

# The Willingness That Precedes the Glory

by Carter Conlon

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*Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes that true willingness in giving is essential for experiencing God's glory in our lives.*

**Duration:** 59:27

**Scripture:** Exodus 35:21, Psalm 103:14, Malachi 3:10, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 10:28, Matthew 10:39

**Topics:** "Willing"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of willingly offering ourselves to God's purposes, even in times of oppression. He draws examples from the book of Judges, highlighting the stories of Deborah and Barak, as well as Gideon. The speaker shares his personal conviction that his family will be a missions family for four generations, and that God will prosper them financially to support global outreach. He encourages listeners to trust in God's provision and care, reminding them of God's faithfulness to provide for the sparrows and the flowers. The sermon concludes with a reminder of God's promise to bless and protect those who faithfully serve Him.

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## Transcript

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If you could just keep your Bible open there. We're going to be going there very shortly. But before we go there, I want to share with you this morning that I am in some measure going to speak on tithing.

Now, this is not a message on tithing in particular. And certainly nobody can ever accuse this church of having a money focus. I have been here ten and a half years now.

To my knowledge, this is the third time I've spoken on this topic. Pastor Neal has never spoken on it. And I'm not aware.

I've not been in every service, but I'm not aware of Pastor David ever having spoken on tithing. And I have somewhat of a reluctance in my heart to even address it. Because of what has happened to this issue of tithing in the house of God in our generation.

The very same thing happened in the generation just before Samuel came to be a judge of Israel. There was a very backslidden priest called Eli, and he had sons. And the scripture said the sons of this backslidden priest.

You see, when they made an offering, the priest had a three-pronged hook. And when people came to make an offering to the Lord or a sacrifice to God, the priests were to execute that office and they were to throw that hook into the pot. And whatever got caught by it, in other words, came out of the pot was supposed to be the priest's portion.

Now, this was a type of the fact that the ministry are to live by faith. Those that preach the gospel are to live of the gospel, yes, but to live by faith. God tells us we're to live by the same faith that we are proclaiming and encouraging the people to embrace.

But these sons of Eli, the scripture tells us that they stood at the door or they appointed others even in their stead. And they began to demand the choicest cuts of meat, as it is, as the people came in to offer sacrifice to the Lord or to give offerings to God. And they began to pressure the people to give.

And they were not willing to live by faith anymore. And they didn't want just any old sodden piece of meat coming out of the pot. They wanted the fillet.

They wanted the prime cut for themselves. And so they began to not only push the people and arm twist them, but even threaten them with, perhaps they even used spiritual intimidation, as if some disastrous thing is going to happen to you if you don't obey this. And if any man protested this approach, then they would take it by force.

They would threaten to take it by force. In other words, there was a forcefulness behind what they were doing. There's no faith behind it.

And folks, there have been some atrocious things that have gone on in the house of the Lord in the name of God when it comes to the issue of finances. And I believe that it has made even righteous preachers of the gospel somewhat reluctant to even go and speak about these topics. But it's never fit that the devil should have the last word in these things.

Now, the sin of the young man, it says in 1 Samuel 2, just I'm reading this to you, verse 17, was very great before the Lord. For men abhorred the offering of the Lord. And when I looked that up, the abhorrence means they scorned it.

They despised it. They rejected it. They condemned it.

Or they derided it. They made fun of it. And we're living in a generation today when you even try to mention a church or preacher of the gospel, and you'll see this very attitude now is not only perhaps dormant in much of the church, but it's very evident in society because they have seen these money-grubbing sons of Eli at the doors of the temple demanding and scheming and planning.

And no matter where they start preaching, you can be sure they're always going for your purse or your pocket. There's no doubt about it. And men abhorred.

There was a despising of the offering of the Lord. People would go to church, for example, or in the temple. And have you ever been there? I don't know.

I've been there over the years. You know wherever it's starting, it's going to money. And they're never content with one offering.

There's two. There's three. And the Holy Spirit seemingly is always changing his mind and encouraging them to take another offering and a third and a fourth offering.

And each one has a new scheme behind it. And if you really get to the root of it, there's a violence at the very bottom of it. There's a greed.

Now, Satan is a master tactician. He has men and women that he puts in pulpits all over the world that are just really his stooges. That's all they are.

They stand there and they go for the money. And if you were to just look on the surface, you would miss what the master tactician is really after. He's not just after the money.

Because remember when he tempted Jesus, he said, here are the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. They're all mine. And he said, I'll give them to whoever I want to.

He offered the kings of this world as it is to Christ. And Christ refused it during his temptation. Now, Satan is not after the money.

He's smart enough to know that you can't bankrupt God. There's absolutely no way. How can you bankrupt the one who created the universe? How can you bankrupt the one who can just speak and create more gold than this world will ever have in a million plus years? No, he knows he can't bankrupt God.

So he's after something much deeper than this. And you see it through the sons of Eli. They caused the people to abhor the offering of the Lord.

