

Nehemiah 13:1-31

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[0 : 00] Turn to the Old Testament book of Nehemiah. While you're doing that, I'm going to hydrate. Yesterday morning I went hunting. It was opening day, and it was really cold.

I wasn't at all prepared for the weather. And so when I got up this morning, I thought it would be a good idea to wear a sweater today. I don't think so, but... If you see me perspiring, it's because of passion.

It has nothing to do with this sweater. So this will be our last Sunday, in the book of Nehemiah. I hope, I know that many of you weren't here for our entire study of it. You can, of course, go to the website and go back and listen to those things if you would like to.

But I hope for at least the part that you've been present for, it's been a blessing to you, as it's been a blessing to me to get to study it and to preach it. It's spoken to my life in many different ways, and I hope the same for you.

And I just wanted to extend appreciation to you for even being able to do this. It's a gift to me to get to study study and preach. So I want to thank you for that.

[1 : 02] Just as a brief summary, we are, in the book of Nehemiah, seeing the people of God having returned from Babylonian exile. They were sent into Babylonian exile as a result of their sin for 70 years. We've now seen three movements of people back to the land.

This is some 90 years later that we're looking at this. Nehemiah is serving as cupbearer to the king Artaxerxes. Now Persia rules the area, King Artaxerxes is the king of Persia.

He hears news of what's going on, that the wall has yet to be rebuilt. People have not yet occupied Jerusalem. The temple's been rebuilt, but it's kind of in a shambles. And he grieves over this because the glory of God is being shamed in this way.

The people of God are not in a good state, and God moves his heart in prayer to go back and to lead the rebuilding of the wall. So we see the rebuilding of the wall, and we see revival come upon these people.

They begin to reestablish the Word of God as the ultimate authority in their lives, and they turn from their sin, and they turn back to God. We saw in chapter 10 that they made a covenant for some specific things that they had been incredibly sinful about.

[2 : 06] They committed to God that they would not do these things anymore. We saw a general covenant or promise to keep the law, and then three specific things happened.

And last week we saw in verse 12 a dedication service to the wall, and we talked about what proper musical worship looks like. And then we come to the last chapter, and I really wish that this story ended on a high note.

At this point in redemptive history, though, it does not. The people of God are still incredibly fickle in their service to God, and it doesn't go quite the way we like to see it happen.

Now, it's apparent that Nehemiah served as governor over Jerusalem, over Israel, for 12 years, and then left for a while.

He went back, as he had promised in chapter 1 to King Artaxerxes. He returned back to the king, and then he comes back. And we don't know exactly how much time has passed from his leaving and going back to the king and then coming back here.

[3 : 08] We don't exactly know what's happened, but you'll see the record that he wasn't present, and then he returns, and we'll see what happens here in just a moment. So, join me with me in reading.

We're going to read all of chapter 13 together. On that day, they read from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people, and it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, 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. There's a little history for you there. Verse 3, As soon as the people heard the law, they separated Israel from all those of foreign descent. Now, before this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God and who was related to Tobiah, 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. While this was taking place, I was not in Jerusalem. For in the 32nd year of Artaxerxes, king of Babylon, I went to the king, and after some time, I asked leave of the king 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. And I was very angry, and I threw all the household furniture of Tobiah out of the chamber.

[4 : 33] Then I gave orders, and they cleansed the chambers, and I brought back their vessels of the house of God with the grain offering and the frankincense. 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.

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. Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses.

And I appointed as treasures over the storehouses Shalamiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Padaiah of the Levites. And as their assistant, Hanan the son of Zachar, son of Mataniah, for they were considered reliable, and their duty was to distribute to their brothers.

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. In those days, I saw in Judah people treading wine presses 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. 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.

[5 : 46] Then I confronted the nobles of Judah and said to them, What is this evil thing that you are doing profaning the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers act in this way and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city?

Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath. As soon as it began to grow dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I commanded that the door 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. Then the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice. 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. 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. In those days also I saw the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab, 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.

