

# 1 Chronicles 17 • Man's Desire vs. God's

## Introduction

So often we discuss the consequences of wrong choices which, from the outset, are so obviously based in sin or contrary to God's Word that we're not surprised at the dreadful outcome. In such discussions we hopefully learn the lesson of running **TO** God instead of **AWAY** from Him. Yet, the same kind of a thing can happen even with good, well-intentioned things when we do not submit them wholly to God in the first place. Scripture teaches that **everything** needs to be submitted for God's approval because even the best of intentions can be corrupted by man's pride to take personal credit or alter their course so as to arrive at a different result than originally intended. This lesson isn't about man's sinful desires and how they're contrary to a righteous and holy God, but about even those seemingly good desires for the things of God.

<sup>1</sup>And it came about, when David dwelt in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, "Behold, I am dwelling in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD is under curtains."

<sup>2</sup>Then Nathan said to David, "Do all that is in your heart, for God is with you."

### [Read v.1-2]

**Q: Based on what has been written about David, even though this seems like a "slam dunk" issue, what seems to be missing that we would normally expect him to do?**

A: He does not inquire of the Lord. David has done so not just for situations when he was unsure of God's desires, but even for times when he already knew God's standing orders such as dealing with the Philistines. This is usually the key indicator that something is about to go wrong in David's life, when he pursues a course of action without first inquiring of the Lord.

**Q: How is this exacerbated by Nathan?**

A: As a prophet, his first response should have been, "Let's inquire of the Lord." Like David, the idea sounds so good, it doesn't appear to need divine verification.

**Application:** Have you ever been part of a program at church or some kind of ministry which seemed like a sure-fire good idea, but ultimately failed? Why do you suppose that was? Is it possible that it seemed so good that it didn't require immersion in prayer and seeking God's affirmation? Did it sound so good to the spiritual leaders that they simply gave their approval without likewise seeking God's approval?

### [Read v.3-10a]

<sup>3</sup>It came about the same night that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, <sup>4</sup>"Go and tell David My servant, 'Thus says the LORD, "You shall not build a house for Me to dwell in; <sup>5</sup>for I have not dwelt in a house since the day that I brought up Israel to this day, but I have gone from tent to tent and from *one* dwelling place *to another*. <sup>6</sup>In all places where I have walked with all Israel, have I spoken a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people, saying, 'Why have you not built for Me a house of cedar?'"

<sup>7</sup>"Now, therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be leader over My people Israel. <sup>8</sup>I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a name like the name

**Q: How would you characterize God's initial response?**

A: David's desire is not God's desire. What David has proposed, God has never requested of **any** leader.

**Q: What might be the reason God didn't just let David go ahead with even such a good desire? How could it possibly hurt anything?**

A: At this point, it would be a completely human endeavor. The history of man parallels his problem with pride, the source of all sin. Even something that sounds as good as building a temple for the Lord can be corrupted if it's undertaken solely by man's will. God's reminder to David of His own humble travels with Israel is a stark contrast to the pride of a man wanting to change that. The bottom line is that it's not God's will.

**Q: In v.6, what does God say which broadly hints as being the thing He considers to be the first and foremost responsibility of a spiritual leader?**

A: God characterizes the judges as being "*commanded to shepherd My people*". This is the first and foremost responsibility which God does not want distracted so that the people, who make up the **TRUE** temple worshiping God, will not be forsaken for a building. If that happened, there would actually be no temple at all, no matter how wonderful the

of the great ones who are in the earth. <sup>9</sup>I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and not be moved again; and the wicked will not waste them anymore as formerly, <sup>10a</sup>even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel. And I will subdue all your enemies.

physical, earthly structure.

**Application:** *Have you ever known a church or organization that seemed to become more concerned for its facilities and programs than the actual people? Even to the point of sometimes choosing things over people? Have you noticed how God's first accusations against Israel through His prophets are almost always that they've forsaken the needs of others even though they've maintained operation of the temple and priesthood? God's priorities are often different from man's.*

**Q: What is God reminding David of in v.7-8?**

A: That David's only in the position to even think about such things because it was brought about by God's will. When great things are accomplished, whether it be a temple for the Lord or elevating a simple shepherd to be the greatest king of Israel, such things don't come about by man's will and desire, but God's.

**Q: And how does God remind David of the priority of spiritual leaders to be shepherds first in v.9-10?**

A: God's first concern is that Israel will be firmly planted and secure. It's not alluding just to physical conditions, but spiritual as well. Remember that the enemies God directed them to remove in the process of taking the Promised Land were their greatest spiritual enemies who, if left unchecked, would bring about the worst spiritual influences possible. God's first concern is establishment of the quality of His people's spiritual walk.

**Application:** *Have you ever known a person, church, or organization to engage in an undertaking that they say will make the people spiritually stronger? Is it possible they didn't work out because it was putting the cart before the horse, so to speak, that spiritual stability was the lacking first step?*

**[Read v.10b-15]**

**Q: What is the first surprising revelation in v.10?**

A: God's personal plans are not yet completed for David. Although he has accomplished much to this point in unifying Israel, subduing the nations around him, and even having built his own physical house in Jerusalem, the whole of God's plans are yet to be fulfilled.

**Application:** *Is it possible that in seeking to become part of something larger than our self, we forget to seek God's will for us personally even over and above the perceived "bigger" things? Personal faithfulness is sometimes lost when we lose ourselves in bigger things.*

**Q: What is the second surprising revelation in v.11?**

A: God will firmly establish a kingdom to follow David's, ruled by one of David's sons.

