

CHEERFUL VOLUNTEERS

"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 its beauty nor its charm.

There are various things which have not lost their beauty nor their utility, 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 its beauty nor its worth.

It had long been David's ambition to build a Temple on Mount Zion. He had even sworn that he would not suffer his eyelids to slumber nor the temples of his head to take any rest until he had found a habitation for the Lord, a dwelling place for the mighty God of Jacob. In the early part of his reign he told Nathan about his intentions and plans, but it pleased God to deny 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 an 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 the blood of his enemies, he was not to be permitted to touch the pure white temple of peace. In David's case, 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 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 necessary for the work. With great industry he collected the necessary materials: the riches of conquered kings and the spoils of plundered nations, as well as the vast treasures out of his own private possessions. He thus devoted to this noble work that wealth which others consume in ostentatious pageantry and expensive pleasures.

This Temple was to be a marvelous thing, excelling everything else that the world had ever seen. It was the only building on this earth of which God was the Architect and Designer. By the guidance of His Spirit, He caused David to know every detail of that wonderful building. There was not a spot in it which God had not marked out and defined and designed.

Anxious that all things should be clearly understood, 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 the illustrious assembly and 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 he had convened them, he turned to his son, Solomon, and exhorted him to serve the God of his father. 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 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?"

There were three men who had much to do with the erection of that wonderful building. They were Solomon, King of Israel; Hiram, King of Tyre; and Hiram Abiff. These men were suggestive of 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; He also requires a service of those who are saved. Salvation is what He gives us; dedication is what He demands from 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 multitude, but you can plead with a friend.

When you look closely at this text, you will observe that it refers to a willing people. "Who then is willing?" It is a freewill offering. It is not constrained. God does not drive slaves to His work as Pharaoh drove Israel of old. Instead, He wants freewill offerings. He wants willing servants. What a glorious privilege--being cheerful volunteers for the Lord's work! Only willing service is efficient. Things done unwillingly are badly done. Workers who put their whole hearts into their work are not made ashamed by what they do.

"Who then is willing to consecrate his service?" 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 phrase puts it, we should fill our hands to the Lord. "He has his hands full." What a familiar saying! It 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 God. Any Christian who truly engages in the service of God will have his hands full. There is work enough for the whole man and for every man 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 produces right thinking. As you would expect, holy thinking will produce right living. As we think, so we live.

Moreover, this service is immediate. "Who is willing to consecrate his service this day?" Some people constantly live in the past. Such people are never useful. Neither are they happy. 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 very 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 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 helped and encouraged thereby, we shall have profound satisfaction therein, our lives will be pleasing to Him and our service will be rewarded by Him.