[6 : 54] And I confronted them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair. And I made them take 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.

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.

Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women? And one of the sons of Jehoiada, the son of Eliashib, the high priest, was the son-in-law of Sambalot, the Horonite.

Therefore I chased him from me. Remember them, O my God, because they have desecrated the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites. Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign and I established the duties of the priests and Levites, each in his work, and I

provided for the wood offering at appointed times and for the first fruits.

Remember me, O my God, for good. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for the blessing of your word and I thank you that every detail of it is important and it matters to us this day.

[8 : 04] That you have an intention with us this morning, that you want to speak to our hearts and therefore change our actions. You want us to grow up into Christ's likeness and I pray, Father, you will accomplish that this day by the speaking of your word.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Alright, one more hydration. And then off we go. Let me say to you, I love Nehemiah.

What a man. What a wonderful, wonderful man. And we see, throughout the Bible, we see many great historical characters. Characters that we would tend to want to emulate.

Often, many of us grew up in church being taught little moral lessons by the example of some of these men. And that's not all bad, but we almost always get some record, some account of their fallenness.

Right? David is a wonderful example of that. Or, um, Abraham, who you may or may not know this, but twice, he gave his wife away to avoid his own death.

[9 : 05] Right? These are not necessarily righteous acts just because they're recorded in the Bible. You'll sometimes hear that argument and talk about the horrible things people did that God approved of. Not necessarily, just because it's a historical account of what happened.

So I've been looking for Nehemiah's flaw. And maybe we found it. Let me say that to you. Maybe we found it. Maybe he overreacted a little bit, especially when we get to verse 25 and he's beating people and pulling out their hair.

However, maybe not. Maybe it was perfectly appropriate for him to respond in this way. There is a such thing as righteous anger.

I want you to have two questions as mine. As Nehemiah returns, apparently to govern once again, he couldn't have gotten all these things accomplished. He appoints, he orders, he does all these things. So he's apparently in charge once again.

And as he approaches the sinfulness of the people, I want you to have two questions in your mind. Firstly, how should we feel about sin as those who have been delivered from it, as those who have experienced grace that abounds all of our sin, right, in Christ, all of those things have been taken care of, but how should we still feel about sin generally, and how should we react to both our sin and the sins of others?

[10 : 26] What's the proper response to sinfulness? Let me say to you, the person who is zealous for God, who wants to serve, wants to be devoted to him in every respect, will defend the holiness of God and the holiness of God's people.

This is going to be a natural reaction. And at times, this calls for a righteous anger. Let's look together at an example, the perfect example, Jesus.

Right? You can turn here if you like. If not, just hear me read. John chapter 2, verses 13 through 17. The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons and the money changers sitting there and making a whip of cords, a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and oxen and he poured out the coins and the money changers and overturned their tables and he told those who sold the pigeons, take these things away, do not make my father's house a house of trade.

His disciples remembered that it was written, zeal for your house will consume me. Jesus, righteous, perfect in any way, without sin, got angry.

He saw something that was offensive to God's holiness and to the holiness of his people and he rectified it in a radical way. So we see that righteous anger is a possibility.

[11 : 50] Another example, turn with me please to this one, Numbers chapter 25. Chris McKean pointed this one out to me today.

I had another example while you're turning there. Moses goes up onto Mount Sinai, receives the Ten Commandments, comes down and the people have already turned from God. They're worshipping the golden calf and what does Moses do?

He breaks the tablets. He's never reprimanded for this and he has thousands. The Levites go and kill thousands of people as punishment for that because that was the example I was going to read to you but this is better. Numbers chapter 25 we'll read verses 1 through 13 together.

While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab. Now again, see this is another sin. This is the same thing we're going to deal with here in chapter 13 of Nehemiah. These invited the people to the sacrifice of their gods and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said to Moses, Take all the chiefs of the people and hang them in the sun before the Lord that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel.

