

THE CONSECRATED HAND

"What is that in thy hand" Exodus 4:2

Moses was keeping the sheep of his father-in-law Jethro in Midian. God called him and commanded him to go over and deliver Israel from bondage. Moses shrank from the undertaking. He hesitated to become a messenger of the Lord to Pharaoh. He mentioned one difficulty after another which he thought would excuse him from entering on his allotted task. He offered seven distinct objections as reasons why he should not undertake the arduous task to which he was called. His objections are as follows:--

1. Lack of fitness--"Who am I, that I should go?"--3:11
2. Lack of words ---"What shall I say?" -- 3:13
3. Lack of authority"They will not believe me"--4:1
4. Lack of Power of speech--"I am not eloquent"---4:10
5. Lack of special adaptation--"Send by whom thou wilt send"--4:13
6. Lack of success at his first attempt--"Neither hast thou delivered thy people at all" 5:23
7. Lack of acceptance--"The children of Israel have not hearkened unto me." -- 6:12

This complete list would seem to be rather conclusive that Moses was not capable or qualified for this task. Yet, if only he would yield to God and be content to ~~be~~ whatever God would have him be and let God work His will in and through him, there would simply be no limit to the service that his wonderful individuality and personality would render to God and man.

However, if we pause for a moment and consider the almost insurmountable difficulties which stood in the way of Israel's redemption from Egypt we can readily appreciate the hesitation on the part of Moses before undertaking this herculean task. Egypt at that time was one of the most powerful of the nations. The Israelites had become the slaves and servants of the Egyptians, and as such were almost necessary to the vigour of the nation. Having been in this relationship for four centuries, the Israelites were in a measure satisfied with their condition. Hope had gone from them. Ambition had died within them. To redeem a people who did not care to be redeemed seemed to be an almost impossible task. Besides he wondered where they would go in case they were freed as their own land was now occupied with the war-like tribes which had come down from the north and strongly entrenched themselves there. Furthermore, Moses was without training in warfare and without any visible means of prosecuting the great task. He had nothing but a stick or rod in his hand which he had cut out of a thicket to be used in protecting and guiding his sheep and as a staff to lean upon for support when needed. Any day he could throw that stick away and find himself a better one. At length God said to him "What is that in thy hand? And he said, A rod." Then God said, "Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground and it became a serpent." Then God spoke to Moses and said, "Put forth thine hand and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand."

Thus in the performance of this miracle God was showing Moses that he could turn that rod to a higher use than he had ever done up to that time. This incident taught Moses that what was feasible to weak faith might become an element of power when the act of obedience to God was performed. God informed him that he was to accomplish mighty things for him and deliverance for Israel with that little rod in his hand. And so it proved. He used what he had in his hand for God and as the result he accomplished mighty deeds for Him and for his own people. This is the method by which all great works for God have been accomplished, that is by doing the best one could with what he had in hand. Let us notice some Bible examples of how God used little things to accomplish greater things, and let us get some of the lessons they teach.

"WHAT IT THAT IN THY HAND?"

I. A Spear Said Joshua --Josh. 8:18

When the second attack was made upon the city of Ai "The Lord said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that is in the hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thy hand." Joshua was obedient to the Divine command and held the spear extended as the signal agreed upon with the men who were in ambush. This spear ever after is associated in our thoughts with the name and work of Joshua who used what he had in his hand for God. How glorious it would be if we would all be obedient children and servants of God in the use of the spiritual weapons which He has graciously furnished for our spiritual conflicts.

II. An Ox-Goad Said Shamgar.--Judg. 3:31

It was an ox-goad which he used to urge on his lazy beasts. It seemed to be a terribly rude and clumsy weapon with which to bless Israel and to honor God. Yet used for God his ox-goad slew six hundred Philistines and delivered Israel with bravery and heroism. Since he used it for God it was not used in vain. Suppose Shamgar had refused to use it because it was crude or small or ill-fitted, as he thought, to the work. In that case he would have lost a great honor because the victory would not have stood to his credit. Many people today are losing the honors of better victories because they are failing to do their best for God with what they already possess or have in hand.

