



Nehemiah 6, 10-13

Nehemiah 6, 10-13

Tape #7152

By Chuck Smith

Let's turn to Nehemiah six and it seems that we did skip this on the Sunday evening. We used this as a basis of a Sunday morning message but we haven't covered it in the Sunday evening commentary. So, Nehemiah chapter six.

When Nehemiah sought to build the wall, there were those enemies who sought to hinder the building of the wall. They knew that the building of the wall would mean a strengthening of the defenses. The enemy always keeps to seek you in a weakened position and thus whenever you begin to develop practices that will strengthen your position, you could be sure that the enemy is going to fight you. He sought to fight against Nehemiah in the building of the defenses in the city of Jerusalem.

When you start going to church, studying the word, fellowshiping together, Satan is going to seek to hinder that. He knows that in these practices there is strength. Your defenses are being strengthened; there's strength in numbers, there's strength in fellowship, there's strength in the word.

The enemies first sought to discourage the work of the rebuilding of the wall by ridicule. This is one of Satan's powerful weapons he often uses against a child of God. That weapon of ridicule. None of us like to be made fun of. We don't like to be ridiculed, our flesh rebels against that. Thus the enemy seeks to use ridicule as a discouragement to seeking God, to spending a lot of time in the word, spending time in prayer. When that did not work, then they sought to hinder it by these sneak attacks. So Nehemiah took certain measures to protect against these sneak attacks.

Then they sought by discouragement as the people themselves than began to fight within. As the people saw the amount of rubble the great task that was yet to be done, they became discouraged, they said, "we can't do it". Oh what a strong weapon discouragement is against us when we just get discouraged. But Nehemiah's answer to the discouragement was to turn the people's eyes on the Lord. Get your eyes off of the problem, get your eyes off the enemy, and get your eyes on the Lord. Therein is encouragement and strength. That's always the cure for discouragement is get your eyes off the problem, get your eyes on Jesus who is greater than any problem that we might ever face. Then greed became a real problem as the wealthy were pressing the poor; Nehemiah took care of that.

Now in chapter six, these two fellows, Sanballat and Tobiah were the leaders against Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the wall. These men who were sort of orchestrating the attacks of the enemy, sort of the Norman Lears and Carol Sagens of the day along with a fellow Geshem, the Arabian.

Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (6:10).

They had been unsuccessful in their attempt to halt or to hinder the work. It had gone on and now there are no breaches left, they filled in.

(though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief (6:1-2).

Actually, they thought to murder to him. So they wanted to draw him out of the city into one of the villages and they said, "we need to talk about this". Of course I found one of the most debilitating things to the work of God are committees, "Let's talk about it". There are always those people that are wanting to talk

about something and then there are always those people that are doing something about it. I would rather be around the doers than the talkers. Let's get in and do it.

And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? (6:3).

He refused to meet them in the villages; there was a conspiracy of course to murder him.

Yet they sent unto me four times [letters] after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner (6:4).

They kept pressing it, kept pushing it. How persistent the enemy is in seeking to break you down. A lot of times he'll come with a temptation, "we'll have victory, all right I won the victory". Well look out, he'll come again and again and again, seeking to catch you at a weak point, seeking to break down your resistance by his persistence. Thus four times they sent to him saying, "come on you better come out and we better talk about this".

Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; (6:5).

Now in that oriental culture that was an insult, a great insult to Nehemiah. These people with their open letters, they send a letter to you but it's an open letter. They send it to the newspaper and you read it in the newspaper. An open letter to Bill Bright by Universal Studios, you know a full page in LA times. It's only an endeavor to put down the person. It's hard for you to answer that open letter unless you take out a full-page ad and an open letter back to Universal Studios. It's hard to respond to the accusations, the innuendoes and all that are created by an open letter. So they sent the open letter.

Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words (6:6).

So there's rumors going around friend, you're planning to rebel against the king and that's why you're building the wall. That you are planning to be their king. Now this is an open letter, it's something they're completely scurrilous charges. Yet here it is in an open letter, everybody is reading it that Nehemiah is planning to be king, is planning to rebel against the king of Cyrus as soon as the walls are built.

And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: (6:7).