[12:56] And Moses said to the judges of Israel, Each of you kill those of his men who have yoked themselves to Baal of Peor. And behold, one of the people of Israel came and brought a Midianite woman to his family in the sight of Moses and the sight of the whole congregation of the people of Israel while they were weeping in the entrance of the tent of meeting.

When Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose and left the congregation and took a spear in his hand and went after the man of Israel into the chamber and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly.

Thus the plague on the people of Israel was stopped. Nevertheless, those who died by the plague were 24,000. Now we don't see exactly what this plague was, but because of this sin, this breaking of the commandment of God, this compromise of the holiness of God's people, God brought a curse upon them.

And what brings the curse to an end? Righteous anger. Right? We see this man Phinehas go and spear both of them and kill this particular couple.

How do we know this is good? Because as I've said before, maybe you stop here and you go, but was that the right thing to do? We see record there that the plague of Israel was stopped and then look at verse 10.

[14:11] And the Lord said to Moses, Phinehas, the son of Aazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy.

Therefore say, behold, I give to him my covenant of peace and it shall be to him and to his descendants after him the covenant of a perpetual priesthood because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel.

God applauds him for the action. So, righteous anger at times may seem a little extreme but is exactly what is called for.

No time today to observe David and Amos and Malachi, John the Baptist, Apostle Paul, there are countless examples of people who got properly angry when folks offended the holiness of God. Now hear me. We're going to talk at length about this and I don't have time today to tell you and warn you about when anger looks improper. I think you know already.

[15:19] We can't quite get into the depths of that. I am not suggesting that any of you rip out people's hair and beat them. I think you'll know if God leads you to something like that, that kind of anger.

But the question again, how should we feel about sin and how should we react to sin and the sins of others? Because if righteous anger is a reality, we've observed it to be true, we've seen it now multiple times, we've seen it in our very Lord, Jesus Christ, if it's a reality then it follows that there are times when not being angry is sinful.

Just going along, peace, kumbaya, let's just get along together, that that in fact could be sin in your life. So consider carefully these questions.

I want to show you in chapter 13 the three offenses, the three sins committed against God and then their corresponding covenant promise. You remember chapter 10 I mentioned to you, we studied that. We studied a covenant, a written document that the people signed together, a commitment that they had made not too many years earlier and they break it here at every single point.

They broke it generally as they made a general promise to keep the law of God and they broke every one of the specific covenants that they made with God. So, firstly, remember the intensity that they entered into that covenant with.

[16:46] Chapter 10 verse 29 says we enter into a curse and an oath in this covenant. They are asking God, if we break this covenant with you, bring punishment upon us.

Guess how God brought it? Nehemiah. Nehemiah is the curse that they asked for as they made this covenant commitment together. So, let's look at the first one. In verses 4-14, we see the offense

that they did not preserve the holiness of the house of God.

Right off the back, we see the high priest. It would have been the high priest because he was given order over keeping the storehouses, keeping the proper things needed for the worship of God in place.

So, Eliashib is the high priest and he clears out one of these rooms that has been specifically commanded by God to be set apart for the storing of these goods and turns it into a home for who but Tobiah.

Do you remember Tobiah? The man that mocked Nehemiah that plotted to kill him? We see later on in relation to the high priest allowed his son to marry Sambalot's daughter.

[17:55] Sambalot and Tobiah were the major antagonists in the story. Right? They tried to raise up an army to at very least threaten the building of the wall at most to actually attack the city.

Remember when they were building they had to carry stones in one hand and a sword in the other? There was a plot against Nehemiah's life by these two men and Eliashib the high priest allows one of them to live in the house of God.

Right? This would be like a priest in the Catholic church hanging a picture of Martin Luther in the Vatican. Right? Really, really offensive.

Can you imagine coming back to this scene and seeing this? This man is living in this place and I love that he just goes and he throws all of his stuff out.

