

CHAPTER FOUR

A CASE STUDY FOR DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AND FREE HUMAN CHOICE

So far, I have implied at least two reasons why it is important soft deterministic Calvinism show that its view of God's sovereignty exercised through his providence fits with its view of human freedom. First, any model must show this since the Bible affirms both God's sovereignty and man's responsible free choices. The second reason is that this particular model advocates compatibilistic human freedom, which, in its very name, implies that the view of human choice that is part of the soft deterministic Calvinist model fits with its view of God's absolute and free sovereignty.

Because compatibility of the two main subjects addressed in this book is especially important for the model I am advocating, I believe it is helpful, before introducing the rest of the seven theological truths, to look at a passage that addresses both subjects and, along the way, gives a starting point for understanding how they relate to one another and that they can fit with each other. There are many passages that could be chosen, but one particularly helpful is 1 Chronicles 29:10-19. In fact, this passage can serve as a case study not only for how God governs all, but how he interacts with the human will in that all-encompassing governance.

Introduction to 1 Chronicles 29:10-19

What the chronicler seems to do in 1 and 2 Chronicles is to encourage Israel after their captivity to see the faithfulness of God and also to see that their full enjoyment of life with God in covenant demands they return to right worship of him.¹ This is played out in these last

¹ See Bill T. Arnold, Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering The Old Testament: A Christian Survey* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1999), 253; and Gleason Archer, *A Survey Of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), en loc.

chapters of 1 Chronicles by highlighting God's faithfulness to fulfill promises to David as preparations for the temple are made and the king approaches the end of his life and reign.

We read in 28:1-8 that David assembled military and tribal leaders, along with royal overseers and leading soldiers, gave them a charge, and then turned to his son, Solomon, to exhort him in preparation for his ascension to the throne (28:9-21).² After David's appeal to the people to give, as well as a record of materials offered willingly by them for the building of the temple (29:1-9), David turns in 29:10-19 to praise God for what has happened. Here is what we read:

Therefore David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly. And David said: "Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. ¹¹ Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. ¹² Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³ And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

¹⁴ "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. ¹⁵ For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding.

¹⁶ O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own. ¹⁷ I know, my God, that you test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you.

¹⁸ O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep forever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people, and direct their hearts toward you. ¹⁹ Grant to Solomon my son a whole heart that he may keep your commandments, your testimonies, and your statutes, performing all, and that he may build the palace for which I have made provision."

There are two main kinds of prayer we see David engaging in: Praise of God for what has been accomplished (10-13) and a request that he continually empower Solomon and the people to carry out his will, since they cannot do this without God (14-19).³ What we read in both of

² See Brian E. Kelly, notes in the *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 740.

³ I am indebted to the notes in the *Reformation Study Bible* (Orlando: Ligonier, 2005), 593, for this twofold division.

these kinds of prayer sets forth the view of divine sovereignty and human freedom for which I argue in the book and introduces they are compatible. Let's see how this is so.

David's Descriptive Praise Of God: Verses 10-13.

To begin, as we examine David's praise (10-13), we grasp that the king blesses the LORD because of or in response to the whole-hearted and generous giving of the people toward the future temple building (cf. 29:6-9).⁴ If this is accurate, then we should expect the praise to be logically connected into the giving on the part of the people, a reality confirmed when we move on to vv. 14-19, which clarify that in his praise of God David is focused upon what the people have given (cf. 14, 16, 17).⁵

What is also significant is what David says directly to and about the LORD in his praise (10b-13).⁶ In referring to him as the LORD (*Yahweh*) and "the God of Israel" he emphasizes that God has committed himself to his people and to keeping his promises to them (cf. Dt. 7:8; Jer. 1:12), which is the significance of the current collection and preparation for the temple building.⁷ To be clear, then, David believes that the sovereign God has moved among the

⁴ According to GKC, 111a, the consecutive imperfect can connote a logical sequel of actions, which is what appears to take place here in the verb translated, "Therefore...blessed...." There is a strong logical connection between the following praise and the previous passage that speaks of the people willingly giving.

