

Nehemiah 13:10-14 – The Right Attitude toward God and Worship

Delitzsch, TSK, HebrewLexicon, Gaebelin, Handfuls, Armstrong, Barnes, Gill, Clarke, Geneva, JFB, Henry, Poole, Trapp, INT

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord: This **sermon is not about giving but about the attitude toward God and worship.**

So **keep the big picture in mind** as we pick up our examination of Nehemiah.

Our headings are:

God's people confronted for forsaking God and Worship

God's people confessed their sin of forsaking God and Worship

God's minister called for God to bless his work for God and Worship

Our goals are: **That you will have the right heart attitude to the one who sent his Son to die for your sins, so you can work for his kingdom, so his kingdom can grow, so he can be worshipped.**

God's people confronted for forsaking God and Worship

10 I also realized that **the portions for the Levites had not been given them**; for each of the Levites and the singers who did the work **had gone back to his field**. 11 So **I contended with the rulers**, and said, **"Why is the house of God forsaken?"** And I gathered them together and set them in their place.

1. After Nehemiah's return from Shushan he realized the Levites, who supported the priests, did not have enough resources for themselves, and so, they returned to the fields to work to meet the needs of their families.

The Levites did not demand nor try to force the people to give, as **tithing should have flowed from love for who God is and what he did for them.**

2. It was a source of shame that men chosen by God to oversee worship were ignored.

The fact was, **many Levites, according to Ezra, were reluctant to return from the Babylonian exile because they were fearful they would not be supported back in Judah.** That's what the Jews did earlier.

Malachi 3: 13 "Your words have been harsh against Me," Says the LORD, "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?' 14 You have said, 'It is useless to serve God; What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, And that we have walked as mourners Before the LORD of hosts? 15 So now we call the proud blessed, For those who do wickedness are raised up; They even tempt God and go free."

The worship was neglected because the workmen were neglected.

(Henry: A Levite in the field is out of his station.)

Deuteronomy 12:19 "Take heed to yourself that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land.

The workmen were neglected because God was neglected.

3. Nehemiah identified the real source of the problem: *The people had forsaken God!*

This was a heart problem! Because they had forsaken God...because they had forgotten who he was and what he did for them, they ignored worship, and so they ignored his house, and so they ignored his priests, and so they ignored his Levites, and so they ignored bringing the tithes and offerings to the Lord.

This was the theme earlier with Haggai.

Haggai 1: 4 "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" 5 Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! 6 "You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes." 7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! 8 "Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the LORD.

4. Nehemiah then *gathered the leaders together to confront them- with the Word of God.*

They heard God's Word again. They were reminded of their vows to do this.

5. Lessons:

a. Know how much God means to you! Reflect on the work of Jesus. This is the foundation of supporting worship and his work.

Do not think about who the minister or the missionary is whom you support with your tithes. Think who God is and what he has done for you.

If you think of the minister or the missionary, you will never give like you ought to. You will see his imperfections.

When you think of your Creator and your Re-creator, you will give in order to bring praise to him.

b. Great judgment will come on those who rob God (his ox which treads corn must get straw) and so make his church and his kingdom, suffer.

His praise is important to him.

c. Everything you have belongs to God.

Have a good attitude then with God's money that is in your bank account. But as before, know that is much more than money.

You have to give to God your time, your talents, your education, and your children.

Encourage your elders and pastors. Your encouragement is a gift!

d. The heart problem, the contempt for God, is why some don't serve as leaders, or show hospitality, or regularly attend worship, or take time to pray regularly!

They don't think God is that important! If they did, their lives would show it.

(Of course, if God's providence stops you, don't tempt him. So don't come to church if you are sick or if it is snowing heavily.)

e. God's house is not meant to be a statue or a monument in the community; God's house is a place of witness, witness to the lost of the grace available in Jesus Christ.

(Maybe this is why many churches focus more on the architecture and the ambience rather than the preaching!)

But you know better. You know God wants his people before him and you will do what it takes to make that happen.