I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall and see Tobias' face as his stuff is being hurled out the door. And he goes beyond that to give orders to cleanse not just that chamber but all the chambers.

[18:54] There's a big cleaning up of the house of God as a result of what Eliashib has done here. Secondly, they're neglecting the provision for the Levites and the singers. This very storehouse would have stored the goods for them to be able to do their jobs, to be at the temple and do temple service.

They needed food to eat. They needed provision. And you see here that they fled to their fields meaning they couldn't stay in the city and do the work at the house of God so they had to go out to their outlying lands so that they could eat.

And we saw a commitment back in chapter 10. They made a promise not to neglect the house of God. Right? But chapter 10 verse 39 we will not neglect the house of our God.

That's the way that very covenant summed up. And here we see Nehemiah asking the question in verse 11 why is the house of God forsaken or neglected?

It could be read that way. Malachi who came along during this time as a prophet sent by God in Malachi chapter 3 verses 8 through 12 says to the people will man rob God yet you are robbing me but you say how have we robbed you in your tithes and contributions you are cursed with a curse for you are robbing me the whole nation of you bring the full tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house and thereby put me to the test as the Lord of hosts if I will not open up the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need I will rebuke the devourer for you so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear says the Lord of hosts then all nations will call you blessed for you will be a land of delight says the Lord of hosts this is when Malachi is prophesying to them this very thing Tobiah is living in the house of God and they are neglecting the contributions that are necessary for the temple service so there is the broken covenant promise chapter 10 verse 39 why did it matter

[20:57] I said to you before we can make some kind of drastic leap and certainly it's a lesser truth contained in this that we somehow ought to be giving tons and tons of money to improve this property and improve this building and Lord knows we need some improving to go on around here however that's not primarily what's being taught here that's not the greater thing should we be contributing to the needs of a church absolutely but that is not why this was so offensive is offensive because of the prefigurative meaning of the house of God remember that the house of God was the place the one place that God came and met with man met with one man one time a year in the Holy of Holies this is a very important thing the activity that surrounded it mattered a lot because it was meant to show us that someday God would come and dwell with man fully without any obstruction forever right

Revelation 21 3 and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling place of God is with man he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God and they're talking here in this chapter of Revelation of the new Jerusalem which comes

down out of heaven as a cube and the other place we see a cube is the Holy of Holies shaped as a cube it mattered the way the people of God in this day treated the house of God so that's the first broken covenantal promise the fact that they did not preserve the holiness of the house of God Nehemiah's anger was proper and measured for that the second offense found in verses 15 through 22 they did not preserve the holiness of the Sabbath the seventh day of the week that God had commanded them to keep holy to set aside to not work on this was meant to be for them again something prefigurative it was a day that they rested every seven years they gave debtors rest and they let fields rest why?

it was because God just didn't want them to work themselves to death they just didn't want them to have too many calluses he knew they needed rest no not at all it was prefigurative it was meant to show us a greater thing a full and final rest that we'll have in Christ right?

the Sabbath was the covenant sign one of them between God and men we see that in Exodus chapter 31 12 and 13 and the Lord said to Moses you are to speak to the people of Israel and say above all you shall keep my Sabbath for this is a sign between me and you a sign a covenantal sign but throughout the generations that you may know that I the Lord sanctify you it was like a wedding ring in that way and so for the people to not keep the Sabbath would be for those of us who are married in this room to take off our rings and not just take them off to wash our hands but take them off and throw them away to say to the world yeah I'm married but I don't want to be right it's exactly what the people of God were doing here as they traded as they allowed people to come into the city and trade on the Sabbath chapter 10 verse 31 they made a promise and if the peoples of the land bring in goods or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on a holy day and we will forgo the crops of the seventh year and the exaction of every debt notice the careful record that there were foreigners coming into Jerusalem to trade right carefully recorded the covenant that you guys made together to keep the law of God you are breaking it in every single way this was incredibly important look at the inspired commentary