And I'm going to speak on what I believe in my heart that the enemy is after in every generation. He's after the willingness that precedes the glory. Now, I'm going to go there and you're going to understand this in just a moment.

First Chronicles chapter 29, verse 16. This is David now. David the king has made preparation for the temple.

This is Solomon's temple. It's built on Mount Moriah. This is the temple where the glory of God is going to come.

This incredible glory that was so powerful that nobody could stand even in the presence of God. And David is praying a prayer because he has been preparing for a portion of his journey. At least his understanding of the house of God began at Mount Moriah.

And now he has made preparation for this house of God, this dwelling place of God. He is passing it on to his son Solomon. And he's praying and he says, verse 16, O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee in house for thine holy name, cometh of thine own hand and all is thine own.

You see, David knew this. God, we're not really being generous towards you. Everything we have has come from your hand.

You gave us breath, life. What do we have that you haven't given us, God? He says, I know also, my God, verse 17, that thou triest the heart and has pleasure and uprightness. And as for me, in the uprightness of my heart, I have willingly offered all these things.

And now I have seen with joy thy people which are present here to offer willingly unto thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people and prepare their heart unto thee. Now, David in this passage is speaking of an issue of the people's heart.

And this issue preceded the manifestation of God's glory, which I said was soon to be experienced at the dedication of Solomon's temple. If we go ahead just for a moment to 2 Chronicles chapter 5, verse 13, the scripture tells us it came to pass as the trumpeters and singers were as one to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord. And when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music and praised the Lord saying, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever, that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.

I don't know about you, but I long for this glory of God. We had a touch, a taste of it, didn't you feel that during the worship this morning? This glory. In the Hebrew, it's kavod, and it means weight, honor, esteem, majesty, abundance, wealth.

It's a foretype of the glory which is ours in Jesus Christ. Paul in Corinthians speaks of a fading glory. Now, the fading glory is the glory that came in the Old Testament.

Even in spite of the law, there was a manifestation of this glory. And of course, the Old Testament temple was part of this. Solomon's temple was part of this glory that Paul says was one day going to fade away, because it was only a shadow of the true glory.

And the true glory is found in Jesus Christ. We beheld him. John says he was full of grace and truth, as of the only begotten of the Father.

This is the glory. Everything in the Old Testament was a type and a shadow. It was like a shadow play that was pointing to the real, that one day would burst on the scene.

It was the manifestation of the true glory of God, which was seen in the face of Jesus Christ. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3, verse 10, Even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excels. Paul said, yes, there was a glory in the Old Testament.

There was a glory on the face of Moses. There was a glory that came because of the preaching of the law. There was a glory of God's manifestation in the Old Testament temple.

But there is a glory coming so glorious, Paul says, it makes this previous glory look like it was no glory at all. It so far exceeds the previous glory. You see, the previous glory was an outside glory.

Yes, the glory of God, the weight, the kabbad of God would come into the temple. But it was an outside glory. You had to go to the temple to get to see this glory.

But when Jesus Christ died on the cross and the veil was rended to, and the way of God now was made to lead the holy of holies and come to where He had always longed to dwell, right in the heart of His own creation, and you and I became the temple of the living God, this glory of Solomon's temple came into your life and came into my life. The Bible says it's an exceeding glory. It's far beyond.

I don't have to go to the temple to see this glory. This glory is within me. I have the risen Christ in me.

Paul says, it's Christ in you, the hope of glory. I can get up in the morning and say, glory, the weight of God is upon me. The life of Christ is in me.

I'm changing by this image and life of Christ into the very image of my Savior. The glory of God is no longer confined to a physical place that I have to go once a week or month to see. The glory of God is now in me.

Hallelujah. Paul says, if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remains is glorious. He says in 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18, But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

If you're not living there, you have missed the whole thing. You fail to understand what this is about. Jesus died to forgive your sin, that He may come and live inside of you and recreate you from the inside out and cause you to stand as a light shining in the midst of a very dark and crooked generation, as a living testimony that the glory of God is still among men.

He says in verse 17, Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Now the word liberty in the Zodiates lexicon of the New Testament is Eleutheria. Actually, it's interesting, the number in the concordance is 1657.

I found that interesting because that's our address here at Times Square Church, 1657 Broadway. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. And the word liberty means freedom.

It means generosity. It means an independence, and this is important, from legal restrictions and rules. Here's the issue.

Now in 1 Chronicles chapter 29 and verse 14, remember, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there's liberty, there's freedom, generosity, there's an independence from legal restrictions and rules. In 1 Chronicles chapter 29 and verse 14, David says, Who am I? Now this is after there's been a great gathering of all the substance that is necessary to build this temple. The people have offered willingly.

