonites died. Upon his

death, David sent a delegation to express kindness and sympathy to his son, Hanun, the new king of the Ammonites. Instead of winning Hanun's favor and support, he turned on David. Although no comment is made by the author, it appears God wanted to teach David not to trust in political alliances, but to trust in Him alone for victory in battle.

As they trusted in God, David and the people of Israel experienced victories in battle that could only be explained by the fact that God did it!

1 Chronicles 20:5-7- "In another battle with the Philistines, Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's rod. In still another battle, which took place at Gath, there was a huge man with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot—twenty-four in all. He also was descended from Rapha. When he taunted Israel, Jonathan son of Shimea, David's brother, killed him."

When our chief concern is to obey God to His glory and pleasure, when we are people after God's own heart who are faithful to Him:

Blessing of faithfulness #5—We experience God sized victories—results that can only be explained by the fact that He did it!

O.K. God did it, He gave Israel victory over giants, but the men of Israel had to fight too. Wasn't it important that they do their best? Weren't their efforts important? Yes, Israel's soldiers were

responsible to fight courageously, investing their energy and giving their best effort in battle. Even so, the results or consequences of their efforts were in God's hands. It is not our heroic efforts that accomplish God's purposes, it is Him working through us that brings the results. When good results come through our efforts, it is God alone who deserves the glory as He is ultimately responsible for those results.

Consider the example of Joab on this point (1 Chronicles 19:13):

Anticipating battle with the Arameans and

Ammonites, he said to Israel's soldiers, *"Be strong and let us fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. The LORD will do what is good in his sight."*

Joab expects the men to fight bravely, doing their best in battle, but he leaves the results to God. We are to do our best and faithfully do what God wills for us, but we need to realize that the consequences of our efforts are not in our hands, but in His—therefore He alone deserves all the glory.

Key lessons for our lives:

Make God's glory your chief concern above all else.

Faithfully serve God concerned only for His glory, not for personal credit.

**Trust and obey God, leaving the results to Him.
Focus on God, giving all the glory to Him in**

both private & public worship—Worship is all about Him, not us.

When we have this attitude, then:

God will give us the desires of our heart.

God will direct our path.

God will accomplish great things through us.

God will bless us.

God will take the responsibility for the results.

God will be glorified in all He does.