

## **I Chronicles 28 Looking forward in a time of transition**

### **Introduction**

Paul in Philippians 3:13-14 wrote these familiar words: <sup>13</sup> *Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead,* <sup>14</sup> *I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.* It may seem strange as we come very close to the end of a church year –and for many of us in full-time employment near to the time of a summer holiday when we want to relax and take things a little easier for a time – to think about the future of life beyond the holidays! The apostle, although he lived probably a little longer than the average person, in part due to the medical support from Doctor Luke! He was very conscious of the shortness of time and of making it count for God. We live in a world that is constantly changing. To our disappointment there are many occasions when we find that companies or individual people unreliable and untrustworthy often when we thought we could count on them. Relatives of a man called David Barker found that out over the Christmas season in December 2005. Widower David had been on his way to watch a Sheffield Wednesday match in Sheffield, but suffered a heart attack on the way and died at the wheel. His brother-in-law Leonard Douglas who came out to pick up the car noticed Robert's AA membership card and because he needed help starting the car due to a flat battery, he called out an AA patrolman to assist him. The patrolman asked if he was the policy-holder. Leonard said, no, actually that person had just died within the last hour or so - in that case, Leonard was told, the policy though paid up with months to run had expired with the holder. To gain assistance a new person would have to sign up for a policy! Later apologies for insensitivity were hardly acceptable! (*Daily Telegraph* 4.1.06 p.28) As Christians we serve a God who is faithful to His promises and His love towards us never ceases. In the midst of this gathering of Jewish people stood the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of the presence of God and the reminder of the grace of God since their formation as a nation in Egypt in the time of Moses. We too have reminders of past blessings, memories, indeed records of answered prayers, even our building here serves as a reminder of financial provision in past days, yet we need constantly to reflect again on the Lord who has brought us to our current opportunities to serve Him.

### **1. The Recognition of Past Blessings** (I Chronicles 28:1-5)

*David summoned all the officials of Israel to assemble at Jerusalem: the officers over the tribes, the commanders of the divisions in the service of the king, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of all the property and livestock belonging to the king and his sons, together with the palace officials, the warriors and all the brave fighting men.*<sup>2</sup> *King David rose to his feet and said: 'Listen to me, my fellow Israelites, my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, for the footstool of our God, and I made plans to build it.'*<sup>3</sup> *But God said to me, "You are not to build a house for My Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood."*<sup>4</sup> *'Yet the Lord, the God of Israel, chose me from my whole family to be king over Israel for ever. He chose Judah as leader, and from the tribe of Judah he chose my family, and from my father's sons he was pleased to make me king over all Israel.'*<sup>5</sup> *Of all my sons – and the Lord has given me many – He has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel* (I Chronicles 28:1-5). David is nearing the end of his life. It has been an era of unparalleled blessing in Israel's history, as well as an

unquestionably hard one, due to the numerous wars that had been fought and won. However, this era was closing and the future appeared uncertain to many of the people. In I Chronicles 28-29 there is an account of this large gathering of people seeking the Lord and acknowledging His way forward for the nation. David was greatly loved by the people because of his love for and devotion to them. We gather as followers of Jesus who declared of Himself in Luke 22:27 *I am among you as one who serves*. A similar view point was held by prominent leaders in the early church James (James 1:1); Peter (II Peter 1:1); Paul and Timothy (Philippians 1:1) referred to themselves as *servants* or *slaves of God* or of *Christ Jesus*. The context of the gathering is the formal handing over of power from David to his young son Solomon (29:1). Is this young man free to rule as he likes? No! The mission had not changed. The way it was to be accomplished and the timescale were longer than expected, but the guidance felt by David concerning this building project would be confirmed as from the Lord, but a task to be accomplished during the reign of his son Solomon

