

(21.24). And in the present passage, having given generously, David insists that his ability to give generously comes directly from God's generosity.

"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" (v. 16).

We cannot form a right idea of the magnificence of the temple, and the buildings around it, about which such quantities of gold and silver were employed. But the unsearchable riches of Christ exceed the splendour of the temple, infinitely more than that surpassed the meanest cottage on earth. Instead of boasting of these large oblations, David gave solemn thanks to the Lord. All they gave for the Lord's temple was his own; if they attempted to keep it, death would soon have removed them from it. The only use they could make of it to their real advantage, was, to consecrate it to the service of him who gave it. (Matthew Henry, *Concise Commentary*)

"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" (v. 18). It would be all too easy to be carried along with the emotion of the moment – and then forget the Lord.

"... keep their hearts loyal to you. And give my son Solomon the whole-hearted devotion to keep your commands, requirements and decrees and to do everything to build the palatial structure for which I have provided" (v. 19).

David is nearing the end of his life. He has made his commitment – it has been very real and deep. What will happen when he has gone? His desire is that they remain loyal to the Lord and that Solomon also has whole-hearted devotion to do the Lord's will.

Reflect:

- We come back to the issue with which we began. The Lord has promised to be with us, But what is our response? Are we going to stay "with him"? What will this mean in practice?

4. Keep Watch! Reading: Acts 20.12-38

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Studies for Home Groups
by Peter J Blackburn

3. THE LORD IS WITH YOU

Reading: 1 Chronicles 28.20-21; 29.10-20

The funeral director in Stanthorpe usually drove me to the cemetery in the front of the hearse. It was a convenient arrangement and became an opportunity for him to "unburden". A funeral director does have feelings and, in a small country town, often has nobody with whom he can share.

The route took us past the Primary School. He commented one day, "When I went to school, we were expected to take off our hat and stand to attention if a hearse passed by. If we didn't do that, a teacher would knock off our hat. How times have changed!"

One day I said to him, "Ray, I've often wondered how you get on with the funeral of an atheist."

"Interesting you should ask that. No matter what a person may have said in life, almost everyone claims to belong somewhere when they die." He went on, "I can only remember doing one atheist funeral. A small group stood around the grave. One of them read out the story of his life, and then said, 'Well, now he's gone and that's how it will be for all of us some day!' It was the most depressing occasion imaginable."

Honesty? Presumption? Something in us cries out that there must be a God, that there must be something the other side of the grave. Can we really be sure of these things?

The Anglican minister came up to the lectern and discovered the microphone wasn't working. He muttered to himself, "There's something wrong with this thing." The congregation couldn't hear what he said, but responded anyway, "And also with you"!

"The Lord be with you" is a fine Christian greeting. Can it be, not just a wish, but a reality?

Reflect:

- Jesus promised, "I am with you always, to the very end of the age". What do we really mean when we say "The Lord be with you"? In what way are we seeking the Lord's presence and blessing?

Be Strong and Courageous!

Read: 1 Chronicles 28.20-21.

King David was nearing the end of his life. He has long had on his heart the building of “a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord” (v. 2). He even had plans ready, but the Lord said, “You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood... Solomon your son is the one who will build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. I will establish his kingdom forever if he is unswerving in carrying out my commands and laws, as is being done at this time” (vv. 3,6-7).

Having given all the plans to Solomon (vv. 11-18), David goes on to say, “Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the Lord is finished” (v. 20) – “Take charge! Take heart! Don’t be anxious or get discouraged. GOD, my God, is with you in this; he won’t walk off and leave you in the lurch. He’s at your side until every last detail is completed for conducting the worship of GOD” (*The Message*).

Reflect:

- Name some of the unfulfilled visions we have had personally or which we have shared as a congregation of the Lord’s people. Why do fear – and even panic — take over and immobilise us? What are some of the Lord’s promises that should cause us to “take charge” and “take heart” and move forward into action?

Praise!

Read: 1 Chronicles 29.10-13.

The task is a massive one – “this palatial structure is not for man but for the Lord God” (v. 1). David has already set aside a huge contribution from his personal fortune to ensure the work can go ahead. But their commitment is needed too – “Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the Lord?” (vv. 2-5) – “And now, how about you? Who among you is ready and willing to join in the giving?” (*The Message*).

In response, the various leaders and officials give willingly – “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” (v. 9). It wasn’t just David’s vision, but theirs.

David gives fitting expression to his joy on the success of the deepest wish of his heart, in a prayer with which he closes the last parliament of his reign. Since according to the divine decree, not he, the man of war, but his son, the peace-king Solomon, was to build a temple to the Lord, David had taken it upon himself to prepare as far as possible for the carrying out of the work (Keil & Delitsch).

David acknowledges that “the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour” all belong to the Lord. So too does the kingdom itself. Wealth and honour all come from the Lord. “Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name” (vv. 10-13).

Reflect:

- Paul writes that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2.10-11). In Revelation he bears the name “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev. 19.16). What difference does it make when a ruler truly acknowledges the Lordship of Christ? What difference does it make when we do that ourselves?

We can’t out-give God!

Read: 1 Chronicles 29.14-20.

At first glance, David’s list of all he has given for the building of the temple could seem to be so much self-glorification – look at all that I have done! But David’s acknowledgement of the Lord is deep and real – can he ever have forgotten the Lord’s dealing with him over the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba? (Bathsheba, remember, was Solomon’s mother).

“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” (v. 14).

When David bought the threshing-floor as a place to build an altar to the Lord, Araunah wanted to give it to him – plus the oxen for burnt offerings, threshing sledges for wood and wheat as a grain offering, but David said, “No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing”