

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 to go over and deliver Israel from bondage. Moses hesitated to become the messenger of the Lord to Pharaoh. He shrank from the undertaking. He mentioned one difficulty after another which he thought would excuse him from entering on his assigned task. He offered seven objections to undertaking the arduous task to which he was called. His objections were as follows:--

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

This list would seem to be rather conclusive that Moses was not qualified for his task. Yet, if only he would yield himself to God and be content to be what God wanted him to be, and let God work His will in and through him, there would be no limit to the service that his wonderful personality and individuality 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 was one of the most powerful nations at that time. The Israelites had been the slaves and servants of the Egyptians. 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 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.

Moses had nothing but a stick or rod in his hand. He had cut it out of a thicket to use 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 formidable to weak faith might become an element of power when the act of obedience to God was performed. What was originally the rod of the shepherd now became the rod of God. This rod in the hand of Moses accomplished mighty things for God and for Israel. He simply used what he had in his hand for God. All of the great works for God are done by doing our best with what we have. Some do not want to do anything for God until they can do their best. But we can never do anything at all until we do the little things first.

Let us notice some Bible examples of how God used little things to accomplish greater things, and get some of the lessons which they teach. "What is that in thy hand?"--

I. A Spear Said Joshua. Joshua 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 thy 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. Ever after, this spear is associated in our thoughts with the name and work of Joshua who used what he had in his hand for God. Happy are we when we become the obedient 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. Judges 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 600 Philistines and delivered Israel through his 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 and victories which they should have because they are failing to do their best for God with what they already have in hand.

III. Trumpets, Pitchers, and Lamps Said Gideon. Judges 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.

We see the brave three hundred divided into three companies, and in every man's hand a trumpet, a pitcher, and a lamp within the pitcher. We then see Gideon going to the outside of the camp and asking all to follow his example. Then came the blast of the trumpets, the crash of the pitchers, the flashing of the lights, and the cry of the hosts of Israel, saying, "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Awakening, the Midianites were astounded, supposing that there were as many companies as there were blazing torches. They rushed about unable to distinguish friend from foe. Terrible was the slaughter; glorious was the victory.

We need never hesitate to undertake any task however difficult if we are following the Divine leadership. Success is certain when we are on God's side, and we must ever give God the glory when victory has been achieved. 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 Samuel 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. Fresh from home came David when preparation for battle was going on in the camp. David was weary of the cowardice of the men of Israel, who dared not resent the impious challenge of the gigantic Philistine. Shall this man continue to defy the armies of the living God? Patriotic fire burns in the soul of the youth. He could not bear the thought that any one should defy the living God. He determined to accept the challenge of the impious giant. He went out in the confidence that God would defend His name and honor the truth.

See the brave David preparing for the conflict! Hear the Philistine cursing him, declaring that he would soon give his flesh to bird and beast. Hear David replying that he is going in the name of God and that the battle is the Lord's. See him securing the pebbles from the brook as he hastens to the conflict. Behold him adjusting the stone and swinging his sling. Behold him as the stone whizzes through the air and sinks into the head of the boastful Philistine. He fell prostrate upon the earth. David served the Lord with what he had in his hand, which happened to be a sling.

V. A Harp Said David.

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. Saul was sensitive to the soft strains of David's music. It is almost impossible to overestimate the value of music in every relation in life. It stirs the soldier to heroic deeds in battle, and to untiring courage on the march. It conduces powerfully to religious feeling, whether it be the product of the great organ or of the human voice. It is one of the sweetest charms in social life, and in its wild revelries it may become an irresistible agency of Satan to deeds repugnant to noble men and hateful to God. David's wonderful playing on the harp changed or checked the evil tendencies in Saul in a great way because David used what he had in his hand for God. He played like he did his other work, namely, "in the name of the Lord." When we learn to go out in the name that is above every name, victory will assuredly be ours.