(a). **God requires an Obedient Servant** (I Chronicles 18:2-3) *King David rose to his feet and said: 'Listen to me, my fellow Israelites, my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, for the footstool of our God, and I made plans to build it. <sup>3</sup> But God said to me, "You are not to build a house for My Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood."* David's vision was to build the temple himself and to that end he had gathered all kinds of materials and prepared all kinds of plans for carry it into effect, but God said No! that task is left for others to lead and take forward. David had not appointed a successor when he should have done and various older sons Absalom (II Samuel 15-19) and Adonijah (I Kings 1) had sought to take the throne, an honour not destined for them. There are two issues here to reflect on – first of all patience; These two older sons failed to exercise the patience necessary to determine God's will – a problem that many of us –myself included– have difficulties with at times! Are there things really getting to you just now personally, or in the church family, where this quality is needed to be exercised? Secondly – inactivity; Could David have acted sooner and pointed out to these older boys and their brothers that Solomon, a younger brother, was the next ruler and avoided all the pain and grief the uncertainty had caused. There are times when the inactivity of leaders frustrates the people of God. It is very possible that David wanted to continue ruling for longer than his appointed time and was unwilling to consider that it was time to hand over some of his powers to Solomon. Here the emphasis is on the obedience of David to accept that some tasks in which he wanted to continue to lead were for others to take forward. We may think (correctly) that Solomon made a big mess of much of his rule- no wonder David wanted to continue in office! It was important, though, that he heard God make plain that young Solomon and other leaders would take forward the next phase of the life of the Israelite nation. It was not a case of going back to the drawing board because God had given the vision to His people. The question was simply how it would be accomplished and when –not if. I believe God has laid a burden on our hearts for outreach into our community and the importance of stepping out in faith to accomplish it. As in David's day we come humbly before the Lord and ask Him to guide us in the details of the 'how and when'.

(b). **God blesses an Obedient Servant** (I Chronicles 28:4-5)" <sup>4</sup> *'Yet the Lord, the God of Israel, chose me from my whole family to be king over Israel for ever. He chose Judah as leader, and from the tribe of Judah he chose my family, and from my father's sons he was pleased to make me king over all Israel. <sup>5</sup> Of all my sons – and the Lord has given me many – He has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel*

Our God is a God of surprises. David reminds the people of the sovereign purposes of God. He is the one who makes the choices and at a human level other choices may

have seemed more obvious. The tribe of Judah to be the ruling house in the nation. Judah was a black sheep of Jacob's family in his youth –yet in his old age showed the qualities God required and this man heard the astonishing prophecy from Jacob on his death bed (Genesis 49:10) *The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the One to whom it belongs.* Was David the most obvious choice for king in the tribe of Judah? No! he was the youngest son of a minor clan in little Bethlehem –David was not even in Samuel's mind when he went to anoint the next king. God had to tell Samuel (I Sam.16:7) *The Lord doesn't see things as you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.* Samuel and Jesse had done what God asked them to do and the will of God was made plain, but not how they expected. Undoubtedly there would be some people who were not happy with what happened. The thoughts of David's three older brothers who had wide experience of the world would have been interesting. However, seeking guidance from God is not deciding what we want to happen and then urging God to bless it. But being willing to step outside our comfort zone and allowing God to be God in our midst; that alone is the pathway to His blessing; The same message in the New Testament, John 15:16 Jesus said: *You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.* This is true for all of God's people, not just key leaders –Romans 16:13, in the list of names of people to greet, are some unknown ordinary people, for example, Paul wrote: *Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord...* In Romans 9:16 the principle is clearly stated: *it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.* The tasks God has for you in the coming months and years may be quite different from what you expected. There may be some changes you don't find easy to accept or responsibilities you would rather not have handled or a willingness to accept that God has not made mistakes – Solomon, like his father, was a younger son and in a culture where the first-born son almost automatically succeeded his father – very few people would have expected him to become king. In each of our lives there are times when God will ask us to do things we never expected to do or felt called to do –but He does not make mistakes. The question for each of us to face is simply this: Am I open to be used by God in the way He wishes or do I insist on the final say? In this church will I insist on wanting to get my way or will I be genuinely open to seeing things from a different perspective? An obedient servant of God is one who is open to the Lord redirecting our steps in order to accomplish His medium and long-term goals.