God's people confessed their sin of forsaking God and Worship

12 Then **all Judah brought the tithe of the grain and the new wine and the oil to the storehouse.** 13 And I appointed as treasurers over the storehouse **Shelemiah the priest** and **Zadok the scribe**, and of the **Levites, Pedaiah**; and next to them was **Hanan the son of**

Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah; for they were considered faithful, and **their task was to distribute to their brethren.**

1. After hearing the preaching of the Word and the reminder of their vows they made to Yahweh, their covenant God, Judah repented and showed his repentance by bringing tithes and offerings to the house of the Lord.

2. Showing their willingness to change, Nehemiah appointed trustworthy men to this post of receiving and distributing the resources for the priests and the poor.

These men were chosen from 4 levels of society: the priest, a historian, a Levite, and a regular man. (Talk is relatively cheap; you need actions!)

3. You can call this a reformation of attitude of the heart toward God and his worship.

Having been **drawn back to the temple and what it symbolized – the work of Christ coming to die for sinners** and living among them – the people changed their attitude.

The **Levites and priests were then reinstated in their respective offices and worship, pointing to Christ, was restored.**

We know this because all their allotments were returned.

4. Lessons:

a. Always reflect on who God is to you—your Great Creator and your Loving Re-Creator. This is one of the most ignored doctrines today. Don't be guilty of it. This will change your attitude!

b. Once you get your heart attitude right, bring your gifts to the house of the Lord. Don't let missionaries beg for money. Don't let them have to leave the mission field for a lack of resources.

Colossians 3:23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,

Be ready to serve in leadership. Show hospitality. Be a friend to visitors. Call the sick or visit them.

(Worship is representative of all your duties; it is the most important one!)

c. Good men (always a plurality) must be appointed to oversee gifts given to God's work.

Acts 6:3 "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you **seven men of good reputation**, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, **whom we may appoint over this business**; 4 "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

There must not be a sniff of impropriety when dealing with God's money.

d. Should you only bring tithes? No!

Bring your sacrifices of praise into the house of the Lord also.

God's minister called for God to bless his work for God and Worship

14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for its services!

1. Nehemiah then pleaded with God to remember what he had done and to bless him for his labor of love.

Nehemiah **could not demand** that God bless his work.

He could not demand this because he knew his good works were not perfect and that without God receiving them through Jesus, his good works would be good for nothing.

2. Nehemiah did not demand the praise or salutation from men for all that he did for the kingdom.

And he did a lot! He knew he was working for God.

3. Lessons:

a. Consider how much good one man could do for the kingdom when you do good things through Jesus Christ! Don't underestimate what you can do. This is true for you too, boys and girls. If a new boy or girl comes to church, go and talk to him or her.

b. Those who don't serve the Lord will be noted.

Exodus 17:14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."

c. Those who do serve the Lord will be remembered well and clearly, and be rewarded.

Hebrews 6:10 For **God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love** which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

d. God will especially remember the deeds you do for worship as worship is the most valuable thing you can do in your life.

Conclusion:

God's people were confronted to look at their hearts...their complacent hearts...which caused them to ignore worship and to stop supporting worship. God called them to repent, pointing them to his Word, and they did.

Beloved in Christ Jesus:

1. Always examine your heart to check you attitude toward the important things in life.

It is too *easy to ignore the important for the urgent or the fun activity*, but important work must always come first!

If you are distracted by frivolous things and they take primacy in your life, you won't worship like you should, you won't support the Lord's work like you should, you won't engage the stranger with the Gospel, you won't care if someone is lonely or in trouble, and you won't welcome the visitor! You won't visit the sick.

You will only be focused on YOU!

2. To do what you should, focus on the work of the Savior for you – work based on his love! Understand his love! Eat of the Word and Sacrament.

Remember, Jesus didn't have to do it, but he did anyway!

Maybe things aren't done exactly as you want in this church, but ask if what is being done is based on God's Word. If it is, play your part.

3. Then bring others in to hear the Gospel and be saved so they will worship God.

That is what God desires.

Finally, you can't worship God (the most necessary thing) if you are not a believer! You need to be made God's child.

So ask God to make you his child. **It is not magic; but it is a miracle.** He will cause his Holy Spirit to work extraordinarily in you and give you a new heart because Jesus paid for it when he died on the cross.