⁵ The verse 10a clause ends with this literal rendering; "Before the eyes of all the assembly." As we discovered in the immediately preceding context, Israel is assembled together for David to charge them and Solomon. As such, what we have here is David praising *Yahweh* in the presence of this assembly and so the assembly saw and heard David do this. This, then, is both praise and, at the same time, admonition to those present (a reality implied about corporate worship we see explicitly in Eph. 5:19-20; Col. 3:16-17). It may be implied, as a result, that David's prayer in their presence is one of the means God will use to empower and motivate them to serve him and carry out his will.

⁶ David's praise forms a chiasm—with the A (10b) and A' (13) affirming that praise and thanks are being offered. Then the B (11a-b) and B' (11c-12) form the content or "meat" of the praise. This means most likely that B and B' are parallel in some manner.

⁷ In 1 Chronicles 17:10-14 God promises he will bring about the building of the temple through Solomon. The building of the temple will be both an affirmation that God has given peace and victory to David and the people, as well as an affirmation that the Davidic dynasty will be forever—thus pointing forward to the Messiah.

people in such a way as to bring about certainly their giving of the materials for the building of the temple. They truly decided to give freely and willingly (29:6-9), and yet David sees the giving as ultimately moved by the LORD and so is a sign of his promise-keeping covenant faithfulness. In other words, the sovereign God has so worked in the wills of his people and in their circumstances to bring about the very end God desires and had promised—including this generous giving on their part—for the purpose of building the temple and thus demonstrating his continual faithful presence among them (cf. Ex. 25:8; 1 Chr. 17:10-14).

That we have read this correctly so far is also seen in the “meat” of David’s praise and thanks—verses 11-12. Here the king attributes to the King of kings several things that not only belong to him, but that men should rightly acknowledge in worship that belong to him. First, is “greatness,” which is a term that not only describes all of God’s attributes and what he does, but highlights that God is superior to all other beings and rulers.⁸ Additionally, David ascribes to God “might,” a term that is not only synonymous with “sovereignty,” but also highlights God has the power to carry out effectively what he desires as the King of kings, and no one can thwart what he determines to accomplish.⁹ What is more, David affirms that “glory” belongs to

⁸ This is a word that encompasses all that God does among men to save, bless, and carry out his blessings, and perhaps even his judgments—actions that could only be done by someone who is of vast and immense power, wisdom, and goodness (2 Sam. 7:21, 23; 1 Chron. 17:19, 21; Ps. 145:6). It appears to be a word that could apply to all of God’s attributes—and to display that they are of enormous, i.e. immeasurable, proportions (Ps. 145:3). The term is used in Esther 1:4 to speak of the many riches and works of King Ahasuerus, things that display the immense and vast character of his kingdom—and point to the enormous place he must have, especially in relation to other kings (see also Ps. 71:21). This greatness is designed to make people marvel at the kingdom. When greatness is attributed to one it also distinguishes them from others (Esther 6:3; 10:2). In regard to God, it shows his uniqueness (cf. Dt. 3:24) and so his superior greatness over all others. His greatness shows he is the ultimate ruler over his universal kingdom.

⁹ This word is a cognate of a term that is often translated “mighty men of valor” (*Hagibborim*: e.g. 1 Chr. 10:24). In texts related to God, the word connotes the resources and power God has to be able to carry out effectively what he desires (Job 12:13-14), which includes his wisdom (Prov. 8:14; Is. 11:2), his giving strength to man (1 Chron. 29:12; Ps. 71:16), or even animals (Job 39:19), as well as creative and sustaining abilities (Ps. 65:6), and also carrying out salvation and judgment. This is a royal, divine, and unique (Jer. 10:6) strength and ability of God that shows he is King of kings and Lord of lords, a strength and ability no one can successfully oppose, what classically is referred to as God’s sovereignty (2 Chron. 20:6). It is a power which should increase man’s praise of him (Pss. 21:13; 150:2), which stands as the ultimate purpose of his salvation of man—“that he might make known his mighty power” (Ps.

