

Celebrating God's Faithful Provision

(Burning our mortgage)

1 Chronicles 29:10-18 on June 1, 2025

Pastor Jerry R. A. Johnson

Please read 1 Chronicles 29:10-18 before going further in this transcript.

David's prayer of praise and thanksgiving, which Jennifer just read for us, is a good reminder of God's faithful provision, which is what we're going to talk about this morning. Before we do that though, just practically speaking, David's prayer is also a good reminder that it's entirely appropriate for churches to have buildings. The Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji is so much more than just a building; and yet, our building is such an incredible blessing to us, because it provides a place where we can gather. There's room for everyone, with room left over for even more people to join us! And that's a good thing! Now some people would be quick to mention that we don't need a building in order to worship God. And that's true, we can worship God anywhere, and at any time. Even so, it's important for followers of Jesus to gather with other followers of Jesus. In the words of Hebrews 10:24-25, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together...." That's why GATHER is the first of our GOSPEL Gs in our Discipleship Pathway (GATHER, GROW, GIVE, and GO).

So this building is intended to be a place where we can meet together, where we can gather around the gospel. It's entirely appropriate, and in many ways necessary, for churches to have buildings. We need a space where we can all assemble together for corporate worship, instruction, fellowship, and service. Building projects like the one we've experienced here at 115 Carr Lake Road SW have been going on for thousands of years, including back in the days of King David, and even before that. Before the temple was built in Jerusalem, God's people met with Him in the tabernacle – a huge portable tent that was set up along their journey to the Promised Land. And even before the tabernacle, God's people would set up altars as meeting places with God.

We know from Scripture, that even though God didn't allow David to build the temple, God did allow his son Solomon to, which demonstrates God's approval of the structure as a meeting place with Him.¹ Throughout most of human history, God's people have been building physical places where they can meet with Him and declare His glory together. Now all of this being said, we do need to be careful that our places of worship don't become too important. We need to keep our focus on worshipping God

¹ See 2 Samuel 7:1-17.

Himself, and avoid worshipping the place. In other words, we can't allow this impressive building to be the object of our worship. Church buildings should keep us mindful that the Living God of the universe dwells among us, and He is worthy of our highest praise.

It's interesting to consider the historical context in which 1st and 2nd Chronicles was written. The book of Chronicles is actually a supplementary account of what we can read in 1st and 2nd Samuel, and 1st and 2nd Kings. In fact, about half of the material in Chronicles comes right out of Samuel and Kings.² The writer of 1st and 2nd Chronicles is recounting historical events that happened some 500 years earlier. In fact, Chronicles was actually written after the Jewish people were exiled to Babylon, and after they'd returned back to Israel. In other words, it was written after Solomon's temple had already been destroyed in 586 BC, which puts the reading of David's prayer regarding that temple in an interesting context. All of this begs the question: why? Why write to God's people about the temple at this particular time in history, after the temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians, and after so much other history had gone by? Why indeed. All of this becomes even more intriguing when we learn that by the time Chronicles was written, a new temple had already been completed, around 516 BC. So the writer of Chronicles is writing about the history of the 1st temple, during a time in history when God's people were worshipping at the 2nd temple. Again, this begs the question: why?

What all of this seems to be pointing to, is that God prompted the writer of Chronicles to recount the temple's history in order to remind His people of His faithful provision. He wanted them to recall this time of celebration and worship, even as they must also recall how they lost their 1st temple: through disobedience. David's prayer brings the encouraging reminder of God's faithful provision for the temple, but it also brings a sober reminder not to stray from the God who they worship at the temple. My *Study Bible* explains it this way: "[Chronicles is] situated in the aftermath of divine judgment that included prolonged time outside the land of promise. [It emphasizes] hope and possibility for a covenant community wholehearted in their commitment to the Lord. [It exhorts] people to remember and obey their covenantal relationship with God while recounting God's faithful acts. The recounting of the past encourages people to consider the present and pursue faithfulness in the future."³ So the temple God's people currently enjoyed needed to be appreciated in light of the temple that they had previously lost.

² See *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 622 introductory notes.

³ See Romans 15:4. *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 713 introductory notes.