I know I did a lot of this a couple of weeks ago but got to make the point again Colossians 2 16 and 17 let no one pass judgment on you in question of food or drink or with regards to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath these are a shadow of the things to come but the substance belongs to Christ and the writers of Hebrew gives it to us Hebrews gives it to us a little more clearly chapter 4 verse 9 and 10 so then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God there remains not because we're meant to have a Sabbath now this isn't about Sunday or Saturday let's get into a massive debate the big religious debate down in Nicaragua when Daniel and I went down there was about what day you were supposed to worship God on there's a bunch of seventh day Adventists down there and a bunch of Sunday keepers as they called themselves and this is the major conflict that was happening in the area not doctrinal in any way whatsoever because this was supposed to show us this final thing a Sabbath rest for the people of God verse 10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his this is why the Sabbath was so important and meant to be kept holy and so Nehemiah responds properly to that he hasn't locked the gates he takes real measure to stop what was going on stop what you're doing

[26 : 11] I'm shutting the gates foreign people can't even come into the city and when they camped outside the city he threatens them you come back here I'm going to lay hands on you which basically means I'm going to pull out your hair and beat you up right there will be consequences to pay and I love that the responses in verse 21 and from that time on they did not come on the Sabbath right they heard him loud and clear as he yelled from the walls I'm going to lay hands on you if you come back here the Sabbath day was meant to be kept holy because of what it showed that was coming this full and final rest are you catching in this how our sin is offensive to what God has done for us we're seeing the fulfillment of these promises the coming of the kingdom of God right the fact that we now have rest and we'll have full and final rest in Christ and our sin is a great offense to him without doubt we've been delivered from our sin right hear this carefully beloved Christ died on the cross for your sins past present and future there's nothing you're going to do that's going to surprise him no thing you will do will be so offensive that he'll go oh I don't know if I really want to die for that one right it's done it's finished it's a completed work right and you can have confidence to approach the throne of grace in that right you can press on in your relationship with God because you know that Christ has paid the price the penalty for the sin it's been completed he's already been punished the wrath of God has been poured out on your behalf in him but because of that because of this display of his great love for us we ought to want to serve him we

ought to want to love him we ought to want to see the people of God become more and more perfect to make him be seen more as he is as holy that's the task that's been given to us to be disciple making disciples to display God's goodness and loving kindness to the world we do that primarily in the way we live so when we sin it's a great offense to God still even though the price has been paid it's an offense to what God has done for us when you sin in those moments you are saying you don't believe the gospel because if you did if you believed it it would produce proper action in you and you're doing improper things so what does that say you've forgotten about the grace of God to you you've forgotten about who you were damned eternally enemies of God and yet he saved you because of his love for you doesn't that just want to cause you to spring forth with good works it does for me

God did good things for me I want to get out there and get active and involved and do good things that's what's going on here that's why Nehemiah is appropriately angry at the way they've acted the third offense this one's a little bit trickier we talked about it a couple of weeks ago final verses 23-31 they did not preserve the holiness of their ethnicity they did not preserve the holiness of their ethnicity we see the covenant promise chapter 10 verse 30 we will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons this has been a consistent issue right I read to you about Phineas this was happening even when they were wandering sojourning in the desert this was happening right and it's happening again and again and again Ezra commanded them to put away their wives of other nations and this makes our heads hurt a little bit I think as new covenant people because we're not told to divorce in quite the same way but there's a uniqueness here in this time there's a uniqueness for the people of Israel in that they were ethnically bound to one another covenantally bound to God they were ethnically bound to each other right they were meant to be a people set apart in this way you want to draw a parallel the church is the same way we ought not be yoked with unbelievers right

