

Text: Exod. 25:1-9, 35:4-36:7, 38:21-31

Title: "The hearts that would build God's tabernacle"

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Place: NBBC

Introduction: The construction of the tabernacle is a work of God. One of the things we learn about the work of God from these chapters is that God's work on earth is accomplished first in the hearts and then through the hearts of His people. In other words, God's work happens through a love of God produced within our hearts and then shed abroad by our hearts.

As surgery approaches for me, Rom. 5:1-6 has been an encouragement. It is a passage that speaks of the truth that God's work in the world today it is a work of the heart: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope. And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad *in our hearts* by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

One of the amazing things about this work of God in the world is that it often accomplishes what the Apostle Paul calls "exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think." We are going to see Israel experience that truth in their work of building the tabernacle. But even these amazing accomplishments are works that begin in the hearts of believers. Paul explains, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, *according to the power that worketh in us*, unto him be glory in the church by

Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:20-21). God's mighty acts are accomplished with a power that works within us by Christ Jesus.

There is a contrast in the New Testament between the church of Thessalonica and the church of Ephesus, which highlights the importance of the heart in the work of God. In his Epistle to the Thessalonian church early in their history, Paul commends them for their "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father" (1 Thess. 1:3).

But in the letters of Revelation 2, the Lord Jesus tells John to write the Ephesian church about His knowledge of their "work and labor and patience" (Rev. 2:2). For the Ephesian church, the Thessalonian "work of faith" had become merely "work," the "labor of love" had become merely "labor," and the "patience of hope" had become merely "patience." Jesus explains that the Ephesian church had left their first love. They had lost their heart of faith, love, and hope.

So, whether we are speaking of Israel's work building the tabernacle or our work today of multiplying disciples and local churches, the work of God in the world has to begin in the hearts of believers and be done through the hearts of believers. This is why God designed church for believers.

This morning I want us to notice from our passages characteristics of the hearts that built the tabernacle of God. Four things are mentioned in the text about these hearts.

I. The hearts that built the tabernacle were congregated hearts (35:4).

Illustration: Professional golfers agree that there is something uniquely grand about the Ryder Cup golf tournament.

Ordinarily, a golf tournament is an individual sport. It is everyman for himself against everyone else. But the Ryder Cup is different in two respects. First, golfers in the Ryder Cup are part of a team. No individual can win the Ryder Cup on his own. He plays with a team, or he loses before he even starts. Second, golfers in the Ryder Cup play for either the United States or Europe, not merely themselves. They play for a cause that they view as bigger than themselves, or the team fractures, and again they lose. Team cohesion is essential to victory.

Application: As we read about the hearts of individuals who built the tabernacle, we are reading about builders who are on a team that is building for a cause that is greater than the interests of any one individual. Moses spoke not merely to the children of Israel, but to *the congregation* of the children of Israel (35:4, 20-21). The nation of Israel is called *a congregation* in these chapters. The root verb of that noun *congregation* means *to meet at an appointed time and an appointed place* (BDB). Without the congregated hearts at an appointed time and in a certain place, the work of the tabernacle would have never happened.

Similarly, in our New Testament era, believers are called a *church*. The NT word for *church* (*ekklesia*) means literally *to call out*, and it refers to the town crier who would walk the streets of a Greek city announcing a time and place for a town assembly. He would summon people to gather. So, the hearts that do the work of God on earth are hearts that are summoned to congregate together. Are we obeying the call?

II. The hearts that built the tabernacle were generous hearts (35:5-9).

Application: Later in Israel's history, the Lord will institute the tithe as a tax of 10% on his people in order to support

the priesthood. Sometimes when we think of giving and receiving in OT terms, we immediately think about the tithe.

What happens in the building of the tabernacle, however, is not the result of obedience to a percentage established by law. This offering is the result of what our text calls “a willing heart” (35:5). It is a free-will offering, not a tax regulation. The need before the people of God was certainly an expensive one. Leaders among the people bore the greatest expense because they had more to give (35:27-28), but every gift both small and great, given from a generous heart was necessary to the completion of the work (35:29).

And with the generosity of the hearts of the people of God, the Lord did exceedingly abundantly above all they could ask or think. They had more than enough (36:3-7). Chapter 38 goes into some detail about the quantity of gold and silver raised in this offering, and at today’s prices the total value of what was contributed comes to roughly \$70MM. And that is just the gold and the silver. This “exceedingly abundantly above” offering happened because each individual of the congregation gave what he could from a heart of generosity (vv. 22-23). As such, they are a wonderful example for us in the era of local churches (“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” – 2 Cor. 9:7).

