

*1 Chronicles 29:1 Then King David said to the whole assembly: “My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the LORD God. <sup>2</sup>With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God—gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze, iron for the iron and wood for the wood, as well as onyx for the settings, turquoise, stones of various colors, and all kinds of fine stone and marble—all of these in large quantities. <sup>3</sup>Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple... <sup>6</sup>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...*

*17[David praised the LORD,] I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. <sup>18</sup>O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you.*

Dear Friends in Christ,

If you knew you had one day to live, what would do?

You can probably remember having this conversation somewhere along the line, maybe in a dorm room with a bunch of friends, or at a sports bar between big games. What would you do with 24 hours?

Usually the conversation follows an outline.

It starts with the self-indulgent. Something along the lines of, “I’d go test drive a Maserati and open it up on the Western Kentucky Parkway and see how fast one of those things can really go.” Or, “I’d eat as much chocolate as I could.”

After talking about the self-indulgent, people realize this is kind of childish. So the conversation moves on to more meaningful things: “I’d invite my friends over and we’d have a party and a great time, and we’d have fun and laugh until I kicked the bucket.” Or, “Only a day left? I’d be on the phone the whole day talking to my family and loved ones.”

Now that you have started talking about serious stuff, people try to outdo each other: “I’d volunteer for a day at children’s hospital and work myself to the bone till I keeled over.” Or “You know, there is someone in my life I really need to say, ‘I’m sorry’ to. I think I’d go talk to them.”

I don’t think most of us want to be remembered as the guy who stuffed his mouth so full of chocolate he couldn’t get his last words out.

And I don’t think God told King David that he only had a day left to live. But our reading from 1 Chronicles 29 almost reads that way. King David is the most mentioned person in the

Old Testament, way more than Abraham and significantly more than even Moses. In a way, we probably know more about David than any other person in the Bible. Sure, Jesus is the main figure in God's Word, and there is more in there about him than anyone else, but 90% of what we know about Jesus is concentrated in three years of his life. David – we know stuff from 50 years of his life.

You know some of it. You know how David, a mere shepherd boy, went toe to toe with the real Goliath and defied him “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty!” You know how David one day went out to the pasture to watch the family's sheep and by the end of the day was anointed king of all Israel. You know how he spent years switching between faithfully serving King Saul, and hiding from King Saul who was trying to kill him. Maybe you know how King David expanded Israel's borders to their farthest extent either before or even to this day. It isn't all heroics. The Bible also records his moral failings, and yet at the end of it all calls David “a man after the Lord's heart,” not because his failings were small (they weren't), but because David repented of them and humbled himself before the Lord.

There is more. If you were to read your Old Testament books of First and Second Samuel and First Chronicles, you would discover that this reading today, is the last recorded event of David's life. You would also realize that this last act of King David is not a dying spark from an dying man. This last deed of David is the 3 carat center stone of David's life. This is the crowning jewel of all that King David did!

What was it David with, maybe, the last 24 hours of his life? Did he go out and get on the fastest racehorse he could find? Did he celebrate his last breaths with a junk food binge? No, he celebrated it with Joyful Generosity to God. And though we may not have solid gold bars to put in the collection plate, like David did, we can still learn about Joyful Generosity from David's last official act. It isn't what or how much you offer the LORD. It is of how it is given.

### **Attitude Matters**

Again and again the phrase “give willingly” comes up in our reading, about half a dozen. It is embodied in verse 17 where David says, “*All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you.*” God's word focuses us on how willingly everyone gave: David, the Israelite leaders, the Israelites themselves.

It is the essence of what is said in 2 Corinthians 9:7: “*God loves a cheerful giver.*” Attitude matters. David and the Israelites had the right attitude.

They gave willingly and joyfully and so they also gave generously. David said, “*With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God—gold for the gold work, silver for the silver,*” etc.

But you say, “Hey, wait a minute. That was easy for David. He was a king. He had lots of wealth. He didn't need all his wealth like I need mine.” Well maybe that's how it was, maybe it isn't. Remember, attitude matters.

For many years David had wanted to build God's temple. Up to this time God's place of worship was merely an elaborate tent. David was not happy with that. But when he started making plans, God wouldn't let him build. Now what would we do? Some of us would

probably have been stubborn and still gone ahead, because we are supposed to “live out our dreams.” Others of us, would think that if God didn’t want us to build the temple, then we would move along and find someone or something else more appreciative.

