

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Nehemiah: Pattern For Solutions In Spiritually Hard Times

P. Faithfulness To God In An Unfaithful Generation

(Nehemiah 13:1-14)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We face a great need to know how to remain faithful to God in an unfaithful generation:

(1) Recently, "the National Education Association, the single largest teachers union in the country, passed a resolution pledging to . . . '(p)rovide an . . . in-depth study that critiques'" various "'forms of . . . oppression.'" (Ben Shapiro, "Stop the indoctrination," Republican-American, July 7, 2021, p. 8A) Besides this progressive union's typical stands against issues like "racism" and "white-supremacy," its resolution also opposed "patriarchy," "capitalism" and "anthropocentrism," Ibid. However, (a) patriarchy upholds the supremacy of fathers in family and religious institutions, what God established by creating Eve from Adam's rib and then bringing her to him that Adam might name her in sovereignty over her like Adam had named the animals in sovereignty over them, Genesis 2:19-24. Also, (b) capitalism asserts the right of individual property ownership and free markets, what God's commands in Exodus 20:15 and 17 support in prohibiting stealing and coveting what others possess. In addition, (c) anthropocentrism is the interpretation of the world in terms of human values over the value of animals, plants and the environment, what God in Genesis 1:27-28 established when He gave Adam and Eve dominion over the earth with its plants and animals. Thus, America's largest single teachers union is increasingly departing from Scripture truth in unfaithfulness to God.

(2) Our state government is departing from God in unfaithfulness, too. Romans 13:1-4 calls us to obey the law, but Connecticut's Governor Ned Lamont signed a bill that legalizes the sale of marijuana even if "(t)he U. S. Food & Drug Administration classifies marijuana as a Schedule 1 drug, and marijuana remains illegal under federal law." (Letter by David Sherman, Naugatuck, Ibid., July 8, 2021, p. 8A) The Republican-American editorial, "Pot peril: U. S. law" (Ibid., July 15, 2021, p. 10A) confirmed Mr. Sherman's claim that this state bill violates federal law!

(3) Unfaithfulness affects many professing Christians. After our morning service last Sunday, a Church member referred to my comment in the sermon on believers who say, "I'm not being spiritually fed" to report that she has heard many Christians make that claim. She appreciated our noting how the Apostle John wrote to believers of all maturity levels in 1 John, exemplifying how all Bible teachers minister to believers of all maturity levels by teaching God's Word as God makes His Word applicable to all levels due to the sheer spiritual power of His Word, Hebrews 4:12-13. If God's Word is preached but the hearer is not "fed," it is the fault of the hearer according to Mark 4:24-25.

Nevertheless, many believers claim they are not being "fed," revealing the need for faithfulness to the Lord!

Need: So, we ask, "How can we remain faithful to the Lord in an unfaithful generation?!"

I. Nehemiah had to deal with a very unfaithful generation of fellow Hebrews, Nehemiah 13:1-10:

- A. After traveling back to Persia's king to serve him for two years there, Nehemiah then obtained the king's permission to return to Judah to help his fellow Hebrews, Nehemiah 13:6; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 695.
- B. At that time, the Mosaic Law was read to the people regarding their need to keep Ammonites and Moabites out of the temple due to the wrongs these nations had committed against Israel, Neh. 13:1-3 with Deut. 23:3-6.
- C. However, Nehemiah learned that the Hebrew man Eliashib had opened up a room for Ammonite Tobiah in the temple in violation of Scripture, so Nehemiah threw Tobiah's possessions out of the room, Neh. 13:4-5, 7-9.
- D. Nehemiah then learned the **reason** that Tobiah had gained access to the temple room was the failure of the people to keep their Nehemiah 12:44-47 pledge to bring the tithes of their produce for the support of the temple ministers, what had left a storage room for tithes empty and available for Tobiah, Neh. 13:10a; Ibid.
- E. With the loss of livelihood support caused by the cessation of tithing, the temple workers themselves had left the temple courts to work their fields for a livelihood (Neh. 13:10b) in violation of Scripture. (Neh. 10:36-39)
- F. The cause for the pause in tithing was the Hebrew leaders lack of oversight of the temple so that the people had questioned if their tithes were being rightly used, so they had stopped giving, Neh. 13:11-13; Ibid.

II. However, Nehemiah used his office as governor to counter this great unfaithfulness: He rebuked the leaders for failing to oversee the temple functions, he stationed them at their temple posts and he appointed several trustworthy men to oversee the tithing ministry in the temple, Nehemiah 13:11-13.

III. Nehemiah's faithfulness in an unfaithful generation rose from his accountability to God, Neh. 13:14:

- A. After correcting the people, Nehemiah asked God **not** to "blot out from memory" (*mahah*, stem, B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 562; H. A. W., T. W. O. T., 1980, vol. I, p. 498-499) his good deeds.

- B. This request shows that Nehemiah knew from the lack of faithfulness in his countrymen in the short time that he had been away in Persia that after his time, the people would nullify the effects of all of his good deeds.
- C. Yet, Nehemiah knew that in **eternity**, he would give an **account** to **God** for **his** deeds regardless what other Hebrews did (cf. Daniel 12:2-3), so he asked God to recall his good works in **hope** of his *eternal reward*!

Lesson: *Though Nehemiah functioned in a generation of Hebrews who were very unfaithful to the Lord, he functioned faithfully due to his awareness of his own personal eternal accountability to God.*

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 resist the trend in our generation to be unfaithful to God by recalling that we will give a personal account to Him for our deeds in eternity, and thus stay faithful to His calling.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

As a result of my conversation last Sunday with a Church member who reported how many believers have told her, "I'm not being spiritually fed," we have provided below more information on the spiritual dynamics involved in the matter to motivate believers to be faithful to the Lord in accord with this sermon's lesson (as follows):

(1) The path in life where one claims "I'm not being fed God's Word" is a spiritually dangerous one (as follows): (a) In this path, a believer ceases to apply the Scripture he hears (Heb. 5:13-14), (b) so he fails to grow in his ability to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:13), turning dull in hearing, unable to absorb more Bible truth (Heb. 5:11). (c) Mark 4:24-25 with 4:15 indicates that such a believer is "hardened" to where Satan removes from his mind the Scripture truth he was already taught. (d) The resulting vacuum of Bible truth can leave the believer thinking that he is "unfed," so he is tempted to indulge in his lusts [of the flesh, of the eyes or the pride of life] for fulfillment (1 John 2:16 with 2 Timothy 4:3a). (e) Moved by his lust, he seeks after other teachers (2 Tim. 4:3b). (f) However, such a believer finds that Bible truth taught by any teacher does not fulfill him, for he is dull to Bible truth anyway, so he can turn to sources of information outside of Scripture itself for fulfillment (2 Timothy 4:4). In time, (g) he can end up irretrievably spiritually hardened and vulnerable to significant error. (Hebrews 6:1-8 in the whole epistle's context)

(2) Conversely, the spiritual path where one is always "fed" God's Word is a safe and fulfilling one: (a) Since Christ is the Sower of the seed of the Word (Matt. 13:37) Who always sows not only what a believer seeks, but even a little more (Mark 4:24), a receptive hearer applies the truth he receives under Christ's oversight (b) and he discerns good and evil (Heb. 5:13-14). (c) Thus, motivated from what he has learned to discern, his appetite for more Bible truth is enhanced so that Christ gives what he desires and even a little more (Mark 4:24), resulting in even more discernment of good and evil in the believer's understanding and motivating his appetite for Biblical information to increase exponentially. (d) As this process is repeated many times over, the believer grows from a "little child" to a "young man" status by overcoming false teachers (1 John 2:18-27) in applying Scripture to discern Satan's wiles and also to overcome Satan, 1 John 2:13b, 14b. (e) As a "young man," he then needs to stop loving the world system that is marked by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of this life (1 John 2:15-16) and live for the life in eternity to come (1 John 2:17) to reach the "father" maturity level. (f) As a "father," the believer realizes that Christ is his All-Sufficient Lord, that he merely needs to stay in fellowship with Him for ongoing fullness of joy and constant "feeding" of Scripture truths by His Savior, 1 John 2:13a, 14a with 1:1-4. (g) The believer's only need at this level is to fellowship with God and not lapse into worldliness or control by his own sinful nature, 1 John 2:13a, 14a implied.

(3) If upon reading these notes we realize that we are on the wrong spiritual path, we must confess it as sin to God for forgiveness (1 John 1:9) and, relying on the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16), start heeding the Bible truth God sends us. There is a limited window of opportunity to repent for the better as is taught in Hebrews 6:4-8, 9-20. However, refusal to repent will lead to that window's closing, the result being permanent spiritual hardness, Hebrews 6:4-6.

(4) As for us pastors and teachers, 2 Timothy 2:6 indicates that if we are spiritually nurtured by our own Bible exposition much as a hard-working farmer is the first to partake of his own crops, such nurture is God's signal that we are rightly ministering God's Word. However, if we are not satisfied with our own exposition, we need to correct it!

(5) Pastors and teachers must realize that only some hearers will respond positively to the ministry of God's Word (Matt. 13:18-23a), and those in that receptive group will respond to varying degrees, Matt. 13:23b. However, God's eternal reward for those who faithfully expound His Word is great (Matt. 13:43; Dan. 12:2-3), so Christ wants pastors and teachers to keep expounding Old and New Testament truths about Him and His Kingdom, Matt. 13:51-52.

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we resist the trend of our unfaithful generation to be unfaithful to God by recalling that we will give an account to Him for our deeds in eternity, and so stay faithful to His calling for us.