

**Title:** Dedicated to the Lord

**Passage:** Nehemiah 12:27-13:3

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Draft Summary:

How the people dedicated themselves to God:

- I. By purifying themselves
- II. By worshipping with music
- III. By rejoicing in the Lord.
- IV. By offering sacrifices
- V. By obeying God's Word without compromises

Key Truths:

*How people try to cover the shame of sin.*

1. This is way I was born.
2. They project toughness.
3. Blame themselves for what happened.
4. Doing external acts of righteousness.

The only true solution to the guilt and shame we carry is through the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ.

*Keys Points on Worship*

1. Worship leaders are men called to be purified and right with the Lord in their personal lives.
2. Worship leaders are called to lead people in worshipping God and not in attracting people in purely praises.
3. Worship music is meant to be corporate.
4. Worship music is first and foremost about glorifying God and helping God's people to worship God.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What point(s) in the sermon did the Lord most impress upon you?
- What comes to your mind when hear about the goodness of Jesus?
- Reflect back to the time where you dedicated something to the Lord - what happened and how did things change thereafter?
- What is God calling you today to dedicate and how so?
- What next steps will you take in response to the sermon?

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**EXPOSITION**

**Context of Passage**

Nehemiah

- a servant of the living God but also living in captivity in Persia.

- Called by God to miraculously come back to Jerusalem to help build the walls.
- Now, the walls are built.
- Here, they are dedicating the walls.

## **Introduction**

What's the value of the Old Testament?

- The Old Testament texts show that the Bible is a historical record
  - not a fictional book
- The Old Testament texts are meant to be an example for us.
  - Learn practical principles about God and life.

### 1 Corinthians 10:11

Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

- The Old Testament texts point us to Christ.
  - Common thread of a Redeemer to come as well as His second and final coming.

### *Dedication*

- meaning: to offer or to give something to someone else.
  - Given to someone else's control and ownership.

## **Overview**

How the people dedicated themselves to God:

- I. By purifying themselves
- II. By worshipping with music
- III. By rejoicing in the Lord.
- IV. By offering sacrifices
- V. By obeying God's Word without compromises

### **I. THE PEOPLE DEDICATED THEMSELVES BY PURIFYING THEMSELVES**

#### **Nehemiah 12:30**

***And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and they purified the people and the gates and the wall.***

Process of Purification

#### **Numbers 8: 5-13**

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Take the Levites from among the people of Israel and cleanse them. Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: sprinkle the water of purification upon them, and let them go with a razor over all their body, and wash their clothes and cleanse themselves. Then let them take a bull from the herd and its grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and you shall take another bull from the herd for a sin offering. And you shall bring the Levites before the tent of meeting and assemble the whole congregation of the people of Israel. When you bring the Levites before the LORD,

the people of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites, and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the people of Israel, that they may do the service of the LORD. Then the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, and you shall offer the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering to the LORD to make atonement for the Levites. And you shall set the Levites before Aaron and his sons, and shall offer them as a wave offering to the LORD.

- Why so detailed and required?
  - Make clear that God is holy and distinct.
- In the beginning, man was in a perfect relationship with God. Yet man sinned.
- At the moment of sin, there is shame. Immediate realization to find leaves to cover themselves.

### Genesis 3:7

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

- Ever since, we likewise look for leaves to cover our shame.

### Genesis 3:21

And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

- With sin, there must always be death. An animal was killed to cover Adam and Eve.
- Likewise, sacrifices were needed in light of man's sin.
- At the right time, Jesus came to die on the cross to take our own sin and shame.

### John 1:29

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

*How people try to cover the shame of sin.*

1. This is way I was born.

- Cover people that they are "fine" and others should be fine with the way they are "fine."

2. They project toughness.

- Instead of bringing the pain to Jesus, they close themselves off and don't want to talk about it. The past is in changeable.
  - Deep there is pain and sin and guilt.

3. Blame themselves for what happened.

- Perpetual victim always carrying shame with them.

4. Doing external acts of righteousness.

- Doing or giving more thinking acts of charity will cover one's shame.

**Truth:** The only true solution to the guilt and shame we carry is through the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:5-9

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- Misperception: God cannot forgive you because of what you have done or what others have done to you.
- Truth: In Christ, God wants to forgive you.
  - Your identity is not in what has been done in the past, your identity is in Christ.
    - In Christ, when God sees you, He sees Christ (not your sin and shame).

## II. THE PEOPLE DEDICATED THEMSELVES BY WORSHIPING GOD WITH MUSIC

**Nehemiah 12:27-28**

***And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres. And the sons of the singers gathered together from the district surrounding Jerusalem and from the villages of the Netophathites;***

*Key truths*

1. Worship leaders are men called to be purified and right with the Lord in their personal lives.

- Not merely someone who is musically talented but must be one of character in God and His Word.

2. Worship leaders are called to lead people in worshipping God and not in attracting people in purely praises.

- Idolatry is also when worship the true God in wrong ways as well as worshipping wrong gods.
- Question: Do you feel the worship of the true God? Are you meeting the holy God that is to be feared?

3. Worship music is meant to be corporate.

- We are part of the body.

4. Worship music is first and foremost about glorifying God and helping God's people to worship God.

- It is not to attract non-believers.
- Theologically, we can do nothing to attract non-believers.
  - Only God can do so.
- Otherwise, misinterpreting God as making God's holiness palatable to the sinful heart.

### III. THE PEOPLE DEDICATED THEMSELVES BY REJOICING (v.38-43b)

#### **Nehemiah 12:43**

***And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.***

Question: do we take the Gospel of Jesus Christ for granted?

- Come to Jesus in rejoicing!
- Look through our circumstances through the lens of the Gospel.

#### **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

#### **Romans 8:32**

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

#### **1 Peter 5:7**

casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

### IV. THE PEOPLE DEDICATED THEMSELVES BY OFFERING SACRIFICES

#### **Nehemiah 12:44**

***On that day men were appointed over the storerooms, the contributions, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them the portions required by the Law for the priests and for the Levites according to the fields of the towns, for Judah rejoiced over the priests and the Levites who ministered.***

- Giving is out of wanting God's name to be proclaimed.
- A pure, redeemed church is a giving church.

#### **2 Corinthians 9:6-7**

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

### V. THE PEOPLE DEDICATED THEMSELVES BY OBEYING GOD'S WORD WITHOUT COMPROMISES.

#### **Nehemiah 13:1-3**

***On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people. And in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, for they did not meet the people of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them—yet our God turned the curse into a blessing. As soon as the people heard the law, they separated from Israel all those of foreign descent.***

- The issue is about worship
  - Not an issue about race
  - People were worshipping other gods
- Truth: Stop putting one foot in the world and one foot in the church.

#### **2 Corinthians 6:14**

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

- do not compromise yourself.

#### **APPLICATIONS**

***If you are a Christian, dedicate yourself to God.***

- If we are in Christ, we ought to walk in the light.
- If there is shame, we are living in darkness.
  - make sure you're not just going through the motions but that your heart is wholly dedicated to God.
- Stop living any duplicity of sin and righteousness.
  - The heart is what matters.

#### Matthew 22:37

And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

***If you are not a Christian, dedicate yourself to God.***

- God doesn't need more religiosity or external acts but wants your heart.

#### Acts 16:31

And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."