God, in other words, a splendor or beauty flowing from who he is and what he does that elevates him in the eyes of others above all other powers.¹⁰ Next, to God belongs “victory,” a term that highlights he succeeds in what he sets out to do and he can enable his people to succeed as well,¹¹ and also “majesty,” a term that connotes the ultimate royal excellencies that inspire awe.¹² David has piled up royal terms to highlight God as the ultimate power and King who can carry out what he has purposed and promised—terms designed to lead those assembled to praise him above all others and to affirm that the present giving ultimately was orchestrated by him—and so in fulfillment of his promises.

David ends this first pregnant statement of praise with reasons why we know that all of this is true of the LORD: “for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours.” The point in this

106:6), for God’s acts of salvation and judgment that display his might form the very content of what one generation should proclaim to another (Ps. 145:4, 11, 12 [esp. in light of vv. 6-20]).

¹⁰ The term that is used here is *hatiph'ara*. It means “beauty” or “glory” (BDB, 802; Victor P. Hamilton, “*tipara*,” in TWOT, 2: 714, i.e. “splendor” [Gesenius’ Lexicon on-line]). Though this term can be synonymous with *kabod* (the most common term translated “glory” in the OT), the focus here is more on being pleasing to own’s sight or understanding, i.e. the display of brilliance or magnificence, rather than the full weight or weightiness of one (as with *kabod*). The term is associated with the beauty or splendor that is displayed by a king (Esther 1:4). Most likely since the other attributes associated with God here seem to address him as King of kings, this one also is intended to communicate that God displays a royal beauty or splendor that surpasses all others.

¹¹ The Hebrew term, *chanetsa* can mean “enduring” or “perpetual” (e.g. Job 20:7; Ps. 9:6), but this sense can also communicate enduring beyond battle and thus “victory” (cf. Job 14:20; Is. 25:8). “Victory” appears to be the sense here. After all, the LXX translates it as *hē nikē* (“the conquering,” “the victory,” “the overcoming”). In context, this most likely focuses upon the reality that God as King over Israel has not only given them victory over their enemies, but currently has given victory or success in their present mission—that of preparing to build the temple that will be at the heart of their attractational witness to the world.

¹²The term *howd* is most often translated by the English word “majesty,.” In the Bible it is often paired with *hadar*, which speaks of splendor, beauty, or majesty. In Nu. 27:20 it suggests the character and place that Moses had before Israel such that they respected and obeyed him—and this was to be transferred to Joshua. In 1 Chron. 29:25 we read that after Solomon was anointed king, *Yahweh* exalted him (gave him such greatness) and gave him such royal majesty that there was no king like him previously. As the accounts of Solomon unfold, we know this refers to riches, respect among other royalty and in Israel, success in projects, and wisdom. Like the other descriptions in this verse, so with this one, it is used of royalty and leaders (see Jer. 22:18—respect given a king). It appears to suggest an exalted status, place, rank, varied excellencies, and in some cases, deportment. God’s majesty inspires fear (Job 37:22; Is. 30:30). It also inspires singing, praise, and worship (Ps. 96:6, in light of whole psalm [here the LXX translates with *exomologēsis*]). The one who has ultimate royal majesty is also the one who will bring fulfillment of the visions and blessings of Zechariah, the one who will build the end-times temple (Zech. 6:13), none other than the Messiah, the Christ!

clause is that all things in the universe belong to the true God and ultimately originate from him. In context, part of the meaning seems to be that nothing can happen but that it is either caused by God or at least permitted by him.