The leaders have offered willingly. The people have come and they've rejoiced with great joy because they were now being infused, as it is, with the very heart of God in the building of His house so that His presence might be manifested, not only in Jerusalem, but to all the nations. And David says in verse 14, But who am I and what is my people that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things have come of thee and of thine own hand have we given thee.

How is it, David says, that we have been given this ability? You see, David knew that this willingness was supernatural. If you look at the word willingly in the Old Testament, it means an uncompelled, free movement of the will for divine service or sacrifice. It's like into a volunteer soldier whose country goes to war and knowing even that he may lose his life, he is compelled to give his all because he believes in his heart the cause is just.

He believes that what he is engaging is worth fighting for, it's worth living for and it's worth dying for. And this is actually the word that David used. He said, Who am I and what are my people that we should be able to offer so willingly that we have the supernatural ability of God has come upon us to give to the work of God.

And we're not doing it under legal compulsion. We're doing it willingly. We are being moved upon by the Spirit of God and David knew it was supernatural.

He must have known that God had intended and initiated this because he intended a great visitation of his glory. Now, history has always recorded that this willingness has always preceded something special which God himself had planned. There's a willingness.

See, that's what the devil has always been after when he puts greedy men in pulpits. He's after the willingness of God's people to give. This free will that is not bound by law is not coming into the house begrudgingly because the law of the Old Testament says 10% of your income belongs to God.

Now, that's only a shadow. We're not even bound by that anymore. That's not under the law.

If you want to talk about New Testament tithing, the standard is all, it's everything. Look in the book of Acts. Some people would ask me, Well, what percentage of our income do we give to God? Well, it's somewhere between 10% and everything depending on how willing your heart is to obey God.

It's the easiest way I can say it. The Old Testament 10% is just a shadow. It's a schoolmaster.

But the New Testament book of Acts, if you read it very clearly and conscientiously, was everything. It was the lives, the entire lives of the people being gripped and given to the work of God. There'll never be a move of God without this willingness.

And the devil has worked hard in our generation to take this willingness away from the people, to take it out of the hearts of God's people to give themselves to the work of God. And everything that that involves in the sum total as it is of who we are and what we possess being released to the work of God. In Exodus chapter 35, if you'll look there with me, this is the first indication in Scripture in the Old Testament of something actually being built to house God.

Now, we know that you can't house God. It's impossible. He's omnipresent.

He's everywhere. You can't build Him a house. But in some measure, these things happen in the Old Testament to teach us that one day He was going to come and dwell within us.

And it began in the Old Testament in Exodus with the building of a tabernacle. In Exodus 35, 4, the people, of course, didn't understand this. But there was still this infusion of willingness.

In Exodus 35, 4, it says, And Moses spake to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying, Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord,

whosoever is of a willing heart. In other words, if the person is not willing, don't force them. There's no legal obligation.

Everything in the kingdom of God is really voluntary. Even Christ Himself stands at the door and knocks. He doesn't force His way into the church.

He's an absolute gentleman. He doesn't force anyone to give anything. There's no arm-twisting.

There's no false promises. There's no begging. He said, Let him bring an offering of the Lord, gold and silver and brass, and blue and purple and scarlet and fine linen and goat's hair.

Now, you have to understand, they were building an Old Testament tabernacle, which was like a curtain box, as it is, with an outer courtyard. And they were making garments for the priests who were going to go in and minister to the Lord and minister on behalf of the people. So there'd be quite an excitement about this.

There'd be an awareness that God has destined to live where we live. He's destined to dwell among us. It's in His heart, and He's asked us to build Him a house.

Incredible. Talk about the humility of God. I don't know how much more we can even start to address this type of humility when we see that God would let people even think in their minds that they're building Him a house.

But nevertheless, that's what He did. And He invited everyone to be involved in the work. And verse 7, He says, And ramskins dyed red and badgerskins and wood and oil for the light and spices for anointing oil and the sweet incense and onyx stones and stones to set for the ephod and for the breastplate.

And every wise hearted among you shall come and make all that the Lord has commanded. The tabernacle, verse 11, His tent, His covering, His tashes, His boards, His pillars, His sockets, the ark, the staves, the mercy seat, the veil of the covering, the table, His staves, all the vessels and the showbread, the candlestick for the light, His furniture, His lamps, the oil for the light, the incense altar, His staves, the anointing oil, the sweet incense, the hanging of the door at the entering of the tabernacle, the altar of burnt offering with the brazen grate, His staves, His vessels, the labor, His foot, the hangings of the court, the pillars and the sockets, the hanging for the door of the court, the pins of the tabernacle, the pins of the court and the cords, the cloths of service to do service in the holy place, the holy garments for Aaron, the priest, and the garments of his sons to minister in the priest's office. And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses.

This is like a shopping list like none other that's ever been given to man. God says, I require, and you can see all the congregation are there. And Moses is saying, the Lord has asked us to build a dwelling place for him.

And here's what he requires. And he starts reading his list just like I did. And all the people are there listening.

