

I Am Willing

A Sermon on Willing Service to God

Sermon Family, Discipleship and the Christian Life Vacation Bible School

1 Chronicles 29:17

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This year, as you all know, the theme for the VBS is 'I Am Willing,' which is based on 1 Chronicles 29:5. This theme is appropriately chosen, considering the fact that we live in a world of 'mad rush,' in an era of working around the clock just to keep abreast of, if not ahead of, competition. When it comes to serving Jesus, the often-heard excuse is want of time. I would say to such people: first, they lack the willingness to serve; and second, from a practical perspective, they need to learn better time management. When it comes to serving the Lord, there can be no excuses.

Let me draw for you a brief background of this book in the Old Testament, supposedly authored by Ezra, a fifth-century-before-Christ figure. The Chronicles, as the name suggests, is a record of history, written soon after the Israelites were released from captivity in Babylon. Key people found mentioned in this book are David and his son Solomon.

David harboured a great desire to build a magnificent Temple for the Lord God. He was almost obsessed with the idea, and willingly and liberally gave all that was necessary, such as gold, silver, bronze, and precious stones, from his personal possessions, thus setting an example for his leaders, officials, commanders and others to do likewise for the Lord. They also gave willingly for this cause. But God willed that the actual construction of this palatial abode for Him should be carried out by David's son Solomon, who eventually fulfilled his father's dream after his coronation.

If we go back to chapter 28, verses 9 and 10, we see David giving Solomon the principles to guide him through life and the difficult tasks ahead of him. These are values that every Christian parent and teacher should invariably teach their children: to get to know God personally; to learn God's commands, and to discover what He wants us to do; to worship God with wholehearted devotion; to serve God with a willing mind; to be faithful; and not to be discouraged.

Verse 17 of 1 Chronicles 29 is the verse I wish to highlight today. David, in his prayer, is telling God: "I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee." This verse tells us that we should not only willingly serve Jesus, but that we should do so with integrity in our hearts. We should be willing to glorify Jesus, to change our inner selves, to believe in the one and only God, to trust God, to respect the Holy Book, to surrender and submit to God, to serve Jesus, and to witness for Jesus. These are the Christian values which have travelled to us from the time of David.

When we take the pledge "I am willing," we need to do so after a careful examination of our inner selves, asking the question: are we willing to offer various services to the Lord, in whatever role we are placed, wholeheartedly, and with absolute honesty, and not as 'men-pleasers,' if I may borrow Paul's phrase? Anything short of that would amount to deceiving our Lord and Master, and He will know. When we go back and teach the children lessons from the Bible, we should shape our teaching around this profound principle: to be willing to serve with integrity.

The second takeaway is that it is possible to become obsessed with a church building, to the neglect of the real church — the people of God. Having said that, neglecting the church building is also counterproductive. David makes this point clear when he says the Temple is not for man, but for the Lord God. While we should avoid extravagance, we must remember that every church building can be a visible witness for God. There may be many ways to do this, but the most effective way would be for us to willingly, with wholeheartedness and integrity, receive strangers who come to seek God in our churches. We should also will ourselves to dissolve all our prejudices and factionalism, and unite in Jesus as His one body, and serve Him. At this point, let us recall what Jesus said to Peter during one of His last post-resurrection appearances to His disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Three times He instructed Peter to take care of His sheep.

May our Lord and Master Jesus Christ bless us with the right attitude to be willing people, to feed His sheep, especially in tending the developing minds placed in our care, with the utmost integrity in our hearts. Amen.