

Building the House (Part 2)

by Bayless Conley

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Hello there. I want to share with you a bit. This is a continuation of some things that I had previously shared out of 1 Chronicles 29. David and all of Israel are gathered together. All of the leaders are there, all of the people are there, and he is encouraging them and instructing them about giving to build a house for the Lord, to build a temple. There are just so many beautiful things in this chapter that are so applicable to our lives. I realize that sometimes, when talking about giving, especially in a church environment, some people get really uneasy. It's like, "Do they always have to talk about money?" Well, people don't always talk about money, but I reckon that it's just a sore spot with some people. It's like the doctor saying, "Does it hurt here?" "No." "Does it hurt here?" "No." "Does it hurt here?" "Ow, ow. Yeah, it hurts there." For some people, it's like the preacher's preaching, but when you talk about money, "Ow." Well, maybe something in you needs to get fixed right there. I don't know. But Jesus, if you look through His parables and His teachings, actually talked a whole lot about money and about handling finances because the truth is our hearts and our treasures are connected.

Jesus said, "Where your heart is, there your treasure will be also. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." They are inseparably connected. So, David here is encouraging the people about giving towards God's house. It could have to do with giving towards your local church, giving towards a missionary endeavor, giving towards some evangelistic work, giving towards a soup kitchen that's feeding homeless people in your town and bringing the gospel to them, and on and on. David, in the course of encouraging people and praying to the Lord, brings out some vital truths that we need to consider. First of all, he talks about the purpose. I want to read to you from 1 Chronicles 29:1 NKJV. He says this. He's talking about his son Solomon. In fact, let me read the whole verse.

¹ Furthermore King David said to all the assembly: "My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced; and the work is great, because the temple is not for man but for the Lord God."

The purpose is for God. Now, men would worship there. Men would serve there. Men would fellowship there. Men would explain the Word of God there, and people would hear the Word of God there. Men were involved in every aspect of it, but ultimately, it was for the Lord God. It was for the name of God and for the purpose of God. When we give towards a church—listen, you and your own local church, you should give regularly to the church that you attend. People serve there. Men and women will serve there. Men and women will worship there. Men and women will hear the Word of God there and, hopefully, give their hearts to Christ there. Men and women are involved in every aspect, but ultimately, it's for God. It's for the Lord God. It's for an eternal purpose, and when we invest and give towards the gospel, we should do it with eternity in view, and that's really the heart of things. David said, "It's not for men, but it's for God." Eternal things will happen there, and in our churches, and in the gospel work that we give to. Yeah, it's temporal, yet there is an eternal aspect. It goes on. David says, "It's because I have set my affection on the house of my God that I've given with all my might. I've done over and above. I've given God my own special treasure." He said, "It's because I've set my affection

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on the house of my God,” that's in verse three. He says, “I have given over and above, and I've given my own special treasure.”

You see, where our heart is, that's where our treasure is as well. David had set his heart on God's house. He loved God's house. He said, “I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” And that should be our heart. We're only here for a little time, friend. We need to invest in things that are eternal. There are a lot of things that are legitimate in life that it's fine to invest in. If you're into cars and you have the money, get yourself a nice car, get yourself two. That's certainly within the realm of legitimate, but it's not eternal. It's going to pass away. There are things that are eternal in nature as far as their impact goes. What we're doing right now, bringing this broadcast to you, well, all of the equipment, there's a great expense in it. It is temporal by nature, yet it has an eternal impact. We need to invest in things that have an eternal impact. David understood that. He had set his heart there because it was for the Lord God. Then the third thing was the invitation. If we read on in the chapter, and we actually covered that in the last time that I spoke along these lines. David said, “Who then will fill his hand with a generous offering to the Lord? Who will also give willingly?” I love that one aspect of this whole story, that it was willing. It wasn't compulsory. David willingly gave, all of the leaders willingly gave, and the people willingly gave. They rejoiced in their giving.