III. Trumpets and Pitchers Containing Lamps Said Gideon. Jdg. 7

These are certainly strange weapons with which to attempt the defeat of the countless Midianites who lie in the valley below. It would seem that Gideon and his three hundred would be killed instantly as they went down into the valley where the thousands of Midianites were encamped. But their experience teaches us that God can take feeble instruments and make them mighty for the accomplishment of his Divine purpose. Brave and noble Gideon caused his name to be written high on the scroll of fame among faithful heroes and patriotic victors because he used what he had in his hand for God.

IV. A Sling Said David.--I Sam. 17

It is only a sling, a little weapon he had made for pleasure and to keep the beasts away from his sheep. Only a sling; but a sling in the trained hand of David was really a mighty weapon. It was mightier far at a distance than the sword of Goliath. With that sling he slew Goliath, whom the whole army of Israel dared not meet. With his sling in hand, David placed himself in God's care and went forth confident of victory and he was not disappointed at the outcome for he served God with what he had.

When asked the same question again David's reply was-----
An Harp.

Before the clouded face of Saul, David sat with his harp. Over its strings his hands swept, calling forth strains inspired by human genius and divine ecstasy. His wonderful playing checked the evil tendencies in Saul in a great way because David used what he had in his hand for God. He was playing like he fought and did his other work, namely, "In the name of the Lord." That was David's motto when feeding the sheep, when slaying the lion, when defying the Philistines, and when composing his immortal psalms. When we learn to do as he did and go out in the name that is above every name, victory will assuredly be ours.

V. A Sword Answered Jonathan

That seemed to be a very insignificant instrument but it was enough to meet the need of that brave youth, when followed by his armour-bearer he goes up against that army, and the Philistines are defeated by these two. It is another instance of a man serving God with what he had, and God blessing him with a great victory.

VI. A Fishing Net Said Peter And His Companions

They were on the Sea of Galilee. By this sea Jesus walked for the purpose of preaching the kingdom of God and calling men to be His disciples. The net in the hand of Peter and his companions is at once transfigured and glorified until it becomes the Divine method of winning souls, and the fish are suggestive of the men and women who are to be gathered into the kingdom of God. This incident shows us that no instrument is so insignificant as to be unfitted for God's purpose in bringing good to men and glory to Jesus Christ.

VII. Five Barley Loaves and Two Small Fishes Said The Young Lad

Yet the young lad heard Christ say, "Bring them to Me." He gave them to the Lord and wondered what He would do with those small things in the endeavor to feed so many. After giving them to the Lord he had the reward of seeing the multitude of far more than 5000 fed with them. Jesus well knew what he was going to do although He asked the question as to the resources for supplying the wants of the multitude. Thus God can make the foolish things of the world confound the things which are mighty. Talents trusted in the hands of our Master will always multiply so the important thing for each of us to do is to use the things that we now have in hand for our Lord.

VIII. Only Two Mites Said The Poor Widow

The scene is in the Temple of God in Jerusalem. The collection is being taken. Christ is present and is watching the proceedings with interest as He always does. There was a poor widow present with only two mites. That was a very small amount in a way, and yet it was everything that she had anywhere. She gave all that she had unto God. Her fame for liberality has inspired others to give. No one knows the amount of money this poor widow has caused others to give. She has influenced many to give out of their poverty and many others to give out of their abundance, and thereby streams of money have flowed into the Lord's treasury for the extension of His kingdom in the world. The lesson again is use what you have in your hand. Give from what you have now, and God will make that worth more to you and to ~~give to~~ the world ~~than~~ than the mere thinking you would give millions if you had them.