That we have read the text correctly so far is confirmed as we move on to the parallel statement of God's praise in 11c-12, a statement that focuses with even greater clarity upon God's sovereignty. In 11c we read, "To you, *Yahweh*, is the dominion" (author's translation).¹³ What is being attributed to the LORD is universal (and absolute) sovereignty. This description is reiterated in the last clause of verse 11: "and you are the one who exalts himself as head above all" (author's translation).¹⁴ This wording makes it clear that no one or nothing outside himself has decided God's status. He is exalted "over all" "as head". The term "head" here means the chief or ultimate one. It is what is meant when we speak of "absolute sovereignty." No one or nothing is above God. He has dominion and has exalted himself above all powers, kings, and other heads, as the head, the chief, the ultimate ruler.

In verse 12 we read David's last words on why praise is given to the LORD on this occasion. This verse reiterates that the praise is tied into this occasion and in large part David is focusing on God's sovereignty. In the clause, "riches and honor are from before your face" (author's translation), it is affirmed that the current circumstances (including David's reign) and the resources just brought for the temple by the people ultimately came from the divine king, who

¹³ The term *hamamlakah* (ESV: "kingdom") is used in Chronicles to refer to a realm of reign, such as a country, countries, or specifically Israel (1 Chr. 16:20; 29:30; 2 Chr. 9:19; 12:8; 14:5; 17:10; 26:6, 29, et al). It is also used to speak of the reign or dominion, the rule of a king (2 Chr. 11:1; 13:5, 8; 17:5). In context, this second usage seems to be the focus here. This appears to be the only time in Scripture where this exact phraseology is used. More specifically, the point seems to be that ultimate dominion or sovereignty belongs to *Yahweh*. All belongs to him and so he reigns over it all as the ultimate sovereign or potentate.

¹⁴ In "the one who exalts himself" we find a hithpael participle, which connotes ongoing causative and reflexive action.

first dispensed them.¹⁵ After all, the Hebrew sovereign is able to say of the divine sovereign, “you rule over all.” In a context in which David is praising God for what he has brought about in Israel, for the current abundant offering, and the reality that the LORD continues to carry out his amazing redemptive work among his people, it appears that this specific affirmation is praising the LORD that there is not one aspect of life—big or small—that is outside God’s rule, his sovereignty. This appears to clarify the statement in v. 11, “Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.”¹⁶

Before we move on, let’s see if the Molinist could apply their understanding of sovereignty and freedom to this passage so far. In these verses could David be praising God that God, in eternity past, not only knew what could be done in this instance and what would be done in the different circumstances in which he might place David and Israel—decisions and actions that originated with them and not outside them (so they are indeterministic)—but God chose to bring about this particular set of circumstances and outcomes—namely, that David is king, that Israel has come together as a nation to worship God, and that these men and women would freely (in the indeterministic sense) bring about these circumstances? The answer is, “No.” The language

¹⁵ The idiomatic picture is of a king dispensing something (for which one would normally stand before him—before his face). If one has honor and riches, then this King of kings has granted it. It is by his decree, his pronouncement. The term translated “riches” (*osher*) speaks of material possessions (e.g. Gen. 31:16) and usually of such an amount or abundance that it is the opposite of poverty (e.g. Prov. 30:8; Eccles. 5:14). Such an abundance of material goods (wealth) and “honor” (*kabowd*) in the Old Testament are seen as gifts from *Yahweh* and come to the one who in humility fears *Yahweh* and seeks wisdom (Ps. 112:3; Prov. 3:16; 8:18; 22:4 [riches, honor, and life are gifts from *Yahweh*]).

David is acknowledging here that he has been placed in his position of leadership by God—along with the honor and wealth that he experiences. This most likely includes the fact that the current wealth that has been brought together in preparation for the temple has been given by and made possible by God.