1 Chronicles 29 begins with a list of all of the many gifts that were given by God's people for the building of the temple. As King David prepares to pass down the mantle of leadership to his son Solomon, he does all that he can to set him up for success, including providing an immense amount of resources for building the temple. And not only does David give, but he **also calls everyone else to give.**

God is faithful to provide through gifts which are given...

1) Collectively, in large and small quantities.

In 1 Chronicles 29:5 David asks, "...Now, who is willing to consecrate themselves to the LORD today?" Verse 6 then records the people's response: "Then the leaders of families, the officers of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of the king's work gave willingly." Despite King David's own personal immense wealth, he didn't provide for everything by himself. If you scan through the first 9 verses of 1 Chronicles 29, you'll see quite an impressive list of donations. Given the variety of people listed here, certainly some were able to give larger quantities, and others gave smaller quantities, but every household seems to have given at least something. Because this task was so great, and because this structure was being built for the Lord Himself, the amount of resources needed was staggering. We are talking about literally tons and tons of gold, as well as silver, bronze, iron, and wood. As David lists his own personal donation amounts, He wasn't being braggadocios; he was being realistic. He knew that a large space would be required, in order to provide room for all of God's people to gather and worship together.

You see, places of worship are big, on purpose, because they're designed to hold a lot of people for corporate assemblies. That's why our expansion project in 2006 was so big, because we knew we'd need this much space. Now, I know some people don't like big churches. And frankly, we're not all that big, but by local standards, we're blessed with a pretty good-sized building. The reason we expanded our church to its current size, is that we were running out of space. We prayed and prayed, and we talked and planned, and then we prayed some more. And eventually, our church family made a congregational decision to expand, because we felt led by God, so we followed. And God faithfully provided, as He always does.

This sanctuary can now comfortably seat up to 500 people; before the expansion, our seating was closer to 350. This sanctuary used to have a 4-beam ceiling, now it's got 7 beams. We've got some balloons here this morning to help us visualize the increase in our space. This first balloon is right under the 4th beam. Our east sanctuary wall used to sit just a little ways east of this balloon, because the room went out to a point like it does today. In fact, if you look closely up at the ceiling at those cross beams; they're called "purlins," which keep our main vertical beams from going side

to side. You can see that the purlins on the right side of the 4th beam are shorter than the ones on the left. (That's because the building codes changed.) This other balloon is on this music stand, which is just about where our pulpit used to be. This side room used to be a lot smaller, as did the stage, and the tech booth, etc. There were many of us, maybe even including me, who wondered why we built such a huge platform: "when are we ever gonna need that much space!?" Well, nobody asks that question anymore, because on special occasions like Easter and Christmas, when we get our worship team up here, and our choir, and our handbells, and Kids Ministry, and so on, we can barely squeeze everyone up here!

It's a similar story with our expanded technology booth. In fact, we could have actually made that even bigger, because we ended up needing to move our livestream to its own room in the Connection Café. (And boy oh boy weren't we all thankful to have our livestream up and running when Covid hit!?) So let's praise God today for the incredible sanctuary He's provided for us! God faithfully provided for this worship space through the collective gifts of so many different people in this church. Gifts which were given in large and small quantities over the span of the past 19 years!

God is faithful to provide through gifts which are given...

2) In worshipful devotion/consecration to the LORD.

In 1 Chronicles 29:3 David declares that his giving was "...in my devotion to the temple of my God..." And in verse 5 he asks the rest of God's people, "...Now, who is willing to consecrate themselves to the LORD today?" 1 Chronicles 29:10 says, "David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, LORD, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting." I don't know if we could find a much clearer demonstration, in all of Scripture, for how our financial giving is a direct act of worship, an act of devotion and consecrating ourselves to God. *(Two weeks ago Mark Carlson talked about how God doesn't need our money, but He does desire our hearts, our affection, and our faith. When we give, we remind our hearts that our treasure is in the Lord.)*

The main theme of David's prayer is praise. 1 Chronicles 29:11-13 goes on, "11 Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. 12 Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are

strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. 13 Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.” Well said David!⁴

God is faithful to provide through gifts which are given...

3) Willingly, freely, and wholeheartedly.

