**REMEMBER ME FOR THIS**

Nehemiah 13:1-31

Key Verse 22b

 “Remember me for this also, my God, and show mercy to me according to your great love.”

**Introduction**



 Here is the final chapter of Nehemiah! At this chapter, what Nehemiah had done appears to be cruel and too strict. But he prayed that God might remember him for what he had done for the glory of God. He began with a humble prayer before God at the first chapter of this book. Now he faithfully prayed before God to the end of his service to help God’s holy people. Whatever he had done in helping them, he never forgot the glory of God through his chosen people. His leadership was very exemplary. May the Lord help us to grow as a true shepherd after the heart of our Lord, Jesus Christ who has been faithful always in taking care of God’s flocks.

1. Read verses 1-9. Why did the Israelites exclude all who were of foreign descent? (1-3) In what condition was the inner house of God after the Israelites returned from Exile? (4-5) What did Nehemiah do when he came back to Jerusalem? (6-9)

1-1, Read verses 1-9.

 On that day the Book of Moses was read aloud in the hearing of the people and there it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever be admitted into the assembly of God, **2** because they had not met the Israelites with food and water but had hired Balaam to call a curse down on them. (Our God, however, turned the curse into a blessing.) **3** When the people heard this law, they excluded from Israel all who were of foreign descent.

**4** Before this, Eliashib the priest had been put in charge of the storerooms of the house of our God. He was closely associated with Tobiah, **5** and he had provided him with a large room formerly used to store the grain offerings and incense and temple articles, and also the tithes of grain, new wine and olive oil prescribed for the Levites, musicians and gatekeepers, as well as the contributions for the priests.

**6** But while all this was going on, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Some time later I asked his permission **7** and came back to Jerusalem. Here I learned about the evil thing Eliashib had done in providing Tobiah a room in the courts of the house of God. **8** I was greatly displeased and threw all Tobiah’s household goods out of the room.**9** I gave orders to purify the rooms, and then I put back into them the equipment of the house of God, with the grain offerings and the incense.

1-2, Why did the Israelites exclude all who were of foreign descent? (1-3)

 ***On that day the Book of Moses was read aloud in the hearing of the people and there it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever be admitted into the assembly of God, 2 because they had not met the Israelites with food and water but had hired Balaam to call a curse down on them. (Our God, however, turned the curse into a blessing.) 3 When the people heard this law, they excluded from Israel all who were of foreign descent.***

* On the day of dedication, the Israelites discovered their faults against the law. The law commanded to admit no Ammonite or Moabite into the assembly of God.

Deuteronomy 23:1-8 reads, (God commands about exclusion from the assembly)

 No one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the Lord. **2** No one born of a forbidden marriage nor any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, not even in the tenth generation. **3** No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, not even in the tenth generation. **4** 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. **5** 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. **6** Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them as long as you live. **7** Do not despise an Edomite, for the Edomites are related to you. Do not despise an Egyptian, because you resided as foreigners in their country. **8** The third generation of children born to them may enter the assembly of the Lord.

* They might have made excuses by saying, “This command seems to be obsolete and the situation changed.”
* They obeyed and excluded **all** who are born of foreign descent. They obeyed God and God’s words simply and absolutely without compromise or excuse.

1-3, In what condition was the inner house of God after the Israelites returned from Exile? (4-5)

***4 Before this, Eliashib the priest had been put in charge of the storerooms of the house of our God. He was closely associated with Tobiah, 5 and he had provided him with a large room formerly used to store the grain offerings and incense and temple articles, and also the tithes of grain, new wine and olive oil prescribed for the Levites, musicians and gatekeepers, as well as the contributions for the priests.***

* But the priest Eliashib had provided Tobiah with a large room in the house of God, formerly used to store the grain offerings, incense, temple articles, as well as the tithes of grain, new wine and olive oil prescribed for the Levites, musicians, gatekeepers and the priests.
* It seems that Tobiah took a huge storage room in the temple and made it his living quarter. And Tobiah was the notorious enemy who hindered and threatened Nehemiah and the Israelites while building the wall.

1-4, What did Nehemiah do when he came back to Jerusalem? (6-9)

***6 But while all this was going on, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Some time later I asked his permission 7 and came back to Jerusalem. Here I learned about the evil thing Eliashib had done in providing Tobiah a room in the courts of the house of God. 8 I was greatly displeased and threw all Tobiah’s household goods out of the room.9 I gave orders to purify the rooms, and then I put back into them the equipment of the house of God, with the grain offerings and the incense.***

* Nehemiah had served the work of rebuilding the wall and governed Jerusalem for 12 years and returned to Artaxerxes.
* Sometime later, Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem. Learning about the evil thing Eliashib had done by providing Tobiah a room in the courts of the house of God.
* He again engaged in rebuilding the spiritual wall by restoring what was ruined according to the law of God.
* Nehemiah was greatly displeased and threw Tobiah’s baggage out. He purified the rooms and put back into the rooms the equipment of the temple, grain offerings and the incense.
* Nehemiah didn’t compromise with what was wrong before God and his law. He reminds us of Jesus who in his holy anger cleared the temple by overturning the tables of the money.
* The drastic actions of Nehemiah and Jesus indicate that there is a time for drastic action. There is a time for strong stands against evil which others have indifferently accepted.
* Today we live in a world where political correctness influences our expression and social relationship.
* People don’t get upset by the presence of evil and think it very strange that a man should act like Nehemiah did.
* But we must not compromise with what is evil and wrong. Otherwise, we gradually yield to what is evil and displease God.
* We must be prepared to be drastic and take painful action to clear up the things that are wrong in our own affairs. We must take drastic action to purge away sin that pollutes our heart and soul.

