



Keeping First Things First
Nehemiah 10
May 20, 2018

Introduction:

As we consider the story of Nehemiah, we find the people anxious to alter their lives. In short, they determined to do things in the order of their importance. First things were to come first. The people were thoughtfully remembering the past and saying to the Lord, "Because of all these things we have brought before you, our Father, we want to establish some priorities. We are making an agreement in writing." These priorities are dealt with in Nehemiah 9. In this lengthy chapter, the people pour out their souls to God. They verbally declare their dependence on Him. In effect, they develop a new set of priorities, which they document in writing.

As a leader, there are three things that have been, and always will remain essential to leaders:

1. To become a great thinker and do things in the proper order
2. To help people maintain proper priorities and use their time wisely

Charles Swindoll:

"Don't kid yourself—thinking and coming up with a good plan is usually far more difficult than carrying it out. Leaders who don't plan carefully and shoot from the hip often miss the target, and they wound others while firing! Thinking also includes praying and quietness. Nehemiah teaches us about prayer and fasting as we make decisions in our leadership."

3. To accept change as a positive factor and lead people to accept it as good

I. The signing of a commitment

Nehemiah 9:38 (NKJV) And because of all this, we make a sure covenant, and write it; our leaders, our Levites, and our priests seal it.

Nehemiah 10:28 (NKJV) Now the rest of the people—the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the Nethinim, and all those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, everyone who had knowledge and understanding.

II. The specifics of the covenant

A. The Spouses

Nehemiah 10:30 (NKJV) We would not give our daughters as wives to the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons.

Takeaway:

When the morals of a nation are under attack, the home is always the first place to suffer.

Billy Graham:

“The immutable law of sowing and reaping has held sway. We are now the hapless possessors of moral depravity, and we seek in vain for a cure. The tares of indulgence have overgrown the wheat of moral restraint. Our homes have suffered when the morals of society are upset, and the family is the first to suffer. The home is the basic unit of society and a nation is only as strong as her homes.”

B. The Sabbaths

Three principles that we learn from keeping the Sabbaths, Our Sunday:

1. The refusal for selling

Nehemiah 10:31a (NKJV) If the peoples of the land brought wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath...

John Butler:

“When people drift from God, Sunday ceases to be a worship and rest day but becomes a godless commercial and entertainment day. You can plead exemption from Sabbath keeping all you want, but you cannot deny that an increase in godlessness in society will be most evident in how people use their Sundays.

2. The revival for our soul

Nehemiah 10:31b And if the people of the land bring ware of any victuals... we would not buy it of them... on the holy day."

3. The rest for the soil

C. The Sanctuary

David Jeremiah:

“Instructively, the emphasis on the Temple in our text is all about giving. The amount of space given to the emphasis on giving in our text reminds us that giving is often a big problem with God's people regarding God's work. It was obviously a problem with the Jews at this time, and so special emphasis is given in the covenant regarding giving.”

Three practical truths about giving:

1. The purpose of giving

2. The preference in giving

3. The percentage in giving