

BEZALEEL - A DEDICATED CRAFTSMAN

Exodus 31:1-5; 35:30; 36:3

After the Israelites had been delivered from their bondage in Egypt, they came to Sinai. Obviously, they needed a place in which they could meet regularly, regardless of the condition of the weather, for the purpose of worshiping God. If they were to have a worthy sanctuary in which to worship God collectively, it certainly would have to be built by men. Even to this day, such a building has never been erected without the labors of men. God does everything for men which they cannot do for themselves, but He will not do anything for them that they can do for themselves.

God designed the tabernacle which He wanted His people to have for their use as a place in which to worship Him collectively and publicly. While Moses was on the mountain, God gave to him specific instructions about the design and the actual construction of the tabernacle. Following His instructions to Moses about the design of the tabernacle, which structure would be a symbol of God's dwelling in the midst of His people, God designated the persons to whom the oversight of the work was to be entrusted.

When God has any work to be done, He always chooses and calls the person or persons whom He wants and needs for the doing of it. He either selects and calls those who are already qualified, or those who can become prepared for the tasks to which He assigns them. God never calls anybody to any work or service of His unless and until he is qualified for it. And their preparation may have been obtained far from the scene of their labors.

There on the mountain God told Moses that He had personally chosen Bezaleel, who would be under the influence and protection of the Almighty, to be the human architect or chief master-builder of the tabernacle, and to be the director and overseer of the whole work relating to it. Desirous of constructing the tabernacle and furnishing it as soon as possible, Moses descended the mountain and gathered the children of Israel together in solemn assembly and transmitted to them the expressed will of God. The people were commanded to take a part of their possessions, each according to his ability, and present them as free-will offerings to God for use in the building of the tabernacle. Cheerfully and willingly they brought their offerings to the Lord for His service and glory. They contributed so freely and bountifully that it became necessary to request them not to make any more contributions.

It is interesting to note that God did not reveal to Moses whom He had chosen as His craftsmen until He had given him instructions about building the tabernacle, the model of which He had shown him, and what should be the furniture therein, who should minister in it, and what clothes they should wear.

God called Bezaleel, whom He had endowed with the gifts of ingenuity and skill in manual arts and mechanical operations, to use his abilities in the building of the tabernacle. This call emphasizes the fact that God has a definite purpose for individuals to whom He has given special talents. His personal call lays upon their hearts a sense of specific mission. God selected Bezaleel to do this important piece of work because he was a craftsman with the unusual ability to make the tabernacle both beautiful and appealing to those who might worship therein. Bezaleel was a master-workman in the use of metal, wood, and stone. Aholiab, who was his associate, was very talented in the use of textile fabrics, but it is quite evident that Bezaleel was master of that type of work as well as his own.

It is possible that Bezaleel had learned these trades in Egypt, where he had spent the major part of his life in slavery. If so, it is very doubtful that, while learning them, he ever had an idea that some day God would present to him an opportunity to do

a piece of work of great importance. With all of his natural and acquired abilities, Bezaleel was in need of the gifts of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge from the Spirit of God in order to superintend this project successfully. It was through the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God that he was enabled to direct the others what to do and how to do it. Other workmen with native abilities and mechanical minds were to work under the supervision of Bezaleel and Aholiab as they were ordered by them. To teach them what tools to use and how to use them, how to melt the metals of gold, silver, and brass, and into what forms and shapes to put them, and how to polish them.

The thing which caused Bezaleel to overshadow his fellows was his spirit. In this connection God said of him: "I have filled him with the spirit of God" (Exodus 31:3). It was the Spirit of God within him which made him an extraordinary artisan whom God could and did use. The difference between him and the ordinary artisans was not the skill of his hands, but the spirit that was in his heart. Whatever he did, Bezaleel tried to the very best of his ability to please God, regardless of what anybody thought or said about him and his workmanship. No doubt there were some who criticized the work of Bezaleel and Aholiab on the tabernacle, for some fault-finders are present in every age, but these two useful and successful men were not troubled in the least by any complainers. When God's Spirit directs His workers and blesses the work which they do for the Lord, the workers can well afford to ignore all complaints of the fault-finders, who do not have the character or ability to do anything except criticize.

These craftsmen, whom God called and directed to build the tabernacle, discovered God's will for their lives, and used their talents to the best of their ability in working for the glory of God. One of the greatest weaknesses in present-day church life is that so many members are patrons of the Lord's work rather than participants in it. When the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart and controls the life of any Christian, he will dedicate his talents unto the Lord to be used in His service. When Bezaleel dedicated his talents unto the Lord, he was endued with the power of the Holy Spirit, and was enabled to accomplish far more than he ever anticipated. Just as God sanctified and used the ability of this man who dedicated himself to Him and His service in the long ago, so will He do with your talents today if you will present them to Him. Just as God blessed him with the wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and dexterity which he needed for his work, so will He qualify you for the work to which He calls you. Ability is never a thing to be despised. All ability is bestowed by Almighty God for the purpose of being used for His honor and glory, for the welfare of others, and for the advancement of the cause of Christ. The skill which is in your mind and hands is an endowment of God and, if truly dedicated to Him and His service, can be used mightily for His glory and for the extension of His kingdom. The highest use of the gifts which you have received from God is to dedicate them to His service in and through His church. There is a great diversity of gifts, but God can and will use all of them that are fully dedicated to Him.