

SERMON FOCUS: I must be vigilant to avoid drifting away from God.

SERMON FUNCTION: The hearer will examine his life to see if there are areas of compromise.

BACKGROUND:

As we come to the concluding chapter of Nehemiah, there has been some time elapsed since the completion and dedication of the wall. After serving in Jerusalem for twelve years, Nehemiah returns to Babylon to King Artaxerxes, presumably returning to serve in his court. A period of time passes, but we're not told exactly how long. Scholars think it might have been about ten years when Nehemiah asked the king for a leave of absence to go and check on things in Jerusalem. That's where we pick up today.

SCRIPTURE READING: Nehemiah 13:4-31

Now before this, the priest Eliashib had been put in charge of the storerooms of the house of our God. He was a relative of Tobiah [5](#) and had prepared a large room for him where they had previously stored the grain offerings, the frankincense, the articles, and the tenths of grain, new wine, and fresh oil prescribed for the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, along with the contributions for the priests.

[6](#) While all this was happening, I was not in Jerusalem, because I had returned to King Artaxerxes of Babylon in the thirty-second year of his reign. It was only later that I asked the king for a leave of absence [7](#) so I could return to Jerusalem. Then I discovered the evil that Eliashib had done on behalf of Tobiah by providing him a room in the courts of God's house. [8](#) I was greatly displeased and threw all of Tobiah's household possessions out of the room. [9](#)

ordered that the rooms be purified, and I had the articles of the house of God restored there, along with the grain offering and frankincense. [10](#) I also found out that because the portions for the Levites had not been given, each of the Levites and the singers performing the service had gone back to his own field.

[11](#) Therefore, I rebuked the officials, asking, “Why has the house of God been neglected?” I gathered the Levites and singers together and stationed them at their posts. [12](#) Then all Judah brought a tenth of the grain, new wine, and fresh oil into the storehouses. [13](#) I appointed as treasurers over the storehouses the priest Shelemiah, the scribe Zadok, and Pedaiah of the Levites, with Hanan son of Zaccur, son of Mattaniah to assist them, because they were considered trustworthy. They were responsible for the distribution to their colleagues.

[14](#) Remember me for this, my God, and don’t erase the deeds of faithful love I have done for the house of my God and for its services.

[15](#) At that time I saw people in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath. They were also bringing in stores of grain and loading them on donkeys, along with wine, grapes, and figs. All kinds of goods were being brought to Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. So I warned them against selling food on that day. [16](#) The Tyrians living there were importing fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them on the Sabbath to the people of Judah in Jerusalem.

[17](#) I rebuked the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this evil you are doing — profaning the Sabbath day? [18](#) Didn’t your ancestors do the same, so that our God brought all this disaster on us and on this city? And now you are rekindling his anger against Israel by profaning the Sabbath!”

[19](#) When shadows began to fall on the city gates of Jerusalem just before the Sabbath, I gave orders that the city gates be closed and not opened until after the Sabbath. I posted some of my men at the gates, so that no goods could enter during the Sabbath day.

20Once or twice the merchants and those who sell all kinds of goods camped outside Jerusalem, **21**but I warned them, “Why are you camping in front of the wall? If you do it again, I’ll use force against you.” After that they did not come again on the Sabbath. **22**Then I instructed the Levites to purify themselves and guard the city gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy.

Remember me for this also, my God, and look on me with compassion according to the abundance of your faithful love.

23In those days I also saw Jews who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. **24**Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples but could not speak Hebrew. **25**I rebuked them, cursed them, beat some of their men, and pulled out their hair. I forced them to take an oath before God and said, “You must not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters as wives for your sons or yourselves! **26**Didn’t King Solomon of Israel sin in matters like this? There was not a king like him among many nations. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, yet foreign women drew him into sin. **27**Why then should we hear about you doing all this terrible evil and acting unfaithfully against our God by marrying foreign women? ” **28**Even one of the sons of Jehoiada, son of the high priest Eliashib, had become a son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite. So I drove him away from me.

29Remember them, my God, for defiling the priesthood as well as the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.

30So I purified them from everything foreign and assigned specific duties to each of the priests and Levites. **31**I also arranged for the donation of wood at the appointed times and for the firstfruits.

Remember me, my God, with favor.