You've hired these guys who go around saying, "Nehemiah should be king", we've got a king in Judah.

and now shall it be reported to the king [Artaxerxes] according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. (6:7)

You better come down and talk about this; these are some pretty serious things. If it gets back to Artaxerxes you'll be in big trouble. Full of lies, full of false accusations, seeking to intimidate Nehemiah into coming out. The whole idea is that of intimidation, force him to come out and talk by this open letter that is just filled with these huge lies.

Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them [are just making them up] out of thine own heart (6:8).

He just denies it. He doesn't go around and try to clear anything up and say well lets talk about it, he just says, "hey, it's not true, you're making it up".

For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands (6:9).

The whole purpose was to strike fear in his heart to weaken him. So he prays. It is interesting to me that in so many of these issues, where they are trying to stop him; Nehemiah's recourse is that of prayer. When they tried to ridicule him, Nehemiah just prays, "Lord, take care of them". Here, when they are trying to strike fear in his heart to weaken him, he just says, "Lord, strengthen my hands" (6:9).

Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple, for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee (6:10).

This Shemaiah was acting as a prophet, sort of a "thus sayeth the Lord," you better hide in the temple, for thus sayeth the Lord, they're coming at night to kill you. He was saying this as a prophet or as a guise of a prophecy. He was warning Nehemiah to find shelter by going into the temple, shutting the doors and finding the security of the temple at night to save himself from the assassination attempt.

And I said, Should such a man as I flee? And who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in (6:11).

Nehemiah was not a Levite; therefore, he was not to go into that area of the temple that was reserved for the priest, into the holy place. This fellow, a prophet of God, supposedly was saying, "come on, let's go in and let's find protection there". Nehemiah said, "Such a man as I flee into a temple for safety, I will not do it" (6:11).

And lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him (6:12).

This spiritual guise kind of a thing, beware of those who come with that strange look in their eyes and the Lord told me to tell you and thus sayeth the Lord. The Bible tells us that if one prophesies, the other should judge. Throughout history, throughout the Bible history, there have always been those who prophesied in the name of the Lord but it was not of the Lord. During the time of Jeremiah, there were many false prophets which were the being to Jeremiah's existence. Here he came as a prophet, pronounced his prophecy but Nehemiah had enough discernment to know that God will not command you to do something that is contrary to his word. Remember that. One of the things by which prophecy is judged is the word of God. God would never command you to do something contrary to his word.

There's a lot of people who are quite excited about tomorrow, the beginning of Rosh Hashanah because some fellow has written a book on eighty-eight reasons why Jesus is coming during Rosh Hashanah, nineteen eighty-eight. It's interesting I've received several copies of this book from people all over the United States as well as phone calls from people all over the United States. Some of them quite excited, many of them convinced that within the next three days Jesus will rapture the church, according to this book the eighty-eight reasons why Jesus will rapture the church in Rosh Hashanah in nineteen eighty-eight.

Whenever a man has to begin a book by explaining why the book is not unscriptural, when it is, then I have problems with that book. When Jesus said, "no man knows the day or the hour," and you have to start out the book, because you're telling the people the day, by explaining that you do know the day when Jesus said, "no man knoweth," and that you've been able to figure it out through these mathematical formulas when Jesus said that he "himself did not know the day, only the Father that is in heaven". Now if the day could have been figured out by a mathematical formula, I believe Jesus could have figured it out. When the disciples, when he was talking about the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the church, and said, "Lord, at this time will you restore the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus said, "It's not given unto you to know the times of the seasons appointed to the Father but you're gonna receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you".

So we announced the services for the entire week. I understand that this man has taken a large group of people over to Israel on a tour so they could be in Jerusalem for this glorious event. They could celebrate Rosh Hashanah in Jerusalem. I found it rather interesting that they had round trip tickets.

It is possible to prophecy but not of the Lord. Tobiah and Sanballat had hired this man to give this with a spiritual overtone in order to again sort of cower Nehemiah into submitting but he perceived that God had not sent him.

Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, (6:13).

Satan's tool against the child of God is fear. Today, as I was heading home from church, I noticed that I was being followed. I saw the car pull right out after mine as I went past the exit there, it was quite...well I could see that I was being followed. The fellow really didn't do too much to hide it. My first impression was interesting; he's making the same turns I'm making. Finally I made a turn that wasn't towards my house, just to make sure, and he made the turn so I pulled over, "do you want something". He came up to the car and he was greatly troubled, he was afraid that maybe he wasn't truly saved. Oh that's one of the trips the enemy tries to put on people so often. Making you doubt your salvation, creating fear in your heart concerning your relationship with God. So we talked with him for a while there and prayed with him, assuring him that God's word is true.