David modeled worshipful giving, and he challenged everyone around him to worship God through their giving, but absolutely no one was required to give. 1 Chronicles 29:6 says that “Then [the people] gave willingly.” And verse 9 says, “The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD....” And in verse 17 David says, “...All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you.” You see, all of these gifts to the temple were freewill gifts, above and beyond people’s regular tithes. Nobody was forcing anybody to give these freewill offerings for God’s temple.

This makes me think back to our initial pledge drive, when Terry Smith put out all the Burma-Shave signs with the clever little jingles. (Anyone else remember that?) People in our church pledged hundreds of thousands of dollars toward our building expansion, not because they were forced to, but willingly, freely, and wholeheartedly. Otherwise, this building project would have been over before it even started.⁵

God is faithful to provide through gifts which are given...

4) Out of His own rich resources.

In 1 Chronicles 29:12, David declares, “Wealth and honor come from you....” In verse 14 he says, “...everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.” Verse 16 says, “LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.”⁶

I wonder how many of us, including myself, truly believe this? I wonder if I actually comprehend the full weight of this reality, that as a deeply devoted follower of Jesus, I don’t really own anything. We are merely stewards during the few years we live on this planet. Nothing we have belongs to us, because it all belongs to Him.

This reminds me of one of my favorite episodes of the Cosby Show. Their daughter Vanessa was having trouble at school because her friends found out... that she was rich! They’d seen her nice home and noticed her

⁴ “David’s prayer “ransacks the theological dictionary” for terms expressing God’s sovereign and boundless power and regal grandeur.” Citing Allen, J. A. Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, vol. 9, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 197.

⁵ There’s nothing like receiving a gift that’s given HALFheartedly. It just makes you want to return the gift. No thanks; I don’t even want it now. No matter how nice the gift is, a grudging attitude by the giver just spoils it.

⁶ Consider John 3:27 and James 1:17.

parents' fancy cars, and they started treating her differently. They accused her of being stuck up because she was so wealthy. So Vanessa is sobbing at the kitchen table, telling her parents how difficult it was to be rich. In his classic style of humor, her dad, Dr. Huxtable, explains to his daughter that she doesn't need to worry about it, because "your mother and I are rich; you have nothing."⁷ Friends, our Heavenly Father is rich, but apart from Him, you and I would have nothing.

King David asks the right question in verse 14, "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this?" You see, even though David was the king over all of Israel, he knew that he was nobody. At least, he was nobody apart from whom God had made him; he was nobody apart from God's goodness and grace which had blessed him abundantly. Before God called David to greater things, he was just a snot-nosed kid out tending his father's sheep.⁸ Indeed, who are any of us, that we should be able to give generously to God's work?⁹

In 1 Chronicles 29:18, King David prays, "LORD, the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their *hearts* loyal to you." Verse 18 highlights the very obedience we talked about earlier; the obedience about which the author of Chronicles is so concerned. In fact, verse 19 goes on in the same vein, "And give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, statutes and decrees and to do everything to build the palatial structure for which I have provided." The author of Chronicles wanted to make sure that God's people in future generations, would know definitively, that the temple structure was absolutely secondary to the exceedingly greater importance of wholehearted devotion and obedience to the Lord.

A Bible scholar named J. A. Thompson says it this way: "David's special supplication was that the Lord himself would establish a perfect heart in both Israel and Solomon, so that God's commandments might be kept AND the temple built. It is noteworthy that the keeping of the law is set alongside the building of the temple. These two were [inseparably] bound together. A temple without wholehearted devotion to the law was an empty gesture."¹⁰

¹¹ Brother or Sister in Christ, let's make sure that this call to wholehearted devotion, and obedience to God's commands, continues to be our sincere desire.

⁷ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rO35dhxNjYI#:~:text=Season%203%20Episode%2008%20%2D%20Vanessa's,fight%20to%20defend%20her%20reputation.>

⁸ See 1 Samuel 16:11; 2 Samuel 7:8. See also 1 Samuel 18:18; 2 Samuel 7:18.

⁹ Consider 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.

¹⁰ J. A. Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, vol. 9, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 198.

¹¹ In the words of 1 Samuel 15:22, "...To obey is better than sacrifice...."