

A God Who Keeps His Promises

2Chronicles 6:14-17 -

By Russell Muilenburg

Sunday, 16 May 2010 00:00

2 Chronicles 6:14-17 *No God Like You: A God Who Keeps His Promises* **First Date** For our very first date, I took Beth to see the Disney movie *Beauty and the Beast*.

Actually, that's not exactly true. It was our second date. And she didn't know it was a date.

We were at UNI and we were in InterVarsity Christian Fellowship together. And one night at IVF some of the girls were talking about this new Disney movie. And Beth mentioned how she wanted to see it, but she didn't have a car to get to the mall. I had a car. So I suggested maybe I could take her.

Now, this is an often debated part of Muilenburg family lore. Beth claims that she thought I was inviting all of the girls to ride along to the movie. I'm pretty sure I made it clear I was only interested in taking her. Either way, she agreed, and we decided to go on Saturday.

Now, it just happened that there was a home football game that Saturday. As you can probably guess, I don't like to miss football games. Beth and I had been to games with the InterVarsity group in the past. So I suggested that before the movie we go to the game together. She agreed.

Now, it just happened that my brother and his wife had just had a baby girl. So I mentioned this to Beth, and asked if maybe before we went to the game she'd be willing to go to University Book and Supply with me to help me pick out a good gift. She agreed.

Now, it just happened that it was an election year, and one our Senators was going to be speaking in the Student Union. I knew from earlier conversations that Beth had some interest in politics. So I suggested that before we went shopping for my niece, before we went to the game, before we went to the movie, perhaps we could go listen to the Senator. She agreed.

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At this point, I was feeling pretty good about things. I had lined up a date that was going to last at least 10 hours.

Beth claims she still didn't know it was a date.

As it happened, it snowed on the big day. And I don't mean just a little snow. There was a full on blizzard. But I didn't let that stop me. I trudged across campus to Beth's dorm room and together we walked out to check the condition of the car. There was no way we were getting it out of the parking lot. They canceled the Senator's speech. But we still made it to the bookstore to buy a gift for my niece, and they still had the football game in the UNI-Dome. I think we had a pretty good time.

And since I couldn't take her to see

Beauty and the Beast

like I had promised, I suggested that maybe we could go to the matinee on Sunday afternoon. She agreed. And that was our second date.

Promises You Don't Intend to Keep

Now, that's an awfully long set-up that I tell for this reason: In the movie there is a talking candle name Lumiere and a talking clock named Cogsworth whose job it is to teach the Beast how to be romantic. And at one point Cogsworth suggests that the Beast should give Belle things--things like "chocolates and flowers and promises you don't intend to keep."

Sometimes I feel like we live in a world that has taken the clock's advice and run with it. We live in a world where promises are discarded as quickly and as easily as old Kleenex.

Politicians make all kinds of promises on the campaign trail only to forget them as soon as they enter office. Advertisers make all sorts of claims that their products fail to deliver. Celebrities campaign for laws that they themselves are breaking. Even preachers--far too often--say one thing in the pulpit only to do something completely different in their personal lives.

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"Promises you don't intend to keep" are all around us. Marriages dissolve. Children are abandoned. Employers cheat their employees and vice versa. Friends turn on friends. Confidences are broken.

Far too often we say things with our mouths only to do something else with our hands.

But God isn't like that. He says what He will do and does what He says. There is no one or anything like Him--He keeps His covenant of love every single time.

He is a God who keeps His promises.

A God who is believable and trustworthy and reliable.

He is a faithful God.

The Text

Would you turn in your Bibles with me to 2 Chronicles 6:14-17? We are continuing in our series called

There is No God Like You.

You will remember that we are looking at the day of dedication for the Temple Solomon built for the LORD. Last week, we set the scene: the entire nation of Israel has gathered in Jerusalem to see the ark carried up to the Temple. Priests offer sacrifices while the Levites play instruments and all the people sing praise to the Lord. Then, in the midst of the celebration, a cloud descends from heaven and fills the temple. It is God's glory, and it transforms the temple from an empty building to the vital center of worship. It reminds the people that--more than just another nation--they are the chosen people of the living God.

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Against this backdrop, Solomon stands up and prays. He begins his prayer by saying, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven or on earth" and then proceeds to give a reverent description of God.

That is why we are looking at this passage. We want to see what it is about God that makes Him so unique. We want to hear Solomon's description of this unmatched and unrivaled God. We want to behold His glory as the people of Israel did, so that, like them, we will fall down in worship.

And the first thing we learn about God is that He is a God who keeps His promises. He is a promise-keeping God. Let's read the text:

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He said:

"O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven or on earth—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way. ¹⁵ You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it—as it is today.

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"Now LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, 'You shall never fail to have a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons are careful in all they do to walk before me according to my law, as you have done.'