You see, in these issues you have to take a choice whether or not you're gonna believe God's word or your gonna believe Satan's lie as he comes to try to fill your heart with fear. It's a tool that Satan so often uses to torment us to cause us to be afraid. Whenever you get in that position of fear, then Satan has you at a disadvantage.

Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. [so he says,] My God, think thou think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, (6: 12-13).

This woman was implicated into this whole thing. She evidently confirmed the prophecy that was made.

and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear (6:13).

Lord remember them, take care of them.

So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, [September] in fifty and two days (6:15).

It was a really great enterprise.

And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God. Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his soon Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah (6:16-18).

Actually, Tobiah had made some in roads, intermarriages, and there was a lot of correspondence between Tobiah and those within Jerusalem, some of the nobles, even the high priest.

Also they reported his good deeds before me, (6:19).

Tobiah's a nice guy.

and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear (6:19).

Moving now over to chapter ten. In the latter part of chapter nine the people, you remember chapter nine, confessed their sin in the faithfulness of God. Looking at their history, they have been reading the law and the law revealed so many interesting things; how God had established a covenant with them but how they have failed, their fathers had failed to keep the covenant. There were the constant affirmations of Gods'

faithfulness but man's unfaithfulness. So they ended with a commitment, we're going to renew our covenant with God; we are going to live by the law of God and that determination to renew this covenant.

Verse thirty-eight of chapter nine,

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

They attest, sign their name to it.

Now those that sealed [the covenant] were Nehemiah, [the governor] (10:1).

And then all of these names. These names are those of the priest. In verse nine, it begins giving you the names of the Levites, in verse fourteen, it begins with the lists of the chief of the people who signed this covenant, then in verse twenty-eight,

And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding; (10:28).

The list of those names of people, who said we are going to make this covenant with God, we seal it, we attest to it.

They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes; (10:29).

You remember when the children of Israel came into the Promised Land and they came to the area of Shechem and Mount Ebal on one side and Mount Gerizim on the other? Part of the Levites were up on Mount Gerizim to pronounce the blessing if you keep the covenant and keep the law and the others were up on Mount Ebal to pronounce the curses. The people down in the valley, as they would pronounce "cursed be the man that does this and cursed be the man that...amen, amen," then the blessings of those that would keep the law in Deuteronomy; they gave the lists of the blessing and the curses. The blessings for the obedience, the curses for the disobedience.

So these men entered into this covenant and they acknowledged the curses if they failed to keep that covenant and also the oath to walk in God's law that was given by Moses.

And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons: And if the people of the land bring ware [goods] or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, (10:31).

We are going to keep the sabbath day as far as buying, that the neighboring village people would bring to the city their handy-work, their vegetables, their fruits and so forth to sell on the sabbath day and so they said they won't buy it on the sabbath day.

or on the holy day: (10:31).

Those special days of the year.

and that we would leave the seventh year, and exaction of every debt (10:31).

These were the aspects of the law. Today there are people who are also seeking to keep the law of the sabbath in order to have the feeling of righteousness. There is always sort of an aura of self-righteousness that goes with the keeping of the sabbath like, we are a little more holy than you or a little more righteous than you because you don't keep the sabbath. If your observance of the sabbath is for righteousness sake that you might be holier or more righteous, than I have sad news for you, you have fallen from grace. If you're trying to have a righteous standing before God by the keeping of the law, if you think the observing of the

sabbath makes you more spiritual or more righteous than the next person, than you have fallen from grace. Not only that, you've brought yourself into a place of cursing, that is a curse upon you because the law said, "cursed is the man who continueth not in the whole law to do those things that are written therein".

The law of the sabbath just didn't go for one day out of the week; it also went for one year out of the seven. So there was the sabbath that you were to give to the land, you weren't to plant anything in that seventh year. So if you're going to take the law of the sabbath, you got to take it all the way, especially if you're looking at it for a righteous standing for God because, "cursed is the man who continueth not in the whole law to do the things that are written therein". I find that as a little heavy yolk for me to try and bear and so I thank God for Jesus Christ and the righteousness that I have through faith.

