

**Let Us Arise and Build  
(Lessons from the Book of Nehemiah)  
Conserving Revival—Don't Go Backward! (Part two)**

**Intro:** In our morning lesson we looked at the final chapter of Nehemiah, showing how Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem to discover that God's people had gone backward in their spiritual lives in the aftermath of his departure. We looked at 5 lapses of holiness which he systematically corrected, seeking to restore the proper practices as the Lord had commanded them in the Law.

Of course, the issues raised in Nehemiah 13 relate to Israel's practice of the Laws of Moses; and as Christians living under the Law of Christ we are not bound by these particular practices. However we can learn some important principles that are confirmed by NT teaching. Tonight let's consider the lessons that we can learn from Nehemiah's efforts to conserve revival among the people of God.

**We too can fall into apostasy.**

*If there is anything that we learn from the account in Nehemiah, it is that God's people can break their covenantal promises and be lulled into conformity with their culture.*

*One of the most widely-embraced denominational doctrines is the doctrine of the unconditional security of the believer or once saved, always saved. To hold this view is to ignore a great deal of what is said in the NT. It emphasizes that faithful people are secure in the Lord; but it equally warns that believers may turn way from God in unbelief.*

*"FOR this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? (Hebrews 2:1-3)*

*"Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God." (Hebrews 3:12)*

*"THEREFORE, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard." (Hebrews 4:1-2)*

*Paul warned the Corinthians to learn the lessons of Israel's history, reminding them of how those who made such a wonderful beginning were "laid low in the wilderness." He warned them of a similar possibility:*

*"Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:11-12)*

**A leadership vacuum can result in loss of needed accountability.**

*The absence of Nehemiah's strong leadership appears to have paved the way for God's people to lapse into old sinful practices. It reminds us of the importance of having leaders present who will watch for our souls.*

*One of the blessings of church leadership is the fact that God's people have someone watching over their spiritual welfare.*

*"Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you." (Hebrews 13:17)*

However, if leaders are not appointed, or if leaders are not on task, God's people today may lapse into worldly compromises.

**Incautious associations can lead to compromised principles.**

*In Nehemiah, we God's people becoming too accepting of people who were living contrary to the will of God, particularly foreigners who were idolaters. This leniency led to sin among God's people.*

*And so today, when God's people get too comfortable with people of the world, we can easily start becoming like them. The NT urges us to maintain relationships with wisdom on the basis of two principles.*

We do not need to withdraw from the world; we need to be a light to it.

*"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)*

Though we are "in the world" we must never be "of the world."

Consider Jesus' prayer:

*"I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John 17:15-16)*

*Paul warned the Corinthians of the dangers of getting too cozy with teachers who denied the truths of the gospel.*

*"Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals." (1 Corinthians 15:33)*

*And we surely should use wisdom in the choice of a mate in view of the influence and pressures it can bring to bear on our faithfulness.*

**Vigilance is essential to continuing holiness.**

*A key to holiness is vigilance. We not only need leaders to be vigilant, but for all of God's people to be spiritually vigilant for the enemy.*

*We need to be personally watchful:*

*"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8)*

*We need to be watchful for others.*

*“BRETHREN, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.” (Galatians 6:1)*

**Sin must be confronted and corrected.**

*To Nehemiah’s credit, he would not look away when he saw the word of God compromised. At great risk to himself, he challenged the wrong behavior and sought to correct it. His only appeal was that the Lord would not forget the good he had done.*

*So today, if bad behavior is not confronted and corrected, it encourage more of the same. Apparently the Corinthians were proud of their tolerant spirit; but Paul could not approve of what they considered to be a virtue:*

*“Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?” (1 Corinthians 5:6)*

*Toleration in matters of opinion is a virtue; but tolerating sin is inexcusable. The consequences are too great.*

*“My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins.” (James 5:19–20)*

**Proper worship must translate into personal obedience.**

*In Nehemiah 13 we see the importance of establishing abiding holiness through real obedience*

The celebration of God’s help in the worship service of chapter 12 is impressive; but the honor of God in worship must translate into abiding holiness.

When people worship God, they are also declaring their intentions to obey Him at all other times! Some of those who worshipped did not do that; and it was disturbing to Nehemiah and offensive to the Lord.

*We only have to remember that God wants to not only honor him in worship but also honor Him in life. He will not accept one without the other.*

*“Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.” (1 Timothy 2:8)*

*“‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’” (Matthew 15:9, NASB)*

That means that we must follow-through on our promises.

In a famous verse in Ecclesiastes the wisdom writer said, “It is better to vow, than to vow and not pay.”

The Lord expected His people to keep their promises. To promise God something and not do it is to lie to him.

If someone today makes us a promise and does not keep it, what do we call that person? A fraud? A crook? What would God call us?

**We too must respect the Lord’s parameters of fellowship.**

*In Nehemiah we see the importance of maintaining godly separation.*

In Nehemiah, we see God's people extending fellowship to those unapproved by God; thus Ammonites and Moabites were allowed into the worship assembly, though forbidden by God.

Israel had no right to extend the parameters of spiritual fellowship to those outside the covenant of God. The unique calling of God's people demanded respect for the boundaries of God's fellowship.

Though it might have been seen as "inclusive" to bring in foreigners, it was contrary to the Law of God.

*Likewise today we must respect the parameters of fellowship. In an age of spiritual ecumenicalism and inclusiveness, it is tempting to say, "We are open to all. We accept all." But that is not our prerogative! Our boundaries of fellowship should be founded upon the Lord's boundaries—upon the basis of the principles of the gospel, not popular cultural thought.*

**Conclusion:** The book of Nehemiah may not end on the highest note; but the message of chapter 13 is important and instructive. Its message to us is an important one—don't go back!

**Let us commit ourselves to moving forward toward greater maturity and holiness.**