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And now, O LORD, God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David come true.

<<prayer>>

Covenant Keeper

Solomon begins his prayer by declaring that there is no one anywhere who can compare with

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God: "There is no god like you in heaven or on earth." Specifically, in verse 14, we're told that God is unique because He "keeps [His] covenant of love with [His] servants who continue wholeheartedly in [His] way (v. 14)."

In other words, God keeps His promises.

Solomon puts it in terms of covenants. A covenant is an agreement between two parties. The whole Old Testament could be described as the story of the covenants God made with His people. There is a covenant made with Noah, a covenant made with Abraham, a covenant made with Moses, and a covenant made with David.

In each covenant God agrees to do something for the people--that is to say, He makes promises. To Noah He promises to never destroy the earth again. To Abraham He promises to make a great nation. To Moses He promises to give the Holy Land. To David He promises a descendent who will rule eternally. And so on. In exchange, the people are expected to obey God and serve Him wholeheartedly. All of the covenants of the Old Testament can be summed up in God's statement: "I will be your God, and you will be my people" (see Lev. 26:12).

And now Solomon wants us to know that God keeps His covenants. If God makes an agreement, He is sure to live up to His end of the bargain. If He makes a promise, then He is going to see it through.

For proof of this, Solomon needs to look no farther than the temple. Let's read verse 15 again:

You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it--as it is today.

Several years earlier Solomon's father David had decided to build a temple for the Lord. But God came to him--through the prophet Nathan--and told him that he was not the one to build it. Instead, God promised that David's son would build the house of prayer (1 Chr. 17:11-14)

And now, on this very day, that promise has come to fruition. Solomon is standing before the temple that God has helped him to build.

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That's the way God is--He keeps His promises.

What is true of this promise specifically is true of all of God's promises generally. When God says that He will do something, He does it.

I love the way Solomon pictures this in terms of God's mouth and God's hand. There is no doubt in Solomon's mind--if God says something with His mouth then He is going to carry it out with His hand. He doesn't just say it, He does it.

Solomon realizes that talk is cheap. It is one thing to make a lot of promises, but it is quite another to actually keep them.

We all know people who are generally reliable--people who usually do what they say. We try to be people like that as well. But when you get right down to it, we have all said we would do things that we haven't done. We have all made promises that we haven't kept. None of us are 100% reliable and 100% dependable. But God is.

"With your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it." In other words, God says what He will do and does what He says. God is faithful. He is a promise-keeping God.

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So let's consider what this says about God. If it is true that God is a promise-keeping God, then there must be at least three other things which are also true about Him.

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A Truthful God

First of all, if it is true that God is a promise-keeping God, then it must also be true that God is a

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truthful God. Because God keeps His promises we know that we can believe Him, He won't lead us astray.

The worst kind of promise-breakers are people who make promises they never intended to keep in the first place. These are the kind of people who will say anything to get you to do what they want, but then never follow through. Like a scam artist who promises huge profits to someone who invests in their bogus company, some people make promises that are nothing more than lies. Sometimes promises are just that--promises, with no results.

But God isn't like that. Numbers 23:19 says: "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind; does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" Solomon's answer to those questions is a resounding "No!" If God says it with His mouth then He will fulfill it with His hand. God says what He will do and does what He says.

God doesn't lie (Titus 1:2). In fact, Hebrews 6:18 says that it is "impossible for God to lie." He isn't some slick advertising executive who has filled His Bible with a bunch of misleading or half-true promises. There is no bait and switch with God. He hasn't lined up a bunch of sweet sounding rewards in order to get us to follow Him, only to substitute something less desirable in the end.

God is a truthful God. He will not lead us astray. If He promises us something, it's because He means it and He will fulfill it.

This means you can believe God. When you are reading your Bible and come across some promise that makes you think: "That's too good to be true," remember, if God says it, then it must be true.

Thus, when you are reading in the gospel of John and you read the promise that "whoever believes in Him [that is, Jesus] shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16), believe it, because God does not lie.

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When you are reading in Philippians and come across the promise that says "my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19), don't doubt it, believe it, because God won't mislead you.

Again, when you are in the book of Romans and you read that "we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37), believe it, because God is a truthful God.

God doesn't make empty promises. He doesn't say things He has no intention of following through on. If He says it, He means it, and you can stake your life on it.

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A Constant God

So, if God is a promise-keeping God, He must be a truthful God. Secondly, if God is a promise-keeping God, He must also be a constant God. Because God always keeps His promises, we know that He can be trusted. He does not change.

Sometimes people break promises--not because they are dishonest--but because they change the way they feel. Some promise breakers have good intentions when the promise is made, but then experience a change of heart. Like a teen-ager who agrees to a summer job only to decide a week later that hanging around the pool is more fun, some people make promises that get neglected or forgotten. Sometimes promises change over time.