The New Testament says that God loves a cheerful giver, so you should give as you determine in your own heart, not because you feel pressured into doing it, not because an offering is being wrung out of you, but you do it because you love God. You love the things of God. My friend, God loves. “He will not abandon, He will not do without a joyous, prompt-to-do-it giver,” it says in the Amplified Bible. God loves a cheerful giver, and that's the invitation that David gave. “Who else then is going to fill his hand with a generous offering?” Then, the final aspect of this, and it's really what I wanted to get to right now, is the prayer. David spends a lot of this time—now he's been instructing the people, but he spends the lion's share of his breath and his energy in talking to God. In so doing, in this prayer, David shares some eternal truths that applied to God's people then. They apply to God's people in every generation, and they apply to us as God's children now. In verses 10 through 19, David prays. I'm going to take a moment. I'm going to read this to you, and then I'm going to go back, and we're going to highlight several aspects of this prayer. Again, get the context. David is there, all the leaders of Israel are there, all the people are there, and they are going to build this temple for God. David said, “This is not for man, the work is great, it's great in scope, it's great in beauty, it's great in importance, but it's for the Lord, it's not for man.” And David says, “My heart is in this. Therefore, I'm going over and above. I have given my own special treasure, which is something that costs me personally.” And then David says, “Who else is willing to get involved?” All the leaders came, and they willingly gave. The people willingly gave. They rejoiced. Then David sort of takes all that, and then he goes to God with it. Oh my, this is so rich. 1 Chronicles 29:10–19 NKJV says,

¹⁰ Therefore David blessed the Lord before all the assembly; and David said: “Blessed are You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. ¹¹ Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; (I want you to think about that. God everything in heaven and everything on earth is Yours.) Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all. ¹² Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³ “Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name. ¹⁴ But who am I, (David asked God in front of all the assembly) and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You. (I want you to consider that) ¹⁵ For

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we are aliens and pilgrims before You, as were all our fathers; our days on earth are as a shadow, and without hope. ¹⁶ “O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have prepared to build You a house for Your holy name is from Your hand, and is all Your own. (Now, I keep looking up because David was talking to God in front of the people.) ¹⁷ I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things; and now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here to offer willingly to You. ¹⁸ O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the intent of the thoughts of the heart of Your people, and fix their heart toward You. (Last verse I'm going to read) ¹⁹ And give my son Solomon a loyal heart to keep Your commandments and Your testimonies and Your statutes, to do all these things, and to build the temple for which I have made provision.”

What a prayer. Let's talk about it. There are so many things in here that are just beyond weighty. They are eternal. They are worthy of our contemplation. First of all, let's go back to verse 12. David said,

¹² “Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.”

God is the source of every good thing we are and every good thing we possess. Every good thing we have has come from God. We have to start there and acknowledge that it comes from Him. I'm reminded of a story I heard once about a rich guy. I think it was in Texas or Colorado. He had this huge estate. He had like a 30,000 square foot house. He brought his pastor over to kind of show off his stuff. They went up to the roof, and there's a helicopter pad on the roof. He has his own private helicopter. He says, “Preacher, I want you to look out. Do you see the woods in that direction?” He points to the north and there's a huge forest. He says, “I own those woods as far as the eye can see.” Then, he points to the south behind them. He says, “Do you see that housing tract there and all those houses?” He says, “I built all those. That's all built on my land. That's my doing.” Then, he points to the east and he says, “Do you see the cattle out there?” As far as the eye can see, there are thousands of acres of cattle. He says, “I own every one of those cows. That's all my cattle land.” And then he points to the west, and he says, “All that land, everything you see over there, all that undeveloped land, that's mine. I got plans for all of that.” He points down and says, “This is a 30,000 square foot house.”

He said, “Every stick and every stone is paid for. I had my architect design it to my personal specifications. I have two Olympic-sized swimming pools. I have a bowling alley down in the alley. I have a shooting range out in the backyard. I have a tennis court.” He says, “I built all of this.” The preacher looked at him and said, “Well, you've pointed every direction except for one.” He says, “What direction is that?” He said, “Up. You haven't acknowledged God at all. Who gave you your wealth? Who gave you the mind that you think with? Who gave you the opportunities? You haven't even acknowledged God.” It reminds me of the story that Jesus told of a rich man. His ground brought forth plentifully, and he filled his barns. He says, “What am I going to do?” He says, “I know. I'm going to tear down my barns and build greater. I'm going to store all my crops there, and I'm going to say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, be merry, take your rest, and enjoy your life.’” But as the story goes, God said to him that night, “You fool! This very night, your soul is required of you. You're going to die tonight. Then who are all these things going to be that you provided?” So is he that is not rich toward God or doesn't think about God.

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If you read the story, the guy talked about my crops, my goods, my barns, my soul, my, my, my, my, my. He uses the words I, I, I. I'm going to do this. I'm going to do this, I, I, I, my, my, my. He never mentions God at all. I mean, again, who gave him the mind that he was able to think with? Who gave him the air that he was breathing? Who caused the rain to fall that caused his crops to grow? Who created the seeds that the crops came from? Who created the soil that the crops grew from? Who gave him his physical strength and physical life with which he could work? God did, but there was no acknowledgment of God whatsoever. David basically begins his prayer by acknowledging God. "Everything we have has come from You. You're the one who gives power to people. You're the one who gives strength to the people. All the good things we have come from You." That has to be our starting point.