IX. A Small Box Of Fragrant Ointment Said Mary

It was but a small alabaster box of fragrant ointment and yet it was very precious. She wanted to give it to her Lord. She did break the box, and then she poured it on the Saviour's head and feet. The odor of that precious ointment has filled not only that house but the whole world. No doubt, you have something that you can use for the Master's sake. To give it to Him is the best way to save it. To break your alabaster box is the only way to let the fragrance out.

X. A Needle Said Dorcas

Is a woman with a needle to be made immortal? Yes, if she uses it for God. God saw that woman's heart. He saw the glistening of her needle as it passed in and out of the garments she was sewing. He saw that needle being used for the Lord's poor. She used it for God and those coats kept multiplying and giving warmth to those who were cold. And as she went about into different homes she sewed the story of her Christ into the hearts of the people. The sewing circles of the world who sew for hospitals, widows and orphans, are but Dorcas at work for God. The needle of Dorcas wrought for her an inscription more durable than brass or marble. Her eulogy will be read when the victories of Roman armies and the glories of Grecian arts are forgotten.

XI. My All Said Paul

What are you going to do with it Paul? I am going to give my body, my soul, my property, my life, yea everything I have anything to do with to Jesus for "I am determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Tell Paul aren't you afraid that you will come to poverty and want? Then he replies, "My God supplieth all my needs."

The same is true in every case. God wants us to serve Him just where we are and with what we have in our hands.

XII. A Piece Of Parchment Said Luther

Yet that was enough for him when he proceeded to nail his famous protest upon the doors of the Roman Catholic Church at Wittenburg because his use of that parchment in his hand caused the era of the Reformation to break upon darkened Europe.

XIII. A Pen Said John Bunyan

This was his answer as he spoke from under the arches of the Bedford jail. Only a goose quill pen in the hand of a tinker in jail but it was enough for he wrote the wonderful story of Pilgrim's Progress with it. That story has guided myriads of pilgrims in their progress toward the celestial city and that story is certain to live as long as the world endures.

Men and women, with common, simple things about them, have heard the voice of God, and doing just what their hands found to do, they made their lives memorable in the history of the Christian religion because they accomplished the Divine will. There was William Carey the poor shoe cobbler pegging and preaching, but as he hammered the tacks into the shoes, he hammered the missionary idea into the church, and world-wide missions is the result. Mary Jones, who was a Welsh maiden, worked and saved for eight years to buy a Bible of her own, and when she earned enough money she walked barefoot for twenty-five miles to get it; but the knowledge of that fact inspired men to organize the first Bible Society, and now eighty of these societies are giving the Word to the World.

The lesson is exactly the same in every case we have mentioned. It is that God wants us to serve Him now just where we are with what we have in our hands at present. "What is that in thy hand?" How each of us needs to realize that every life has some capacity and that success is to be measured not by the character of the capacity but by its realization and full use. He does not require us to do extraordinary works but He does demand that we do ordinary work well. If what you have in your hands is just an ordinary tool then use it for God. If it is a broom then use it for God. If it is a pen then use it for God. If you have a tongue of eloquence, which is the mightiest instrument that God ever made, then use it for God as Robert Hall did. If you have the gift of song then consecrate it for God as did Jenny Lind. Some of us have accomplishments we have never thought of more seriously than as a source of some slight pleasure to ourselves or others. Why not use those accomplishments for God? Some of you can sing and play well then consecrate that talent to God and use it for Him and His glory. You have no idea how much it may result in if you will only use what you have in your power to use in the name of the Lord. Let us consecrate everything to Him.

Hymn---Take My Life And Let It Be.

WHAT IS THAT IN THINE HAND?

The story of how God spoke to Moses at the burning bush is familiar to all of us. We recall that God was asking Moses to go to Pharaoh and intercede for the children of Israel, but Moses did not consider himself capable of performing this task; and as the conversation went on between Moses and God, he was asked the question, "What is that in thine hand?" And we know how a simple rod was used by Moses to do wonderful things because Moses let God have his way.