**Point:** *Perhaps we begin to think more of ourselves than we ought if we think that no one can do a thing except us. Like David, we need to be reminded that it's God's plan and God's timing, not our own. It's as much a test of faith for us preparing the way as for those who will take it to completion.*

**Q: What is the third surprising revelation in v.12-14?**

A: This isn't just the person through whom God is going to erect a building, but is going to establish something even greater, "his throne forever". God's plans are far more extensive than just an earthly thing.

<sup>10b</sup>Moreover, I tell you that the LORD will build a house for you. <sup>11</sup>When your days are fulfilled that you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up *one of* your descendants after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>12</sup>He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. <sup>13</sup>I will be his father and he shall be My son; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. <sup>14</sup>But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever."'''

<sup>15</sup>According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

**Application:** Have you noticed how programs or even church building endeavors can become a thing unto their self? How does one prevent a continuing commitment to the “thing” at the expense of the actual ministry and working which was originally intended for the thing?

**Q: What is God politely reminding David of in .v14?**

A: It's not David's house, but “My house”; it's not David's kingdom, but “My kingdom”. It goes back to the issue that such things are to be established exclusively according to God's will and ways, not man's, lest man deceive himself into thinking he's brought these things about, or elevated these things beyond their proper place.

**Q: A partial, literal fulfillment naturally occurs through David's son Solomon. But through whom does the final, complete fulfillment come?**

A: Through Jesus Christ. The repeated teaching of the New Testament is that **WE** are the temple.

**Point:** God often has plans that are far greater and deeper than even our best imagination or intentions. David's vision of the future was very limited compared to God's plan through Him for eternity. It's the same with us.

**[Read v.16-22]**

<sup>16</sup>Then David the king went in and sat before the Lord and said, “Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my house that You have brought me this far? <sup>17</sup>This was a small thing in Your eyes, O God; but You have spoken of Your servant's house for a great while to come, and have regarded me according to the standard of a man of high degree, O LORD God. <sup>18</sup>What more can David still say to You concerning the honor bestowed on Your servant? For You know Your servant. <sup>19</sup>O LORD, for Your servant's sake, and according to Your own heart, You have wrought all this greatness, to make known all these great things. <sup>20</sup>O LORD, there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears. <sup>21</sup>And what one nation in the earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people, to make You a name by great and terrible things, in driving out nations from before Your people, whom You redeemed out of Egypt? <sup>22</sup>For Your people Israel You made Your own people forever, and You, O LORD, became their God.

**Q: What is David's response?**

A: True humility and worship of God. All vestiges of pride have been removed.

**Point:** This is always the best approach to “correcting” one's direction so that it once again conforms to God's, but is also the ideal starting point to avoid having to make such a correction later.

**Q: What is David's acknowledgment in v.18-19?**

A: Everything is going to be brought about according to God's desires – **HIS** will and way and timing – not man's.

**Q: What is the affirmation with which David follows up in v.20-22?**

A: That God has **ALWAYS** been faithful in the past to fulfill His Word not only exactly as promised, but to an even greater degree than expected. Therefore, it's a kind of faith statement in God to fulfill these things to come in the same way.

**Q: What word is used in v.21 as a reminder that nothing has come about according to man's will or efforts?**

A: “Redeem”. We are incapable of anything on our own. The entire process begins and end with God. Salvation is something that actually began before creation and extends into the life to come. God's working towards things infinitely beyond man's grasp.

**Q: Harkening back to the theme running through this chapter of what God expects of spiritual leaders, how is this affirmed in v.22?**

A: That the work of faithfulness has been completed to such a degree that they become His people and He becomes their God. The temple is something that actually isn't necessary for this. The greater work of molding the heart is what is established.

<sup>23</sup>“Now, O LORD, let the word that You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house be established forever, and do as You have spoken. <sup>24</sup>Let Your name be established and magnified forever, saying, ‘The LORD of hosts is the God of Israel, *even* a God to Israel; and the house of David Your servant is established before You.’ <sup>25</sup>For You, O my God, have revealed to Your servant that You will build for him a house; therefore Your servant has found *courage* to pray before You. <sup>26</sup>Now, O LORD, You are God, and have promised this good thing to Your servant. <sup>27</sup>And now it has pleased You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You; for You, O LORD, have blessed, and it is blessed forever.”

### **[Read v.23-27]**

**Q: What are the two things David desires above all else? How does it indicate that his priorities are now in alignment with God’s?**

A: “...let the word that You have spoken...be established forever...Let Your name be established and magnified forever...” These priorities not only establish truth as the foundation of his pursuits, but mitigates to the greatest degree possible that his own pride is at work in these things.

**Q: Why might it be possible that some people would not consider this to be a happy ending? What does that indicate about them?**

A: Some might think David fell short of the best possible outcome because God was not granting the original desire of David's heart. People who react that way aren't actually seeking God's will, but their own. David was not disappointed because God's will **HAD** been revealed to him so that he might pursue the right things for the right reasons.

**Point:** *The real reward is knowing God's will, whatever it is.*

### **Overall Application**

- *When things are desperate, we nearly always go to the Lord in depth. But what about the things that seem so good that they don't appear to require a depth of inquiry? How fervently do you seek God's affirmation of such things?*
- *How might this apply to both one's personal ministry and to the church as a whole? How sincerely do we seek His affirmation of every single thing?*
- *How confident are you that your current efforts are fully aligned with God's will?*