

SERVING GOD REQUIRES CHANGES

Nehemiah 11:1-18; 12:27-43; 13:6-31

Introduction: Most Christians are not aware of the boundless opportunities to serve God found in many forms and in many places for they are looking ONLY where they want to look. God has a place and something for everyone of His Children to serve and to work but few find God's "call" for their lives. Some found what God wanted them to do, but refused to do it because it would require changes that they didn't want to make.

The story is told of a family who prayed and prayed for missionaries and supported them financially but when their son grew up, went to college and came home one weekend announcing that he was going to be a foreign missionary, his parents, the ones who had supported missions all their lives, did not want their only son to become a missionary and be far away from them. They had prayed for missionaries but refused to accept God's call for their own son to be one of those whom they had prayed for and supported for years. Serving God where God wants is going to require some changes to be made.

I. SOMETIMES SERVING GOD REQUIRES RELOCATING (11:1-18)

1. Nehemiah had struggled long and hard to get the walls of Jerusalem rebuilt so the city could be restored as the city of God's people.
 - The walls were up, the gates had been installed, guards were posted, many of God's people had returned to their promised land, what else was left to do?
 - The city was empty. Jerusalem needed somebody to live in the city, who could come?
 - Those who had helped rebuild the walls and the city went back to their homes when the work was done.
 - Jerusalem had become a dangerous place to be in because of the hatred of the non Jewish pagan nations surrounding the city.
2. God led Nehemiah to get all the leaders together who had helped him get workers to rebuild the walls and the city to stay and live in the city for they were the "leaders."
 - They cast lots among themselves and every one out of ten was to stay and live in the city.
 - There were volunteers who decided on their own to live in Jerusalem.
3. God moved the hearts of many people to accept the difficult challenge of living within the city thus revealing God's grace and favor.
 - God had not failed Israel for He had put the idea in Nehemiah's heart to rebuild the walls and the city and then supported Nehemiah as he stepped out to do what God wanted and the walls were rebuilt and the city repopulated.
 - Nehemiah had to relocate to serve God, many of the people had to relocate into Jerusalem to serve God.
 - How many do you know personally who have had to relocate in order to serve God?
 - If God really has full control of your life, are you open to whatever He might want you to do, even relocate?

II. GOD IS SERVED THROUGH CELEBRATION (12:27-43)

1. *"...there is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance..." (Eccl 3:4)*
 - The time for weeping and mourning was finally past and now there was laughter, dancing and celebration.
 - The Levites provided hymns of thanksgiving and songs of joy.
 - There were at least two choirs and each was given time for performance and location.
 - Music leaders and orchestras (many instruments) were organized and they practiced.
 - Priests got their sacrifices ready.
 - All the officials of Jerusalem gathered together in God's House.
 - Enormous planning and synchronizing went into each service meant to express before the Lord joy and thanksgiving that filled their hearts.
 - Two thanksgiving parades (processions) filed into the House of God.
 - On that glorious day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced for all that God had done for them.
2. God had given the people the courage and determination to do what was done - rebuild the city.
 - God had moved their hearts to recommit themselves to Him and in keeping His law.
 - God was to be credited for making their celebration so wonderful and joyous.
 - From beginning to end God had been at work to bring His people back to Jerusalem.
 - The gratitude of the people for all that God had done was reflected in their giving.
3. Today there are those who do not make any plans for worship but "let the Holy Spirit have control."
 - There is no order, no pre-worship anything, just whatever happens, happens.
 - What about planning out every detail of a worship service so that everything will be done in order and for the right reason?
4. Has our Church ever celebrated the victories, the wonderful things that God has given us?
5. How does "being grateful to God" affect your giving back to God?

III. PEOPLE NEED ALERT LEADERSHIP TO HELP THEM SERVE GOD PROPERLY (13:6-31)

1. All was done, all was over. The walls were up, the gates in, guards posted, leaders in place, census taken, the city repopulated, celebration and dedication over, so, all is well. NOT SO!
 - Revival, such as Israel had just experienced, does not do away with one's proneness to sin. People will continue to sin until Jesus comes back to take His people back to heaven and areas of sin among God's returned Children of Israel had come up already.
 - The law stated that no Ammonite or Moabite was to enter the House of God, yet Eliashib, the priest had not only allowed an Ammonite to remain in Israel, but had actually given him a room in the Temple area. He was removed and the room cleansed.
 - The Levites and singers were not being given the portions God said were theirs, therefore qualified men were appointed to oversee that tithes and offerings went where they were supposed to.

- Some were working at their winepresses and hauling grain on the Sabbath, so Nehemiah reminded them that such sins had brought God's hand down heavy on Israel in times past. Therefore Nehemiah posted guards at the gates to prevent anybody from leaving or coming into the city on the Sabbath.
- Some men had married women from pagan nations and their children were being raised speaking languages other than Hebrew or Aramaic. In order to prevent more disruption by ordering these wives back to their own countries, Nehemiah ordered them not to give their sons or daughters to any other than an Israelite. He reminded them about Solomon's problems as he brought wives from other countries.
- Godly, alert leadership was needed to help Israel serve God properly, thus it is the same today. Every Church congregation needs a Godly leader, someone to help them stay within the guidelines of God's Word.

CONCLUSION:

1. God has something He wants YOU to do but it must be done God's way and to do things God's way requires changes.
2. Nehemiah's call by God to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls and then the city required a lot of changes by him and by the people of Israel as well.
3. God blesses obedience and enables that obedient one to complete the task God has given him/her.
4. How willing are YOU to serve God, doing what God wants, God's way?