I'll tell you right now that is a temptation young people if you are dating somebody that doesn't claim the name of Christ more than likely they will lead you astray not the other way around history has proven old testament history has proven this to be the case right put them away don't get yourself covenantally bound with these people because you want to honor God with your marriage right there's the parallel for us in that way right so their ethnicity mattered a lot they were an internal people an exclusive people set apart in this way and the gospel now has turned out that into an inclusive people the church now invites all kinds of people in right we wouldn't dare say because you're not of the same socioeconomic status as us or the same racial background as us or you don't have the same culture as us you can't come meet with us right we don't say that because the gospel transcends all of those things right it's now been turned out

I showed you the example when Jesus talked about how the gates of hell would not prevail against the church we're no longer encamped inside of a wall holding out the world now we're making advances on the world and the gates of hell is not going to stand against our attacks right that's the picture that's going on here but in this day it was different right Nehemiah gives the example of Solomon Solomon was not led astray particularly because of how many wives he had but because of where they were from and I'm not defending how many wives he had 1 Kings chapter 11 verses 1 through 4 reads now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh Moabite Ammonite Edomite Sidonian and Hittite women from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel you shall not enter into marriage with them neither shall they with you for surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods Solomon clung to these in love he had 700 wives who were princesses and 300 concubines and his wives turned away his heart for when

[32 : 24] Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God and was the heart of David his father as was the heart of David his father skip down to verse 9 and the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord the God of Israel who had appeared to him twice and commanded him concerning this thing that he should not go after other gods but he did not keep what the Lord commanded here we find the people of God doing once again and it wasn't like this is the first time Nehemiah has set it straight there was correction brought before this you remember in chapter 1 that Nehemiah sat down and grieved and wept over the state of the people of God he came in and led in a lot of very generous tender ways he sets a lot of wrongs right throughout the book and then he goes away for a while and comes back and now he's angry right 2

Corinthians 6:14 says do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers for what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness or what fellowship has light with darkness just to drive my previous point home so Nehemiah responds I believe appropriately we see in verse 25 in his anger and I confronted them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair and I kind of like this language and I made them take an oath so you have somebody's arm to start by and her back and say say uncle say uncle say uncle say uncle say you shall not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for yourselves for yourselves the covenant that you made say it say it right because Nehemiah was zealous zealous for the holiness of God and for the holiness of his people now I know that many of you are thinking about this you're trying to take this scene and apply it to your own living you're seeing this righteous anger you're seeing Jesus display it you're scratching your head about

Phineas you don't even really know! how! how! how is it that I'm supposed to respond and act in this because there's this verse I can recall it I'm not really sure exactly where it's at but it says judge not lest you be judged we're not supposed to judge people right Nehemiah would have more appropriately called together some friends and said don't you guys think what's going on over there is wrong we should do it differently!

build someplace else and gather some people who are kind of like minded with us right that we'll set our own standard up and let them have their standard for how to worship and conduct their lives no he doesn't do that does he there's a standard they've all agreed to it they've all signed a covenant together and he holds them to that the problem with Matthew chapter 7 verse 1 and 2 is that we don't keep reading context beloved is so important so it reads turn to Matthew chapter 7 we're done with Nehemiah for the moment Matthew 7 we'll read verses 1 through 5 judge not that you be not judged for with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged and with the measure you use it it will be measured to you that's where most people stop verse 3 you hear this separately often why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye but do not notice the log that is in your own eye or how can you say!

! let me! take the speck out of your own eye when there is the log in your own eye you hypocrite first take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye so isn't it interesting that most people use this to judge but the rest of the passage goes on to tell us how it is!

[36 : 35] we're! to judge this warning against here in verse 1 and 2 is hypocrisy it's the very thing he says in verse 5 you hypocrite right you can't be a person that sins and loves sin and tell everybody else about their sin you got to get the log the larger speck it's a huge picture I mean if you can picture having a tree stuck in your eye versus somebody who has a flake of something in their eye get the tree out of your eye so that you can help the person get the little thing out of their life have proper perspective right that you're a sinner as well and you must repent to be able to properly judge your brother we are called to do this as the church how do you ever share your faith with anybody who's not a Christian if you don't first tell them that they're lost your life is offensive to

