

Sacrificing for God's Work

Text: Nehemiah 11-12

Introduction:

1. In these two chapters we reach the climax of the book with the finalization of the resettlement of Jerusalem (Chapter 11) and the dedication of the rebuilt walls (Chapter 12)
2. The theme of sacrifice runs through both chapters. We will note 3 sacrifices that were made in these two chapters:

I. The Sacrifice of Themselves (11:1-12:26)

A. The Direction of God's will (Vs. 1)

1. Note condition of Jerusalem in 7:4
2. "casting lots" = an O.T. method of determining God's will
3. Prov. 16:33 *"The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD."*
4. Land divided by lot under Joshua: *"And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD..."* (18:8)

B. The Dedication of the volunteers (Vs. 2)

1. "willingly offered" = there were some who didn't have to be asked! They had surrendered hearts to the will of God.
2. D.L. Moody: "A great many people have got a false idea about the church. They have got an idea that the church is a place to rest in...to get into a nicely cushioned pew, and contribute to the charities, listen to the minister, and do their share to keep the church out of bankruptcy, is all they want. The idea of work for them – actual work in the church – never enters their minds."

C. The Details of the people (Vs. 11:3-12:26)

This list of names can be broken up into three broad categories:

1. The city dwellers (11:3-24)
 - a. Names of those willing to move to Jerusalem mentioned.
 - b. Reminder that God keeps a record of the sacrifices we make for Him and He will reward us at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
2. The country dwellers (11:25-36)
 - a. Names not mentioned. Less commitment and sacrifice required to stay in a familiar, more tranquil place.
 - b. Some famous towns mentioned such as Ziklag.
3. The forerunners (12:1-26)
 - a. "Nehemiah goes back almost 100 years to the time of Zerubbabel & Joshua and the first returnees from exile in Babylon. He names the priestly and Levitical families up to his own time...Nehemiah was acknowledging that all of them had

Building for God – Nehemiah Series

played a part in reaching this point when the wall of Jerusalem was built and about to be dedicated.” (Lacey)

- b. Note: These men of faith pioneered the return to Jerusalem and prepared the way for the re-building of the walls. We may not always be given the privilege of seeing the long-term fruits of our labors. Some are called to a work of preparation and sowing, others to reaping. Illustration: David’s preparation for the building of the temple (Read 1 Chr. 17 & 29)

II. The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving (12:27-42)

Thanksgiving mentioned repeatedly in these verses (Vs. 27, 31, 38, 40, 46) Hebrews 13:15 *“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”*

A. The Call to Thanksgiving (Vs. 27-29)

1. “gathered themselves together” = the principle of assembly. The need for collective, unified praise!
2. Levites and singers would play an important role in leading God’s people in praise. True praise and worship that glorifies God involves order, structure and sequence.

B. The Cleansing before Thanksgiving (Vs. 30)

1. Purity preceded praise! (See Psalm 15)
2. Purification of priests, people and place.
 - a. Purification of this nature usually involved the washing of clothes and person in water. Likely included sin offerings. So, there was the washing of water and washing of the blood.
 - b. N.T. Application: The water of the Word and the blood of Christ are the cleansing agents for the believer, to prepare him for worship (Eph. 5:26; John 15:3; 1 John 1:7, 9)
 - c. Three times in God’s Word we are exhorted to “worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (1 Chr. 16:29; Ps. 29:2; 96:9). Our worship is to be holy, pure and distinct from the world.
 - d. “A polluted congregation will hinder a consecration service. The very thought of coming before God for worship and consecration ought to promote purity.” (Butler)
3. Note: While the primary lesson here is spiritual, there is still something to be said for physical hygiene and cleanliness as part of our preparation for coming to God’s House. “Cleanliness is next to godliness”. Get cleaned up before you come to the house of God and arrange yourself appropriately.

C. The Contemplation of Thanksgiving (Vs. 31-39)

1. People divided into two companies (Vs. 31)
 - a. Ezra’s Company (Vs. 32-37) – moved in an anticlockwise direction along the wall.

Building for God – Nehemiah Series

- b. Nehemiah's Company (Vs. 38-39) – moved in a clockwise direction
 - c. Starting point likely somewhere near the valley gate.
 - d. Walls thick in Bible times. Cities such as Nineveh had walls wide enough to drive several chariots side by side on the top of the walls. (Butler)
2. This tour of the walls would have produced feelings of great joy and gladness as they viewed what God had empowered them to accomplish. In like manner, our hearts will be stirred to thanksgiving when we take the time to consider all that God has done for us.

D. The Contents of their Thanksgiving (Vs. 40-42)

1. Joyful Praise – 'gladness' (Vs. 27); 'rejoiced' (Vs. 43); 'rejoice' (Vs. 43); "great joy" (Vs. 43); 'rejoiced' (Vs. 43); 'joy' (Vs. 43); 'rejoiced' (Vs. 44). God was the source of this joy (Vs. 43) "*Make a joyful noise unto the LORD...*" (Psalm 100:1)
2. Powerful Praise – "*the singers sang loud*" (Vs. 42); "*the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off*" (Vs. 43) (See Psalm 126:2)
3. Tuneful Praise – 'cymbals, psalteries...harps' (Vs. 27); 'trumpets' (Vs. 35, 41); "*musical instruments of David the man of God*" (Vs. 36)
4. Structured Praise – "*And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer.*" (Vs. 42). Service was executed "decently and in order"

III. The Sacrifice of Their Things (12:43-47)

A. Offerings of Sacrifices (Vs. 43)

1. Generous sacrifices – "great sacrifices"
2. Joyous sacrifices – "and rejoiced"
3. "...*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" (Acts 20:35)

B. Offerings of Substance (Vs. 44a)

1. 'firstfruits...tithes' = they made good on the covenant they made (chapter 10)
2. It is not hard to give of our substance when our hearts are filled with thankfulness for what God has done.

C. Offerings of Support (Vs. 44b-47)

1. These offerings served the needs of God's ministers.
 - a. Vs. 44 - "for the priests and Levites"
 - b. Vs. 47 "gave the portions of the singers and the porters..."
 - c. 1 Corinthians 9:7-14
2. This support was given with a good attitude
 - a. "...*for Judah rejoiced for the priests and Levites that waited.*" (Vs. 44)
 - b. 1 Timothy 5:17-18 "*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word*"

Building for God – Nehemiah Series

and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the labourer is worthy of his reward.”

Conclusion: Are we sacrificing for God’s work? To what degree are we committed?