And as he finished speaking, you can see all this congregation, multiples, tens of thousands of people head away from this meeting with this man of God. And it says, and they came, verse 21, everyone whose heart stirred him up, and everyone whom his spirit made willing. And so there are people who will hear of the building of God's house and his kingdom and his work, and they will just leave and not be stirred.

But there are people in every generation who are made willing by the spirit of God. There are people who say, God, I don't have much, but what I have, I'm going to get it, and I'm bringing it back, and I'm going to give it to you for your glory, and I'm going to let it be used for you, O God. And they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation and for all his service and for the holy garments.

And they came, verse 22, both men and women, as many as were what? Willing-hearted and brought bracelets and earrings and rings and tablets and jewels of gold and every man that offered an offering of gold unto the Lord and every man with whom was found blue and purple and scarlet and fine linen and goat's hair. You know, folks, some people have gold, some have goat's hair, but everybody brought something. And red skins of rams and badger skins brought them.

You know, I mean, you could look at your neighbor and say, God, here's a man next door to me that has 25 golden rings, and all I have is a badger skin, but by God's grace, it was on the list. And they brought it. It doesn't seem like much if you've ever seen a badger run across the highway, but it was necessary.

And everyone that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought the Lord's offering, and every man with whom was found a shite and wood for any work of the service brought it. Some people just had wood and brought that. And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands.

There would be in Moses' day, as there are in our day, there were those who quite conceivably possessed a lot less than others did, but God put wisdom in their hearts. And they had a skill, and they took this skill, and they began to... Some people just simply have a thread. That's all they have, or a spool of thread.

But God plants within them a supernatural ability, because everyone's contribution is important to the Lord. You have to understand that. There are no big people and little people in the kingdom of God.

God says, no, I want my whole church, my whole bodies to be involved in the building of this place where I'm going to dwell. And they did spin with their hands, and they brought that which they had spun, both the blue and purple and scarlet and fine linen. And all the women whose hearts stirred them up in wisdom spun goat's hair.

And the rulers brought onyx stones and stones to set for the ephod and for the breastplate, and oil for the light and for the anointing oil and sweet incense. And the children of Israel brought, verse 29, a willing offering unto the Lord. Every man and woman whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.

Now, the scripture tells us something just phenomenal. In chapter 36, in verse 3, it goes on to say, And they received of Moses all the offering which the children of Israel had brought of the work of the service of the sanctuary to make it with all. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning.

And all the wise men that brought all the work of the sanctuary came, every man from his work which they made. And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded to make. And Moses gave commandment.

And they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. What a willingness came upon these people that Moses had to make a decree and basically say, Stop! Stop giving! Stop giving! We have too much.

We don't know what to do with what we have. Can you imagine having that kind of a problem as a pastor today at church? The people so moved with a willingness that is birthed of God to say, God, we're not under compulsion here. We're every man, every woman given a choice.

But you have worked something so supernatural within us that each one of us, we want to be part of the house and the kingdom that you are building. And so we take what we have, as little or as much, and we start bringing it. And can you see Moses standing there and the leaders and the people are coming in, young and old and rich and poor.

They have everything from goat's hair that has been woven into things, whatever you make with goat's hair, to rings that have been melted down. And they're bringing it in for the work of God so abundantly. You see, before there is a move of God's glory, at any time throughout history, if you study it, you're going to find a people who are willing.

Before revival comes to a nation, you're going to find somewhere a church, a people, a group, an individual. Two or three are gathering somewhere and they are praying and saying, God, I give all I have to your kingdom. I give you my pride.

If you want to speak to my heart about issues, speak to my heart. I give you my family. I give you my future.

I give you everything I have, oh God, that your glory might be known in me, that your glory might be known in the land once again. You will always find, you'll never find just all of a sudden the glory appearing. Now, this can happen.

God is not bound. But if you search it through history, you're going to find that every major move of God throughout history is always preceded by a people who say, God, we are willing. I'm willing.

Wherever you send me, whatever you ask of me, whatever you want me to do, God, I will do it. The little that I have, I bring it to you, oh God. And I'm trusting you to multiply it.

I'm trusting you to receive my sacrifice, my little ability, my my my little life, my little experience. I bring it to you, God. But you have made me willing to give this to you.

And I am believing, oh God, that you're going to multiply it and glorify your name. And you just have to turn ahead a few chapters after this to Exodus chapter 40. You see this willingness that had come into the hearts of the people in verse 34, says that a cloud covered the tent of the congregation and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

And Moses was not able, verse 35, to enter into the tent of the congregation because the cloud abode thereon. And the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. The glory comes and it's a type.

It's a shadow of Jesus saying, if I have your heart, if you are willing to give what you have to me, it is my desire to manifest my glory in you. It's my desire to come and change you. It's my desire to make you so much more than you are, to give you so much more than you could ever possess, to take you where you could never go and to make you what you could never be.

