

EQUIPING GOD'S HOUSE
STEWARDSHIP SERMON
March 10th, 2018

Key Text: Exodus 36: 4-7

INTRODUCTION

Read Exodus 35 : 4-9 ; 20-29 / 36 :4-7

It is of some consequence that a building prepared expressly for God to meet with his people, should be arranged with care--made comfortable, neat, and convenient; for it is to be dedicated to God, and presented to him, and he is to be entreated to abide in that house, and make it sacred by his holy presence. Enough should be willingly given to the Lord, to liberally accomplish the work, and then the workmen be able to say, Bring no more offerings.

Great and expensive preparations were necessary. Precious and costly materials must be collected. But the Lord accepted only the free-will offerings.

Generally, people will expend much to erect comfortable and tasty buildings for themselves; but when they would prepare a place that they may receive the presence of the high and exalted One, they manifest a wonderful indifference, and have no particular interest as to the convenience, arrangement, and workmanship. They are continually studying in what manner the sacred building can be made to cost the least, and answer the purpose as a house of worship. God will not cause his blessing to rest upon those who have so little estimate of the value of divine things. EGW, 1SP270.1.

MOSES GOES FORWARD IN FAITH.

Moses makes an immediate beginning. He might have doubted the people's liberality (so much was required) or the workmen's ability, and have waited; but it was enough that God had commanded the work.

The duty and privilege of making offerings to God.

That God allows us to offer to him of his own, and accepts such offerings as free gifts, is one of his many gracious condescensions. Moses now summoned "all the congregation of the children of Israel," that he might give to all, without partiality or favouritism, the opportunity for a good action, which would obtain its due reward. Doubtless he pointed out that the object was one for the glory of God and the edification of his people--no less an object than the substitution for that poor "tent of meeting," which he had extemporised on the morrow of his first descent from Sinai (Exo. 33:7), of a glorious structure, Of the richest materials, designed by God himself, worthy of him, and suited to intensify and spiritualise the devotions of all worshippers. It was fit that the

structure should, if possible, be raised by means of the free gifts of the faithful.

For this Moses now made appeal to all. In doing so, he pointed out the two modes in which such offerings may be made.

I. OFFERINGS MAY BE MADE BY THE ASSIGNMENT TO A SACRED USE OF A PORTION OF OUR SUBSTANCE. All who had gold, silver, brass, blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, goat's hair, etc; were invited to contribute out of their abundance to the erection of the sanctuary. It was especially urged that, if they did so, it should be with "a willing heart" (Exo. 35:1)—"not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2Cor. 9:7). Such a mode of offering is open to those only who have property of some kind or other, and is especially suited to anyone who is able to contribute in this way.

II. OFFERINGS MAY BE MADE BY THE DEVOTION TO A SACRED USE OF SOME PORTION OF OUR TIME AND LABOUR. "Every wise-hearted among you shall come, and make all that the Lord hath commanded" (Exo. 35:10). All who had sufficient skill were invited to join in the actual work of preparing and making the various fabrics. Carpenters, weavers, dyers, smiths, embroiderers, metallurgists, might contribute their time and work, and so make an offering to God as acceptable as that of the gold or jewels of others. Even poor women, whose only skill was to spin thread with their hands (Exo. 35:25), might "bring that which they had spun," and were accepted as offering worthily. And so, in our own day, whenever any good work is taken in hand, it will always be found that every one who wills can have some part in it—can help, by headwork or by handiwork. And the value of such participation is quite equal to that rendered by rich contributors, at any rate, in the sight of God.

Moses having made known to them the will of God, they went home and immediately put in practice what they had heard, Exo. 35:20. O that every congregation would thus depart from the hearing of the word of God, with a full resolution to be doers of the same!

The people departed to think over their response to Moses' appeal, and then returned.

It is intimated that they brought their offerings immediately; they departed to their tents immediately to fetch their offering, and did not desire time to consider of it, lest their zeal should be cooled by delays. What duty God convinces us of, and calls us to, we should set about speedily. No season will be more convenient than the present season.

Gifts

I. LIBERAL GIVERS. Almost everything needed for the sanctuary was provided by the free gifts of the people. What was required was readily forthcoming.

These givings, which may well be made the model of our own, were:

1. WILLING: "Every one whose heart stirred him up, and whom his spirit made willing" (Exo. 36:21). The Lord "loveth a cheerful giver" (2Cor. 9:7).

It is said that their spirits made them willing (Exo. 35:21), and their hearts, Exo. 35:29. What they did they did cheerfully, and from a good principle. They were willing, and it was not any external inducement that made them so, but their spirits. It was from a principle of love to God and his service, a desire of his presence with them in his ordinances, gratitude for the great things he had done for them, faith in his promise of what he would further do (or, at least, from the present consideration of these things), that they were willing to offer. What we give and do for God is then acceptable when it comes from a good principle in the heart and spirit.

2. ACCORDING TO ABILITY. Each gave as he was able (Exo. 36:23-29). The offerings were of divers kinds, according as they had; those that had gold and precious stones brought them. Those that had not precious stones to bring brought goats' hair, and rams' skins. If we cannot do as much as others for God, we must not therefore sit still and do nothing: if the meaner offerings which are according to our ability gain us not such a reputation among men, yet they shall not fail of acceptance with God, who requires according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not, 2Cor. 8:12; 2King 5:23. Two mites from a pauper were more pleasing than so many talents from a Dives. God has an eye to the heart of the giver more than to the value of the gift.

The princes gave costly gifts. Others brought silver and brass. Others gave wood. Those who could not give anything else gave work (Exo. 36:25, Exo. 36:26). Everyone gave according to his/her possibility without calculating how much others could have given. No one did not wait untill the end to see what is lacking

There was in that early age no money in the form of coins or bullion. What money passed current with the merchant consisted of rings which were weighed, and principally of ornaments for personal decoration.

