

## BUILDING TOGETHER FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

I have known of young people and some that were not so young that made a choice to go into the ministry. I have seen some that abandoned careers that would have taken them to positions of wealth and power in the business world to be a preacher and pastor to a small congregation in rural America and I have heard people say, "What a waste of talent and potential." I guess that the argument was that this person could have made a lot of money in business and could have paid a lot of taxes and given a lot to charity and helped the poor. Nearly two thousand years ago, a young lady took a jar of expensive perfume and poured it out on a man named Jesus. That perfumed ointment was worth a typical wage earner's yearly salary and many said, "What a waste, that could have been sold and the money given to the poor." About one thousand years before that, a very famous man, a very powerful man, a king had a desire to build a house for God. King David gathered materials for the job that would be undertaken by his son Solomon. The result was, as all of you know, called Solomon's Temple. Usually when I think of David I remember the description of him that is given in the Old Testament as "a man after God's own heart." I think of the Psalms and the depths of worship that are contained in those passages. I see David's consuming desire to provide a house for God as his consummate act of worship. I see worship in what Mary did when she poured out the perfume on Jesus. and I see worship in the people that sacrifice career and material wealth for a call to the ministry. In a sense, whatever we do as an act of worship will be classified by the world as "such a waste."

When we go through a process in our churches of deciding to build or to fix up the present facility we need to approach them as acts of WORSHIP. In a real sense worship and sacrifice cannot be separated and we have coming up in the life of our church an opportunity to demonstrate to ourselves and to God how much sacrifice we are willing to make. What kind of commitment of prayer, love, service and money

will be a sacrificial amount for us? The Old Testament provides examples for us of expressions of worship. One such example of the extent to which people were willing to go is found in the story of David and the preparation for building the Temple.

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. 2 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. 3 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: 4 three thousand talents of gold (gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the buildings, 5 for the gold work and the silver work, and for all the work to be done by the craftsmen. Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the LORD?" 1 Chronicles 29:1-5 NIV

The assembly David was addressing were the leaders or elders of Israel. He was telling them that the job was going to be a big job and that their help and experience and example were going to be important. David recognized that the structure that was going to be put up was not for man but for God. It was a great work because it was for God. In our building efforts here as we try to be good stewards and plan for the future, we must first realize that we are doing this for God and not for ourselves. If it is not being done for God, then it really is a waste. If it is being done for God then it is worship. David had already gathered a lot of the materials that would be needed; however, he was not satisfied with just that. He also gave of his personal fortune of gold and silver. We have trouble relating to a talent of gold. Three thousand talents is about 110 tons. That's 220,000 pounds or over a billion dollars worth of gold at today's price of gold. The silver he gave would be worth over 40 million dollars today. David, as leader of this nation, was setting an example of sacrifice for them. The question was who was willing to

follow?

6 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. 7 They gave towards the work on the temple of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze and a hundred thousand talents of iron. 8 Any who had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the temple of the LORD in the custody of Jehiel the Gershonite. 9 The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD. David the king also rejoiced greatly. I Chronicles 29:6-9 NIV

I've often heard it said that a good leader must first of all be a good follower. David had called the leadership of the nation together and they knew how to follow as well as to lead. They were inspired by the sacrifice they saw that David made and they followed his lead. As the people in the communities saw what their leaders had done, they too were inspired. These people gave freely and wholeheartedly. It was a time of rejoicing. They did not pat themselves on the back for the great job they had done though, they recognized that the ability to give was itself a gift from God. David expressed that realization in his prayer.

10 ¶ David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. 11 Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. 12 Wealth and honour 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. 14 "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. 15 We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. 16 O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. 17 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. 18 O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people for ever, and keep their hearts loyal to you. 19 And give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, requirements and decrees and to do everything to build the palatial structure for which I have provided." I Chronicles 29:10-19 NIV

The first part of this prayer of David is a praise hymn that acknowledges that God is above and over all. As we put our priorities in proper perspective we will not have difficulty in giving to the work of the kingdom of God. We won't have trouble in giving sacrificially. This reality is reinforced in the second part of David's prayer where he acknowledges that God is the true owner of everything. If we accept that, then we can see ourselves as managers of the resources that already belong to God. The challenge for each of us to discover the will of God so that we can know how to use what he has given us so that the use of the time, talent, ability, and material things are of maximum benefit to His purposes. Each one of us has so much for which we should be and are thankful. Many of us have spent many years associated with our church. We can look around us and see the need for refurbishing the building. We cannot and should not look to some governmental agency to foot the bill and we cannot expect one or two individuals to pay for it all. All of us have interest in and concern for this church. Sharing, giving, and sacrifice are basic expressions of Christian love and these are essential to our own well being and usefulness. We should be ever watchful for opportunities to show our commitment and consecration. We don't want to let this great work go on and find that we did not have a part in it. I look forward to the completion of the building project. Each one that had a part will have a feeling of accomplishment. I hope that we will have a dedication time of the finished product just as Solomon did when the Temple was finished. Was God pleased with what David started and Solomon finished? After the dedication, the Spirit of God filled the temple in the form of a visible cloud and the people knew that God was with them. Will God be pleased with what we are doing here. That depends on you and on me. Do we see that we are doing this work for ourselves or for God. Does our gift and support for the work reflect our true thankfulness for all that God has provided for us? I pray that as we adopt the right attitude and action in this matter that God's spirit will be manifest in our midst and that all will know that the Lord is in this place.

The motivation for building or renovating a church's building should be to honor God as an act of worship.