**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**1 CHRONICLES-005. DAVID'S CHARGE TO SOLOMON by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"1.* *And David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, unto Jerusalem. 2. Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building: 3. But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for My name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood. 4. Howbeit the Lord God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for He hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father He liked me to make me king over all Israel: 5. And of all my sons, (for the Lord hath given me many sons), he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. 6. And He said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build My house and My courts: for I have chosen him to be My son, and I will be his father. 7. Moreover I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do My commandments and My judgments, as at this day. 8. Now therefore in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the Lord, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God: that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you for ever. 9. And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever. 10. Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it.."*

*1 Chronicles 28:1-10*

David had established an elaborate organisation of royal officials, details of which occupy the preceding chapters and interrupt the course of the narrative. The passage picks up again the thread dropped at chapter 23:1. The list of the members of the assembly called in verse 1 is interesting as showing how he tried to amalgamate the old with the new. The princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, represented the primitive tribal organisation, and they receive precedence in virtue of the antiquity of their office. Then come successively David's immediate attendants, the military officials, the stewards of the royal estates, the officers or eunuchs attached to the palace, and the faithful mighty men who had fought by the king's side in the old days. It was an assembly of officials and soldiers whose adherence to Solomon it was all-important to secure, especially in regard to the project for building the Temple, which could not be carried through without their active support. The passage comprises only the beginning of the proceedings of this assembly of notables. The end is told in the next chapter; namely, that the Temple-building scheme was unanimously and enthusiastically adopted, and large donations given for it, and that Solomon's succession was accepted, and loyal submission offered by the assembly to him.

David's address to this gathering is directed to secure these two points. He begins by recalling his own intention to build the Temple and God's prohibition of it. The reason for that prohibition differs from that alleged by Nathan, but there is no contradiction between the two narratives, and the chronicler has already reported Nathan's words (chap. 17:3, etc.), so that the motive which is ascribed to many of the variations in this book, a priestly desire to exalt Temple and ritual, cannot have been at work here. Why should there not have been a divine communication to David as well as Nathan's message? That hands reddened with blood, even though it had been shed in justifiable war, were not fitted to build the Temple, was a thought so far in advance of David's time, and flowing from so spiritual a conception of God, that it may well have been breathed into David's spirit by a divine voice. Sword in one hand and trowel in the other are incongruous, notwithstanding Nehemiah's example. The Temple of the God of peace cannot be built except by men of peace. That is true in the widest and highest application. Jesus builds the true Temple. Controversy and strife do not. And, on a lower level, the prohibition is for ever valid. Men do not atone for a doubtful past by building churches, founding colleges, endowing religious or charitable institutions.

The speech next declares emphatically that the throne belongs to David and his descendants by real divine right, and that God's choice is Solomon, who is to inherit both the promises and obligations of the office, and, among the latter, that of building the Temple. The unspoken inference is that loyalty to Solomon would be obedience to Jehovah. The connection between the true heavenly King and His earthly representative is strongly expressed in the remarkable phrase: He hath chosen Solomon ... to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of Jehovah, which both consecrates and limits the rule of Solomon, making him but the viceroy of the true king of Israel. When Israel's kings remembered that, they flourished; when they forgot it, they destroyed their kingdom and themselves. The principle is as true to-day, and it applies to all forms of influence, authority, and gifts. They are God s, and we are but stewards.

The address to the assembly ends with the exhortation to these leaders to observe, and not merely to observe, but also to seek out God's commandments, and so to secure to the nation, whom they could guide, peaceful and prosperous days. It is not enough to do God's will as far as we know it; we must ever be endeavouring after clearer, deeper insight into it. Would that these words were written over the doors of all Senate and Parliament houses! What a different England we should see!

But Solomon was present as well as the notables, and it was well that, in their hearing, he should be reminded of his duties. David had previously in private taught him these, but this public charge before the chief men of the kingdom bound them more solemnly upon him, and summoned a cloud of witnesses against him if he fell below the high ideal. It is pitched on a lofty key of spiritual religion, for it lays Know thou the God of thy fathers as the foundation of everything. That knowledge is no mere intellectual apprehension, but, as always in Scripture, personal acquaintanceship with a Person, which involves communion with Him and love towards Him. For us, too, it is the seed of all strenuous discharge of our life's tasks, whether we are rulers or nobodies, and it means a much deeper experience than understanding or giving assent to a set of truths about God. We know one another when we summer and winter with each other, and not unless we love one another, and we know God on no other terms.

After such knowledge comes an outward life of service. Active obedience is the expression of inward communion, love, and trust. The spring that moves the hands on the dial is love, and, if the hands do not move, there is something wrong with the spring. Morality is the garment of religion; religion is the animating principle of morality. Faith without works is dead, and works without faith are dead too.

But even when we know God we have to make efforts to have our service correspond with our knowledge, for we have wayward hearts and obstinate wills, which need to be stimulated, sometimes to be coerced and forcibly diverted from unworthy objects. Therefore the exhortation to serve God with a perfect heart and with a willing mind is always needful and often hard. Entire surrender and glad obedience are the Christian ideal, and continual effort to approximate to it will be ours in the degree in which we know God. There is no worse slavery than that of the half-hearted Christian whose yoke is not padded with love. Reluctant obedience is disobedience in God's sight.

David solemnly reminds Solomon of those pure eyes and perfect judgment, not to frighten, but to enforce the thought of the need for whole-hearted and glad service, and of the worthlessness of external acts of apparent worship which have not such behind them. What a deal of seeming wheat would turn out to be chaff if that winnowing fan which is in Christ's hand were applied to it! How small our biggest heaps would become!

The solemn conditions of the continuance of God's favour and of the fulfilment of His promises are next plainly stated. God responds to our state of heart and mind. We determine His bearing to us. The seeker finds. If we move away from Him, He moves away from us. That is not, thank God! all the truth, or what would become of any of us? But it is true, and in a very solemn sense God is to us what we make Him. With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure; and with the perverse Thou wilt show Thyself froward.

The charge ends with recalling the high honour and office to which Jehovah had designated Solomon, and with exhortations to take heed and to be strong, and do it. It is well for a young man to begin life with a high ideal of what he is called to be and do. But many of us have that, and miserably fail to realise it, for want of these two characteristics, which the sight of such an ideal ought to stamp on us. If we are to fulfil God's purposes with us, and to be such tools as He can use for building His true Temple, we must exercise self-control and take heed to our ways, and we must brace ourselves against opposition and crush down our own timidity. It seems to be commanding an impossibility to say to a weak creature like any one of us, Be strong, but the impossible becomes a possibility when the exhortation takes the full Christian form: Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.