

Prepared for God

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at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.
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I Chronicles 29:1-17

Furthermore King David said to all the assembly: "My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced; and the work is great, because the temple is not for man but for the Lord God. 2 Now for the house of my God I have prepared with all my might: gold for things to be made of gold, silver for things of silver, bronze for things of bronze, iron for things of iron, wood for things of wood, onyx stones, stones to be set, glistening stones of various colors, all kinds of precious stones, and marble slabs in abundance. 3 Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver: 4 three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses; 5 the gold for things of gold and the silver for things of silver, and for all kinds of work to be done by the hands of craftsmen. Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?" 6 Then the leaders of the fathers' houses, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the officers over the king's work, offered willingly. 7 They gave for the work of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. 8 And whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the Lord, into the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite. 9 Then the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the Lord; and King David also rejoiced greatly. 10 Therefore David blessed the Lord before all the assembly; and David said: "Blessed are You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. 11 Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, And You are exalted as head over all. 12 Both riches and honor come from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great And to give strength to all. 13 "Now therefore, our God, We thank You And praise Your glorious name. 14 But who am I, and who are my people, That we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, And of Your own we have given You. 15 For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, As were all our fathers; Our days on earth are as a shadow, And without hope. 16 "O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have prepared to build You a house for Your holy name is from Your hand, and is all Your own. 17 I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things; and now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here to offer willingly to You.

Tozer once wrote,

“What a glorious company they were, those heroes and heroines of the Bible, whose deeds were recorded but whose names were not given! There is another book kept by the One who never slumbers nor forgets, and in that book the anonymous great have their names as well as their deeds recorded. After all, a deed without a name is better than a name without a deed.”

I once feared (and I'm sure that to some degree I still do; I do not trust myself) that all my labor for Christ would go unnoticed by the world. There would be deeds without a name. Now I know that this proved one thing: that my labor was not for my Lord, but for me. I have a new fear; I now fear that I shall go to my Lord without any deed—that the labors of my life shall be small. I fear closing my eyes in this world and opening them in the next realizing that I did not sacrifice anything for the King—that my sword lay more silent than wielded in His service. Perhaps this fear proves that I cannot see what God has done through me unless it measures some level of greatness in my own eyes, which means I've traded one pride for another. Or is it possible that finally the Lord of the second, third, and fourth chance, or for that matter, the God of infinite mercy has taught me my name matters not; all that matters is what is done in His name?

Whatever the reason, I come today to tell you that I wish to trade all pride away for true selflessness. I wish to give my life away—its reputation, its ease, its pleasures—so that I may give my life to what pleases my God. I am a branded man speaking to the same, and the brand we bear is His sweet name. We are His and not our own. We therefore, cannot labor for any other cause but His. “Jesus only” must be the battle cry from our lips. The best soldier is he that fights for the cause and not for glory. Our cause is Christ and we march into battle for His glory. To fight for one's own self makes one a mercenary. Too long, too many of us have been mercenaries and not ministers.

The servant must devote himself to the cause of his master. If he neglects this, purposely or not, for any other cause, no matter how noble, he is not a faithful servant. We must determine to do one thing and do it with all our might—serve the Lord, who loved us and gave Himself for us. What better day to make such a resolve than on this first day of the new year. We must become single-minded and wholehearted. We must learn to say, “This one thing I do” and follow through.

It is my assessment after long and difficult praying, thinking, and listening that we have misunderstood waiting on God to mean idleness until God does something. Even though I have over the years often confronted this mentality, we remain a people who are waiting for some great miracle. Once we see the great sign of God's power, then and only then will we get into motion and give our all. Once we have been given a guarantee of success, then and only then will we really put on the armor, pick up the sword, enter the heat of battle, and fight.

I know I am much to blame for this. I am consumed with seeing God active as He was in the Bible. I am unmovable in my belief that He has not changed His mode of operation. My conviction about this has moved me to passionately preach and convince us that He “is the same yesterday,

today and forever.” However, every strength carries its own weakness with it, and the weakness of this stance is that it has somehow translated into your hearts and minds that there is nothing for us to do until God comes upon the scene as some ancient king returning to his kingdom after a long absence. Once the monarch returns then we can begin the work of rebuilding the disarray and disintegration of the city.