It's my desire to manifest my glory inside of this tabernacle where I've chosen to dwell. You'll see this principle, for example, in the book of Judges. You see it all through the scriptures.

When the people are under oppression and God comes and speaks and finds a prophetess called Deborah and finds a military leader called Barak who, in spite of their weakness, are willing to give what they have to God and for the purposes of God. And it's this type of life that begins to inspire the people. And after the battle is over, the scripture says they sang a song and it went like this.

Praise the Lord for the avenging of Israel when the people willingly offered themselves. The people willingly offered themselves. Think of Gideon's day when they're standing against an army of 135,000 and 300 standing against odds that could never ever have a successful outcome without the presence of God and the intervention of God.

But they're willing, even to the death, to offer themselves to the work of God that He might be glorified one more time in the nation. Even the temple, this Solomon's temple that is about to be rebuilt. You remember the story where there was an angel with a destroying sword stretched out over Jerusalem because David had sinned in numbering the people and had, in effect, turned to pride.

And David was instructed by a prophet to head to the top of this mountain called Moriah. And he headed to the top of the mountain to offer a sacrifice to God. And on top of that mountain there was a man called Orn in the Jebusite.

And he had a threshing floor and he had two sons with him. It was his income. He had oxen, he had instruments.

But he saw, he was a man who saw the need. And David came to Orn in and he said to Orn in, give me this threshing floor, I must make a sacrifice. Orn in seeing the need said to the king, this is a type of you and I and the church and Jesus Christ.

And he said to the king, he said, I see the need, I see the destroying sword over the nation. And so I give you my threshing floor. And I give you the instruments for my livelihood to break them up and make a fire for the sacrifice.

And I give you the oxen for the sacrifice. And Orn in said, I give it all. I give everything I have to stay the plague of death that has come upon my nation and my city.

And David, the king said, no, I will not take it for free. I myself will not offer to God something that costs me nothing. And so David says, no, I'll pay you the full price for it.

So here you have two men that are willing to give it all. They're willing to give everything. David basically says to Orn in, name your price.

I will pay it. I will not offer to God something that costs me nothing. And after the negotiation is completed, the Holy Spirit opens David's eyes.

And you go back in the scripture, you'll see it for yourself. And David has a revelation. This is Mount Moriah.

And David says, this is the temple of the Lord. This is God's house. This is where God dwells.

He has this incredible revelation. And it's an amazing thing. David, this is exactly where Solomon's temple was to be built.

It's on a mountain where two men are willing to give everything they have to stay the plague that is upon the people. In Ezra, after the people were released by King Cyrus to come back into the nation of Israel and rebuild this temple of Solomon, which had been destroyed because of neglect, the king issued a decree and he released those who are willing to go and rebuild. Willing, though, it was an issue.

Even with a foreign king, a Persian king, he made it very clear that nobody could be forced to do this. It had to be willing. Ezra was allowed to take for use all that the people willingly offered for the house of God.

In Nehemiah's day, a little shortly after this, Nehemiah talks about, in chapter 11, verse 2, that the people willingly came and offered themselves to dwell within the walls of Jerusalem. It was a willingness. This willingness to be given to God.

This willingness to offer to God everything that they had. Now, 1 Chronicles chapter 29, again. David says this in verse 2. He says, Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God, the gold for the things to be made of gold, and silver for things of silver, and brass for things of brass, and iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood, onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistening stones of diverse colors, and all manner of precious stones and marble stones in abundance.

Moreover, he says in verse 3, Because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of my own proper good of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophira, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses withal. The gold for things of gold, and silver for things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord? David says, I have prepared of the treasury, the king's treasury as it is of the nation.

But he says, More so than this, I have given of my own substance for the building of this house, dangerous to sit under the ministries of people who are not given to the work of God. And then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes, in verse 6, and the captains of thousands and hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered willingly. And they gave for the service of the house of God, five thousand talents and ten thousand talents of drams, and silver eighteen thousand talents, and brass eighteen thousand talents.

And verse 8 says, And they with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasure of the house of the Lord. Verse 9 says, Then the people rejoiced for that they offered willingly, because with a perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord. And David the king also rejoiced with great joy.

They had not given for personal gain. They gave because this was the work of God. There is a principle, yes, in Scripture, that God will bless us, and God will keep His people who trust in Him.

But they were not giving to get. They were giving because they were involved, their hearts were engaged in the work of God. And there was a trust, there's an abiding trust in those who are God's.

To say, Lord, I give you what I have. And I'm trusting you. Because you said that I will have food, I'll have clothing, I'll have shelter.

That if I seek first the kingdom of God, that you'll provide everything I need. So that settles the issue. It may not be a castle on a hill.

It may not be the finest suit of clothes available in New York City. It might not be the finest table in the nicest restaurant. But it will be food, and I will be covered, and I will have shelter.