Not David. After God told David “No” to building the temple, David then devoted his energies to gathering the resources—the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron—for that temple. Whenever David went out to war, God gave Israel’s armies success, and we are told (in 2 Samuel 8 where it lists many of David’s campaigns), “...*King David dedicated these articles [the plunder,] to the LORD, as he had done with the silver and gold from all the nations he had subdued.*” Through the years David willingly and generously saved up, everything he could!

Think about how out of character David’s actions are. Hasn’t it always been the great goal of kings and powerful people to accumulate wealth and power? Even to our day people do this?

David was orienting his life to God’s ways. Back in Moses’ time, hundreds of years before Israel had any kings, God gave rules for the kings of his people. One rule was, “*The king must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold*” (Deuteronomy 17:17). Therefore David saved up the royal revenue, not for himself, but for God. And when the end of his life came, he gave with two hands.

What do I mean by “giving with two hands?” If you ever visit Africa and are given a gift by an African, you know it! (And here I can’t speak for all Africa, but what I know from the Bantu cultures of Malawi and Zambia.) If an African gives you a gift, it is always with two hands. It does not matter how small the gift, even an envelope. To give a gift with one hand is an offense. One-handed giving symbolizes that while you are giving with one hand, you are hiding something with the other. One-handed giving symbolizes half-hearted giving, that you are withholding something, hiding something behind your back or in your pocket. But two-handed giving means that you give the best, with all your heart, willingly and generously.

David gave with two hands. He gave with all his heart. He stated that it had been the great design of his life to gather up these gifts for the temple construction, and at the end to give these joyfully and generously!

These are the hallmarks of all the best gifts to God in the Bible. Read through it and whenever you find someone praised for their gifts to God, you will see a joyful and generous attitude, because attitude matters to God. You can think of tax collector Zacchaeus who promised to repay any and all whom he had formerly cheated. Remember the poor Macedonians in our second reading who “pleaded” with Paul to contribute to the needs of others. Think of the sinful woman who anointed Jesus and was commended by our Lord himself, “What she has done will be remembered as long as this Gospel is proclaimed.”

Each of these, and David, were willing and generous givers specifically because they were forgiven. They responded joyfully and generously with God because they knew what God had done for them. Only when we realize that this is “*the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich*” (1 Cor 8:9), then we too get really joyful and generous toward God.

Which brings up a question people sometimes ask: “If I don’t want to give, should I? Wouldn’t that be a hypocritical gift?” This can happen with money, it can also happen with our time and talents. We see it with people who don’t worship God because they don’t feel like

it. “Wouldn’t it be worse,” so they reason, “to go and worship when my heart isn’t in it?”

To be honest, that is a dishonest question. If you realize that your heart is not right, then should you not be on your knees praying that God would change your selfish heart, instead of making excuses? Such a person is in a dangerous situation, because they truly are in danger of being damned if they do and damned if they don’t. It is sin to give or worship with wrong feelings and motives, but it is an even greater sin to have those feelings and then *also* sin by not giving, or not going to church.

Let me put it in un-spiritual terms. Let’s say that you have a small child, but you don’t feel like taking care of that child. Would it not be better to feed that child, even if you don’t feel like it? And as you do so, as you realize what you are supposed to do and war with that sinful, lazy, selfish desires, will you not learn to love that child and to eventually love taking care of that child?

Or you are in combat and one day say, “I don’t feel like fighting today,” and so you don’t. Isn’t that what the enemy wants? So it is with people who decide not to give, not to worship because, “I don’t feel like it.” The Evil One, the Enemy, is only too glad to see people who don’t engage and fight their sinful desires.

So David had had to learn with God. He had had his times, not just moments, but months and seasons where he withheld from God what was his. And it wasn’t wallowing in those sins that changed his mind, but rather when he was confronted with his sins of selfishness, and he finally confessed, “I have sinned against the LORD.” Then assured of God’s forgiveness for lost sinners, only then was a right spirit restored within David, and he could give willingly and generously.

And so it must be in each Christian. We must war against our sinful natures that always find reasons to not give God what is his: his treasures, his time, his honor, his credit, our lives. When by his Holy Spirit we war against our sinful natures, God gives us the victory and the assurance of our forgiveness. Then joyful and generous thanks to God will be our attitude. Amen.