

WHO IS WILLING?

"And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?"
I Chronicles 29:5.

This is a wonderful verse of scripture. The incident described in the context took place hundreds of years ago. But, in spite of its antiquity, this text has not lost any of its beauty or charm.

There are many things which have not lost their beauty or their usefulness, even though they are old. What about the sun? How old is it? It is as old as creation, yet its rays were not one whit more welcome in the Garden of Eden than they are now. What about the air we breathe? It is just as welcome now as in the golden days of the past. It is even so with our text. Even though it is very old, it has not lost any of its beauty or its worth.

By the time of the story recorded in our scripture lesson, David's enemies had been subdued and all of his victories had been won. Near the close of his life he was preparing for something that was to excel everything else that the world has ever seen; he was preparing to build a temple for God. He had resolved that he would build a dwelling-place for the Lord. He had made great preparation for this tremendous undertaking by collecting a huge supply of materials.

Some five centuries earlier God had said that there was a place where He intended to put His name. Just before this story God had pointed out to David the very spot that He meant, at the top of Mount Moriah. This was the place where God's wrath was averted, where the sacrifice was accepted, where the sins of God's people were pardoned, and where the destroying angel put up his sword. That was the place God had chosen on which His temple was to be erected. The place was not for man, but for God. It was the only building on this earth of which God was the Architect and Designer. He made David know by His hand upon him, and by His Spirit guiding him, every detail of that wonderful building. There was not a spot in it, from the foundation to the top, which God had not marked out, defined and designed.

God said that He would manifest His presence in that building. Not only would the place be filled with His glorious presence, but it would be a place of prayer for the Old Testament saints.

Even though it had long been the ambition, intention and plan of David to build this temple, God denied him the privilege of doing so. God commanded Nathan, saying, "Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not build me a house to dwell in" (I Chronicles 17:4. Then God added, "And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever" (I Chronicles 17:11.)

We cannot imagine how great was the disappointment of David when he was told that the work was not to be done by him. Being a man of war, and having his hands stained with human blood, he was not permitted to touch the pure white temple of peace. In David's case, however, as in many others, this great disappointment was sanctified. So great was his zeal for the honor of God that, even though he was not permitted to build the house, he was determined to promote the good work to the very utmost of his ability. Instead of sinking into sullen apathy, or the inertness of despair, he devoted himself with renewed energy to gathering the materials: the riches of conquered kings and the spoils of plundered nations, as well as the vast treasures out of his own personal possessions. He thus devoted to this noble work that wealth which others would have consumed in ostentatious pageantry and expensive pleasures.

Anxious that everything should be understood clearly, and that before his death the work might be so arranged as to proceed afterwards without interruption, David summoned the chief men of the nation to Jerusalem, in order that he might deliver to them all the instructions which he had received. When the assembly convened, the aged monarch was so cheered with the sight of those assembled and so animated with the hope that God was about to fulfil His gracious promises that he stood up and said, "Hear ye, my brethren, my people." Then, having briefly stated the purpose for which had convened them, he turned to his son, Solomon, and exhorted him to serve God faithfully. He particularly urged him to prosecute with diligence the building of the temple, and then to engage heartily in the work of the Lord.

In connection with the incident referred to by our text there is a very interesting angle. Instead of trying to take the glory unto himself for the erection of the wonderful temple, David gave every Israelite the opportunity and the invitation to have a share in that great project. "And who then is willing to consecrate his service (just as I have consecrated mine) this day unto the Lord?" All of God's people are asked to share in His work. We are simply God's fellow-laborers.

There were three men who had much to do with the erection of the temple in Jerusalem. They were Solomon, King of Israel; Hiram, King of Tyre; and Hiram Abiff. These men suggest wisdom, strength and beauty. "It is necessary that there should be wisdom to contrive, strength to support, and beauty to adorn all great and important undertakings." Although these three men get the credit for building the temple, we must remember that David first suggested the idea. He made many of the arrangements and collected much of the material. Knowing that it could not be completed without help, he called for the assistance of all who were willing. "And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?"

God not only gives us numerous blessings, but He also requires a service of those who are saved. Salvation is what He gives us; dedication is what He requires of us. He certainly has the right to our service. This service may be rendered by a noble, upright, consistent and unselfish life. It may be rendered also by earnest, loving efforts. You may not be able to preach to a crowd, but you can plead with a friend.

When you look closely at this text, you will observe that it refers to a willing people. The word "who" indicates that it is a personal matter. The question, "Who is willing?", indicates that it is a voluntary consecration. It is a freewill offering. It is not constrained. Christ does not drive slaves to His work as Pharaoh drove the Israelites of old. Christ wants willing servants. We have the glorious privilege of being cheerful volunteers for the Lord's work. Only willing service is efficient. Things done unwillingly are done inefficiently. Workers who put their whole hearts into their work are not put to shame by what they do.

"Who then is willing to consecrate his service?" He is asking His own people, pardoned, willing and rich as they are, to dedicate themselves to His service. How wonderful it is to know that we are His children! None of us knows how rich His children are. "All things are yours." Did you ever think of that? "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." That is wonderful. Not only must this dedication be personal and voluntary, but it must be active. God is ready and anxious for your service. If we expect to please and honor the Lord, as we should, then we must cheerfully submit ourselves to Him for the doing of His blessed will. Let us make the service of God our business. As the Hebrew expresses it, we should fill our hands for the Lord. A very familiar saying is, "He has his hands full." That means that his every faculty -- body, mind and soul -- is taken up with his work. Full hands imply wholeheartedness. The happiest Christians are those who fill their hands full

for the Lord. Any Christian who truly engages in the service of the Lord will have his hands full. There is work enough for every person in God's service.

This is the very highest service imaginable because it is "unto the Lord." Service unto Him implies that the mind is under the influence of divine truth and this always produces right thinking. As you would expect, holy thinking will produce right living. As we think, so we live.

The One Who gave His all for you has redeemed you from all evil, has preserved you and kept you hitherto, has provided you with peace and joy, now asks you to give up all to Him. This dedication, which is so reasonable, should be immediate and prompt. "Who is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" Some people constantly live in the past. Such people are neither happy nor useful. Others constantly live in the future. They are always talking about what they intend to do. Their eyes are focused on the future, and naturally they fail to see the beauties and opportunities of the present. There are comparatively few who actually live in the here and now.

This would make a splendid motto: "Yesterday is past; tomorrow may never come; if you have anything to do, get busy and do it now." Today is not too early; tomorrow may be too late. Christians need not lose any time in waiting for opportunities. The present may be your only opportunity. Man says a lot about tomorrow, but God is everywhere and always lays great stress on today.

If we will only yield our hearts completely unto the Lord, live upright, consistent and unselfish Christian lives, put forth earnest and loving efforts in the interest of the Lord's work, then many of our difficulties will be overcome by His help, others will be encouraged and helped thereby, we shall have profound satisfaction therein, our lives will be pleasing and honoring to the Lord and our service will be rewarded richly by Him.