¹⁶ As the absolutely sovereign God of the universe, the one who exercises meticulous providence, David acknowledges at the end of verse 12, “In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.” The point here seems to be that the current status of David and Israel, as well as God’s ongoing work among them have come from the LORD. Underneath David’s praise here is that as the King of kings and Lord of lords, God is able to take care of his people and he is doing this. As such, all that the people have given back to God and all that David has been able to accomplish in obedience to God come ultimately from God. God has blessed and rewarded his people for the very things he has enabled them to do!

used, the terms David has piled upon each other, all are designed to display that God is absolutely sovereign in this sense—he is ultimate in his decisions. He is free in the ultimate sense, namely that he is not moved by anything outside himself—he is not even moved by innate awareness of what choices man would make.¹⁷ The language here is too precise and strong to leave room for God to decree these events in a manner in which he could choose only what was open to him as defined by and limited by man’s indeterministic free choices.

This conclusion is not only reached because of what we have seen in David’s praise of God, it is also supported by the second kind of prayer the Hebrew king offers to God in verses 14-19, a request that he continually empower Solomon and the people to carry out his will, since they cannot do this without God. Let’s turn to those verses now. More specifically, the king goes about this request by preliminary remarks that lead to trust in God for this empowerment (14-17) and then makes the request itself (18-19).

David’s Grace-Focused Prayer Request: Verses 14-19

In 14a David’s prayer affirms that people are not worthy or able on their own to be involved in such free giving to God. David asks (author’s own translation): “But who am I, and [who] is my people, that we should be able to offer willingly [as this]?” The verb translated, “offer willingly,” not only speaks of truly desiring to give the offering, but elsewhere is used in contexts of duty, strong compulsion, and influence—including, as here, God’s determining governance.¹⁸ The expected answer to David’s question is something like this, “We ourselves

¹⁷ The perceptive reader will respond, “Wait a minute, Tom!” You just admitted that the careful Molinist speaks of God’s innate knowledge of what humans would do in certain circumstances. That is not something outside himself.” The knowledge may not be outside himself. However, the human choice is outside himself. My point is that the language used here does not allow limitation upon God by human choices.

¹⁸ The verb *nadav* that stands behind the English, “to offer willingly,” communicates the idea of inciting or moving something or someone to act. For example, in Exodus 25:2, as the LORD is giving instructions to Moses regarding the tabernacle, he instructs Moses in this fashion: “From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the

are no one and we are not able on our own willingly to do this—it must be by God’s grace!”¹⁹ David is acknowledging here that God has not only made David king, brought about these circumstances, and given the resources behind the giving, he has also worked in the hearts of the people certainly and according to his promises²⁰ that they willingly give these resources! And, in light of verses 11-12, it is deduced that the movement on God’s part to work in their hearts was not based upon knowledge that they would make these choices—either according to simple foreknowledge or middle knowledge.

What we have here is none other than soft deterministic (and compatibilistic) human freedom, freedom that is in line with the reality that people are moved by the strongest motive in

contribution for me.” The clause, “whose heart moves him” literally is, “who moves his heart” and contains the Qal imperfect of *nada*. We see a similar usage in Exodus 35:21. There, as people are bringing offerings for the tabernacle, we read, “...everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him, and brought the LORD’s contribution to be used for the tent of meeting.” The clause, “whose spirit moved him” contains the Qal perfect of this verb. Exodus 35:29 repeats this idea, only with the “heart” as the subject of the verb.” Outside of Exodus 35 the verb is used only in the Hithpael (causative reflexive) tense. All of its other uses speak either of offering one’s self freely for some kind of service or act (Judges 5:2, 9; 2 Chron. 17:16; Ezra 11:2), freely bringing resources or materials for the accomplishment of God’s work—the building of the temple (1 Chron. 29:5, 6, 9, 14, 17; Ezra 1:6; 2:68), or freely bringing offerings or sacrifices to offer on the altar to the LORD (Ezra 3:5). In 1 Chr. 29:9 we are told that giving freely involves giving with the whole heart or because they truly wanted to do it. In Ezra 1:6 freely giving can be ordered by decree of the king (cf. 1:4)—i.e. strong compulsion or causation—especially in the context of knowing what the penalties are for disobedience. And, in Ezra 3:5 offerings can be freely brought to the LORD, even though it is emphasized that this is according to God’s requirements, his laws (cf. 3:2, 4)—i.e. a strong sense of duty or compulsion. Finally, moving to live in Jerusalem as decided by the casting of lots (which itself is decided by the providence of God in the biblical worldview, Prov. 16:33), can be described as doing something freely (Neh. 11:1-2)—i.e. in the context of a strong sense of compulsion or causation. In other words, the use of the verb elsewhere repeatedly affirms that something is free if the heart or will of a person truly wants to do it, i.e. if the movement is from the person, rather than their being forced to do it. Free choices and giving can be the result of strong influence or compulsion outside the person—provided that their heart truly comes to desire to move or give.