And I've settled this in my heart. Because there's something more important than all of these outer trappings. It's that I have been invited by the God of this universe to be part of a kingdom that He is building.

And He has invited me to give a portion of what He has entrusted into my hands, willingly back to Him for this work. He has, in effect, funneled it through me, through His church, for His work. He doesn't even need me.

Why would He even have to use us? He could push us all aside and just do it Himself. No, you see, the miracle is that He has interwoven Himself with you and I. We are the temple of the Lord. We are the dwelling place of God.

He says, I will not work outside of My people. Therefore, when I intend to do a marvelous thing in a nation, there will be a willingness come upon the people. There will be an excitement.

There will be something in the heart that says, I don't have much, but what I have, I'm bringing it to the glory of God. I'm giving it to God's use. I'm going to be a person, a man, a woman, a young person, whose life is dedicated to the glory of God.

If all I have is a badger skin, I'm bringing it. If I have a piece of wool, I'm weaving something and bringing it to the house of God. And it's going to be used for His glory.

Whatever talents He has put in my life, I'm bringing back to God. And they're going to be used for His glory. Thanks be to God.

This willingness is an indication that you have truly embraced the heart of God. Now, folks, I came from a church background where the collection time on Sunday morning sounded like a hailstorm on a tin roof. The collection plate was tin.

And the pennies and nickels and dimes hitting the collection plate. Now, I'm convinced they did it to embarrass the poor. I remember being a kid.

Every time the plate would go by, if I'd see a dollar on it, I'd think, Wow, this is quite a week. This is really something. Because there wasn't very much paper hit that plate, trust me.

Hallelujah. But as I began to grow in grace, I remember coming into the kingdom of God and I thought, you know, I give \$20 to the work of God. I was making, I don't know, maybe \$50,000 a year, I guess, at that time.

I thought \$20 is pretty generous from my background. It didn't make any noise on the plate. It looked good.

And I remember sitting there. And the first time I ever heard this in my life, a preacher got up and said, 10% of your income. I almost died in my chair immediately.

I don't hear a word he's saying. The calculator is going off in my mind. 10% I see now.

Is that before or after taxes? What about the... And I'm figuring out all of this, all of the ticker tape issues, and it comes down to, I forget what it was. And it's, oh my goodness. God surely couldn't mean this.

And then you'll have the occasional one that says, We're not under the law. That's the law. And then you read a little farther in the book and you see it's not 10%.

In the New Testament, it's everything. It's a life in totality given to the work of God. And then all of a sudden the law starts looking pretty good when you get there.

Well, 10%. Reasonable. But as I... You see, God is very gracious.

He takes us where we start with the measure of faith that we have. And then as I began to learn that it's not a threatening thing to give to the work of God. And God began to... I'm a budgeter.

I still do today. I keep track of everything. I have books and I write everything, every expense.

I get really frustrated because I'd never make it in the banking world because I can never balance even this little book. It never balances. So I have a column called Correction at the end of every month.

Minus \$152.30, which I haven't got a clue where it went. So I correct it and just balance it out. Everything is fine.

I remember the battle in my soul when the Lord asked me to give up my career. I had a very well-paying career. I was advancing very quickly and I enjoyed what I... And he asked me to give it up.

It's a tithe in a sense. It's my future. It's a pension.

It's a dental plan. It's everything. I had it all.

And it was a job that I really couldn't get fired from unless I really messed up. And God says, give it up. Pastor this little group of 17 people for \$375 a week.

I had a bigger electric bill than that wage was. And I remember the struggle inside to trust him. I remember when I left the police force, and then you've heard my story, I rolled some money into an account.

And I used to call it my Ananias and Sapphira slush fund. If this whole thing doesn't work out in ministry, at least I have a startup fund. I remember a friend of mine coming in and his car blew up, and he's praying at my desk in my office.

And he's saying, oh, I don't know what to do. My car is gone. I have no money.

And he said, another pastor. And so I said, oh, let's pray. And so we began to pray.

I have enough money in the bank to buy him a car. But I'm praying now. I'm getting very, very spiritual.

And all of a sudden we pull out the old scripture. Oh, God, you own the cattle on a thousand hills. What we're saying is, you have much more money than me, God.

You would never ask me to give up what I have for this man. Why would you ask this of me? I have enough for one more car. And God, you own all the cars in the world.

So I'm just appealing to you to meet this man's need. And, of course, my prayer was just dying. The longer I prayed, the less faith I had, the more it began to die.

And finally, I had to go home to my wife and say, the Lord is just telling me to take what we have and everything we had, actually, and buy this man a car. And so we just obeyed him. It's a tithe, in a sense, to the work of God.

This is a pastor. This is a godly man. And not the type of a person that runs around just sharing their needs so that you can give them some money.

He was a godly man. And the step of faith. My own car was a mess.

It was just an absolute oil burner. You could tell where I was five miles down the road by the blue smoke. And I buy another man a new car, and my car is a disaster.