3. UNIVERSAL. 1/ **Every One** (35:21) - 2/ **Every Man** (35:23)-3/ **All The Women** (35:25) - 4/ **The Rulers** (35:27)

And what a rich profusion of gifts did they contribute! Here one of the princes brought a priceless jewel; here again were crowds of ordinary people bringing precious amulets, ear-rings, nose-rings and other jewelry, in which Orientals take great delight. Large numbers of women brought their metal mirrors, and out of them the laver was afterward constructed. These things were piled in heaps, and we are told that the Spirit drove the people to give.

4. It sufficed for the work (Exo. 36:7). Thus would God teach us that it is his will that his work should be supported by the voluntary contributions of his people. It is so amazing to see that no instruction has been given who should give what. Moses only gave the list of the needed materials. What's happen if none brought gold, none brouhth silver nor wood. Can you imagine how was it if most of them gave the cheapest material. There were no lacking materials.

5. Overflowing. So zealous was the spirit of the people, and so abundant were their gifts, that they had in the end to be restrained (Exo. 36:5-7). “The people bring much more than enough ». No one guess about what others might give. No one compared his/her gift to other’s. No one waited untill everybody would have given. They brought what they could give according to the blessings they received and according to the value they estimed about their God’s house.

Superabundant giving

The contributions restrained. The people continued to bring free offerings every morning, Exo. 36:3. Probably there were some that were backward at first to bring their offering, but their neighbours' forwardness stirred them up and shamed them. The zeal of some provoked many. There are those who will be content to follow who yet do not care for leading in a good work. It is best to be forward, but better late than never. Or perhaps some who had offered at first, having pleasure in reflecting upon it, offered more; so far were they from grudging what they had contributed, that they doubled their contribution.

Superabundant giving shows a truly liberal spirit in those who give. It is not a very common thing. Cases are rare of its needing to be "restrained." The example of the Israelites should stir Christians to emulate them. While these poor wanderers in the desert were so generous, how is it that we are, for the most part, so niggardly?

No exciting harangues were made, nor had the people Bibles at home in which they could compare the requirements of their leader and see if these things were so. But they had no doubt as to his bearing to them the will of God, and they were impressed with so strong a sense of its being their duty, that they made a spontaneous offer of the best and most valuable treasures they possessed. There was no need of a second appeal. Though they knew that much had been contributed they still gave.

Too much is far better than too little. Isn't it? Let a great work be taken in hand, and it is impossible to anticipate the exact quantity of the material that it will require, or the exact cost of work and material together. Care should always be taken to have a margin beyond the supposed necessity.

Prices rise while a work is in progress; material purchased, or presented, turns out to be defective, and has to be replaced by something better. Accidents occur. The actual cost of a work almost always exceeds the estimate—some-times greatly exceeds it.

Also their acts of devotion, their energy, and liberality, in bringing their free-will offerings to Moses, are recorded for the benefit of the people of God. Their example in preparing material for the tabernacle so cheerfully, is an example for all who truly love the worship of God. Those who prize the blessing of God's sacred presence, when preparing a building that he may meet with them, should manifest greater interest and zeal in the sacred work in proportion as they value their heavenly blessings higher than their earthly comforts. They should realize that they are preparing a house for God. EGW, 1SP270.1.

Motivated by grace

When will a like liberality be manifested in the cause of Christ? Liberal givings are needed. There is still much land to be possessed at home. Heathen lands are opening to the Gospel.

“Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought the Lord’s offering” (Exo. 36:24). This is the true spirit of religious giving. The humblest offering, if given according to ability thus presented, will not fail of acceptance.

“What were the driving motives of this marvelous outburst of generosity? They remembered that God had brought them forth from Egypt, destroying their foes and liberating them from slavery. Again they heard the rattle of the pursuing chariots and the clash of arms! Again they thought of the march through the oozy bottom of the sea, while the walls of water stood on either side, irradiated with the glow of the cloud of fire! Extraordinary blessings should be acknowledged by extraordinary offerings. Those that are enriched with these must devote them to the service of God and his tabernacle

With full hearts they turned to God, saying, “The best we have is thine. You are worthy to receive glory and honor and riches and power and blessing, for thou hast redeemed us.” Upon the heels of that thought came the remembrance of the constant provision for their daily needs. The manna had fallen; the water had gushed from the flinty rock; Amalek had fled! These were the fountains that fed the springs of generosity. But have we not similar reason? “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, yield yourselves.” See Rom. 12:1-2.

If you were among them?

For sure you are not part of this people in the wilderness. Imagine if you were among them. Maybe you say I wish I am part of them so that I could manifest my interest of erecting the house of worship of my deliverer. Maybe some of us might have given gold, some might have brought woods.

Unfortunately you were not part of them to give what you wish to give. But fortunately another occasion will be given to you. Do not miss it this one.

On the first Sabbath of the month of July, every church member will have this opportunity to equip materially the church. On this moment you can manifest your willingness to beautify the house of worship of The Owner of the universe. There is a place for everyone in God’s kingdom. A list of the needed materials will be provided. You have the privilege and the duty to give according to the blessing God has done for you or for your family.

« Those who manifest that earnestness to bring to the Lord acceptable offerings, of the very best they have, willingly, as the children of Israel brought their presents to Moses, will be blessed in that proportion that they have estimated the value of divine things ». EGW, 1SP 270.2

So from now on, take time to think about it. How much can you give? What can you bring for God’s house? I hope that on this very time we shall hear the church elder saying: “The people

bring much more than enough » and “Bring no more offering”. May God continue to bless you so that you continue to be a blessing for Him and for His sake.

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