And so, we pray God will save, and we say nothing to the sinner. We ask God to show up and rescue our children, but we neglect to teach our children the God of the gospel. We seek God to intervene and grow our church, but we fail to labor for the church. We plead in prayer for our neighbors, factories, and schools to be converted, yet we do not gird up our loins and do one thing to reach them. We wrongly assume to wait on God in prayer means God must make the first move.

No doubt we are commanded to wait on God in prayer, and I will deal with this subject next week as we begin a week of prayer. But, we must not squeeze this wrong definition of idleness into the words “waiting on God.” Why are we waiting for God to make the first move when He already has? He sent His Son into the world and He died for us. He saved us by His Spirit and then told us, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.” Isn’t this enough for us? What then are we waiting for?

Someone, even my own conscience, might answer, “But did not Jesus command the apostles to do no ministry until they had been endued with power from on high?” My answer is yes, but they had every intention of laboring, even giving their lives in the Master’s service. Do we have the same intention? Are we really interested in God’s power so that we may work effectively, or are we really wanting an idyllic world where everything we touch turns to gold and there are no harsh and painful sacrifices required? Is that what we are waiting for?

Have we read and heard of great revivals where it seems the Midas touch was given and everything was gloriously easy? Then I say we misunderstood those revivals and heard only what we wanted to hear. The records of those great moves of God’s Spirit show us many nights when sleep was forsaken in order to pray. They tell us of ordinary men and women coming under intense burdens to labor in prayer and proclamation to see loved ones and neighbors come to know the Lord. There are many testimonies of men of God extinguishing their physical lives by sheer exhaustion to see men spiritually prepared for eternity. I think of the pastor of First Baptist Church here in Paducah, J. J. Cheeks who in 1906 was used of God in a mighty awakening; a thousand souls were converted in two months. Cheeks died six months later from the exhaustion of his labors. Revivals are not easy. They require the hardest thing—to die to one’s self, and then give away what’s left of you.

So yes, if it is true that we desire to go to work for the Lord realizing that supernatural power is required, and we are willing to be consumed by the divine flame, even to the point of extinguishment, then, by all means, let us begin today and wait together in prayer until the blessing comes. I am convinced that it would come for God will not despise the desperate heart. But, if you do not

mean to sacrifice and suffer the loss of your worldly plans and be set on God's course for the rest of your life, then you will wait in vain. Nothing will happen! You will have neither a name nor a deed!

I say this is what has happened to us generally. However, in my case, it is not as simple as this. I do know we are not to act as if there is nothing for us to do but pray. I know that we are to do more than pray. My conviction that God is still supernatural as seen in the Scriptures does not mean we are to practice idleness, waiting for an explosion of power. No, my error has been a laziness to lead brought on by a fear of failure.

If you are afraid of failure and do nothing to resist it, then failure is certain. The failure you fear is destined to come. I confess to you that often my heart has frozen within me, paralyzed so that I could not lead. It is indeed a paralysis. You are robbed of both motive and mobility. You cannot stir yourself as other times. You want to see God move and mighty things accomplished, but the prospect of failure immobilizes effort.

The inner voice of doubt whispered (and I longed believed it), "Why attempt it when it will not work? Why try when you know God will not do it? He will not help you. He did not help you in the past, why should He now? All your best efforts failed because God did not show up." My fear would speak to me saying, "The outcome is not worth the effort."

Someone said, "It is better to try and fail, then to have not tried at all." As far as proverbs and axioms go, I'm sure it's true, but my heart would not buy into it because it feared the failure. To me it was safer, and therefore better, to have not tried so that failure may be avoided. Yet, failure still came. Not the failure of an attempt gone awry or an effort not successful, but the failure due to negligence and dereliction of duty.

Consequently, I have avoided the harder work of leadership, concluding that it was easier to suffer the embarrassment of an unsuccessful life, than the embarrassment of trying to do big things and fail. I had plenty of experience at failure before many of you came here. I've seen my best efforts whither away, like a pile of leaves blown away by a heavy wind. I have a constant reminder of failure every time I look behind these buildings.