And I said, well, God, you know. And I remember one day I was in the church, and I was painting the dome. I was up on a scaffold painting the dome in this church that we bought for a dollar.

That's another story. I was up on the scaffold painting it, and somebody said, Pastor, there's a call for you in the building next door. So I went, and they said, Is this Pastor Connell? I said, It is.

And he said, I am so-and-so from some car dealership in the city. A man walked in this morning, bought you a brand-new car. He said, Put it in your name.

You just have to pick it up and take it. And I said, Who is the man? He said, I don't know. He wouldn't give us his name.

He just walked in, bought it, and left. And, folks, it's been like that ever since. We don't give to get.

But I have come to understand that God is faithful. God is faithful. You give what you have.

You give the little bit that you have, and God promises that he will bless us, promises that he will keep us. Now, it didn't matter to me if it was somebody walked in and bought a \$500 secondhand car. It really wouldn't have mattered.

The issue is that God provides. The issue is that I will always have what God knows that I need to do his work. And it's a progression.

As you get to know the faithfulness of God, you and I finally, and I'm not suggesting I've even arrived there, but I'm moving towards it, as Paul says, of coming to that place where you're abandoned to God. And you say, God, everything I have is yours. Whatever you want, you can take it.

Lord, use it for your glory. And even if I have to go to jail for the sake of preaching the gospel, I'm prepared to go. I'm willing to give my life, my freedom, everything, because I trust you, Lord.

You've never failed me. You will never fail me. There's a willingness that's in the heart.

There always has to be this willingness before the glory of God will come. It has to be found in the hearts of God's people. In the Old Testament, in the book of Malachi, it's the only scripture that I'm aware of, at least, where God says, prove me.

He says, bring the tithes into the storehouse. It's Malachi chapter 3, just before the book of Matthew. In Malachi chapter 3 and verse 10, he says, bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me, he says, now herewith.

Saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of heaven. Now, it's not just material things. There's a knowledge of Christ involved here.

I'll give you knowledge of my ways. I'll open heaven to you. Yes, I know there'll be some provision, and thank God for it, but I'll open my heart to you.

I'll open my mind to you. Heaven won't be a closed book anymore, because you're willing to trust me. You're willing to allow me to reach out through you, and to give through your life.

And I'll pour out a blessing, and there'll not be room enough to receive it. I can honestly say, and I know my wife Teresa can vouch for this, in our marriage, a blessing of God, that there's not room enough to receive. Thank God.

My children, around my table, like olive plants, just as the Scripture says, I hear oil coming from them. I see that God's made my children not greedy, selfish people, and I see their hearts being molded by the very hand of God. I see the faithfulness of God on my house.

I see His faithfulness on my family. I know in my heart that my family is going to be a missions family for four generations. God has spoken this very, very clearly to me.

If He tarries, that He will prosper us financially, but He does it so that we can go and give to those throughout the world who don't know about the goodness of their Father in heaven. I don't know where to stop. I could talk from now till the end of the six o'clock service about the blessings of God, and what He has done in my life from a very feeble beginning in my walk with Christ, and very dim in my understanding, very afraid to be released to the work of God, to the introduction of this heart that is willing to say, God, I'm willing to take the leap.

Even if it looks like suicide, spiritually speaking, I'm willing to take the leap, O God, and I'm willing to trust You, only to find that there is no fall, that the hands of my Father have been there all along. And He says, I care for the sparrows. Will I not care even more for You? Will I not even feed You and clothe You? I look after the flowers.

Won't I look after You? Very basic scriptures, but so hard sometimes to lay hold of it in our frailty. But God doesn't despise us. He remembers, David said, that we're just dust.

That's all we are. We've been breathed by God the breath of life, and because of His grace we live. And His grace leads us to an understanding of who He is.

And His grace gives us a willing heart to enter into the work of God, which is the salvation of souls, that none should perish, and all should come to the knowledge of a heavenly Father who not only died for them, but can keep them in all ways, that we can be this extension of God's life. Prove me, He says. I'll open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing that there's not room enough to receive, and I'll rebuke the devourer for your sakes.

And He will not destroy the fruit of your ground, and neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time. In the field saith the Lord of hosts, and all nations shall call you blessed, and you shall be a delightsome land, says the Lord of hosts. I will bless you.

I tell you, folks, my father said to me before, when I became a minister, he said to me, you are a fool. He said, you will never have a nice house. You will never have a nice car.

You will never have nice clothes. Your kids will never go to college. And he started just speaking all this stuff.

And he said, and then don't come to me for money. When you are broke and destitute. And I said, Dad, I can't explain to you what I'm doing.

All I can say is God is calling me. I hear His voice. I know you don't understand this, but God is calling me.

And before he died, we sat down one summer, just a year or so before he died, and he saw everything that God has done in my life. And my kids have gone through university, and all will be graduated in just a short time. That I have had the clothes that I need.