INTRODUCTION:

How would you like to be remembered? There is a lot to remember Nehemiah for, as we have seen studying his book for the last nine weeks. He was a brave governor, a committed builder, and one who loved God and His people deeply. He wanted, according to what he has written, to be remembered for his faithful love and service for the house of the Lord. Others in this passage will be remembered for less noble reasons. Consider the high priest Eliashib. His is the example that we get when love of man replaces love of God. His is the example that we get when love of money replaces love of God. His is the example of that we get when love of sex replaces love of God. Let's look at these.

MESSAGE:

1. WHEN LOVE OF MAN REPLACES LOVE OF GOD
 - a. (13:4-5) Remember Tobiah from the early chapters of Nehemiah. He was one of the ones hurling insults at the Jews trying to rebuild the wall.
 - b. As an Ammonite, he was forbidden from being in the Temple. (Deut. 23).
 - c. Eliashib had been instrumental in rebuilding the wall. (3:1) mentions the Sheep Gate. He would have been there to hear the insults.
 - d. Why would the high priest Eliashib have allowed this? Clearly, he was seeking the approval of man instead of the approval of God.
 - e. After Nehemiah had left, Eliashib felt free to make alliances that clearly did not honor God.
 - f. We don't know for certain what Eliashib got out of this relationship, but we do know that it influenced the operations of the Temple.
 - i. People were no longer tithing.
 - ii. We don't know if the money had been going to Tobiah instead of the priests and Levites, but people caught on and quit giving.

- iii. When that happened, the Levites left and went back to the farm for their living.
- g. The church, particularly in America, has been allowing unholy alliances to influence us in crazy ways:
 - i. Preaching (love of people over love of God)
 - ii. Morals (everyone else is doing it)
 - iii. Politics (both sides of the aisle)
- h. We are to impact the culture around us for Christ, now allow the culture's desire for influence to contaminate the church.
- i. Had Tobiah had any fear of God, he would have stayed away from the Temple.
- j. Many churches have allowed people without a fear of God join their ranks and influence them. We must do better.
- k. Remember that we are to love God first and our neighbor second. If we replace the love of God with the love of man, we fall short. We do the same thing when we replace the love of God with the love of money.

2. WHEN LOVE OF MONEY REPLACES LOVE OF GOD

- a. (13:15-16) The next thing Nehemiah mentions is that people are out doing all manner of work on the Sabbath.
 - i. Making wine
 - ii. Bringing in crops
 - iii. Burdening their animals
 - iv. Buying fish
- b. These were not bad things to do. They were being done during the time that was God's time.
- c. They were lining their pockets on the day they should have been worshipping God. This showed where their priority was.

- d. When our love of money, or the things that money can buy, replaces our love of God, worship of Him gets forgotten.
- e. Maybe Temple had gotten boring without singers. Maybe people thought the Temple was corrupt because the tithe had been embezzled. Clearly, the world had intruded on the Lord's day.
- f. The example set by the high priest Eliashib obviously was being followed by the people!
- g. Besides the love of man and the love of money, there's another love that the world tries to replace God with, and that is the love of sex.

3. WHEN LOVE OF SEX REPLACES LOVE OF GOD

- a. Once again, Israel finds themselves chasing after marriages to foreign women. Them being foreign wasn't the problem. Them being pagan was the problem.
- b. The people thought that they knew better than God what was good for them.
- c. People still think that today, finding sexual partners outside the bounds of God's will for their lives.
 - i. Outside the bounds of marriage.
 - ii. Outside the bounds of religious compatibility.
 - iii. Outside the bounds of God's design for marriage.
- d. The things that have been happening in Western Culture for the last 30 years will impact the next several generations of our children.
- e. The children of these intermarriages could not understand the language of the scriptures (Hebrew)! Obviously, they were not being taught the things of God!
- f. Even the priesthood was contaminated with these intermarriages. The high priest's grandson was

married to Sanballat's daughter. Remember Sanballat?

- g. Marriage is compromised in our society, and the postmodern church reflects this as well.

4. WHAT WILL BE FOUND WHEN CHRIST RETURNS?

- a. Remember that Nehemiah had been gone for about ten years. He came back and found these atrocities and corrected them.
- b. The scene with Nehemiah throwing Tobiah's belongings out and cleansing the Temple reminds us of Jesus throwing out the moneychangers.
- c. This leads us to wonder, what is the condition that Christ will find us in when He returns?
- d. Will He find us having compromised for influence and love of man?
- e. Will He find us having loved money more than Him?
- f. Will He find us having prioritized our own carnal desires over Him?
- g. Or will He find us still serving, still worshipping, and doing what He has commanded?
- h. Many will be found not even knowing Him. I urge you to not be one of those!

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