2. Read verses 10-22. What caused the Levites to go back to their own fields? (10) How did Nehemiah solve this problem? (11-13; Mal 3:10,11) How did Nehemiah struggle to help his people keep the Sabbath? (Ex 20:8-11; 15-22a) What can we learn from Nehemiah’s prayers? (14,22b)

2-1, Read verses 10-22.

 I also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to them, and that all the Levites and musicians responsible for the service had gone back to their own fields. **11** So I rebuked the officials and asked them, “Why is the house of God neglected?” Then I called them together and stationed them at their posts.

**12** All Judah brought the tithes of grain, new wine and olive oil into the storerooms. **13** I put Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and a Levite named Pedaiah in charge of the storerooms and made Hanan son of Zakkur, the son of Mattaniah, their assistant, because they were considered trustworthy. They were made responsible for distributing the supplies to their fellow Levites.

**14** Remember me for this, my God, and do not blot out what I have so faithfully done for the house of my God and its services.

**15** In those days I saw people in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath and bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys, together with wine, grapes, figs and all other kinds of loads. And they were bringing all this into Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Therefore I warned them against selling food on that day. **16** People from Tyre who lived in Jerusalem were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them in Jerusalem on the Sabbath to the people of Judah. **17** I rebuked the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this wicked thing you are doing—desecrating the Sabbath day? **18** Didn’t your ancestors do the same things, so that our God brought all this calamity on us and on this city? Now you are stirring up more wrath against Israel by desecrating the Sabbath.” **19** When evening shadows fell on the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I ordered the doors to be shut and not opened until the Sabbath was over. I stationed some of my own men at the gates so that no load could be brought in on the Sabbath day. **20** Once or twice the merchants and sellers of all kinds of goods spent the night outside Jerusalem. **21** But I warned them and said, “Why do you spend the night by the wall? If you do this again, I will arrest you.” From that time on they no longer came on the Sabbath. **22** Then I commanded the Levites to purify themselves and go and guard the gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy.

Remember me for this also, my God, and show mercy to me according to your great love.

2-2, What caused the Levites to go back to their own fields? (10)

 ***I also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to them, and that all the Levites and musicians responsible for the service had gone back to their own fields.***

* The portions of the offerings assigned to the Levites had not been given to them, and that all the Levites and singers responsible for the service had gone back to their own fields.
* The people had neglected to offer their tithes and other offerings. So the Levites and singers were not supported and had to go to their own field to make a living for themselves.
* Earlier, the Israelites made a binding agreement to give their offerings to God willingly. But now they also broke it and used their tithes and other offerings that belonged to God for themselves.

2-3, How did Nehemiah solve this problem? (11-13; Mal 3:10,11)

***11 So I rebuked the officials and asked them, “Why is the house of God neglected?” Then I called them together and stationed them at their posts.***

***12 All Judah brought the tithes of grain, new wine and olive oil into the storerooms. 13 I put Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and a Levite named Pedaiah in charge of the storerooms and made Hanan son of Zakkur, the son of Mattaniah, their assistant, because they were considered trustworthy. They were made responsible for distributing the supplies to their fellow Levites.***

* Nehemiah rebuked the officials saying, “Why is the house of God neglected?” Then he called the Levites and singers together and stationed them at their posts and he put stewards in charge of the storerooms.
* Then the people brought the tithes and other offerings to God into the storerooms as originally intended. Thus God’s order was restored in the nation.
* As corruption invaded the Israelites quietly, they neglected God quietly and neglected the house of God quietly. They neglected to worship.
* They neglected to give the tithes and offerings. They neglected God and God’s temple, and lived like godless people.
* They forgot that their forefathers had neglected God and had lived disgraceful lives as exiles.
* At this time, let us examine ourselves if we have neglected God and lived like the Israelites.
* Let us not call for God’s wrath by neglecting God and his church. Instead, let us love and care for God and his church so as to live as God’s people.