I have had of God's grace the houses. I have had everything that God has ever promised me. And he had no more argument.

And Malachi said, you will be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts, and all nations shall call you blessed. God says, I will shut the mouth of the accuser. There will be nothing anyone can say.

They will see the blessing of God. You have to understand, of course, my heart was to win my father to Christ, which the Lord in His grace allowed me to do. Prove me.

Now to those who have wealth, all I say to you today, just give as the Lord enables your heart to. That's all. If you don't want to give, don't.

Give as He enables your heart. To those who are poor, because quite often those who are poor end up with their heads down in a meeting like this or this type of a message. I don't want ever any poor person in this house to hang your head.

You have no reason to. If you're poor, follow the example of the widow in 1 Kings 17. God sent Elijah to this widow.

And He said, I've commanded her to feed you. And the example is just share some of what you have with the stranger who has less. That's how you start giving to God.

You don't have much. You say, I just have a half a loaf of bread and I have some peanut butter and I have some jam in the cupboard. And God says, OK, that's good.

That'll suffice for now. You have a little bit, but you're going to meet somebody who has less. So share with that person.

Share with the one who has less. And God says, I will bring the increase. And I'm going to teach you.

I'm going to bring increase into your life. And I'm going to teach you this principle that you can trust me. I will not fail you.

All I'm asking now is a slice of bread and a bit of peanut butter for a hungry kid on the street corner. That's all I'm asking, God says of you. But you do this.

Just do that little bit. And as He does, He's going to guide you and increase your heart to give even more. He's going to make you willing.

Because it's a process. And the Lord is patient. And He will teach you how to give.

Whatever you bring to the house of God, do not bring into this house your children's food money. Do not bring to this house that which is needed for clothing and shelter. Bring only what you can afford.

If you have nothing, and there are times and seasons where there are people who have nothing, bring them your confidence. Bring them a heart of faith. And lift up your head, because His glory is coming to you.

You stand, please. Hallelujah. My altar call is very simple today.

For those who have been able to hear, make me willing. Let's stand, please, if we could, in the annex. I'm just going to invite you to come, those who have had a hard time giving.

Just make me willing. Just, God, make me willing to hear your voice. And when you ask me, then help me to obey you.

Not a very complicated altar call. But it can be the beginning of the glory. You have to understand, without willingness, there is no glory.

There is no glory. You can sit here and then become dependent on us hitting the right note in the worship time to experience the glory. But wouldn't it be better to experience it in your soul? The glory that says, God is able, He provides all things.

No matter what He asks me to give, He gives back even more. He is in an exhaustible supply that never runs out. Wouldn't you like that to be your testimony at the end of your life? Wouldn't you like that heritage to leave to your sons and daughters and your grandchildren? This testimony of God's faithfulness? And it starts just with the willingness to say, God, whatever you ask.

Now, keep in mind, we're not under the law. So, there is no legality to this. It's free will.

It's what God speaks to you. So, if you're getting under compulsion, it isn't God. If you leave here guilty and say, well, you know, I've got to do this.

No, that's not God. It's an engaging of your heart. You will want to do this.

It will be something that God does within you. A giving, ultimately, which brings you and I to the surrender of ourselves to the purposes of God. Not just our treasure.

Not just our talent, but ourselves. To God's work. All the days of our lives.

My only prayer has been to present a balanced understanding of what it means and why we should give to the work of God. And I hope that you've heard that this morning. It's wonderful to trust God.

Now, those that have come to this altar, you are not to leave here with a burden. This is not about a burden. This is about a release into the work of God.

And all you have to do is really obey God. And until you know what to do, don't do anything. He'll speak to your heart.

He will give you the desire. And then He will fulfill that desire in Himself. And when you're finally released to trusting Him, there will be a glory that comes into your soul.

It's an amazing thing to experience and to know His faithfulness. Hallelujah. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, the Scripture says in Psalms, The people will be willing in the day of your power. God, that speaks of me. Your Word says that I will be willing to give of myself and what I have for Your use and for Your purposes, for Your glory.

Lord, You say very clearly, this willingness will touch my heart before Your glory will come. God, I'm asking You to touch my heart with a willingness to have open hands for the work of God. Help me, Lord, to trust You more than the things that I possess.

Help me to value You more, Your purposes and Your work, more than my own plans and my own ambitions. You are building a kingdom and You have invited me to be a co-laborer with Jesus Christ. Today, I'm asking, Lord, that You give me a willing heart and a ready mind to engage the work of God as You speak to me and live through me.

Now, O Jesus, I ask You that I might know the glory that comes into the soul of any person who learns to trust You and is an open vessel of Your kindness. And I thank You for this. Thank You for expanding my heart, for deepening my understanding and drawing me into the very heart of Your kingdom.

I thank You in Jesus' name. Now, can we rejoice together just for a moment? Can we just thank Him? This is the conclusion of the message.

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