## 2. **The Requirements for Present Blessing** (I Chronicles 28:6-19)

(a). **The Qualities required in an Obedient Servant** (I Chronicles 28:6-8) *He said to me, "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. <sup>7</sup>I will establish his kingdom for ever if he is unswerving in carrying out My commands and laws, as is being done at this time."* <sup>8</sup> *'So now I charge you in the sight of all Israel and of the assembly of the Lord, and in the hearing of our God: be careful to follow all the commands of the Lord your God, that you may possess this good land and pass it on as an inheritance to your descendants for ever (I Chronicles 28:6-8).* Verse eight in the NKJV includes this statement *be careful to seek out all the commandments of the Lord your God, that you may possess this land...* The NLT version reads *Be careful to obey all the commands of the Lord Your God.* There has been a strong emphasis on election in I Chronicles 28:4-5, but here the emphasis is on human responsibility. Taking care requires diligence and effort. Following Jesus is at times a tough discipline and hard work. There are many times when we do not think 'Yippe

its time for prayer!’ –or the prayer meeting! It’s not like that and never has been, but like Jesus the model servant we need to be conscious of knowing the will of God and obeying it. Writer W.S. Gilbert many years ago reflected on the contribution of certain members of the British aristocracy who sat in the House of Lords. He declared: ‘They did nothing in particular and did it very well.’ The blessing of God on the land and the line of David on the throne was conditional not absolute. Verse seven states *If he continues to obey my commandments and regulations as he does now, I will make his kingdom last forever.* It is about finishing the course not just starting with a flourish. Many Christians start off well, but how many finish with the same zeal they had when first converted- not necessarily the same physical and mental energy, this declines as we get older, but the same passion for God? Paul in II Timothy 4:7-8 could declare confidently: *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me- the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge will give me on the day of His return. And the prize is not just for me, but for all who eagerly look forward to His appearing.* How tragic to fall short near the end of a race. On 4 January 2006 Helene Castel appeared in the highest Paris criminal court to be sentenced to life imprisonment for a bank robbery in which she had participated in 1980. Her three male companions (one killed at the scene) were quickly caught and put in prison, had served their terms and now were a doctor, historian and businessman respectively. She had transformed herself into Florencia Rivera Martin, a psychotherapist living in the Northern Mexican city of Jalapa. In France if you are not caught within 25 years your slate is wiped clean. Four days short of liberation this fugitive who lived dreading the knock at the door, opened her home to the sight of French Interior Ministry police in May 2004 (*The Times*, 5 January 06, p. 41). So close yet so far – one day you and I will stand before the Judge of the all the earth – what will be the verdict on your life and mine? David has grasped the fact that God must be in control. In Psalm 139:5-6 he wrote: *You hem me in behind and before, and You lay Your hand upon me.* <sup>6</sup> *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.* There is no other way but to ‘trust and obey’ as the hymn writer John Samis expressed it in his hymn ‘When we walk with the Lord’ (CMP760). Is there an area of your life you need to hand over to the Lord today?

(b). **The Calling of an Obedient Servant** (I Chronicles 28:9-19) *‘And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve Him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you for ever.* <sup>10</sup> ***Consider now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house as the sanctuary. Be strong and do the work***’ (I Chronicles 28:9-10). In the presence of the great multitude this young man was charged with a solemn responsibility to obey the Lord. First, *learn to know the God of your ancestors intimately* (v9) This calling requires a personal relationship with the Lord, not a second-hand faith. Do you know the Lord? Have you put your faith in Jesus? If you don’t know – speak to someone after the service and let them pray with you if appropriate –and do so today! Secondly *Worship and serve Him with your whole heart and a willing mind.* Giving God the honour and glory due to His name- only one place on the throne of your life and mine –who is currently occupying it you or God? It cannot be both! This is a New Testament principle too: In Luke 10:27, a religious lawyer correctly answered Jesus’ question regarding the requirements for eternal life said: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.* It is intellect and emotions –the whole person that is involved. Does Jesus have this place in your life today?

