

Rebuild #12

When good times go bad

(*Nehemiah 13:1-31*)

Introduction

In Ch. 10, God's people made a firm commitment to walk in God's Law and to observe and do all the commandments. Cf. 10:29

In Ch. 11-12, God's people make a good start in their obedience.

But Ch. 13 is a massive disappointment. While Nehemiah is away in Persia (cf. 13:6) the obedience of the people of God falters. We observe that the people of God cannot keep the Law of God – despite their best intentions.

Despite all the good work that has taken place, the real problem has not been dealt with – the problem of the heart.

The book of Nehemiah, and indeed the Old Testament, ends on a sad note.



Sermon points

1. The initial success (v1-3)

2. The age-old problem

(a) Finances (v4-14)

(b) Lifestyle (v15-22)

(c) Relationships (v23-31)

3. The New Covenant in Jesus

Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹ “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.



And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

4. The new heart (v14, 22, 31)



Discussion starter

Do you agree with the statement, *"One can have all the privileges and religious privileges in the world, but if there is no change of heart it means nothing"*?



From the Bible

- 1) Where does any rebuilding begin? (v1)
- 2) How did God's people dishonour God by breaking his Law?
V4-10:
V15-18:
V23-24:
- 3) How did Nehemiah deal with each situation? What can we learn from him about dealing with sin?
V8-9, 11-13:
V19-21:
V25-28:
- 4) The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. What did God promise to do in the New Covenant? Cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34



Think it through

- 1) Jesus not only died for our sins, but he also perfectly kept God's Law for us. If we are "in Christ", God sees us as righteous, a perfect Law-Keeper. How does this encourage you?
- 2) Can you think of times in Jesus' life when he demonstrated the same passion as Nehemiah for God's honour?
- 3) Think of the illustration in Andre's sermon of water seeping into the Titanic and how this could picture worldliness seeping into the church. How could the church and Christian people be tempted to worldliness in our world today?
- 4) What does 13:14, 22, 31 tell us about Nehemiah's motives and priorities?



Pray

Thank God for the New Covenant in Jesus. Ask God to give you and our church a renewed passion for obedience – for God's glory and our good.

Pray that God would raise up many to serve in our church and many to give generously to support our church financially.

Pray for the **Unreached People Group: Swiss Jews in Switzerland**



Verse for the week

Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.