

# THE COST OF SPIRITUAL CARELESSNESS AND THE REWARD OF SPIRITUAL CAREFULNESS

## NEHEMIAH 13

### CHURCH GROUP SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE - MAY 19, 2024

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#### SCRIPTURE READING

##### *Nehemiah 13 ESV*

##### *Nehemiah's Final Reforms*

*On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people. And in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, 2 for they did not meet the people of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them—yet our God turned the curse into a blessing. 3 As soon as the people heard the law, they separated from Israel all those of foreign descent.*

*4 Now before this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, and who was related to Tobiah, 5 prepared for Tobiah a large chamber where they had previously put the grain offering, the frankincense, the vessels, and the tithes of grain, wine, and oil, which were given by commandment to the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests. 6 While this was taking place, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I went to the king. And after some time I asked leave of the king 7 and came to Jerusalem, and I then discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, preparing for him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. 8 And I was very angry, and I threw all the household furniture of Tobiah out of the chamber. 9 Then I gave orders, and they cleansed the chambers, and I brought back there the vessels of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense.*

*10 I also found out that the portions of the Levites had not been given to them, so that the Levites and the singers, who did the work, had fled each to his field. 11 So I confronted the officials and said, “Why is the house of God forsaken?” And I gathered them together and set them in their stations. 12 Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses. 13 And I appointed as treasurers over the storehouses Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah of the Levites, and as their assistant Hanan the son of Zaccur, son of Mattaniah, for they were considered reliable, and their duty was to distribute to their brothers. 14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God and for his service.*

*15 In those days I saw in Judah people treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them on the day when they sold food. 16 Tyrians also, who lived in the city, brought in fish and all kinds of goods and sold them on the Sabbath to the people of Judah, in Jerusalem itself! 17 Then I confronted the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day? 18 Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster[a] on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.”*

*19 As soon as it began to grow dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and gave orders that they should not be opened until after the Sabbath. And I stationed some of my servants at the gates, that no load might be brought in on the Sabbath day. 20 Then the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice. 21 But I warned them and said to them, “Why do you lodge outside the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you.” From that time on they did not come on the Sabbath. 22 Then I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come and guard the gates, to keep the Sabbath day holy. Remember this also in my favor, O my God, and spare me according to the greatness of your steadfast love.*

*23 In those days also I saw the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. 24 And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but only the language of each people. 25 And I confronted them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair. And I made them take an oath in the name of God, saying, “You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. 26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless, foreign women made even him to sin. 27 Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?”*

*28 And one of the sons of Jehoiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was the son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite. Therefore I chased him from me. 29 Remember them, O my God, because they have desecrated the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.*

*30 Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign, and I established the duties of the priests and Levites, each in his work; 31 and I provided for the wood offering at appointed times, and for the firstfruits.*

*Remember me, O my God, for good.*

#### SERMON RECAP

- Sin tempts so incessantly.
- Sin appears so innocently.
- Sin spirals so inevitably.

- Sin devastates so indescribably.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### **Observation: What does the passage say?**

1. Read Nehemiah 13:1-31 aloud as a group. Let group members share observations. Try not to move into interpretation of the passage or application of what you read quite yet. Simply share what you observe.
  - What promises did the people of Israel make in Nehemiah 10:28, 39 and Nehemiah 13:1-3? How had they broken their promises?
    - What did Eliashib, the high priest, do to desecrate the house of the Lord? Nehemiah 13:4-5
    - How had the officials' violated promises regarding the temple and the Levite's well-being? What was the impact of their actions on the Levites and the house of God? Nehemiah 13:10, 12
    - What were the people prioritizing on the sabbath? Nehemiah 13:15-16, 20
    - What did they do concerning intermarriage with foreign women? Nehemiah 13:23-24
  - How did Nehemiah respond to the people's unfaithfulness and what reforms did he instituted?
    - What was Nehemiah's response to desecration of the temple? What actions did he take? Nehemiah 13:4-9
    - What was Nehemiah's response to how the Levites were treated? What actions did he take? Nehemiah 13:11-13
    - What was Nehemiah's response to what the people were doing on the Sabbath? What actions did he take? Nehemiah 13:15-22
    - What did Nehemiah do about the people intermarrying? Nehemiah 13:25-28; 30-31
    - What was Nehemiah's prayer? Nehemiah 13:14, 22, 29, 31
2. How would you summarize Nehemiah 13 in your own words?

### **Interpretation: What does the passage mean?**

1. In what ways did the spiritual leaders compromise? Nehemiah 13:4-5 Why is godly leadership of God's people so important? Exodus 32; Acts 20:28-32; 1 Corinthians 10
2. Why did God forbid intermarriage? Exodus 34:14-16; Deuteronomy 7:3, 23:3-5
  - How do we balance the call to be in the world, and not be of this world? John 17:14-15; 2 Corinthians 6:4-15
3. What are some similarities between Nehemiah's response and Jesus' concerning the description of the temple? Matthew 21:12-13
  - What were some challenges Nehemiah may have experienced in confronting sin and instituting the reforms that he did?
4. Why do you think the spiritual decline among God's people happened? Was their repentance in Nehemiah 9 genuine?
  - What was God's command to his people about spiritual carefulness? Genesis 3:1-6; Deuteronomy 5:32, 6:3, 28:15
  - Why did God warn them, and us? Genesis 4:7, Joshua 1:7-8, 2 Timothy 2:22; Hebrew 2:1; 1 Peter 5:8 What lessons can we learn from them?

### **Application: How can we apply this passage to our lives?**

1. What are some ways that Satan tempts you to live spiritually careless and compromise with sin? In what ways are you tempted to live as those God doesn't exist?
2. How does Nehemiah's courage to stand up for righteousness and confront sin encourage you? 1 Corinthians 9:24-25, 2 Timothy 4:8, 1 Peter 5:4, Revelation 21:21-27
3. What are 2-3 steps you need to take this week to be more spiritually careful in my life?
4. In light of today's discussion, how can your church group/huddle members pray for you?

## LEADER NOTES

**SUMMER CAMP** | Registration is now open for MBC summer camps! Check out [mcleanbible.org/events](https://mcleanbible.org/events) for more information and to register.

- High School Camp - Watermarks Camp from July 13-17
- Middle School Camp - NorthBay Adventure Camp from August 1-4
- Kid's Quest Camp - Skycroft Conference Center from August 5-9