My friend, when was the last time you thanked God for your health? If you woke up pain free this morning, you should have already thanked God several times for it. When was the last time you thanked God for having a sharp mind, for the opportunities you have, for the health that you enjoy, and for every good thing you have? If you have a roof over your head, if you have a vehicle to drive, if you have a bicycle, and if you have food on your table. I mean, my goodness, you at least have some sort of a mobile device or a television set or a computer or something. You're listening to me right now. You should thank God for that. We need to acknowledge God's ownership. Then, in this prayer, David actually, in verse 14, asks a question. He said, "Who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? Of course, because God, everything's come from You, and we're only giving You that which is Your own." But David asked, "Who am I?" Think about it. He was the king. He was the leader of a great nation. He was a military hero. He was a giant killer. He was a prophet. He was a musician. He was a song writer. He is standing before a sea of people, and they are about to install his son, Solomon, as his successor. David is wealthy. He's famous. He's adored.

Yet he says, "God, who am I? Who am I? Who are my people?" Well, are they not God's chosen people, the ransom of the Lord, his inheritance, his special treasure, and a people uniquely set apart by God? But David says, "Who am I, and who are my people?" Friend, David stayed little in his own eyes, and we need to do the same. Saul, when he kind of went off the rails, ended up building a big monument to himself. He became arrogant and oppressive to the people. The prophet Samuel came to him and said, "Look when you were little in your own eyes, didn't God make you ruler over all of His people and give you this position?" Well, King Saul didn't stay little in his own eyes. We need to stay little in our own eyes. A big shot is just a little shot away from home. Your family knows the truth.

I was speaking at a conference once in another country, and it was a pretty big deal. In fact, it was the largest conference in the history of that country. Thousands upon thousands of people were attending, and I'm one of the keynote speakers. It was a pretty cool thing. Anyway, I'm back where they have a big green room area where the speakers can be, and you can get a cup of tea or whatever before service begins. So, I walk in and I notice one of the other guest speakers. Now, I knew who he was, but I had never met him personally. So, I go up and say, "Hey, how are you doing?" I go to talk to him. I want to meet him, and he won't even look up. He does not even acknowledge me. He doesn't even look up. He just ignores me. I just went, "Okay." So, I went over, and there were a couple of guys who were there just serving coffee and tea to people. So, I said, "Now I'm going to find somebody more friendly." So, I went over and started talking to these guys who were just members of the church who were serving there. One of them made me a cup of tea, and I joked around with these guys. I had a great time with them. Interestingly enough, I was talking to my son Harrison yesterday, and I've had the privilege to speak at conferences in churches around the world and with some of the most well-known speakers of our generation. Mostly, the speakers at these conferences are guys who

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I have met. Men who are brilliant and anointed. I'm not really close friends with a lot of them. Some of them, yes. Most of them are just an acquaintance. We might shoot a text back and forth every once in a while. But the people who became my friends from those events generally were the drivers. The guy who picked me up from the airport. The guy who drove me from my hotel or the guy who was serving the cup of tea. And to this day, it's true, in different countries, those are some of my dearest friends. For the people who are driving car, I just said, "Hey, how did you come to Christ?" I found out their story and found out about their families. I've met their families. We have had meals together, and we stay in touch.

Now, I share that to share this. I'll get back to that story about the guy in the green room, the other speaker who didn't give me the time of day. So, I meet these guys, and I think. Actually, some of the guys who were serving there, we are still friends to this day. But anyway, about 15 minutes later, the host of the whole conference comes in and says, "Hey, Bayless! How are you doing?" I said, "I'm doing great, man. I'm just really glad to be here." And he says, "Come on, I want you to meet so-and-so." It's the other speaker, the guy sitting at the table. So, he takes me over and says, "Hey, so-and-so, I want you to meet Bayless." He jumps up and says, "You're Bayless?" He says, "Oh, man. I'm really sorry about before. I didn't think you were anybody." I shook his hand, and I just laughed. I thought, "Well, the truth is you're right about that. I'm not." But that kind of attitude is like, "Okay, carry my briefcase, carry my Bible up to the podium, and open it for me because I'm too special." Get out of here and get your heart fixed, man. We need to stay little in our own eyes. David said, "Who am I, and who are my people that we should be able to offer so willingly as this?" Interesting. David even considered the willingness of their hearts to give to the work of building God's house. He considered that a work of God's grace. David would not even take credit for his willingness to give or the willingness of his people to give to God. I mean, he even gave God credit for that. Philippians 2:13 in the Good News translation, says,

¹³ Because God is always at work in you to make you willing and able to obey his own purpose.

