

Message Series: The Whole Counsel of God, Message 15  
Feeding God's Downhearted People. The book of 1 Chronicles  
Pastor Roger Ridley, Gretna Baptist Church – May 6, 2007

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There's an old gospel song I enjoy entitled, Precious Memories. Are you familiar with it? I heard it and learned while spending time with my Grandmother Hendry. That is a big part of why I appreciate it. There are times when I am reflecting on the past that I just sing its words out loud.

I grew up on a small farm in Tennessee. In my memory those were good days. When our family moved to Illinois my dad kept the farm thinking someday we would move back. One year however, out of meanness, someone burned our old home to the ground. Whenever I've returned to Tennessee for a visit I go stand among the ruins of our former home and it floods my mind with the good memories of the past. I have often been moved to tears on such occasions.

At approximately 450 B.C., God called a priest named Ezra to shepherd a downhearted flock of His people; to feed them, nourish them, to build them up, and strengthen them once again. For seventy years they had been under God's punishment in the Babylonian Captivity, but now they were allowed to go back to Jerusalem. Imagine what it must have been like to be one of them standing in the charred, burned out remains of the glory that once was. It would have felt good and difficult at the same time. It would have been enough to make a grown person cry, and that's exactly what happened. The memories of the past could have haunted them and kept them down but God moved Ezra to put those memories down in a book, which we know as 1 Chronicles, in such a way as to feed their hungry hearts and build them up again.

To accomplish this he used the example of an earlier shepherd, David. In 2 Samuel, when he finally became king, God called him to shepherd and oversee the flock of Israel. I like what it says about him in Psalm 78:70-72...

By God's Spirit, Ezra used some precious memories from the days of David to feed and strengthen that downhearted flock God had called him to shepherd.

## **I. The People of God**

The first precious memory he used focused on the people of God. In 1 Chronicles this is illustrated in the genealogical tables covered in the first nine chapters. You know that section of “*begats*” when reading through the Scriptures that many of us want to skip over. But it was very valuable and encouraging to that returning remnant and certainly should be to us as well.

Have you ever worked on your family tree? I’ve not been a fanatic about it but I have tried to trace my family line back to the “old country.” For me it’s been encouraging. It has helped me to see my place in the world and to know that I come from a line of hard-working, God-fearing people. In essence, that’s what 1 Chronicles 1-9 accomplishes for the remnant of Israel.

In chapter one, the genealogical table starts with Adam and goes through Abraham and then Jacob. In chapter two, it goes from Jacob to David. In chapter three, the table continues from David to the Captivity. In chapters four through eight we find the lineage for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. And in chapter nine we find the lineage of the remnant that returned.

Again, imagine what it must have been like to stand in the charred, burned out remains of Jerusalem, wondering if there was any future, wondering if there was any reason for hope, and wondering if God would ever bless them again. These tables helped them to see where they fit in as a people and even as individuals. It helped them see how God had worked up to and through David’s line, and that through it all God had remained faithful, and as they now stepped into a new day, as God’s people, He would remain faithful.

I think the question the Apostle Paul asked in Romans 11:1 must have been on their minds, “*Hath God cast away His people?*” The genealogical tables of 1 Chronicles 1-9 proclaimed, “*Certainly not, God forbid!*” God’s people then and now can count on Him to be faithful. 2 Timothy 2:13 says, “*If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself.*”

What’s exciting to me is for those of us that have received Christ as Savior, according to Romans 11, God has grafted us in to be part of His people. No matter what our circumstances, the one thing we will always be able to count on is God’s faithfulness. In Psalm 37:3, David encourages us to feed on the Lord’s faithfulness. As He has worked in generation after generation in the past, He will continue to work in this generation and in our lives as well. That encourages me and I trust it encourages you too!

## II. The Presence of God

The second precious memory taken from David's example by Ezra in 1 Chronicles regards the presence of God. Chapters 13-16 focus on the Ark of God, in fact the ark is referred to approximately thirty times. The Ark, which was built in the days of Moses, stood for God's presence; it was the place God met with the people of Israel. Its description is provided for us in Exodus 25 and in verse 22 God says, *"And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim."*

Chapter thirteen tells us that after David became king one of the first things he did was gather the whole nation together and express his desire to bring the Ark once again to the center of their national and religious activities. It was the same as saying, *"Let's get ourselves right with God again!"* At the time they needed to, 13:3 says...