2-4, How did Nehemiah struggle to help his people keep the Sabbath? (Ex 20:8-11; 15-22a)

 ***In those days I saw people in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath and bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys, together with wine, grapes, figs and all other kinds of loads. And they were bringing all this into Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Therefore I warned them against selling food on that day. 16 People from Tyre who lived in Jerusalem were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them in Jerusalem on the Sabbath to the people of Judah. 17 I rebuked the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this wicked thing you are doing—desecrating the Sabbath day? 18 Didn’t your ancestors do the same things, so that our God brought all this calamity on us and on this city? Now you are stirring up more wrath against Israel by desecrating the Sabbath.”***

***19 When evening shadows fell on the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I ordered the doors to be shut and not opened until the Sabbath was over. I stationed some of my own men at the gates so that no load could be brought in on the Sabbath day. 20 Once or twice the merchants and sellers of all kinds of goods spent the night outside Jerusalem. 21 But I warned them and said, “Why do you spend the night by the wall? If you do this again, I will arrest you.” From that time on they no longer came on the Sabbath. 22 Then I commanded the Levites to purify themselves and go and guard the gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy.***

* God commanded his people not to work on the Sabbath. The Israelites also made a binding agreement to keep the Sabbath holy. But they broke and desecrated it.
* Nehemiah made spiritual environments for the Israelites to keep the Sabbath holy. It is the day for us to come to God and worship him sincerely.
* Let us pray that we keep the Lord’s Day holy by listening to God’s words earnestly and by making a decision to love God and serve his work. Let us give God the first place in our lives.

2-5, What can we learn from Nehemiah’s prayers? (14, 22b)

***14 Remember me for this, my God, and do not blot out what I have so faithfully done for the house of my God and its services.***

***22b Remember me for this also, my God, and show mercy to me according to your great love.***

* Nothing is more important than being remembered by God. People may be remembered as a good worker by a company or as a loyal man by a nation. But what is meaningful the most is to be remembered by our Lord God.

Mark 14:6-9 reads,

She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7 The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. 8 She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. 9 Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

3. Read verses 23-31. How did Nehemiah deal with the men who had married foreign women? (23-27) What did Nehemiah do in order to purify the priests? (28-31)

3-1, Read verses 23-31.

Moreover, in those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. **24** Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah. **25** I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God’s name and said: “You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves. **26** Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women. **27** Must we hear now that you too are doing all this terrible wickedness and are being unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women?”

**28** One of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest was son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite. And I drove him away from me.

**29** Remember them, my God, because they defiled the priestly office and the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites.

**30** So I purified the priests and the Levites of everything foreign, and assigned them duties, each to his own task. **31** I also made provision for contributions of wood at designated times, and for the firstfruits.

Remember me with favor, my God.

3-2, How did Nehemiah deal with the men who had married foreign women? (23-27)

 ***Moreover, in those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. 24 Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah. 25 I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God’s name and said: “You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves. 26 Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women. 27 Must we hear now that you too are doing all this terrible wickedness and are being unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women?”***

***Remember me with favor, my God.***

* When they married gentiles, they lost their spiritual identity as God’s people, Nehemiah rebuked them and called curses down on them. He even beat some of them and pulled out their hair.
* Why did Nehemiah deal with this intermarriage problem so seriously? It was because he learned from Solomon’s downfall.
* Even Solomon the wisest king in Israel’s history fell into idolatry because of his gentile wives who had worshipped idols. His sin led to the division of Israel in two kingdoms.
* The Bible clearly teaches us that we shouldn’t be yoked together with unbelievers (2Cor 6:14). Biblically speaking, marriage is primarily designed and ordained by God. God joins the two people as husband and wife.
* God must be the center of the marriage, not we ourselves. Only through establishing godly marriages and raising house churches, can God’s people maintain their spiritual identity and purity.

3-3, What did Nehemiah do in order to purify the priests? (28-31)

***28 One of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest was son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite. And I drove him away from me.***

***29 Remember them, my God, because they defiled the priestly office and the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites.***

***30 So I purified the priests and the Levites of everything foreign, and assigned them duties, each to his own task. 31 I also made provision for contributions of wood at designated times, and for the firstfruits.***

* Nehemiah purified the priests and the Levites of everything foreign, and assigned them duties, each to his own task. In this way, Nehemiah rebuilt the spiritual wall in his people’s hearts and in his community and country.
* To do so, he rebuked many people and raised new faithful leaders and taught godly principles and practices. He struggled hard to help his people to keep the holiness of God.
* God blessed his spiritual fight to keep holiness so that his people repented and lived as God’s holy people again.
* He was firm, very spiritual, fervent, prayerful and non-compromising. Most of all, he loved God. God used him to restore his country as a kingdom of priest and a holy nation.
* May God raise many spiritual and influential leaders like Nehemiah from among us and among young campus students. Amen.

**Conclusion**



 There is a saying, “When the cat’s away, the mice will play.” Ezekiel 11:18-20 reads, “They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.” God’s prophecy fulfilled when they followed God’s words. God wanted them to love God absolutely. But they didn’t live according to God’s words when Nehemiah was away for a while. Corruption spread the whole community and again the Israelites disobeyed God’s commands while Nehemiah was not around. That is why we are called as shepherds for vulnerable sheep. May the Lord raise up many spiritual leaders like Nehemiah so that America may be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation and she may realize the fact that a prophet has always been among them!

**One word: Remember me!**