¹⁹ This expected answer is not only implied by the context here, but also by this same form of question used elsewhere and the expected answers in those contexts: Exodus 3:11; 1 Samuel 18:18; 2 Samuel 7:18; 1 Chronicles 17:16; 2 Chronicles 2:6.

²⁰ Consider what God promised to David in 1 Chronicles 17:3-15, that though David himself will not build the temple, his offspring will and God will certainly bring it to pass.

their heart—a motive that can be certainly caused by God and antecedent movements of the heart.²¹

In addition to man’s moral inability that prevents him from giving such gifts as these in the manner they were given (14a), David has another reason for attributing the giving ultimately to God, namely that God is the ultimate origin of the resources and the ultimate origin of the desire to give (14b): “For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.”²²

Additionally, in verse 15 David affirms the shortness of their lives and the reality they are not the ultimate owners of the land and resources and these realities place them in situations in which David knows they cannot ultimately control their own destinies and could not, on their own, have brought about these outcomes: “For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding.”²³

²¹ As we see in 1 Chronicles 29:1-5, King David made a strong case to the assembled people that they should give—following his example, and also that they might be part of the great purposes God is working out (cf. 28:1-8). In 1 Chronicles 29:9 we discover that the people “had given willingly...with a whole heart they had offered freely to the LORD.” In other words, they responded to David’s reasoning and so in their intellects, affections, and wills, they came to agree with David—seeing the truth of his reasoning, they had the desire to follow his words, and so they made the decision to do so.

²² The following reasons lead us to conclude that David is writing that the desire to give also comes from God and not merely the material resources: (a) In the immediate context (14a), David is talking about giving willingly or freely. The statements about all being from *Yahweh* come directly after this and thus more likely refer to the giving of both the material and volitional resources. (b) The fact that “victory” is ascribed to *Yahweh* in v. 11 implies success; i.e. the ability to do something or stay with something. This includes the willingness to start and carry out the task. (c) In verse 12 that David affirms that *Yahweh* “gives strength to all” goes to the level of willingness and ability. (d) Finally, verse 17 speaks of giving not only freely, but joyously, and this is part of the uprightness of heart on which David focuses. This joyous affection seems to be part of what God has made possible, what he has brought about that these events might take place. So, what we are saying, then, is that in context, David is not merely praising God for the material resources, but also for the volitional resources for the people to carry out this task. This understanding runs counter to how many Molinists view freedom.

²³ In v. 15 we find another reason why (“For:” *kiy*) David and the people are not worthy to give freely to God what they have. It is not only that all things belong to and are from God, but David and the people are not truly and ultimately owners of anything. Instead, they are “strangers” (*gerim*) in the eyes of God and sojourners (*w^otoshabim*), as were their fathers. What is more, their days are like a shadow and there is no abiding, remaining—i.e. their lives are short. The emphasis appears to be on the shortness of life, the fact that they are not the ones who ultimately own the land (that is God) and so they are not in control such that they could decide their own outcomes, what their resources are, and thus what they give.

In verse sixteen David concludes his affirmation that God has been the ultimate source of the material and volitional resources with these words: “O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own.” God has provided what he promised and what he commanded the people to do and so the glory ultimately goes to him.