III. The hearts that built the tabernacle were wise hearts (35:10-20, 25).

Illustration: In life there is a kind of intellectual pursuit that is theoretical and focused on research, and another kind that is practical and focused on industry. I heard an interview of Dr. Robert Malone, who invented the mRNA technology used in our nation’s vaccination program. In that interview, Dr. Malone talked about how throughout his career as a PhD

virologist he wanted to work in industry rather than academia because in industry you use your wisdom to help with real-world needs. What he described may be viewed as the point at which wisdom becomes skillfulness.

Application: The Hebrew idea of wisdom includes this focus on practical industry. For the Hebrew, a wise man is a skillful man. In our NT terminology, we might say that a man of grace is a gifted man who has been given those gifts to give to others. In both eras the work of God is accomplished by hearts that have been gifted by God to be wise and skilled at meeting some important need related to building the house of God, whether a tabernacle or a local church family.

Bezaleel and Aholiab are the prime examples of this wise skillfulness in our passage (35:30-36:3). Their ability comes from the Spirit of God (35:31), and whatever ability or skillfulness we may have to further the work of God in our day is a gift of the Spirit of God, who deserves all the glory. The name *Bezaleel* means *in the shadow of God* (Olford, 48). That is where we should be as we work for Him – in His shadow.

In addition, their skillful wisdom is shared with others. The heart of wisdom includes a heart to teach (35:34). Their skill is an ability that they willingly give back to the Lord, and it is an ability that they are willing to help others develop and use for the Lord too. Are we using our gifts to build the house of God that way? Have we given our skillfulness to the Lord, and are we sharing how to do so with another?

We are not necessarily called to be artisans (although our church has certainly been blessed by that talent too – front sign; flower arrangements), but the Lord has much for each of us to do according to Rom. 12:3-8, “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to

think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”

“There’s a work for Jesus,
Ready at your hand;
‘Tis the task the Master
Just for you has planned.
Haste to do His bidding,
Yield Him service true;
There’s a work for Jesus
None but you can do.” – Elsie Duncan Yale (Oxford, 49; Elsie Duncan Yale was a graduate of Moody’s school for girls in Northfield, MA. Married in 1896, she had divorced her husband by 1920. Many of her hymns were published under pseudonyms.)

IV. The hearts that built the tabernacle were stirred hearts (35:21, 26).

Illustration: In November of last year the Barna Group released a survey result that said that 38% of pastors are seriously considering leaving full-time ministry, which was up from 29% in January. If we added to that statistic the number of men who are looking to leave their current pastorate in search for another, that number would be far higher, I be-

lieve. That is a survey about pastoral discouragement, but I know that what is true for pastors when it comes to this issue is equally true for all of us as church members.

Application: How can the house of God be built in a world of discouragement and difficulty? The Bible answer is the stirring of the heart of believers. The Hebrew word for *stirred* is literally the idea of *being lifted*. It refers to a power that lifts us up when we are down in the dumps in the work of the Lord. So, who can do this for us? Who can pull us out of the dumps and give us a stirred heart for the work?

Illustration: David knew Who. On a very dark day for David, when the enemy had taken everything from him and his allies only wanted to take more, David knew who could give him an uplifted heart: “And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God” (1 Sam. 30:6).

Everyday has the potential to be as bad and as discouraging as that day was for David, so everyday must begin with a power that encourages us in the Lord our God. If nothing else we can find encouragement in the unchangeable truth that our names are written in heaven. David knew this truth: “I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord” (Ps. 40:1-3). Do we know what to do when our heart needs stirring? David did.

Conclusion: So how is your heart this morning? Is it the kind of heart God can use to accomplish His mighty work in the

world today? Is it a congregated, generous, wise, and uplifted heart? Is it a heart where Jesus is on its throne?

The Lord still seeks a heart who will do the gospel work of His house: “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” (2 Chron. 16:9). What do His eyes see this morning in our heart? A desire to congregate? A generosity to give? A wisdom to work and disciple? An uplifted power? That is the only way God does His work in the world. Let’s ask Him together to truly give us this kind of heart this morning.

Finally, the hearts that build God’s house are redeemed hearts. The Israelites could not do what they did enslaved in Egypt, and we cannot have a heart to build God’s house until our heart is redeemed from sin. “Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (Ezek. 18:31).

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching