

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Nehemiah: Pattern For Solutions In Spiritually Hard Times
Q. Separating From Spiritually Corruptive Influences
(Nehemiah 13:15-31)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We face a great need today to guard ourselves from corruptive influences:

(1) We face it in our culture: A recent letter to the Republican-American by Terrence Ryan, M. D. of Litchfield referred to the July 12 story on "Hannah Bacon . . . a 28-year-old New Milford woman who walked 3,081 miles to call attention to the climate crisis." (Republican-American, July 13, 2021, p. 8A) Dr. Ryan expressed appreciation for her vision "of the future," referring to Proverbs 29:18a and quoting it (as follows): "'Where there is no vision, the people perish.'" Dr. Ryan added, "In these times, we should reflect on that passage," Ibid.

However, these comments are full of unbiblical error: After the Genesis flood, God promised in Genesis 8:22 to provide a stable climate for the duration of the planet's existence that man might inhabit the earth, making "climate crisis" ideology false! (b) Also, Proverbs 29:18a does **not** teach that a people must have a goal of what they want to achieve lest they perish, for the word rendered "vision" in the Hebrew text is *hazon*, a "divine communication in a vision" (B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 302-303), and the Hebrew word for "perish" is *para'* in the passive Niphal stem, meaning "unrestrained" (Ibid., p. 828-829). This proverb then teaches that if a people lack a word from God, they are unrestrained, and there is a breakdown in law and order! (c) If God's Word at Genesis 8:22 exposes the error of climate change crisis ideology, the New Milford woman's goal to stress the "climate crisis" issue by walking many miles and the words by the physician who supported it in his letter are in error!

Nevertheless, this "climate crisis" issue is only a fraction of the depth of error that is behind it, one that leads to the destruction of law and order in society that is mentioned in Proverbs 29:18a: (a) "Christiana Figueres, executive secretary of U. N.'s Framework Convention on Climate Change, admitted that the goal of environmental activists is not to save the world from ecological calamity, but to destroy capitalism." ("U. N. Official Reveals Real Reason Behind Warming Scare," February 10, 2015; investors.com/politics/editorials) (b) The entity that promotes the destruction of capitalism in turn is Marxism (Brannon S. Howse, Marxianity, 2018, p. 20), and (c) Marxism seeks to destroy not only capitalism, but also Biblical Christianity in calling for social justice, the victimization of LGBTQs and feminists, the removal of national borders, globalization, racial tensions, the social gospel and other such objectives by progressives, Ibid., p. 1-336.

(2) However, we face the need to guard ourselves against corruptive influences even from some evangelicals: a number of our Church members and attenders recently heard a minister teach that one must exercise a strong faith to be saved, what leads some believers to doubt if they have believed strongly enough even to be saved! That in turn leaves them lacking assurance of salvation! This belief is actually a form of errant Arminianism, for it makes man's faith into a meritorious contribution to his salvation -- a false gospel!

Need: *So, we ask, "How can we guard against the spiritually corruptive influences we face?!"*

- I. The Hebrews in Nehemiah's era knew they faced the challenge of corruptive influences, Neh. 10:28-31:**
 - A. The Hebrews stressed their pledge not to marry Gentiles, showing that issue had been trial for them, v. 28-30.
 - B. The Hebrews also agreed to keep the Sabbath Day with a special emphasis on not purchasing items from Gentile merchants, indicating that temptation had also been a snare for them, Nehemiah 10:28-29, 31.
- II. However, the Hebrews soon yielded to these corruptive influences in sin, Nehemiah 13:15-16, 23-24, 28a:**
 - A. The Hebrews had started to tread wine presses and bring all kinds of agricultural products to Jerusalem on the Sabbath, Neh. 13:15. In addition, Gentiles from Tyre who lived in Jerusalem brought fish and other goods to the city for sale on the Sabbath, what had likely sparked all of this commerce, Nehemiah 13:16.
 - B. As for intermarrying with Gentiles, some Hebrews had married women from Ashdod in Philistia, Ammon and Moab, and half of their children spoke foreign languages and not the language of the Hebrews, Neh. 13:23-24. Even a grandson of the high priest had married the daughter of Sanballat, the Gentile who had greatly opposed Nehemiah in his wall building effort, which marriage had corrupted the priestly line in violation of Leviticus 21:6-8, 14-15. (Nehemiah 13:28a; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Nehemiah 13:28)
- III. Nehemiah countered this corruptive influence by SEPARATING from it, Neh. 13:17-22, 25-27, 28b-31:**
 - A. He countered the corruption and its Gentile influence on the Sabbath observance, Nehemiah 13:17-22:
 1. Nehemiah rebuked Judah's leaders for allowing the Sabbath violations to occur, Nehemiah 13:17-18.

2. Nehemiah ordered that the gates of Jerusalem be closed on the Sabbath and stationed some of his servants at the city gates to prohibit any loads from being brought into the city on that day, Nehemiah 13:19.
 3. Gentile merchants lodged with their wares outside the city on the Sabbath so that the Hebrews could view their wares from the city wall and plan what to buy the next day, undermining the spirit of keeping the Sabbath. Nehemiah thus warned the merchants to stay away on the Sabbath, so they did, Neh. 13:20-21.
 4. Nehemiah called the Levites to purify themselves and come and guard the city gates, keeping the Sabbath day holy as added influence in directing the Hebrews of Jerusalem to keep the Sabbath, Nehemiah 13:22a.
 5. Finally, Nehemiah asked God to spare Him of divine punishment for the Hebrews' violation of the Sabbath, for he was innocent of that sin, and he had done his best to preserve its observance, Neh. 13:22b.
- B. Nehemiah countered the corruption and its Gentile influence on mixed marriages, Neh. 13:25-27, 28b-31:
1. He punished those who had married Gentiles, making them take an oath in God's name not to intermarry with such pagans and warning them from Solomon's bad example in the matter, Nehemiah 13:25-26.
 2. Nehemiah expelled the high priest's grandson for corrupting the priesthood in marrying a Gentile and he prayed that God might remember so as to punish the priests for their sins in this matter, Neh. 13:28b-29.
 3. He also cleansed them from all things foreign and established the duties of the priests and Levites, and he provided for the contributions of wood at designated times and for the firstfruits, Neh. 13:30-31a NIV.
 4. Nehemiah offered a final prayer that God might remember him for good, Nehemiah 13:31b.

Lesson: *When the Hebrews yielded to corruptive Gentile influences and thus violated God's laws, Nehemiah countered the bad Gentile influence by SEPARATING from it.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-11. (2) May we like Nehemiah SEPARATE from corruptive influences.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

We apply this message on handling corruptive influences we face today by separating from them (as follows):

(1) Since we learned in our introduction that Proverbs 29:18a claims that where God's Word is absent the people are unrestrained, leading to lawlessness and disorder in society, what we see Marxism do, we briefly repeat Scriptures from past sermons that correct each Marxist error we noted in our introduction (as follows): (a) Genesis 8:22 counters "climate crisis" ideology. (b) "Social justice" and the "social gospel" that push the forced distribution of wealth from the rich to the poor are opposed by Exodus 20:15, 17 that condemn stealing and coveting, and 2 Thess. 3:10 and 1 Thess. 4:11-12 call each head of household to work to earn a living. (c) LGBTQ orientations and immoral actions are opposed by 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and Romans 1:18-27. (d) Feminism is countered by 1 Timothy 2:12-15; 5:9-15 and Titus 2:3-5 that teach that a woman's calling before God is to focus on homemaking. (e) The removal of national borders and globalization are countered by Acts 17:26-27 where God set up national boundaries to lead man to Himself. (f) Marxism's promotion of racial tensions is countered by Acts 17:26 that claims all people are of one race and Ezekiel 18:1-28 where one is accountable to God for his own actions, not for the racism of his forefathers.

(2) On the Arminian error of asserting one must have a strong, meritorious faith to be saved, Christ in Luke 17:5-6 replied to his disciples' request that He increase their faith by saying that they only needed faith as small as a mustard seed! It is **not** man's faith, but the **object** of his faith -- **Christ** -- Who saves the sinner!

(3) To guard against all error, (a) we urge all to pay more attention to Scripture and less attention to man's writings about Scripture, for that to which we pay attention affects what we believe, 1 Timothy 1:4-5; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5! (b) We urge all to obey 2 Timothy 2:16-23 and avoid fellowship with the doctrinally errant, but to fellowship with those who call on God out of a pure heart. (c) We also urge all for their own welfare to withdraw from satanically-influenced people: they are envious, selfishly ambitious, (James 3:14-15 ESV), controlling, greedy, proud, abusive, insubordinate, ungrateful, unholy, loveless, unforgiving, slanderous, not self-controlled, brutal, treacherous, rash, pleasure-loving versus God-loving people with artificial spirituality. (2 Timothy 2:25-3:6 ESV)

(4) Though we learned in our sermon introduction that Proverbs 29:18a teaches that if a people lack God's Word, they become lawless and disordered to the deterioration of their society, **in contrast**, Proverbs 29:18b claims that if an **individual** in that society and group of people obeys Scripture, he is blessed by God. So, based on Proverbs 29:18a,b, we urge each **individual** believer to heed Scripture that he might be **personally** blessed **in spite of** the fact that he lives in a world and a society marked by spiritual darkness and unrest!

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May then heed Nehemiah's example to handle corruptive influences.