As a result, mostly unconsciously, I lied to myself that I was doing the spiritual thing—waiting on God. Honesty, however, calls it something much different—I chose to do nothing. I had weighed the two evils: retreat into a hole of indecision and hope God would surprise me, or try again and fail. I chose what I thought to be the lesser evil, all the while blaming God because I had waited and He had not shown up. With this choice, I could congratulate my patience and think myself a man of great endurance and perseverance. I could tell myself that I had tried, and tried often, but it was just not the right time.

It's true we must wait for God's time, but my waiting has not been biblical, for the most part. It has been idleness. It has been a refusal to do things that are difficult, sacrificial, and costly. This is

my sin, and I confess it before you and the Lord.

I confess not only my sin but my reclamation also. *Reclamation* is a great word from the Latin meaning to reclaim. The Lord has come and reclaimed me and touched me. I can see more clearly now. I can see that God only uses those who work hard for Him, who labor strenuously while waiting for God. Spurgeon said it this way: “What kind of men does the Master mean to use? They must be laborers. The man who does not make hard work of his ministry will find it very hard to answer for his idleness at the last great day.”

I am willing to go back and learn from my mistakes. Again I quote Spurgeon’s words to you because the Lord uses this man to speak life to me. Spurgeon said to his audience,

What is the use of regret unless we can rise by it to a better future? Sighs, which do not rise us higher, are an ill use of vital breath. Chasten yourselves, but be not discouraged. Gather up the arrows which aforesaid fell wide of the mark, not to break them into passionate despair, but to send them to the target with direct aim, and a more concentrated force. Weave victories out of defeats. Learn success from failure, wisdom from blundering.

So, I say to us all this first day of January 2012, let’s not wait until we can do some great thing for God. Let’s learn wisdom from all our blundering. Let’s start over and do the little things that are within our God-given graces to do. Let’s use the grace given instead of wishing for greater grace. Then the Lord will bid us higher, if that is His will. And if it please Him that we stay in our lowly position, then let us content ourselves that we are pleasing Him. Please, let this be your great pleasure—to please your Father in heaven.

If you wish to be a great in the kingdom, then don’t forget our Lord’s pathway to greatness, “whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant” (Matthew 20:26). If you want to be a great chef, then you must begin to learn how to wash pots and pans in the kitchen. If you want to be a great general, you must first be a cadet in boot camp. Be content to start somewhere in the Master’s service and let the final place of service be His gift to you and not your demand. There are some in His service who will not serve but where they wish. They refuse the lesser stations wanting only the larger places. They miss the opportunities of today waiting for the hope of a larger opportunity tomorrow.

From the text we read earlier an example of what I am trying to say. First, I want you to see that David prepared and gave.

*“Now for the house of my God **I have prepared with all my might:** gold for things to be made of gold, silver for things of silver, bronze for things of bronze, iron for things of iron, wood for things of wood, onyx stones, stones to be set, glistening stones of various colors, all kinds of precious stones, and marble slabs in abundance.” (1 Chronicles 29:2)*

Please, notice that David says, “I have prepared with all my might.” David did not build the temple.

In fact, God had told him that he would not do so, but his Solomon would be granted that task. Yet, with all of David's might he does what he can do—prepare, prepare! He did all that He could do to make it possible for Solomon to build and he did so with all his might.

Second, see that David did this because his heart was to see a temple built.

“Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver.” (1 Chronicles 29:3)

The problem of Christian service is not a lack of ability but heart. That is where it begins and ends—in the heart. When you want it, you will do it. Simple isn't it; it's the way God made us. When your affections, passions, desires are in it, you will do it. I suggest that the first thing we do, is ask God to give us hearts that beat with His heart beat, that feel as His heart feels.

Third, the people also willingly worked and gave.

