

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 9TH - 10TH, 2021 // BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

THE UNRAVELING (NEHEMIAH 13:1-14)

"AT THAT TIME..."

During the time Nehemiah was in Jerusalem, the people dedicated themselves to the Bible and living out its commands.

- Not only did they dedicate themselves to learning and living the Word, **they separated from foreign influences because they brought in false teachings, unethical practices, and violence.**

WE HAVE TALKED A LOT ABOUT SEPARATION

We must pray for **wisdom** and **discernment** along with consulting God's Word in order to know how to interact with people.

- **We're to be around non-believers IF we are full of God's Spirit and it doesn't cause us to sin.** This means **we must be wise in what we're involved in. We must also know when to step away from people.**

SOMETHING HAPPENED

V4-5 tells us that somewhere along the way the people started to slip and allow outside influences back in and in the worst way.

- Eliashib was the priest put in charge of the storerooms (finances) of God. This man was a relative of Tobiah (ch. 2, 4) and he prepared a "large room" for him where the offerings for the priests should be.

THIS MOVE WAS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC

More than likely the priest had political and economic ties to Tobiah. So, an outside influence was given space in the religious community to advance **politics** and **money**.

- **When the church strays from the gospel, the integrity of God's people is compromised and the whole community feels the effect.**

NEHEMIAH HAD GONE BACK TO BABYLON

V6 says during the blasphemous use of God's house Nehemiah was back in Babylon with Artaxerxes after a 12 year term in Jerusalem. After hearing about the religious compromises of the Jews, he came back.

- When he returned, Nehemiah threw Tobiah's stuff out, purified the rooms, and replaced the proper offerings.

THE PROPER MINISTERS WERE QUITTING

Because the proper offerings weren't given to the Levites, they went back to secular jobs. Nehemiah "rebuked the officials" who were responsible for the integrity of the temple.

- Nehemiah wasn't a polished diplomat. He was **straightforward** and sometimes harsh, but it was because he loved God and the people of God.

RESTORING AND HOLDING ACCOUNTABLE

Nehemiah had a plan to collect tithes, put them in the proper places, and build a team to make sure that no one person can corrupt the system.

- Remember, Nehemiah can be a manual on leadership principles. We learn that **Godly integrity involves our beliefs, our sacrifices, how we use resources, and being held accountable.**

GOD, I'M TRYING!

At the conclusion of each attempt at reforming the people, Nehemiah desperately prays for God to remember his hard work.

- Though the faults of others were not his fault, he felt a responsibility for the people that God had given him influence over. It is an example of **the delicate balance of personal and community responsibility.**

MORE DISOBEDIENCE (NEHEMIAH 13:15-22)

"AT THAT TIME..."

In the era of Nehemiah's 2nd tenure in Jerusalem, he saw the community start to unravel even more. This time it was people forsaking the Sabbath Day.

- God knows we need to work, but He also commanded us to rest. The Jews were working and not dedicating time to rest, meditation, and worship.

FORSAKING THE SABBATH IS ROOTED IN GREED

99% of the time the lack of honoring a day dedicated to God and rest is because we place our priorities above His.

- If we're honest, **our lack of church participation and intentional spiritual recharging is because we tend to look at church as a secondary need in our lives.** What do we consider essential? Is it really?

REBUKING THE LEADERS

In true Nehemiah fashion, he rebuked the leaders because the integrity of a community starts with those in charge. He also says, "Didn't your ancestors do the same [and bring] disaster on us and on this city?"

- **Not only should we be responsible with those we influence, but we should learn from the mistakes of the past.**

REPENTANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

So, Nehemiah ordered the doors of the city to be shut to prohibit the people from selling goods on the Sabbath and to keep the allure of the outside world away from the people of God.

- **Not only did the people repent, they took steps to not fall into the same sin.** This is what true repentance is: **to not only ask forgiveness, but to move away from sin.**

NEGATIVE INFLUENCES (NEHEMIAH 13:23-31)

"IN THOSE DAYS..."

Nehemiah remembered when it got even worse. Not only had the temple sacrificed its integrity and they neglected the Sabbath, now they were letting in false religious teachings.

- **Notice the progression: the church fails to teach the Bible, the Sabbath isn't honored, and then false teachings infiltrate the people.**

UNEQUALLY YOKED

Previously Nehemiah told the people to not marry foreigners with differing religious beliefs. This had nothing to do with nationality or color, but belief in the true God.

- The same principle still applies. As Christians, we are to marry other Christians or we not only disobey scripture, we compromise our faith (Solomon).

THEY COULDN'T SPEAK HEBREW

Nehemiah isn't a racist, but he was concerned that if the people married foreign people and didn't teach them Hebrew, they were incapable of understanding the Bible.

- Nehemiah didn't handle this well. He not only rebuked them, he "beat some of their men, and pulled out their hair." **Though this was common, it was wrong.**
- **Ephesians 4:26-27**

ANOTHER PLOT TWIST!

V28 says that even the son of the high priest married not only a non-believing foreigner, but the daughter of Sanballat, the main antagonist of the people of God in Nehemiah! The leader of the church openly broke biblical marriage parameters.

- **Nehemiah's response was to "drive him away," which was appropriate** (Eph. 5:11).

ANOTHER WAY TO REMEMBER

V29 Nehemiah asks God to remember the people that "defil[ed] the priesthood as well as the covenant" to God's commands that they swore to uphold. This "remember" was one of **judgment against negligent, rebellious, and unrepentant people.**

- **God's full of grace, but He's also righteous and will not tolerate unaddressed sin.**

ANOTHER TRY AND ONE MORE "REMEMBER ME"

The fascinating thing about this book is that it ends with Nehemiah frustrated and tired, begging God to not forget his efforts with his people because they are making the same mistakes that ruined the city in the past.

- We learn a lot about humanity in this book: **without God we become self-destructive and it affects the whole community.**

DISCERNING RELATIONSHIPS AND SITUATIONS

- We must read the Bible and **pray for the gifts of wisdom and discernment** to be able to decipher what situations and people we need to steer clear of.
- If we are not wise and discerning, we open ourselves up to false teachings, poor choices, hurt, brokenness, and sin that separates us from God.

IF WE MOVE FROM THE GOD AND HIS WORD

- If we move away from God and His Word we will lack wisdom and discernment and inevitably turn from holy living. This will have dire consequences now and forever.
- **Every corner of society and our personal lives are affected by our spiritual state: rest, peace, finances, family, marriage, business, etc.**

GETTING BACK UP UNTIL THE END

- Humans gravitate towards selfishness and sin that leads to self-destruction because of the sinful nature we are born into. This is why we **must be born again** (Jn. 3).
- Though we will fall, **we must repent and take steps to move away from sin. If we are persistent in this, we will grow in holiness and sanctification.**

HELPING OTHERS UNTIL THE END

- Not only do we have to keep running this marathon until the end, we must show grace and love while teaching the truth and walking out this life with other people.
- Though it is the most heartbreaking and frustrating thing ever, **we cannot let the state of the world distract us from our command to love ALL people!**

SOME SIMPLE CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Pray, listen, read and obey the Bible, and be active in a church community.
- We all make mistakes, but God is quick to forgive if we ask. We do not have to be slaves to sin.
- Sanctification is a life-long process. We must not give up on people. God values them, and so should we.