

The Book of NEHEMIAH

Chapter 13

“Fight the Good Fight of Faith!”

Between chapters 12 and 13 Nehemiah had returned to Babylon to report to King Artaxerxes (433BC) and to assume his various duties. Eleven years had passed since Nehemiah had first received the command (445BC) to rebuild and restore Jerusalem. Upon his return (424BC, approximately 9 years later) Nehemiah discovers compromise and corruption amongst the priests and the people once again. It was during Nehemiah's absence that *Malachi* also wrote his prophetic book indicting both priests and people for their sinful defection. Nehemiah is a leader governed by God and His Word and will not permit God's laws to be compromised. He cares not for popularity, but understands His accountability and responsibility before God. Nehemiah is a man of honesty, conviction, and devotion. This is a chapter of evaluation, correction and gumption!

> FOUR LESSONS FOR THE FAITHFUL:

- Lesson #1 - FAITH PROTECTS! (v1-9)

Problem: Guilty by association! Deut 23:3-6 - *No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation. For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim to pronounce a curse on you. However, the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam but turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them as long as you live.*

- **Cursings or Blessings: Deuteronomy 27:9 – 28:14.**

- Lesson #2 - FAITH PROVIDES! (v10-14)

Problem: Greed! (Malachi 3:7-10)

Remedy: How did Jesus deal with ungodly corruption? Look to John 2:13-22. We are exhorted in 1 Tim 6:6-10 - *Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. God's word encourages us to give with the proper heart in 2 Cor 9:6-9* - *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. (Also Matthew 6:19-34)*

- Lesson #3 - FAITH OBEYS! (v15-22)

Problem: Worldly pursuits at the expense of neglecting God!

Remedy: Ex 20:8-11 - *"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."*

> **Meaning of the Sabbath.** The Sabbath is a means by which man's living pattern imitates God's (Ex 20:3-11). Work is followed by rest. This idea is expressed by the Hebrew word for Sabbath, which means "cessation." Sabbath rest is also a time for God's people to think about and enjoy what God has accomplished. Another Hebrew word meaning "rest" embodies this idea (Deut 5:14). God's people are directed to keep the Sabbath because God delivered and redeemed His people from the bondage in Egypt. Thus, the Sabbath is an ordinance that relates redemption directly to history. Sabbath rest also holds promise of the ultimate salvation that God will accomplish for His people. As certainly as He delivered them from Egypt through Moses, so will He deliver His people from sin at the end of the age through the Great Redeemer (Gen 3:15; Heb 4:1).

> **The Christian Sabbath.** Many Christians feel that God still expects His people to set aside one day in seven to Him. They argue that such an observance is a creation ordinance which is binding until this creation comes to an end and our ultimate rest as Christians is realized in heaven (Heb 4). They also believe that as part of the

moral system known as the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath is morally binding upon all people for all time. Historically, Christians of this persuasion usually observe Sunday, the first day of the week, as the Christian Sabbath. They note that Christ arose on the first day of the week (Matt 28:1) and, thereafter, the New Testament church regularly worshiped on Sunday (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2; Rev 1:10). This day on which Jesus arose was called the LORD'S DAY (Rev 1:10). (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

*- **Colossians 2:16-23** - So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations — "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using — according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.*

*- **Jesus disciples us in Matthew 7:24-27; 6:7-11.***

- Lesson #4 - FAITH CONFRONTS! (v23-31)

Problem: Unequally yoked!

Remedy: 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

> Conclusion: Nehemiah could proclaim as Paul the apostle in 2 Tim 4:7-8 - *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. **And we would be encouraged with 1 Tim 6:11-12** -But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*