As a shepherd, David was seeking to do the right thing for the right reason but on his first attempt he went about it the wrong way. There was a serious consequence, one man, named Uzza, lost his life. The lesson was that in order to enjoy God's presence, it must be pursued God's way. Even today we have the silly notion that we can get right with God on our terms, but it never works that way. Look at what David said in 15:13...

In other words, David was saying, *"Let's do it God's way this time!"* And when they did it caused celebration and blessing for the whole nation. I especially like the psalm David was moved to write once the Ark was in Jerusalem. Keep in mind it was selected for 1 Chronicles by God with the intent of feeding and encouraging a downhearted remnant. See 16:8-36...

The message is the same for both then and now, great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. He desires to be with His people, therefore call on His name, glory in His name, and seek His face continually. There is no greater blessing or greater encouragement for the child of God than His presence. If you know the Lord as Savior, God's presence is always available. Hebrews 4:16 says, *"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."* The greatest encouragement for the downhearted child of God is the presence of God.

Listen to how Isaiah says it in Isaiah 40:11, speaking of God, he says, “*He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom.*” That’s the nourishing and comforting presence of God!

### **III. The Promise of God**

Once again looking at the example of David, Ezra next reminds his readers of the promise of God.

In chapter 17, David was sitting in his house, a palace fit for a king, and it didn’t seem right to him that the Ark, the meeting place of God’s presence, was outside in a tent. So he expressed to God the desire of his heart to build a house for God.

God’s answer to David was “*no*”. Two reasons were given: (1) verse 6, it was not a priority for Him, and (2) 28:3...

However, in return, God made a promise to David that has become known as the Davidic Covenant. Look at 17:10-17...

Some elements of these promises to David were fulfilled in his lifetime (chapters 18-20). Others were fulfilled in Solomon who succeeded David and built the Temple. But those elements concerning an eternal kingdom relate to an “*offspring*” to be born in the distant future. As New Testament genealogies (Matthew 1; Luke 3) show, that distant offspring was Jesus Christ, and He will yet sit on the throne of David, over Israel, in the millennium.

What Ezra does in first and second Chronicles is show his readers that God had been faithful to these promises and would continue to be so. As a result, there was hope and encouragement for the future. That’s why we read in 16:15-17...

And it goes from there to the covenant with David reminding us that God keeps His promises.

I would have to add that His most precious and encouraging promise is found in John 3:16...

Have you personally placed your faith in this One that the New Testament calls the Son of David, Jesus Christ? God's promise is that when we do, He will give us everlasting life and nothing, nothing will ever separate us from His love. What encouraging words!

#### IV. The Place of God

Ezra then turns to the example of David for one more precious memory; it covers chapters 22-29, the place of God.

David was told he could not build God's house but the final years of his life were consumed with preparing for God's house:

In chapter 22 he prepared the materials.

In chapter 23 he organized the Levites.

In chapter 24 he organized the priests.

In chapter 25 he organized the Temple musicians.

In chapter 26 he organized the miscellaneous workers.

And in chapter 28 he handed all of those plans over to Solomon. See 11-13...

All of those plans that David handed over for the Temple, which would be built in Solomon's day, were according to the Spirit of God. God takes the worship of Him seriously and so should we.

For the remnant in the days of 1 Chronicles this was meant to be an encouragement to rebuild the Temple for a place to meet with God once again. In our day it's also an encouragement to take our worship of God seriously. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman in John 4 that today true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth. We approach Him with the right attitude and in the way prescribed by Him.

But we also need to remember that God doesn't meet with us today in a Temple or place made by hands. See 1 Corinthians 6:19-20...

When we receive Jesus as Savior, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our lives. We become His Temple. Our bodies are the dwelling place of God. Where we go, He goes. What we do, He does. Think about that. If our approach to a physical Temple was to be taken seriously then our handling of these living Temples should be just as serious. What an encouragement

that should be! Ephesians 1:13-14 tells us that His presence in our lives is His guarantee that someday we will be in His place which has been prepared for us. I can't wait, can you?

As a shepherd Ezra used the example of another shepherd, David, to remind his flock of God's people, God's presence, God's promise, and God's place. These reminders were intended to nourish and encourage them. I trust their reminder has encouraged you as well.