*“Then the leaders of the fathers' houses, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the officers over the king's work, **offered willingly**. They gave for the work of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. And whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the LORD, into the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite. Then the people rejoiced, for **they had offered willingly**, because with a loyal heart **they had offered willingly to the LORD**; and King David also rejoiced greatly.” (1 Chronicles 29:6-9)*

The people were joyful and rejoiced for one reason. It was not because they had seen God do a miracle, at least not in the conventional definition of a miracle. They rejoiced because they had offered willingly and had completed the task. Their joy was in their service; they were doing what they wanted to do. Serving God carries with it its own reward of joy, if done from the heart.

The last things I want to point out before I make application is that God was in all that was given.

“But who am I, and who are my people, That we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, And of Your own we have given You.” (1 Chronicles 29:14)

David realized that something happened in their giving to the construction of the temple that was beyond them. He knew that God had made it possible. In the willingness of the people to serve there was God's activity. In their generosity God was at work. The Lord had given all that the people gave to Him. David is praising God for all that had occurred and yet several times the text states that David and his people offered their gifts willingly to the Lord. How does this compute?

The answer is that this story is a beautiful explanation of the responsibility of man and the sovereignty of God and how the two are not opposed but joined together in perfect harmony. God blesses those who prepare themselves for Him so that what they accomplish is God working His will through them. It is the same message as Philippians 2:12-13,

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”

Now, let me make two points of application. The first is the people were able to give what they gave because they saw it. In other words, they had seen David’s vision for a temple. They could see the goal. It was something that they could get their hearts into.

What is the vision of Oak Grove Baptist Church? What can we see so convincingly that we can almost taste it? When you see it, you will be inclined to offer yourself to its fruition.

Second and final application of the text is a reliance upon God. The reliance was not that God would miraculously build the temple or even provide the materials. The reliance was that He would accomplish something from their efforts. David’s and the people’s faith was that God would accomplish something with their efforts. They believed that God would take what they did and He would do something with it. And they trusted that God alone would determine how great or large or small it would be.

That is the key for us today. How can we anticipate and trust God for results if we are not laboring? If we do not offer willingly something for Him to work with how can He bring a result?

So, what are the opportunities to do the work of God today? First, we must ask ourselves has God given us a vision of something we can see and get our hearts around? Yes, He has commanded us to do all that we do for His glory. This is the ultimate goal of every believer. This is why you were born the first time and why God birthed you a second time—for His glory. Our task is to bring Christ honor and majesty in everything we do. But that can be sometimes hard to put a handle on, to always see it.

Christ solved this difficulty before He ascended back into Heaven. He gave us something we could see, something we could grip with both heart and mind, something we could measure our progress. What was it? The Great Commission.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

The vision for OGBC is making disciples. Let me state it as plainly and primitively as I can—our vision ought to be to see how many disciples we can make! That’s it. I can get my hands on

that. Let's see how many disciples we can make in this world today, this year, next ten years, the remainder of our time on earth. How many disciples can I make for the glory of Jesus Christ?

I want to share three things that I want to offer willingly to the Lord for Him to do His work of disciple making through us. I will not go into much depth this morning; more will come later. These three things I pray are enough to help us see the vision.

1. Commitment to Touch the World.

Let us be resolved today that we have one field in which to labor, and that field is the world. It's not just Western Kentucky or the United States. Jesus told us to go "unto all nations." In order for this to happen we must change our minds to believe it is possible that God can use us to touch the world. Believe with me the size of our church is irrelevant. Believe that God uses the small, the weak, and the base to touch communities, nations, and eternity.

In order for us to begin to have a larger world view when it comes to disciple making I am proposing we reform the Oak Grove Baptist Church Mission Board and invest in it the authority to lead us in touching world for the glory of Christ. This board will be a group of men and women among you who will lead us by keeping us informed about our missionaries and presenting opportunities for us to serve.

2. Structure for Success.

We must believe that God wants us to be fruitful and prepare for it. Jesus was very clear that it His intention that every believer be not just fruitful but abundant in productivity.

"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit." (John 15:2)

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." (John 15:8)

We need to structure ourselves in such a way that we are ready to receive the fruit from our labors. If we believe we will see God use our work to produce His results, then we should be ready to receive His harvest.