So, God is even at work in us to make us willing and able to obey Him. Friend, we owe a lot of thanks to God. Then again, David went on and said, "For all things have come from You." It's a recognition of ownership and stewardship. God is the owner of everything. We are just the stewards. We don't own any of it. In fact, when we give to God, when we bring an offering, when we bring our tithes into God's house, we are just giving Him that which is His anyway. We are just stewards. Here is the attitude we should have. "God, everything I have, everything in my bank account, everything I possess, everything within my power, well, it's Yours. You have access to it. You just put Your finger on it. You touch it, and it's Yours, God, whatever You want done with it. I remember when I was in Bible college, one of my neighbors, this guy, and his wife lived a couple doors down. A friend of mine had loaned a bicycle to him. When my friend came to retrieve his bicycle from the neighbor a of couple doors down, who happened to be also, he and his wife were both Bible school students as well; he said, "I don't have your bike anymore." He says, "What do you mean you don't have my bike?" He said, "I gave it away." He said, "What? I loaned you my bike for a day, and you gave it away?" He says, "Well, yeah, I saw a guy, and my heart went out to him. I just felt he really needed a bike, so I gave it to him." Well, listen, friend, that wasn't yours to give. It belonged to somebody else. Friend, everything that we have ultimately belongs to God, and we need to do with it what He says. David went on in verse 15, and I don't know if you recall me reading it, but it's interesting. He said,

¹⁵ For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, as were all our fathers; our days on earth are as a shadow, and without hope.

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“We are aliens and pilgrims before You.” He gave witness to the transitory nature of this life. He said, “Without hope,” again, the GNT translation says, “We cannot escape death.” That’s what that means. We’re just here for a little time, and every one of us is going to die. The ASV version says, “There’s no abiding.” The Amplify classic says, “We have no expectation of remaining.” The book of James says this earthly life is just a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. David acknowledged that. “Hey, we’re just pilgrims. We’re just passing through. God, none of us are going to stay here forever. Every one of us is going to die.” I had a friend, who has been in heaven many years now, but he told me this story once. He was walking along the street, and some young guy said, “Hey! Get out of the way, old man.” He thought, “What?” He realized they were talking to him. He says, “I went home. I looked in the mirror, and I realized they were talking to me. I was old, and I just didn’t realize it. It sort of snuck up on me.”

Now, David also said in verse 17, “God, test our hearts in this.” What did he mean, “You test our hearts?” To see if we’ve embraced these truths, the truths of humility. It’s the work of God’s grace that makes us willing and able to give. He tests our hearts when it comes to stewardship and ownership. He tests our hearts when it comes to our understanding of how brief and fleeting our life here on earth really is. He tests our hearts when it comes to the importance of supporting things that will have eternal consequences, like giving into the work of His church. David prayed and said, “God, put this in the hearts of your people, not just now, but for always.” Let me just go back. I want to read the verses to you. They’re so powerful. He said in 1 Chronicles 29:18 NKJV,

¹⁸ O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the intent of the thoughts of the heart of Your people, and fix their heart toward You.

David was praying for the people who were there, but he was also praying for God’s people in every generation. He was praying for us as well, that God would keep these things in our hearts, that this would be our intent as well. After the people gave, they rejoiced, and they offered sacrifices to God. We should rejoice when we have the privilege to give toward God. It really is all about the heart. The Lord doesn’t see as man sees, but the Lord sees the heart. He weighs the motives. He knows not just what we do. He knows why we do what we do. I pray that these thoughts have helped you. I pray that your heart would embrace eternal things, and that you would think about the brevity of life. It’s amazing how quickly it sort of sneaks up on you. I’m talking about old age. My dad died a few years back, and I still remember. I’m going to close with this. My dad, on his deathbed, was just saying over and over as I sat on his bed. He said, “It’s forever and ever and forever and ever and forever and ever and ever and ever forever and ever.” He just kept saying it over and over. I said, “Dad, what’s going on?” He said, “Eternity.” He realized that he was on the brink of leaving this earthly life and that this earthly life was so short and so temporary. Eternity is forever and forever. My friend, this life is just a dressing room for eternity, and the most important thing you can do in this life is get ready for the next. If you’ve not embraced God’s Son, Jesus Christ, as your Lord and Savior, you ought to do it today. I love you. We’ll see you again. God bless you.

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