I am with Paul the apostle who declares that "one man esteems one day above the other, another man esteems everyday alike," and I'm the second man. I esteem everyday alike. I don't hold to the sabbath day. I was making mention last Sunday night; it was really for health purposes more than anything else. I think God established this law and he established it with the nation of Israel, not for the Gentiles. It was never determined by the early church that the Gentiles should be under the law of the sabbath. In fact, it was determined that they should only keep themselves from fornication of things strangled and if they did that they were doing well.

In the sabbath holidays and in the keeping of the sabbath, every seventh year you've got to forgive everybody the debts that they owe you. Someone borrow money from you, you have to say, "well it's over, forget it, don't pay me anymore," "oh but I don't want to do that," "oh well, then you're cursed".

Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God; (10:32).

They put on themselves, they imposed upon themselves sort of this tax for the temple that each one of them would give a third part of the shekel every year annually for the support of the temple so that they can continue the sacrifices and continue the ministry within the temple. It was sort of a tax.

I think that this is a rather sad thing when you have sort of a state-sponsored church. We were in Switzerland, recently, at this beautiful cathedral there in Basil, in fact last week ago Sunday night...we had this service in this beautiful cathedral. The cathedral is owned by the state and it had a state pastor but his congregation was dwindling because it was made up of nothing but old people. About five years ago there was about fifteen older people that attended the church but they'd been dying off.

He would go every Sunday morning and minister to the fifteen, then to the fourteen, then the thirteen... finally, he was ministering to just one little lady. Every Sunday he'd go one little lady would sit there and he would climb up in his little tower and give his oration. She finally died. He didn't really care if there was just one little lady there because the state pays his salary and he gets the same whether the cathedral is full or if there is just one little lady. He found it was easier, he had a lot more free time with just one little lady in the church. So it was professionalism and it was encouraged really because of the state religion or the state church kind of a thing and that kind of professionalism is encouraged by that.

This was a commitment of the believers but in the New Testament we are told that "every man should purpose in his own heart and so should he give never by grudging or constraint [pressure]," God loves a cheerful giver. These people said they are going to give a third part of a shekel, each of us, to the service of the house of God.

For the shewbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, and the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God (10:33).

They were imposing upon themselves these pledges.

And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, (10:34).

Now this is the first mention of a wood offering and of course the fire had to be kept burning continually and through the conquest of Israel by these other nations, the wooded areas were being thinned out until when the Jews began their more modern return to the land. The land was pretty barren of all trees except fruit trees, olive trees and fig and apricot and peach. It was pretty barren of all trees and of course you know the program of Israel and reforestation and planting millions upon millions of trees all over the land, it's a tremendous project and has had tremendous success.

Now it seems that gathering the wood was quite a task. It wasn't as easy as it once was when all of those hills were covered with trees. The wood offering is first mentioned here.

to bring it into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the law. And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and firstfruits of the fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD: Also the first born of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God: (10:34-36).

Giving God the first, not the leftovers as is the custom of many.

And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, (10:37).

Now that's flour dough.

and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage (10:37).

Bringing in a tenth part of your crops and all for the sustenance of the Levites who ministered within the temple.

And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God (10:38-39).

So this is the covenant that they made. These are the things we will do as unto the Lord.

And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, (11:1).

The houses were still sort of in rubble; the walls had been built, it was a secure place but not a comfortable place. There were much nicer houses out in the country and so it was a sacrifice to live within Jerusalem. It would be like your choice of living in downtown Los Angeles or living out here in the suburbs. They figured they ought to have more people living in Jerusalem so they cast lots and one in ten, every tenth one was to live in Jerusalem, dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city. Nine parts of the people would live outside of the city of Jerusalem.

and the nine parts to dwell in other cities. And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem (11:1-2).

Oh bless you man for your sacrifice.

Now these are the chief of the province that dwelt in Jerusalem: but in the cities of Judah dwelt every one in his possession in their cities, to wit, Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants (11:3).