Therefore, to structure us for success I am proposing the formation of a Leadership Council. The Leadership Council will be an administrative body and not a governing body. The governing of the church, according to the Bible, is delegated to pastors and elders. This group will assist me in the administrative oversight of the ministries of our church. Each ministry will have a leadership council representative. For example, the Sunday School ministry will have one person

representing that ministry on the council. Our Evangelism ministry will have one person on the council. The OGBC mission board will have a representative. All ministries of the church will be represented on the council.

The Leadership Council's main purpose is ministry planning and accountability. Each ministry will be responsible to receive, through prayer, the ministry's vision and goals, and implement the vision and goals received. The ministries' representatives will report to the Leadership Council each ministry's vision, activities, progress, and needs. The council will not tell the ministries how to do their ministry but be a support to them.

One of the failures of our ministries has been the lack of accountability and communication. We start a ministry and in a few months it seems to fizzle due to the lack of accountability and support. The council will provide both. The council will bear the responsibility to communicate the burden, needs and progress of the ministries of OGBC to the congregation, keeping the church informed of what is happening in the pursuit of our goal to glorify Christ in the making of disciples.

The final proposal is new ministries. We need to revive some ministries that need to be either restructured or revitalized in vision and purpose. But there is also need for new ministries. The first proposed ministry is a biblical deacon ministry. It is my hope that in the next three to six months, this ministry will be a reality.

The second ministry I am proposing to start is an apologetics ministry. We are living in a post-Christian nation. People know little to nothing about the Bible. Many actually think Peter, James and John is some rock and roll band. There is a complete ignorance of God and His Scriptures. Therefore, this generation will have real and tough questions for real Christians they come in contact with. We are commanded in 1 Peter 3:15, "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." I want you to receive that training and information. I want you to be able to answer the tough questions that this generation is asking. This will be a perpetual ministry where leaders will be produced who can continue this ongoing instruction.

The last ministry I want implemented is a small group ministry. Before this year is done I want to see a small group, home-based ministry started. It's going to require some of you to be leaders who will meet with me in a home on a night other than what we meet now. I know this is a huge commitment but ample training is involved to launch such an enormous endeavor. If we are to structure for success, we need to be able to grow smaller as we grow larger. This ministry is one of the ways to do so.

We will do these things in the faith that God will make something to result from our labor. We will not think that we are doing anything other than obeying our Lord who told us to make disciples. Let us do this one thing with the belief and reliance that He will take our labor and bless it according to His counsel and glory.

In the movie, *Facing the Giants*, a Mr. Bridges, a man of prayer, passed by the lockers of the students and prayed for a move of God in the high school. Coach Taylor shared with Mr. Bridges his lack of faith, "I admit to you I have been struggling. But I've also been praying. I just don't see Him at work here."

The more seasoned Christian replied, "Grant, I heard a story about two farmers who desperately needed rain. And both of them prayed for rain. But only one of them went out and prepared his fields to receive it. Which one do you think trusted God to send the rain?"

Coach Taylor answered, "The one that prepared his fields for it."

Mr. Bridges knew Grant Taylor was open for his challenge and said, "Which one are you? God will send the rain when He's ready. And you need to prepare your field to receive it."

I want to be the kind of farmer who knows God is going to send the rain. I want to be the kind of Christian that works the fields given to me by the Lord of the harvest. I want us to be church that prepares the fields of Western Ky, Southern Il, and the places in the world that He sends us and believe God for the results. What is true faith? It is a faith that goes into the fields and plants the seed because it trusts God for a harvest. Yes, it's true; we must let God handle the results. But, I ask you, how can God work results through us if we have done no labor? Have we become so focused on a harvest that we have not focused on sowing seed? Have we become a harvest-oriented people in the midst of an unseeded generation?

When will you stop the lies you tell yourself? When will you stop believing the lies Satan whispers to your heart? The voice that says, "God will never do anything with me?" is a voice of deceit. "What I do will not matter" is a lie that must be cast down. Or the great hope-killer, "It will always be this way. Why try if it only means failure?" must be confronted and denied. As for me, the lies stop today. What about you? Amen.