Yet, we dare not overlook that in verse seventeen David also sees the desires and decisions to give as truly coming from the hearts of the givers—a joyous, willing giving that pleases God: “I know, my God, that you test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you.”²⁴

After these preliminary remarks that have prepared the hearts of David and the assembled people for petitioning God with humble and dependent hearts, David now turns to the actual request for continual empowerment itself (18-19), a prayer, that takes us beyond any reasonable doubt that David has been attributing to God through this text that both the material and volitional resources for this giving (and thus doing the will of God) have come ultimately from God: “O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep forever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people,²⁵ and direct their hearts toward you.”²⁶ ¹⁹ Grant to

²⁴ There are two main affirmations David makes here. First, God examines the heart (the seat of emotions, desires, and will) of man very closely and he finds great pleasure in decisions, desires, and actions that are in accordance with the character of God—in accordance with his will. The term for “uprightness” is used elsewhere as synonymous with “righteousness,” which is something that is in line with the character of God (cf. Ps. 9:8). The point here is that God knows man’s heart, he knows what he does and why he does it, and God takes great pleasure in obedience that flows from a heart given to God.

The second affirmation is that God-like uprightness involves free and joyous giving to God for the purpose of his mission. Both David and the people have given freely (*nadav* [same verb as used above]) and David adds the people have given “with joy/rejoicing” (*simchah*). When true joy or rejoicing (gladness) is present, this means that there is full desire on the part of the person to do what they do.

²⁵ The text uses an intensified form of the imperative for “keep,” that displays a strong request. David very much wants the LORD to keep this way of thinking (i.e. glad free giving for God’s glory and living for his mission) forever or always “in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of your people” (author’s translation).

Solomon my son a whole heart that he may keep your commandments, your testimonies, and your statutes, performing all, and that he may build the palace for which I have made provision.”²⁷

What we have in this passage, then, is an introduction to almost all the key theological truths the remainder of this book will make: in favor of Calvinism and against Molinism.

- As will be seen in Chapter Five, God is absolutely sovereign, and this means that he is the ultimate ruler in the universe, and is not limited by anything or anyone outside himself (and this includes human free choices). God exercises this sovereignty through meticulous providence, and this means God preserves and governs all his creatures and all their actions. This passage does not address different ways of governing, but is consistent with those texts that teach such a truth (as we will see in Chapter Six).
- As will be seen in Chapter Seven, Man is free in a manner similar to God. In other words, man’s will functions in a way that flows out of his nature and follows out of its greatest motive at the time. Where man’s will differs from God’s is that God’s is free in the absolute sense—not dependent upon anything or anyone outside himself. Man is not free in that absolute sense, but is dependent upon God in his choices and actions.
- As will be seen in Chapters 8-9, God can and does move the heart of man such that man will trust in God, delight in him, and freely do his will (especially important for salvation and sanctification). Though this passage does not address the believer’s ultimate glorification (Chapter Ten), it does lay a foundation for understanding how God can perfect the hearts of saints such that they always and eternally choose what is right and holy, and yet do this freely.
- Finally, we see clearly in this text that absolute divine sovereignty and free human choice are compatible—a truth that will permeate the rest of our study.

²⁶ The verb used here (*kuwn* [lit. “prepare”]) is a Hiphil (i.e. causative, active) imperative, so it is in this context a request that God would direct or prepare in such a way the heart of the people so that they would be inclined toward *Yahweh* and thus would gladly and joyously give and live for his glory. The sense of this verb (i.e. to prepare) suggests that David understands that God must work in hearts such that preparatory work is done so that the heart will be moved toward and in favor of God. This is none other than praying for antecedents to take place so that the heart of the people is moved to glorify and please God. It is not only another example of how God’s grace is seen in the OT, but also prohibits us from holding to contra-causal or indeterministic (libertarian) freedom.

²⁷ David prays for God’s grace to give to Solomon a whole heart to follow God and to complete the temple (v. 19). Here we see that the focus throughout has been on God’s provision in the hearts and lives of the people so that this part of the mission of God that lies at the heart of his redemptive history could be completed.