For Solomon his life was mapped out for him the plans drawn up, the materials in large measure collected –though some especially the more common variety such as wood were shipped in from Lebanon nearer the time of the actual building of the temple. Like David he accepted (v19) that this calling of God went beyond a single generation. Today we admire the architecture or the British Cathedrals, especially the Norman ones with their amazing structures built so many centuries ago without any modern lifting equipment or tools. Generations of workmen in particular families would have spent their entire lives contributing to a small part of that building, and content for it to be so. Spiritually in this church, and every other real community of faith, we are building God’s kingdom in partnership with other men and women who rely on each other, together, to erect the spiritual walls of God’s temple in this place – can you be counted on in the work today and in coming days?

Solomon never appears to have resented how much his father had under God’s guidance planned out much of his life. He was willing to recognise that he was part of a team in the bigger scheme of things for God. It was not a case of him saying what do I want, but a willingness to follow the plan God had given to David and those who worked most closely with him. Am I a team player for God willing to work with other people to accomplish His goals? Am I willing to accept not getting my own way when a majority of people in a ministry or the church as a whole sense God’s leading in a particular direction? In a Baptist Church one of the strengths of our convictions over the centuries has been the willingness of each member to acknowledge that there are times when we need to trust that the larger proportion of the church have correctly discerned the Lord’s will on some major issue and been willing to go forward with it even when it was not our sincerely held conviction at the time. If our Lord in Gethsemane could pray: *Father, if You are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but Yours be done* (Luke 22:42), then we as His obedient servants must be willing also to acknowledge that our preferences for ways forward might also have to be given up at times.

### 3. **The Source of Future Blessings** (I Chronicles 28:20-21)

(a). **The Promise** (I Chronicles 28:20) *David also said to Solomon his son, ‘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.* There are echoes here of the promises of God to the Israelites in Joshua 1:2 after the death of Moses. *Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the River Jordan into the land I am about to give to them.* God had not changed His mind about the calling to enter Canaan –the issue was whether enough Israelites were willing to join Him in fulfilling the calling He had entrusted to them. Praise God that in Joshua’s day the nation was willing to go forward in faith. Are we willing to take big steps of faith to reach our communities here with the Gospel? If we are God will be faithful is equipping and enabling us to accomplish it. The same God is at work in our midst as in Joshua’s day. Jesus gave a similar assurance in Matthew 28:20 *And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.* Likewise in Hebrews 13:5-6 it states: *For God has said, I will never fail you. I will never abandon you. So we can say with confidence, The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?* Romans 8:31 reminds us: *What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us?* The question before us is this- am I claiming and believing the promises? Or do I believe that God can only be counted to help the person sitting in the pew next to me. What

God has started in you He will finish. The gifts He has given you are for a purpose to be used for His glory and to encourage other Christians as we work together for Him, both inside this church and together with other Christian congregations. It is outside our remit to tell God how He should work, in whom or through whom. We must always remember it is the Lord who is in charge!

(b). **The Provision** (I Chronicles 28:21) *The various divisions of priests and Levites will serve in the Temple of God. **Others with skills of every kind will volunteer**, and the officials and the entire nation are at your command.* God has made us all different. Paul told the Corinthian Christians in I Cor.12:4-6: *There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.* The hand cannot say I don't need the feet, or the eye to the ear. Every one is needed and every person has something to enhance the work of the Lord in this place. If you are not using your gifts to serve the Lord prayerfully seek what you should be doing – if you need people to pray with you about it come forward at the end and there are those who will pray with you –God's work will only be done in His way if all His people are wholeheartedly committed to serving Him year after year. ***Others with skills of every kind will volunteer...*** (v21); to follow God's revealed plan is not restricting but liberating. When God opens doors we need to walk through them not find excuses why we ought not to acknowledge His leading. As we yield ourselves obediently to Him we open up the opportunity to receive the blessings He has in store for His obedient children. May God help you and God help me to honour Him by following His plans and purposes in coming days, Amen.