God I encourage you to start sharing your faith that way your life is offensive to God let me show you why let me show you his statutes and his rules let me show you all the ways in which you've broken them rattle through the Ten commandments with them and just ask have you ever lied have you ever lusted you ever profane the name of God everyone goes yeah yeah your life is offensive to God you're his enemy start that way we need the law to humble us we're called to do that we're also called to purify one another young people particularly you need the church this is a major reason why we need that kind of thing church can't always be just like fun and hugs and how are you brother I'm great and you just come in and do that kind of stuff it's got to get messy it's got to get ugly because people are messy and ugly we're flawed we have we have issues going on in our lives and we need people to speak the truth to us there's a practice that's been practiced all throughout history called church discipline and it's been lost by and large in evangelical churches! in America it's a travesty of people and it starts with going to a brother and saying you've sinned set it straight let's sort it out together that's part of the process of church discipline you all have probably been involved in that I hope you have at some phase you've been involved in that most people think of church discipline at the end of the process where you actually tell a person they can't fellowship with you anymore sake of holiness to the glory of God that's why we do this two reasons to break it down for you firstly to win back the brother or sister to righteousness that's always the goal of church discipline you're telling somebody they're in sin you're just trying to win them back to

righteousness finding a way to get rid of them I don't care for this person too much find them to sin I'd rather not deal with them anymore I'm going to go after them about this sin there's the tree if you're responding in that way get that tree out of your eye before you can ever go and bring about correction in that way to win back the brother or sister to righteousness and secondly to preserve the holiness of the church it's why church discipline must!

place and beloved it is not easy our church practices church discipline on all those levels from the beginning of that to the end of that process we've practiced all of this and it is challenging lots of critique comes into the process I don't know that I've ever really done it perfectly I'd like to say that I have but often I wonder if I waited too long sometimes I wonder if I should have waited longer in the way I press in with people it's a challenging thing but it's necessary if we are zealous for the holiness of our God we will participate in this process let me give you three reasons we should practice church discipline if I haven't already established it for you enough at this point firstly we have a reverence for God's holiness that's what I've been saying to you all along right like we're meant to be Nehemiah maybe not in the hair ripping meeting up making say oath kind of a way but we are meant to bring correction we ought to be zealous in this way right it ought to light a fire in you when you see things in our church and elsewhere that's just wrong right how many of you hear about the new fad heresy the new thing that's out there that's going about let me just give you an example how about when when

[41 : 29] Rob Bell put out his book Love Wins how many of you got mad about Rob Bell's book maybe you don't even know about Rob Bell's book if you know about it you should get mad about such things right it's heretical it's anti gospel right we should be furious about these things now I don't know him so that was where my anger ended the righteousness of my anger I had to go well couldn't do anything in the case of Rob Bell but I have a zeal for God's holiness we can observe that here with Nehemiah in chapter 13 secondly we love one another if we're to speak the truth to one another in love we see in Ephesians chapter 4 if we're growing each other up into Christ likeness it's going to take this I want to hear the truth from you I don't want you to let me go on in sin you see me sinning come and tell me I want to persevere in holiness

I want to honor my God with my living so if you see me doing something that I ought not be doing come tell me sometimes I am completely oblivious to my sin I am offending somebody I don't even know it I want to set those things straight I invite that kind of criticism into my life for the sake of my God because I am zealous for him and if we love one another we will do this you'll have the hard conversation and I know many of you very well and I know that you have these conversations often I talk to you before you have that conversation love one another we will do this 1st Timothy 5:20 Timothy is told for those who persist in sin rebuke them in the presence of all so that the rest may stand in fear not at Timothy's power and might but fear of sin it's a serious thing and we ought to be working together to drive it from our midst we don't want to be!

these Old Testament! We want to be persevering in our holiness together and then thirdly this is a real simple reason we know that Jesus himself commanded it it's really not optional at this point the other things are more implicit we gather from Nehemiah chapter 13 we can see 1st Timothy 5:20 we can look at the one and others of scripture we can imply that church discipline is healthy and proper but how about the fact that just Jesus told us to do it should be enough how dare we as Christian churches not participate in this activity Matthew 18:15 through 17 if your brother sins against you go and tell him his fault between you and him alone appropriate first step there's one end of the spectrum process between you and him alone if he listens to you!

