

# David and Stewardship

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## Introduction.

- A. As a preacher, I love just about everything that I do, and I enjoy getting up in the pulpit and preaching, but there are some topics that I just don't particularly enjoy preaching on. One of those topics is sexual sin. By nature, I'm a very private person about certain things, and I really do not relish the times when I have to get up in front of dozens of people, including children of all ages, and talk about things like Internet pornography. Sadly, however, the evil state of the world around us means that I have to preach about those things too.
- B. Another one of my least favorite topics to preach on is money. There's a certain amount of privacy that is appropriate with our family finances too, but even more than that, to a lot of ears, when I preach on money and especially giving, it sounds like I'm angling for a raise. People have some right to be suspicious of that, too. There have been a lot of evil men through the years who have used the faith of others to satisfy their own greed, and when I touch on the subject of money at all, it can sound like I'm one of them.
- C. That's why I want to tell you about what's really going on here. This is not a sermon that I'm preaching on my own initiative; this is a sermon that the elders have asked me to preach. Here's why: several weeks ago, the elders and I were meeting together, and they reviewed some of the letters they'd been getting from other preachers asking for support. One of those letters was from Josh Tolbert, whom many of you know, who is beginning to work with the brethren in Manteno. Another came from the brother preaching in Pine City, MN. The elders talked about how worthy these men were, how much the work in those areas deserved support, and how much they wanted to help. In the end, though, they knew that they had to write back to both of those brethren and refuse those requests for support. Why? Because right now at Margaret St., we aren't even bringing in enough money to fulfill our existing commitments, let alone help more men.
- D. Friends, that's why we're even bringing this delicate subject up. We're bringing it up because men who have given their lives to the gospel need our help, and it's our responsibility to help them. Among many other places in Scripture, we find this in the story recorded in 1 Chronicles 29. Let's turn there this evening, then, to see what these events from 3000 years ago can teach us about David and stewardship.

## I. The Background.

- A. For our purposes, the most informative part of 1 Chronicles 29 is the prayer of David in the later part of the chapter, but to understand that prayer, we need to understand what provoked it. We see the heart of the matter described in 1 Chronicles 29:5b-9. Here is what has just happened: David has been told by God that because of the bloodshed that he has committed, that his son Solomon, and not he himself, will be the one responsible for building God's temple. David accepts this, but he knows that when Solomon takes the kingship, that he will be young and inexperienced. David, then, resolves to help him with the task of building the temple by collecting building materials himself and inviting the people to offer to the work as well.
- B. As this text tells us, the people responded willingly and on a massive scale. Just to give us an idea of how much is being contributed to the Lord's work here, let's pay attention to one part of the contribution, the 5000 talents of gold that were offered. Back in that day, a talent was considered to be as much as one man could carry, about 80 pounds. So, then, with the help of our trusty calculator, we learn that the Israelites contributed 400,000 pounds of gold, or about 200 tons. I can't imagine what 200 tons of gold even looks like!
- C. That's just one part of the massive freewill offering that the people made, and we see how both they and David react in the last verse of this context. These aren't people who have been strong-armed into helping with the temple project. David hasn't coerced them. They have given freely, because they have a lot to give, and both David and the people rejoice to see this tangible sign of the nation's devotion to God.

## II. David's Prayer.

- A. However, we see the true meaning of this gift in the prayer that David is moved to offer to God. We find the prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:10-18. The first thing that we need to pay attention to in this prayer is its overall tone of humility. This is absolutely the opposite of the way that the world thinks. I was reading an article the other day that was talking about how to succeed in the workplace. It advised people who wanted raises, promotions, and so forth to talk about their own accomplishments as much as possible. That way, when the decision-making time comes, the boss will remember all the horn-tooting you did and reward you accordingly.
- B. If David had been a man who was looking to impress God, this would have been a great time to do it. He could have gone to God and said, "Wow, God! Look at all this great stuff I'm giving You! And look at all this great stuff these people are giving to You too, all because I asked them too! You have me to thank for all of this! Aren't I wonderful?" Yet, in this prayer, David doesn't make himself the focus at all. God is the focus.

