

Title: O my God, Remember Me for Good

Passage: Nehemiah 13

Summary:

Nehemiah's prayer:

I. Remember I did not make Your house our house (v. 1-14)

II. Remember I did not make Your day our day (v.15-22)

III. Remember I did not make Your people our people. (v. 23-30)

Key Truths:

- One of the primary indicators of godliness is our sensitivity to evil. We must train our spiritual sensitivities by and under the Word of God to discern between evil and good as well as to love the good and hate what is evil.
- Avoid any circumstances where tempted to sin. Make no provision for the flesh.
- We must keep on doing the next thing out of our devotion and discipline for God.
- What is the last thing Nehemiah is doing in this book? The next thing that accords with the glory of God.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What point(s) in the sermon did the Lord most impress upon you?
 - Does our time and money reflect true, genuine worship of God?
 - What does it mean to love what God loves and hate what God hates? How may you grow in training in this area?
 - Where may temptation to sin occur in your life where you need to make decisive action to avoid or stop?
 - What is the next thing you can do for God's glory?
 - What next steps will you take in response to the sermon?
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EXPOSITION

Introduction

Winston Churchill

- "Never give up"
 - Theme of Nehemiah's life.

Nehemiah's prayer in Chapter 13

- Pleading in desperate confidence for God and in God.
- Remember, by Your grace, I
 - Loved Your house
 - Loved Your day
 - Loved Your people

Overview

Nehemiah's prayer:

I. Remember I did not make Your house our house (v.1-14)

II. Remember I did not make Your day our day

III. Remember I did not make Your people our people.

I. REMEMBER I DID NOT MAKE YOUR HOUSE OUR HOUSE.

Nehemiah 13:1-3

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, 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. As soon as the people heard the law, they separated from Israel all those of foreign descent.

- God's Word was read and obeyed, which is the foundation of revival

Deuteronomy 23:3

No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the LORD forever,

- This was a recital of a command previously given. But the people failed to obey it.
- Likewise, many know doctrine but do not obey it.

James 1:22-24

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

- Misperceptions: passage is racist

- Ex: Ruth (Moabite who turned to God and abandoned their pagan gods), Zelek the Ammonite (listed among David's Mighty Men in 2 Samuel 23)
- Truth: separate all the unrepentant Ammonite or Moabites in their presence.
- God is both for the Jews and the Gentiles

Context for response:

Nehemiah 13:4-5

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.

- The priest had sinfully treated the Temple as his own home.

Where was Nehemiah when this occurred?

Nehemiah 13:6

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

- Nehemiah had returned to the Babylonian king.

Previously:

Nehemiah 2:6

And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), "How long will you be gone, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time.

Nehemiah 5:14

Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the food allowance of the governor.

- Nehemiah had set a time to be away, which was 12 years
 - He stayed in Babylon for about 8-13 years. Then returned to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 13)

Nehemiah 13:7

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.

I then discovered the evil

- The more we love God, the more evil is evil to us.
- Caution: apathy is not righteousness before God.

Romans 12:9

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

James 4:17

So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

Nehemiah 13:8

And I was very angry, and I threw all the household furniture of Tobiah out of the chamber.

- Nehemiah was a man of a action.
- Love for God causes discernment for evil.
 - One of the primary indicators of righteousness: our sensitivity to evil.
- We must train our spiritual sensitivities by and under the Word of God to discern evil.
 - Train to love the good and hate the evil.

Nehemiah 13:9

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.

- Nehemiah identified those who were practicing a false religion
 - Those who did not love what God loved and did not hate what God hates.
- Likewise: do we do the same today?

Revelation 2:4

But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Nehemiah 13:10

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.

- Judah had stopped paying the tithe. Priests were forced to work the fields.

- God's design: free up spiritual leaders for ministry.

1 Timothy 5:17

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

Nehemiah 13:11a

So I confronted the officials and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?"

Confronted the officials

- Actual fight with the leaders. Leaders had not readily agreed but rather contended with Nehemiah.
 - Nehemiah fought back

Nehemiah 13:11b

And I gathered them together and set them in their stations.

- The leaders had broken their covenant promise to follow God's ways.
- Gentleness must rise loud and make things clear out of love for God's people.

Nehemiah 13:12-13

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

- Clarity brings clear action.
- Faithfulness replaces unfaithfulness.
 - He put out the bad leaders and replaced them with faithful men.
 - Nehemiah did not give second chances to leaders compared to the general population

Nehemiah 13:14

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.

- Nehemiah's prayer

- Contrast: does our time and money reflect true, genuine worship of God?
- His greatest ambition was the proper worship of God.

II. REMEMBER WE DID NOT MAKE YOUR DAY OUR DAY.

Nehemiah 13:15

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.

- The people had wasted God's day on themselves.
- If something is clearly wrong, you must stop it right there.
 - Not wait for a trend as to whether it will be an issue.

Nehemiah 13:16

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!

- Worship reveals God.
 - The Sabbath reminded people that God saved them.
 - The Sabbath wasn't made for God but for the people to remember to rest and worship God.

Nehemiah 13:17-18

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 the leadership goes, so goes the people.
 - Here, the leaders had fallen and led the people accordingly.

Romans 2:4

Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Romans 6:1-2

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Nehemiah 13:19-21

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. 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.

- Does anything change with the principles of God's Word from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant? No.

Romans 13:14

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

- Avoid circumstances where tempted to sin.
 - Here, Nehemiah had the gates to the city closed.

Galatians 5:16-17

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Nehemiah 13:22

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.

- Nehemiah acts and invites God's people to participate.
 - He equipped the saints for ministry.
- Nehemiah is not self-confident but God-confident.
 - Nehemiah humbly prayed to God recognizing he is not entitled to God's favor but rather recognized his need for God's mercy.
- We pray according to the wonder of God's mercy.

Psalms 103:10-12

He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

III. REMEMBER THAT I DID NOT MAKE YOUR PEOPLE OUR PEOPLE.

Nehemiah 13:23-24

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.

- It took only one generation after Nehemiah left where the people stopped speaking the language (Hebrew)
 - Failing to speak Hebrew meant they could not and did not read God's Word.

Nehemiah 13:25

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.

- Remember, these men were guilty and stubborn and fighting against what God commanded for the people to do.
 - Nehemiah may not have done the best means (pulling out hair) but he was still right in the rebuke of these leaders..
 - If people do not repent, they are cursed.

- Oath was quoting Exodus 34 and echoed what the people already did:

Nehemiah 10:29-30

join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord and his rules and his statutes. We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons.

Nehemiah 13:26

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.

- At the peak of Israel's monarchy, sin entangled and led to its downfall.
 - How great was the danger of sin now that Jerusalem was surrounded by its enemies (no longer a time of peace)?
- Satan's temptation: giving a peach while stealing paradise.

Nehemiah 13:27

Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?"

- Faithful love sounds like embarrassing shame when we are living in sin.
 - Love resembles shame when we are in sin.

Proverbs 27:6

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

- How blessed it is to have a friend who hurts when we are wrong.

Nehemiah 13:28

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.

- All had turned back to God except this one.
 - Why? One who loved his own sin so much that he refused to turn back to God. So he failed to remain.

Nehemiah 13:29-30a

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 firstfruits.

- What is the last thing Nehemiah is doing in this book?
 - The next thing that accords with the glory of God.
- Likewise, this is the standard by which we should live: what is the next thing we can do to glorify God?

- Why? Out of love for God because He is worthy.

Nehemiah 13:30b

Remember me, O my God, for good.