

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT GIFT

"And next him was Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto the Lord" (II Chronicles 17:16).

Jehoshaphat was a good and great king. He was very popular and very powerful. He was surrounded, supported, and undergirded by mighty men of valor and by a loyal people. The chief officer in the reign of Jehoshaphat was Amasiah. So important was he that 200,000 picked men were put under his command, and Amasiah stood next to the king in position. While no title was appended to his name, a most significant statement was made about him. This statement was far more significant than a title, than wealth, than valor. Listen to it! He "willingly gave himself unto the Lord." It was a great thing for Jehoshaphat to have one who could command an army, and at the same time obey the commands of God. It was also a great thing for the country of Judah to have a godly man in such a position.

Amasiah is a man of whom we do not know anything beyond this -- he "willingly offered himself unto the Lord." There was a time when first he knew the grace of God, which wrought such a change in him and in his entire career. There was a waking up to the fact that God deserved his love and his life. There was a time of dedication of himself to God.

It is a glorious thing when people of leadership are pronounced and positive friends of the Lord. It is a glorious thing when the outstanding lawyer is a modest, faithful friend and follower of Christ; and the skillful doctor, who has such an opportunity to bless the world; and the patient teacher, who occupies such an eminent place of responsibility and opportunity; and the aggressive businessman, with various people under his direction; and on and on in all realms. What a glorious thing when people in positions of leadership, as was this man Amasiah, make it a point to be pronounced friends of God! The most significant thing about life is for it to be positioned properly, the most tragic thing about life for it to be positioned wrongly. By the quiet wielding of influence we are daily elevating or degrading people. Glorious it is beyond words to express when one is known as a positive and faithful friend of Christ!

Our great need is not for titled leaders; it is for more unselfish and Christlike leaders. Our great need is not necessarily greater numbers, but rather a better quality. After he had addressed a group of Christian men, Mr. Henry Drummond was asked by one of the men if he did not think that the first need of Christianity today was for more men. He answered, "No, not more men, but a better brand." Then, there was somebody who remarked, "Men are looking for better methods; God is looking for better men."

I. Amasiah Gave Himself.

The most significant and meaningful gift ever made is that of oneself. Christ made the most significant gift ever made when "He gave Himself a ransom for many." Himself was the best thing that Amasiah had to give.

1. He made no reserve as to what he had.

He gave himself, his money, his ability, his position, and his influence. All was yielded up to the Lord. Have you given yourself to the Lord?

2. He made no reserve as to what he did.

He gave himself to the Lord.

3. He made no reserve as to how his service should be rendered.

When the supreme gift of self is made, all other gifts and services are easy and joyous. The reason why some of us give but dribblets of our time and talents and substance to the Lord and His causes is because we have given so little of ourselves to the Lord. Self is the greatest of all gifts, and it is the hardest to make. If self is withheld, every other gift will be hard to make. When self is really given, there will not be any reservations.

Men and women who have given themselves have wrought marvels. They have spanned oceans, annihilated distance, faced lions' dens, the fiery furnace, the handman's knot, and the martyr's death. They have stormed citadels of wickedness, attacked festering dens of corruption, and blessed mankind everywhere.

II. Amasiah Gave Himself Willingly.

There was no coercion, no conscription, no drafting. The Bible says, "My people shall be a willing people." Willingness to follow the Lord all the way is one of the finest qualities of a Christian. What other service than that which is rendered willingly is either worthy of the Lord or acceptable unto Him? Too many Christians have to be begged, persuaded, and petted in order to get them to accept a place of responsibility in a church. Such a spirit is not pleasing to the Lord. One church member exultingly says, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." Another says, "Do I have to go to church again?" You know which of the two pleases the Lord.

What a glorious thing for Christians to say, "Christ is entitled to my best, and I am going to give Him my best." One of two factors dominates every life. Either self is the dominating factor or the Lord is. The self-centered life is doomed. That is true of an individual, a family, a church, an organization or a nation. Gladstone remarked, "Napoleon had the keenest brain that was ever packed into a human skull." And yet Napoleon died like a dog in the ditch, after he had made Europe cower and cringe and tremble before him. Why? He was self-centered in life from first to last. What did he care to walk with cruel foot over the heart of his beautiful Josephine? What did he care to sacrifice a hundred thousand soldiers, if only he could carry out his self-centered and fiendish ambition? But, the self-centered life is doomed. No matter what the calling, the position or the power, the self-centered life is doomed. But the life that is given to Christ and conforms to His will is the victorious one.

III. Amasiah Gave Himself To The Lord.

People give themselves and what they have to various causes -- some of which are worthy and commendable, while others are non-essential, unworthy, and injurious. But Amasiah gave himself to the most significant cause -- "the Lord."

Recognizing the greatest Person in the world, he threw the powers of his undivided allegiance on the Lord's side. He heard the clamorous and insistent voices of the age bidding for his time, talents, powers, and influence. But in a spirit of heroism, discernment, fidelity, surrender, and willingness, he threw the powers of his magnificent manhood, with all that he had, on God's side. How fine, commendable, and far-reaching it is for men in high positions to be out and out for God! The most manly thing anyone can do is to declare himself unequivocally for the Lord.

Amasiah made it his life-work to serve the Lord. This is the reasonable and right thing for everybody to do.

One should serve his Creator. He is under an even greater obligation to serve his Redeemer, Who shed His blood in order that he might be set free from sin. Besides, this is an honorable service. To serve Him is the most honorable service in which one can engage. And, then, God will never let His servants serve Him for nothing. He always rewards them.

Amasiah put first things first. He put God first in his life. Surely, that was right. There is but one rightful place for anybody to put the Lord, and that is first. When God is put first, other things come in their rightful order. Each of us should give God the first place in our personal and every-day life.

In His matchless sermon Christ said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." If you will seek first the kingdom of God, all these things — including food, clothing, and the necessities of life, will be added unto you.

We belong to Christ by a threefold claim. He created us, He died for us, and He preserves us.

Amasiah gave himself to the Lord in a secular calling. He offered to be what the Lord would have him to be; and so he remained a soldier. There is no lawful occupation in which one cannot serve the Lord. Yet, it was not easy for Amasiah to live for God as a soldier. However, he did it, even though his occupation was a difficult one in which to do so. Wherever your lot is cast, abide in your calling, and glorify God in it, as Amasiah did. Not only did he do so, but he arose to eminence in his hard place. He left an honorable record and a worthy example.

One of the leading shoe men of the world was a devout Christian. One day he and one of his ardent admirers were walking away from a church service together. This friend asked him: "If you should put your life passion in one sentence, what would that sentence be?" He smiled and took him to his office, where he had it on a cardboard. Six little words voiced it. Here they are: "God first. Family second. Shoes third." That is exactly right. God first, before loved ones or business, certainly. Making a living is a mere incident. Making a life is our main task. Let Christ's will come to pass in your life. Any other course will have regret in it. Give yourself completely to Christ and the accomplishment of His blessed will.