- C. That's a habit of thought we need to learn as well. In all that we do, whether it is giving to the Lord, or working for the Lord, or just serving the Lord, we must remember that the glory always goes to Him. If we try to keep some of the glory for ourselves, we aren't working for Him anymore. We're just working to promote ourselves, with just enough of a religion to it to keep us from feeling guilty. Brethren, that's not the truth. The truth is that God deserves the credit for all of our accomplishments, because we succeed through Him.
- D. Let's look at the way that David's humility manifests itself throughout this prayer. In 1 Chronicles 29:10-11, he begins by pointing out the greatness of God. This is a truly fascinating thing for David the king to say. In his life, he has raised Israel up from basically nothing to become the most powerful nation in Palestine. He's the greatest king his nation has ever known, and yet he gets up in front of his people and says, "I deserve no credit for any of this. I am king of nothing. God is the One who is the true Ruler, and everything that has just happened here only shows His glory." This is a powerful lesson for us today in any of our successes. We need to make sure that the people around us know that we're nobody special, but that God is special.
- E. David similarly makes sure that the credit for Israel's prosperity goes to the right place in 1 Chronicles 29:12. This is a truth that American ears don't like to hear. We love to worship the idol of the self-made man, the man who picks himself up by his bootstraps and becomes rich through his intelligence and hard work. Friends, in reality, it doesn't work that way. Every one of us here, in terms of the standards of living that people have historically enjoyed, is ridiculously wealthy, and all of us have worked to get there. However, God is the one who has blessed our efforts with success. Whenever we achieve some financial milestone, or work-related milestone, or family milestone, that happens because God has chosen to give us those things.
- F. We see David react to this in the only possible logical way in 1 Chronicles 29:13, where he thanks God for His kindness and praises Him for His power. We owe God the same thing. We can't possibly praise God for every good thing He gives us. There just aren't enough hours in the day for that, but brethren, we need to make the effort. Every time we walk through the door of our house, we need to thank God for it. Every time we are blessed with another meal, we need to thank God for it. In everything, we need to give thanks.
- G. In fact, friends, as we give to God, we need even to thank Him for what we are giving. Look at David's words in 1 Chronicles 29:14-16. He makes it clear that he knows that of himself, he is nothing. Like David, folks, without the blessing of God, we're just a bunch of hopeless sojourners. Some of us in this room have more money than others, but if God lets it happen, Satan can wipe every one of us out in a single day. He can have us sleeping under the overpass on I-55, or even dead, and God is the only thing that stands in Satan's way.
- H. That means, friends, that because God provides for us, all of our possessions really belong to God. That means that when we're putting that check or folded bill in the collection plate, we are just returning to God what is His. The only reason why we had it at all is because God let us borrow it for a little while.
- I. In fact, David goes a step further than that. He says that the reason why God blessed Israel so abundantly is because God intended that blessing for His glory. All those tons of gold and everything else that God gave Israel, He gave only because He knew that Israel would need those things for His temple. We are blessed abundantly too. We all have a roof over our heads, we all know where our next meal is coming from, and none of us need to fear that Canada is going to invade and take it all away. That means that we've got it good. Since we have such abundance, then, we can only conclude that God expects us to give abundantly.
- J. However, it's not enough that we give abundantly. We need to give willingly too. Look at David's description of the temple offering in 1 Chronicles 29:17. This is a joy that we also should come to know. We shouldn't be whining all the time about how times are tight and how we need more money. If that's our attitude, no matter how much money we have, we will never be happy. Instead, we should joyfully thank God for our blessings, and joyfully return from those blessings to Him, because less return or less joy would both be ungrateful.
- K. Finally, though, we need to learn one last important lesson from David's prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:18. Notice what he's asking for here. He sees that the people have given abundantly, and he prays that they will have forever this same heart so that they will give abundantly forever. Friends, we need to pray that, and we need to follow through on it. This sermon isn't about feeling guilty, tossing an extra 20 in the collection plate today, and forgetting about it by next week. This sermon is about constantly, consistently giving to God as abundantly as He has given to us, and folks, this is a sermon for me too. Last Friday, Lauren and I sat down with our budget and figured out how we could give more, even though we have a little one on the way.
- L. Let's be honest, folks. None of this is about putting ourselves in poverty to contribute to the spread of the gospel, even though there were first-century Christians who did exactly that. This is about giving up things that we want so that other people can hear the gospel they desperately need. This is about being willing to do without those four-dollar lattes at Starbucks, so that the light of the word of God will continue to shine in places where it is flickering. This is about choosing to eat pasta instead of steak, so that souls we don't even know will be fed on the bread of life. It's about giving up treasure here to lay up treasure in heaven.
- M. I'm not the judge of hearts, brethren. I've never even helped to count the contribution here. I don't know who's giving what, nor would I presume to say how much anybody should be giving. I don't know what's going on, but God does. We need to make sure that we are giving back appropriately instead of cheating Him.

**Conclusion.** It may be, though, that you aren't even giving God the service He deserves. If so, change that today.