If he says no I disagree with you I'm not being prideful that's the most difficult sin to confront the sin of pride because people typically don't admit they're being prideful I'm not being prideful case in point but you take a couple other people with you that's the process take another or another and go and say brother we're seeing it together right you have love and respect for us you're seeing that the three of us are all seeing this issue happening in your life verse 17 if he refuses to listen to them he just!

wants! to keep persevering in his sin tell it to the church that's us the congregation and if he refuses to listen even to the church let him be to you as a gentile and a tax collector which is to say put him out of your assembly don't fellowship with him anymore this process again is meant for restoration it's meant to show the church how seriously the church takes!

[45 : 38] and it's to show that individual how seriously you take sin so you can't go on professing the name of Christ and being a part of this church if you're going to continue in sin you cannot do it

if we got busy at this activity really went after it we as Christians I'm not talking about our congregation churches!

would get small quick or we would see revival people would start turning back to God in a major way that would be awesome begin to press each other in this way press each other into holiness remember it's all meant for restoration it's ultimately loving to do this very thing and I would argue it's arguable I would agree but I would argue that ultimately what Nehemiah was doing was loving to the people of God showing them how very severe their sin was bringing correction in a very severe way a measured way to what they were doing how dare you right like they got it you see some of the people around him getting in their stations snapping to he collected the tithes again the tithes been neglected the nation said yeah yeah yeah we'll give it up we'll give it back to the house of God right as a people they responded!

to what Nehemiah was saying rightly they were doing the right thing as they were correcting and bringing about this type of work so I'll say to you again the person who is zealous for God will defend the holiness of God and his people you have to ask yourself if you feel rightly about sin and if you respond rightly to it not just in the lives of others but in your own life as well does it grieve you when you sin against God many of us have become master manipulators of our own minds and we justify everything well it's not that bad you hear people talk about how you ought not compare yourself to others typically in the sense that you ought not aspire to be more than you are like oh gosh that guy is so good at that I'm never going how about the other way that you compare yourself to people who you view as worse than you and that somehow makes you okay if you are sinful you are sinful you are sinning against a holy

God who is perfect in all his ways that should be offensive that should grieve our hearts why because Christ died for those very sins that is why!

should grieve our hearts not because of favor with God that he sits enthroned and he says they messed it up again well maybe they'll fix it and get it right he extended to us his grace as a free gift he sees us as righteous in Christ no matter what it's just the proper measured response to his goodness to us that we desire to be good what is the source of all that goodness it's the spirit living within us changing our hearts making it new every day moving us along together towards perfection it is good and right when we come together and I preach to you that you don't feel so great about yourself when you leave I have a client for the other job I do that attended John Piper's church and she asked why didn't you stick around she said well because every time I went there when he preached

[49 : 14] I felt condemned and I didn't she's a client I really wanted to go probably because you are probably because he was preaching the gospel to you and you recognized your state you knew that you were damned I didn't say any of that I did proceed to preach the gospel to her though I did go on in a nicer way to tell her that where she wouldn't call and complain to my manager and never want to hear about money management from me ever again right you ought to feel less about yourself but you ought to be praising!

Christ and the work he's doing in you as you leave I believe proper gospel presentation works that in us that humbles us all at once but then I hope that you're feeling this morning that your zeal for God has maybe grown a little bit cold if that's the case repent just repent and believe that God has sacrificed even for that Romans chapter 8 there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ you can persevere and move on let that warm your heart let that fuel your zeal to desire the holiness of your life and holiness of the church for the proclaiming of the holiness of God let's pray together