

Wise Stewards of God's Blessings Nehemiah 10

Introduction:

1. The book of Nehemiah is a story of a courageous group of people that left their homes in Babylon and traveled to Jerusalem to rebuild the city of God.
2. After their work was complete, they begin to experience a spiritual revival. In chapter 8, we see them hungering for God's Word; in chapter nine they begin praying, and the longest prayer in God's Word is recorded.
3. At the end of chapter nine (vs. 38), they decide to make a covenant among themselves. They write it down and their leaders seal it (10:1-27).
4. This covenant involved how they were going to walk and live their lives. vs. 28-29
 - God's Word would be their basis for life. God's Word would be their guide and final authority.
5. As this chapter goes on to explain this covenant here is what you find (vs. 30-39): It deals with how they would handle their material resources. You've heard the expression, "Put your money where your mouth is." This is what they are doing.
6. It is one thing to pray and make promises, but it is another thing to take God's Word and apply it to our everyday lives, especially in the area of our money and resources. What kind of steward are we of God's blessings that He provides? Does God care?
7. Our stewardship of material resources (money and possessions) is a strong indicator of how serious we really are about God and His Word. How do we handle God's blessings?
8. Let's note three important truths from our text about the handling (stewardship) of God's blessings (our material resources).

First, it is a Bible issue.

1. Many people have the mistaken notion that God doesn't care about how we handle money and material resources. He only cares about "spiritual" issues in our lives.
2. Nothing could be further from the truth. God's law to Israel contained very specific commands regarding how they handled their material resources and income.
 - Vs 31 - they were not to buy or sell on the Sabbath or any other holy day.
 - Vs 31 - every seventh year they were to let their fields lie dormant and forgive any debts that others owed them.
 - Vs 32 - they were to give a yearly offering for the sacrifices at the temple.
 - Vs 35 - once a year they were to bring the first-fruits of all their increase to the temple.
 - Vs. 37 - they were to bring one tenth of all their increase to the Levites.
 - Vs. 37 - the Levites were to give a tithe of the tithes to the priests.
3. I realize this was all a part of Israel's Old Testament law system, but here is the point. God **did** care about how they handled the blessings He gave them. God was concerned!
4. Likewise, God is concerned about this today, too. Paul writes to the church about this issue. **1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8; 1 Timothy 6:8-10, 17-18**

5. Everything we possess is a blessing from God and we are responsible for how we handle it. We are His stewards. I manage and oversee His stuff (His house, car, etc.).
 - God is the owner, I am the manager. This must be my attitude. Everything belongs to Him and He has entrusted to me to manage.

Second, it reveals our inward hearts.

1. These people in our text had been experiencing a spiritual revival, but the **inward** change of their hearts was producing **outward** fruit. Their **heart** was to give to God.
2. Let's read verses 35-37. What jumps out at you? They desired for God to have the **first-fruits** of all their increase. God was foremost in their hearts and mind, and it was revealed through their giving. They did not want to give God the leftovers.
3. Likewise, Paul told the church that our giving proves the sincerity of our love.
2 Corinthians 8:8, 24
 - **Example:** Macedonian churches - their giving was simply a reflection of their hearts. **2 Corinthians 8:2, 5**
4. When we truly love the Lord and our hearts are enthralled with Him, we **want** him to have the first-fruits of our increase. I want my checkbook to reveal my love for Him. I want it to accurately indicate how much I appreciate my Savior and what He has done for me.

Third, it determines the progress of God's work.

1. The center of Israel's Old Testament religious system was the temple. It was here all of the many sacrifices were offered for God's children. It was here the priests and Levites oversaw the implementing of God's law.
2. It took great material resources to make this happen. Thousands of sacrifices were made yearly. Some required animals, some wheat and grain, some olive oil, etc.
3. Where would the necessary resources come from? God's people. vs. 32-33, 38-39
 - If the people did not give, the work of God could not go forward.
4. It is no different today. Praise God, we don't have to offer any sacrifices. A final, once-for-all sacrifice has been made for sin. Jesus Christ died for the sins of all of mankind.
5. But the church has been charged with the responsibility to get this message out to the world. And it takes money and resources to accomplish this great task.
6. Where do you think God has ordained that the money and resources should come from? From those of us whose lives have been changed by Jesus Christ.
 - If God's people give sparingly, then the work of God struggles and moves slowly.
 - If God's people give bountifully, the work of God can make great strides forward.
7. **Example:** Paul was able to minister the gospel in Thessalonica because the Philippians gave generously to him. **Philippians 4:15-17**

In Conclusion:

1. This chapter of Nehemiah teaches us that God does, in fact, care about our stewardship of earthly possessions and blessings. It is an issue we will stand accountable for one day.
2. This chapter also teaches us that when God's people's hearts are right and when they are in love with God, our outward giving is a reflection of this inward heart.
3. When the Word of God and prayer are an active part of the believer's life, a giving heart naturally follows.