But not the promises of God. 1 Samuel 15:29 says "He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind." In Isaiah 46 God says: "My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please...What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do." (Isa. 46:10-11)

In other words, God is constant. He isn't some squirrely, wishy-washy kid who changes his mind every other minute. He makes His promises to last and sees them through to the end.

When young David volunteered to fight the giant Goliath, King Saul had serious doubts about

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his ability to survive. David replied with a story of God's faithfulness. He told Saul that when he had been a shepherd God had kept him safe and for that reason he believed he would be kept safe again. "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:37). He simply drew on the past to get God's promises for the future.

God doesn't change. That means the God who kept His promises yesterday can also be trusted to keep them today and tomorrow. His promises aren't dependent on how He feels or what side of the bed He gets up on. He is a steadfast God, He is trustworthy.

So trust Him! When He promises that He will not withhold any good thing from those who seek Him (Ps. 34:10), trust Him. He won't change His mind.

When He promises to forgive and purify all those who confess their sins (1 John 1:9), trust Him. He won't have a change of heart.

When He promises to keep you safe until the time of His return (1 Cor. 1:8), trust Him. He is a constant God.

I read this week about a woman named Gladys Aylward who served as a missionary in China before World War II. When the Japanese army invaded northern China, she was forced to flee, taking about 100 orphans with her. As she led the children into the mountains, she despaired of ever making it to safety. After a sleepless night, she was reminded by a 13-year-old girl of Moses and the parting of the Red Sea. "But I am not Moses," she replied. "Of course you aren't," the girl said, "but Jehovah is still God."

God isn't going to change. You can trust Him.

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A Strong God

So, if God is a promise-keeping God that means He is a truthful God and a constant God. Third, the fact that God always keeps His promises tells us that He is also a strong God. Because God

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keeps His promises He can be relied on. He does not fail.

Sometimes people break promises for reasons outside of their control. This is probably the main reason people break promises. They don't mean to be dishonest, they would still love to see the promise kept, but circumstances change in such a way that they can't carry them out.

For example, a presidential candidate can promise today that if elected he will lower your taxes, but he can't guarantee that that will happen. He might get into office only to run up against a stubborn congress that refuses to accept his plan. Or, an unexpected enemy might force us into a war that requires more taxes to pay for defense. Or, an unpredictable market might crash destroying the economy and leaving the government starving for funds. There's a whole list of things that could happen which would make it impossible for our new president to keep all of his campaign promises.

You can give the candidates the benefit of the doubt and believe them to be both honest and sincere, but the fact remains that they are not capable of keeping all the promises they make. There are just too many things outside of their control. Too many factors they cannot account for.

But God isn't like that. There is nothing beyond God's control. The angel Gabriel told Mary that "nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). Psalm 115 tells us that God in heaven "does whatever pleases him."

God is omnipotent, all-powerful, sovereign. He is not like humans who are limited in knowledge or strength and subject to unpredictable events. He will carry out the things He promises and nothing will be able to sidetrack Him.

That's why Solomon can say: "With your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it," because he knows that God's hand is strong enough to carry out everything He says.

When God promised to make a great nation out of Abraham, He didn't let problems like Sarah's

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barrenness or Abraham's old age stand in His way. Indeed, He worked in the midst of those obstacles to leave no doubt that His promises were being kept.

Or again, when God promised to deliver the Israelites from Egypt, He made it happen even when it didn't look like it was possible. Instead of being thwarted, God took a reluctant leader, a hard hearted Pharaoh, and a rebellious people and made them fit into His plan.

When Jesus promised His disciples He would come back to them (John 14:3), He didn't let a little thing like death stand in His way. Instead, He journeyed to the cross and the grave and three days later He was raised in glory.

Thus, you can count on God. He will not fail. If He makes a promise, He is capable of seeing it fulfilled. He is a strong God.

That means He is able to keep all the promises He makes to us, even the ones that seem impossible. Romans 8:28 contains the amazing promise that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him." From our perspective, we often cannot see how God could make something good out of our chaotic lives. But we need to remember: God is not taken by surprise, He is never outmatched, and He will not fail to do what He says. He can make good out of any circumstance. He has promised it, and you can count on it.

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Conclusion

So, there we have it. Because God is a promise-keeping God, we also know that He is truthful, constant, and strong. Or, if you wanted, you could say it the other way around: because God is truthful, constant, and strong we know that He is a God who will always keep His promises. He does not lie, He does not change, and He does not fail. We can believe Him, we can trust Him, and we can rely on Him. He says what He will do and He does what He says.

To conclude I want you to take a look at another story of God's faithfulness. One which comes right out of our congregation...

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