

By Pastor Benny Ho

“CALLED TO ACCOUNT”

Nehemiah 13: 1 - 31

- vs 6a - “...*in the 32nd year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king...*”

- vs 6b: *“Sometime later I ask his (the king) permission and came back to Jerusalem...”*

- “The life of discipleship needs to be lived out intentionally and consistently. Spiritual vitality is not something that just happen, but it is nurtured intentionally.”

4 DISCIPLESHIP PROBLEMS

1

UNGODLY FRIENDSHIPS

(vs 4 - 9)

- **vs 4, 5** - *“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 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, oil prescribed for the Levites, singers and gatekeepers, as well as the contributions for the priests.”*

• **vs 9** - *“I gave orders to purify the rooms (plural)...”*

- “Have all kinds of friends so that you can influence them for Christ but make sure that your closest friends are godly Christians because they will influence you!”

- **James 4: 4, 5** - *“You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the Spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?”*

- Jealousy is when we yearn for something that rightfully belongs to us.
- Envy is when we yearn for something that does not rightfully belong to us.

- **vs 8** - *“I was greatly displeased and threw all of Tobiah’s household goods out of the room. I gave orders to purify the rooms, and then I put back into them the equipment of the house of God...”*

- “What is right and wrong is defined by God not by culture or society. Morality cannot be a social construct or else the idea of righteousness becomes a mockery.”

4 DISCIPLESHIP PROBLEMS

2

UNFULFILLED GIVING

(vs 10 - 14)

- **vs 10** - *“I also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to them and that all the Levites and singers responsible for the services had gone back to their own fields...”*

- **vs 11** - *“Therefore, I rebuked the officials, asking, “Why has the house of God been neglected?” I gathered the Levites and singers together and stationed them at their posts.”*

- **vs 12** - *“Then all Judah brought a tenth of the grain, new wine, and fresh oil into the storehouses.”*

- Everything rises and falls on leadership. Get the leaders right and we will get the church right.

4 DISCIPLESHIP PROBLEMS

3

UNKEPT SABBATH

(vs 15 - 22)

- **vs 15** - *“At that time I saw people in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath. They were also bringing in stores of grain and loading them on donkeys, along with wine, grapes, and figs. All kinds of goods were being brought to Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. So I warned them against selling food on that day.”*

- **Nehemiah 10: 31** - *“When the surrounding peoples bring merchandise or any kind of grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or a holy day...”*

- **Exodus 20: 8 - 10** - *“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: You are to labor six days and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. You must not do any work...”*

• **vs 17** - *“I rebuked the nobles of Judah and said to them: “What is this evil you are doing - profaning the Sabbath day?”*”

- **vs 18** - *“When shadows began to fall on the city gates of Jerusalem just before the Sabbath, I gave orders that the city gates be closed and not opened until after the Sabbath. I posted some of my men at the gates, so that no goods could enter during the Sabbath day.”*

- The Jewish day does not begin at 6 am till 6 pm but it starts at 6 pm and ends at 6 am.
- When we work, God rest. When we rest, God works.
- The theological anchor of the Sabbath is that we trust in the God who is working on our behalf!

- The Hebrew word for “*rest*” is “*menuha*” which is better translated as joyful repose, tranquillity or delight.
- To the biblical mind, “*menuha*” is the same as happiness, peace and harmony.
- Sabbath is the state where there is no fretting, no fear, no strife, no distrust, no churning inside. It is state of inner rested-ness.

- **Exodus 20: 11** - *“For the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then he rested on the seventh day. Therefore; the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and declared it holy.”*

- **Deuteronomy 5: 15** - *“Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. That is why the LORD your God has commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”*

4 DISCIPLESHIP PROBLEMS

4

UNLAWFUL UNION

(vs 23 - 31)

- **Nehemiah 13: 23** - *“In those days I also saw Jews who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.”*

• vs 26 - “...God made him king over all Israel, yet foreign women drew him into sin.”

- **vs 24** - *“Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples but could not speak Hebrew.”*

• **vs 28** - *“Even one of the sons of Jehoiada, son of the high priest Eliashib, had become a son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite. So I drove him away from me.”*

- **vs 25** - *“I rebuked them, cursed them, beat some of their men, and pulled out their hair. I forced them to take an oath before God and said, “You must not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters as wives for your sons or yourselves!”*”

• **vs 14** - *“Remember me for this, my God, and don’t erase the deeds of faithful love I have done for the house of my God and for its services.”*

• **vs 31** - *“Remember me, my God, with favour.”*

- **Romans 12: 2** - *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

- We are called to be “*culture-sensitive*” but not “*culture-centred*”. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to be “*Christ-centred*” and not “*culture-centred*”.

- In our effort to keep up with culture, we must not sacrifice the timeless at the altar of the timely.
- If we are rooted in the timeless, we will always be timely!

- **Colossians 2: 6, 7** - *“So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, being rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, and overflowing with gratitude.”*

- **James 1: 17** - *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”*