



### Time to Reflect

- Why might we drift away from what God actually requires of us? How can this be avoided?
- Take a few moments to reflect on (v13). What do we regard as the necessary characteristics of a Christian leader?

In our last study we entered the final chapter of Nehemiah and we were reminded of the significance of people problems and we were challenged to live out our faith without condition or compromise. We reflected on our own daily lives and particularly the areas where we need to change. This week our attention is drawn to broken promises and we see how the initial faithfulness of the Israelites faded away. Beyond this, we also discover how Nehemiah dealt with this unfaithfulness.

**“Tobiah’s apartment in the temple is not the only problem Nehemiah encounters when he gets back to Jerusalem. In fact, the people have compromised on all the commitments that they made in chapter 10.”**

(Eric Mason, *Nehemiah For You*, p156)

### Specifics

- When we studied Nehemiah 10, we looked at the promises of the covenant. We reflected on the faithfulness, dedication and commitment of the Israelites as they sought to pursue holiness and live as God’s people.
- This week we see that this initial enthusiasm soon dwindled and the Israelites were found to be lacking. Our short passage is a reminder of how quickly we can drift away from where God wants us to be.
- The Israelites had declared **“We will not forsake the house of our God” (Nehemiah 10:39)**. This was the final statement that they made in their covenant with the Lord. They pledged themselves to paying the temple tax, providing wood for the altar, and bringing the required tithes and offerings to the priests and Levites (10:32-39).
- Yet it is clear from this week’s passage that this promise was not kept for long (v10). Warren Wiersbe reflects on the significance of this as he writes, **“Without the faithful support of the people, the ministry at the temple would languish, and the Levites would then scatter to the villages, where they could work the land and survive (13:10).<sup>1</sup>”**
- The failure of the Israelites to keep their promise had serious implications for the worshipping life of the community. (v10b) speaks of regression, a drifting away from what God had actually wanted.
- The people had failed to keep their promises. The storehouses were not full of tithes and offerings, dedicated to God and for His glory. When we pause to think about this, it also explains why one of the storage rooms was available for Tobiah (13:7).
- Those responsible for the worship of God **“...had gone back to their own fields” (v10b)**. This is a bleak situation and it causes us to reflect on who would have been leading worship in their absence.

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<sup>1</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Be Determined: Nehemiah* (David. C. Cook, 1992), p160.

- Understandably, Nehemiah moved to address this situation (v11). We are told that he rebuked the leaders for breaking their promise. Note the question he asked, “Why is the house of God neglected?”
- This is a direct and challenging question. It is also a heart-break assessment given much of what was achieved under the leadership of Nehemiah. How quickly things can change.
- Nehemiah sought to resolve this regression and he began by repositioning the leaders (v11b). He then proceeded to encourage the people to bring their offerings once again. We see that this was successful in (v12).
- Four leaders are named in (v13) and they were given special responsibilities. Wiersbe observes, “He appointed four men to supervise the treasury and distribute the tithes and offerings. Note that these men represented the priests, Levites, scribes, and lay men, but they all had one thing in common: They were faithful to the Lord.”<sup>2</sup>
- The trustworthiness and faithfulness of these four leaders is one of the main encouragements that we find in this passage. Even in the desperation of what had occurred, there were still people who sought to honour God and they were true to Him.
- Nehemiah needed people who were reliable and God-honouring. He required partners who were able to set a standard for what it means to be faithful to God. These were key leadership traits for Nehemiah.
- In (v14) we encounter Nehemiah praying once again. This is the first prayer recorded since Nehemiah 6:14 and it is the seventh of the arrow prayers that we find in the book of Nehemiah. Other examples can be found in (v22, 29 and 31).
- In this Bible Study series, we have been consistently reminded that Nehemiah was a man of prayer. Wiersbe reflects, “He was in the habit of talking to God as he served Him, a good example for us to follow.”<sup>3</sup>
- This short prayer in (v14) shows us how Nehemiah pleaded with God to remember him because of his faithfulness. This is the cry of a heart that longs for nothing more than to be close to God. It may be brief in its word count, but this prayer is rich in its content.
- It is important to recognise that this is not a prayer that is focused on personal merit or a sense of spiritual entitlement. Nor does it promote an association between blessing and good works.
- Nehemiah longed to do the will of God and he consistently sought the direction and blessing of God. For Nehemiah, it was always about God and for God.
- In this penultimate study we are challenged in a number of ways.
  1. To avoid falling back into our old ways. The promises that we make to God are serious and should be lasting. If we are finding things to be difficult, turn again to God and seek His guidance.
  2. To remain faithful to God and seek to honour Him in all that we do.
  3. To value the power of prayer, just as Nehemiah did, and develop the habit of talking to God as we serve Him.
  4. To be generous in offering our time, gifts and talents to God for the purpose of seeing His Kingdom extended and His Name glorified.

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<sup>2</sup> Wiersbe, *Be Determined: Nehemiah*, p161.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p162.