

other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service." He was not saying that he was a thief, but that he received wages from them. Our missionaries, and other missionaries worldwide, depend on funds given by others. Even if you cannot go as a foreign missionary, you can give.

3. God is looking for those who will lead.

a. Cyrus placed the treasures in the hands of Sheshbazzar.

- 1) Sheshbazzar was a prince of Judah.
- 2) Exactly who he was is uncertain. Some think this is another name for the leader Zerubbabel whom we will meet later in the book. Others think he was a Jew who worked for the king and whom the king trusted with the treasures.
- 3) Whoever he was, we know that he was a leader. The king charged him with the duty of carrying the treasures. He was trustworthy and responsible.

b. God is looking for leaders today as well.

- 1) God has given each of us unique qualities. Some have building skills. Others are writers. Some are preachers. Others are great at teaching.
- 2) Today we need leaders. We need men who will be godly leaders in their homes. One of our greatest needs here in Australia is for church leaders, especially preachers.
- 3) The need for leaders is nothing new. God expressed this need to Isaiah, centuries ago, when he said to him, (Isaiah 6:8) "... Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."
- 4) If God is calling you to be a leader, will you answer "yes"?

Conclusion: Just as in the days of Cyrus, God is looking for those who will go, those who will give, and those who will lead. Will you volunteer? It begins by saying, "Here am I Lord, send me." If you cannot go to a foreign land, you can go to those around you, hand out tracts, invite to church, etc. You can also give. If God calls you to lead, He will give you the grace needed. Leaders are desperately needed in God's work.

Song: Go Tell the Untold Millions - 421

Willing to Go!

21 April 2024 PM – Text: Ezra 1:5-11 – Topic: Missions

Introduction: In an amazing way, God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia so that he proclaimed that all his Jewish slaves could return to their homeland and rebuild the temple of the LORD God of heaven. This sudden good news must have buzzed in the Jewish community like a swarm of bees just disturbed. Isaiah and Jeremiah had predicted this announcement, but like the promised coming of Christ, it had not yet taken place, and many had likely become complacent. I think we could have heard neighbours chattering, "Are you going to go?" "I am not sure, I just finished building my new house." "I think we should all go." "That is easy for you to say, but I am old and sickly." "My wife is about to have a baby, I cannot go."

Transition: Ezra 1:5-11 records three responses to Cyrus' edict, which gave the Jews permission to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. God is looking for the same three types of responses to His call for service today.

1. God is looking for those who will go.

a. Note those in Ezra 1:5 who were willing to go.

- 1) Those who willing went had counted the cost.
 - a) The trip was dangerous and expensive.
 - b) They were leaving their adopted homeland.
 - c) There would be much hard work ahead.
 - d) They would face many enemies.
- 2) The chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin were willing to leave exile, return to Jerusalem, and help rebuild the temple. Apparently, these were the old men. They were the heads of the fathers. They were likely worn and weary, but they had willing hearts.
- 3) The priests were willing to go. These men were the spiritual leaders of the nation. Though many of them had lived in Babylon all of their lives, they had not lost sight of their roots in the priesthood.
- 4) The Levites were willing to go. Remember, the Levites were the tribe designated to serve the priests and work in the temple. They too must have learned from their

fathers their role in the service of the Lord.

- 5) All whose spirit God had raised up were willing to go. Does this imply that God did not raise up the spirit of some of the people or does it refer to those who accepted the challenge? I suspect the later, and here is my reasoning.

- a) To remain "was contrary to the will of God (Isa. 48:20; Jer. 50:8; 51:6; cf. Jer. 29:10...). They should have returned." Thomas Constable
- b) God has given man a free will. God does not force us to obey His calling, but we miss his best and suffer the consequences if we choose not to obey.

b. As God was looking for people who would go back to Jerusalem, He is also looking for workers today.

- 1) We have His great commission. (Mark 16:15) **"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."**
- 2) I don't recall who, but years ago, I heard a preacher say, *"God has not called every Christian to the foreign mission field, but every Christian ought to wrestle with the possibility."*
- 3) Even if God does not call you to the mission field, He has called you to be a witness for Him to people you meet. The Apostle Peter gave us this challenge. (1 Peter 3:15) **"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:"** If you cannot share the Gospel clearly with a lost person, then get a good Gospel tract (e.g., God's Simple Plan) and memorise it so that you can. Sadly, many tracts today are far too brief and shallow.
- 4) Many are not interested in God's salvation, and some will openly reject it. While we cannot force them to believe, we must give them an opportunity to hear the Gospel.
- 5) Jesus commanded believers to pray for labourers. (Luke 10:2) **"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest."** It is hypocritical to pray for labourers

and be unwilling to go ourselves.

2. God is looking for those who will give.

a. Those about them to the cause (v.6).

- 1) This likely included Jews who were too old or too sickly to make the journey back to Jerusalem.
- 2) It may have included those who did not answer God's call to return.
- 3) It is possible that it included non-Jews who lived among the Jews in Babylon and who wanted to be a blessing to them.
- 4) All these strengthened the hands of those who went. In other words, they helped them with material goods. They gave silver, gold, good (i.e., property or supplies of various sorts), beasts (i.e., domestic animals), and precious things (i.e., costly items). They also gave other things willingly as freewill offerings.

b. Cyrus the king also gave to the cause (v.7-11).

- 1) He brought out the vessels of the house of the LORD which Nebuchadnezzar had taken and placed in the house of his gods (v.7).
- 2) Ezra records a list of these vessels for us (v.9-11a). The total of these was 5,400. Because they had been in the temple of God, they would have been of high quality and of great value.

c. Those who cannot serve the Lord full-time, can give.

- 1) While every Christian ought to be a witness for Christ, God does not call every Christian to serve full-time. If that is your situation, God wants you to help those who do go.
- 2) Every Christian ought to give faithfully to his or her local church. I personally believe that God wants us to tithe, but even if you think tithing ended with the Law, you cannot escape your duty to support those who minister to you in your local church. (1 Timothy 5:18) **"For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward."**
- 3) The Apostle Paul wrote, (2 Corinthians 11:8) **"I robbed**