Israel, notice that people talk about the ten lost tribes of Israel. When they returned from their captivity, the decree from Artaxerxes, the decree was to the Jews in all the world and Persia of course was a world dominating empire. There were those of the Northern Kingdom that also returned during that time. The Nethinims were the Gibeonites who were the ones who were to be the hewers of wood and all with that covenant that was made with Joshua.

And at Jerusalem dwelt certain of the children Judah, and of the children of Benjamin. Of the children of Judah: (11:4).

And it gives the names of them and we're not going to go through that.

All the sons of Perez that dwelt at Jerusalem were four hundred threescore and eight valiant men (11:6).

And it gives you the names of the sons of Benjamin that were there in verse seven. In verse ten it tells you the priest.

And their brethren that did the work of the house were eight hundred twenty and two: (11:12).

It gives you the names of the Levites in verse fifteen.

[they] had the oversight of the outward business of the house of God (11:16).

The priest did the offerings, the Levites took care of the grounds and the repairs and the things of that nature: "the outward business of the house of God," (11:16). It gives you these sons of Asaph in verse seventeen

Was the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer: (11:17).

Then the porters in verse nineteen.

And the residue of Israel, of the priests, and the Levites, (11:20).

And it continues with just the names and the villages and so forth that really do not minister to us.

Now these are the priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel (12:1).

And so continues their names. Levites in verse eight and then the chief of the Levites in verse twenty-two. In verse twenty-four, the latter portion, their duty was

to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, ward over against ward. And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgiving, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps (12:24, 27).

And so the great celebration as they're gonna dedicate these walls.

And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Naphtali; Also from the house of Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Azmaveth: for the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem (12:28-29).

With their musical instruments that David, the man of God, established for them. Twice here David is mentioned as the man of God. I like that, I like that title. Were to God that we could all be known as men and woman of God. David the man of God that just has a good ring to it.

and the singers sang loud...Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: (12:42-43).

Dedication of the walls, they were all rejoicing.

so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off (12:43).

Everyone there celebrating, rejoicing with the musicians, the cymbals, the psalteries, the harps, the singing and the time of great rejoicing and celebration.

And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, (12:44).

So they appointed these people to take care of the financial aspects of the temple.

And both the singers and the porters kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, according to the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son. For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God (12:45-46).

Those whose ministry was just to sing and to lead the people in singing of songs and praises.

Chapter thirteen.

On that day [the day of the dedication] they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever; (13:1).

This is in Deuteronomy chapter twenty-three, verses three and four.

Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: (13:2).

The reason God forbid them was because of the treatment of the Israelites who were coming out of Egypt, coming into the promised land and how that the Moabite king Balak had hired Balaam to come and put a curse on these people. I love this part.

howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing (13:2).

How often does God work on our behalf turning the curses into blessings?

Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude (13:3).

That is the Moabites and the Ammonites that were there. Now we sort of shift gears here, we come sort of to the end at that point. Now we're gonna move into a little different scenario.

And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah: (13:4).

The guy who had given Nehemiah such a bad time. The guy who worked so hard to hinder the work of the rebuilding of the wall, he was an enemy to Nehemiah. He had conspired against him and yet, here he was allied with one of the priests, Eliashib.

And [Eliashib] had prepared for him a great chamber, (13:5).

In the temple, gave him this place where they used to store the meal offerings in the temple. He cleaned out this chamber and gave it to this enemy of the work of God, Tobiah.

where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, (13:5).

During this period of time Nehemiah had gone back to the palace at Shushan, back to the king of Persia. He was away, while he was away, here these guys Tobiah and Sanballat move right in.

How often, when the enemy cannot conquer any other way, he moves right in, moves right into the church, can't defeat it then I'll join it you know and seeks then to destroy it from within.

But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained [got permission] I leave of the king: And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me sore; therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber (13:6-8).

He went in and just cleaned house, tossed all of the furniture out that Tobiah had moved into this chamber, he just cleaned the thing up.

Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense (13:9).

Put it back to its original intent and purpose.

And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field (13:10).

Now remember, these guys had just made the covenant the last couple ago; we'll give a third of the shekel and we will pay the tithes out of our firstfruits...words, words, words. They didn't follow through.

It's easy, at times of emotional fervor, when God is moving to say, "Oh God, I'll give you everything," or make rash kind of vows and commitments unto the Lord. Usually a person makes a vow in order to gain favor or to extract from God some special favor; "Lord, I'll do this for you if you do this for me". Jacob sort of did this when he took off from the land he said, "Lord, if you bring me back to this land in peace again, when I come back I'll give you a tenth of everything..." It was a vow that he made to God. Sort of with a purpose of inducing God to do special things for us.

I have found that, for the most part, the making of a vow is only demonstrating confidence in the flesh; "Lord, this is what I am going to do for you". Thus I shy away from making vows because I have no confidence in my flesh. Here, they made these great pledges, we'll seal it, I'll sign it, and this is what I'm going to do. But Nehemiah gets back and he finds that the Levites have all gone out to their fields, they're all working in their fields again, the support wasn't coming for them.

Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries. And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful and their office was to distribute unto their brethren (13:11-13).

These men, faithful men, and their job was to take and to distribute the goods unto the Levites. Then Nehemiah puts in a little plug for himself.

Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof (13:14).

Lord, put down a good mark about me.

In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, (13:15).

Here, they were out there treading the winepresses; they were barefoot jumping on the grapes. It was a sabbath day.

and bringing in sheaves, (13:15).

That is, the bundles of grain out of the field.

and lading [loading down] asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? (13:15-17).

Here's Nehemiah just gone for a short time, back to the king of Syria to keep his commitment there. When he gets back, they're already gone apart. How important is strong leadership? Here we find that it was very important. This man of God Nehemiah, diligent in the things of the Lord, people vacillating. And he said to them, "what are you doing profaning the sabbath days?" (13:17).

Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath. And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, [Friday afternoon] I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day (13:18-19).

Nehemiah took charge here; Friday evening before the sun goes down, shut the gates and keep them shut. He sent his servants there to watch, to see that no one would try to bring burdens in on the sabbath day.

So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without [outside] Jerusalem once or twice. Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath (13:20-21).

He went out there and threatened them. Sometimes people need a Romaine around to sit on you.

And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day (13:22).

Then Nehemiah tossing out again,

Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy (13:22).

The interesting thing is he's holding up his work saying, "Don't forget this good thing, but Lord, really I am looking for mercy". "Spare me not according to my works but spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy" (13:22).

When we have received the gift of God, our hearts seek to respond and we do things for the Lord. We get involved in serving the Lord. We want the Lord to observe our service but when we come to him for his blessings and for his salvation, we come not on the basis of our service or our works but we come on the basis of God's mercy; "Spare me Lord according to the greatness of your mercy" (13:22).

If I am a child of God my life is going to bring forth fruit. I do not look to the fruit as the basis of my salvation. I look to the works of the fruit as the genuineness of my faith. If a person doesn't have good fruit,

if a person doesn't have any works, then it would follow that he really doesn't have a genuine faith. A genuine faith in God will produce good fruit in your life and good works for the kingdom.

In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, [the Philistine city] of Ammon, and of Moab: (13:23).

The Ammonites and Moabites were not to be in the congregation to go out.

And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto your sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves (13:24-25).

He got tough, he got rough with them, held them down, pulled out their hair, got his knee on their neck and says, "now swear you're not going to give your daughters or sons to be married unto these others" (13:25).

Did not Solomon king of Israel [that wise man] sin by these thing? Yet among many nations was there no king like him who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin (13:26).

Watch out for outlandish women. Solomon, with all of his wisdom, was taken in by them and because of them was led to sin.

Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives? And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: (13:27-28).

Now Eliashib was also tied in marriage to Tobiah, the high priest. Here he is in an alliance with these two enemies.

therefore I chased him from me. Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites. Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business; And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good (13:28-31).

So the thrice of asking God don't forget Lord what I have done, remember me.

Now we move into the book of Esther. Fascinating book, you're gonna love it and next week we'll start off with the first couple of chapters in Esther.

May the Lord be with you now, watch over and keep you. I hope the Lord does come, I would like to be proven wrong and if we get up there we can say, "ha ha ha, you missed it but that's all right". I'm sure the Lord can come.

May the Lord be with you and may you walk with him, as he wants us to walk with him at all times, not just today and tomorrow. He wants us to always walk in expectancy and preparedness for his return. "Watch be there for and be ye ready for you know not the day or the hour the son of man come". His word to us is watch, be ready. May you be watching and may you be ready for our Lords return. God Bless you.