

“A Special Day!”
Nehemiah 13:15-22

Introduction:

1. As We Return To Nehemiah:
 - Remember: Nehemiah Had Left Jerusalem, After Leading The People Of Judah As Their Governor For 12 Years!
 - Not Sure How Long He Was Gone - But Long Enough For Some Major Problems To Creep Back In!
 - Upon His Return, He Soon Noticed These Problems!
 - And Identified Them For What They Were – Sins!
 - Already Looked At 3 Of These Problems!
 - Inter-marriage With Unbelievers!
 - Letting Traitors Have A Home Near The Temple!
 - Not Supporting The Work & Workers Of God!
2. Come To A 4th Problem! And We’re Still Not Done!
 - How Far They Had Strayed From Their Commitment To Obey The Lord In Chapters 10 & 12!
 - In 10:31, The People Made A Commitment That: “If the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt!”
 - But Look What Happened After Nehemiah Left!
 - Read 13:15-16!
 - They Went Right Back To Buying & Selling On The Sabbath Day!
 - What Was To Be A Special Day For The Lord & His People!
3. We Will Look Tonight At The Steps Nehemiah Took To Deal With This Sin!
 - And It Was A Sin!
 - The 4th Commandment! Also The Longest Commandment!
 - Exodus 20:8-11 - “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. / Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: / But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: / For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it!”
 - We Will Look At How This Commandment Applies To Us Today!
 - But Also How To Deal With Any Sin That Comes Up In Our Lives / Our Families / Our Church!
4. What Are The Steps To Dealing With Sin?

* There Needs To Be:

1. *A Consciousness Of Sin!*

- 13:15-16 - “In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. / There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem!”
 - We Just Finished Reading How Nehemiah Was Aware Of The Sin In The Camp! He Didn’t Ignore It! He Identified It For What It Was!
 - When It Comes To Sin: Must Not Ignore It! Identify It!
- Be Conscious Of The Problem Of Sin!
 - When Nehemiah Returned To Jerusalem, “In Those Days He Saw” An Awful Lot Of Work Going On!
 - Treading Wine Presses / Bringing In Sheaves / Etc.
 - So What Was The Problem Here?
 - Very Productive! Very Prosperous! Very Big Problem!
 - It Wasn’t So Much What They Were Doing, But When!
 - “On The Sabbath!” / “On The Sabbath Day!”

- A Day To Be Remembered! But Forgotten!
- What Is The Sabbath?
 - Hebrew - Shabbath - Means Rest!
 - A Covenant Law / Principle!
 - Exodus 16 & 20 - Not A Terribly Difficult Command To Keep! Rest! But It Is A Bellwether Command! An Indicator / Index Of How You Will Keep The Rest Of His Commands! They Had No Choice! But Why Did God Command This? Arbitrary?
 - A Creation Principle!
 - The Sabbath Started When God “Rested On The Seventh Day” (Genesis 2:2-3)!
 - The Sabbath Was Not Something New!
 - Meant For To Rest / Refresh / Remember!
 - How Does This Apply To Us Now?
 - A Christian Principle!
 - The NT Has Never Abrogated This Principle!
 - Jesus Kept The Sabbath!
 - Matthew 12:1-13 - He Is The “Lord Even Of The Sabbath Day!”
 - He Doesn’t Do Away With The Sabbath; Instead, He Clarifies What The Sabbath Was For! Works Of Necessity / Mercy / Good!
 - Of Course, As The “Lord Of The Sabbath,” He Could Even Change The Day Of The Sabbath! Did!
 - There Is To Be A Day Devoted To The Lord!
 - Mark 2:27 - “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath!”
 - Not For A List Of Don’ts, But Do’s!
 - DO Rest / Be Refreshed / Worship / Good Works / Mercy!
 - Do We “Remember The Sabbath Day, To Keep It Holy?”
 - Could It Be That We Are Sinning The Same Way The Jews Were In Nehemiah’s Time?
 - There Needs To Be A Consciousness / Awareness Of Our Problem!
 - These Steps Are Important For This Problem & Others!
- Be Conscious Of The Power Of Sin!
 - Their Sin Did Not Just Affect Them! It Affected Others!
 - Look At 13:16!
 - The World Saw No Difference Between Them!
 - The World Knew Where They Could Make Some Real Money!
 - The World Figured It Was No Big Deal - Because It Was No Big Deal To The People Of God!
 - Sin Will Cause Us To Lose Any Real Influence / Impact For The Lord! No Difference / Distinction!
- What Did Nehemiah Do, When He Became Aware / Conscious?
 - “I Testified Against Them!”
 - This Is What Sin Needs! Direct Confrontation! Hit It Head On!

* There Needs To Be:

2. ***A Confrontation Of Sin!***

- Not Only Did Nehemiah Confront Those Committing The Sin Directly / But Also Those Condoning The Sin!
- 13:17-18 - “Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? / Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath!” - No Cover Up!
- Reveal The Complaint Of The Sin!
 - “Contended!” - Same As 13:11 - Different Group Of People!
 - These “Nobles” Were Responsible For The Political & Commercial Welfare Of God’s People! Failed!
- Reveal The Critical Nature Of The Sin!
 - It Was A Big Deal! “What Evil Thing Is This That Ye Do, And Profane The Sabbath Day?”
 - “Evil” - Something That Brings Judgment & Calamity!

- Bad Things Are Going To Happen!
- What Was The Sin Problem?
 - “Profane” - To Make Common / To Pollute / Defile
 - They Did The Exact Opposite Of What They Were Supposed To Do! “Remember!”
 - There Was No Difference!
 - There Was No Devotion!
 - There Was Defilement!
- Reveal The Consequences Of The Sin!
 - 13:18! Look At The Bad Example Of Your Ancestors!
 - Why Don’t We Learn From The Mistakes Of Others? Don’t Think It Applies To Us! Pride!
 - Look At Their Conduct! (They Too Profaned The Sabbath)
 - Look At Their Consequences! (Calamity!)
 - Your Past Exile / Your Present Oppression!
 - Jeremiah Warned In 626 BC - Jeremiah 17:27 - “But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched!”
 - Look At Your Course! (The Same!)
 - “Those Who Forget History Are Condemned To Repeat It!”
- Sin Needs To Be Confronted!
 - Before It Is Too Late!

* There Needs To Be:

3. *A Correction Of Sin!*

- 13:19-21 - “And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day. / So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. / Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath!”
 - Nehemiah Took Some Drastic & Aggressive Action Against The Sin He Saw In The Camp! This Is How We Must Treat Sin! It Must Be Stopped In Its Tracks!
 - Active Not Passive - Seen In Nehemiah’s Response:
 - “Commanded” / “Charged” / “Set”
 - This Aggressive Action Took Place When The Temptation Was Near! “When The Gates Of Jerusalem Began To Be Dark Before The Sabbath!” Before The Temptation! Drastic & Deliberate Action!
- Aggressive Protection!
 - “Commanded That The Gates Should Be Shut!”
 - To Protect / Keep The People From Sinning!
 - In Control Of The Most Vulnerable Points!
- Aggressive Prevention!
 - “Charged – Not Be Opened Till After The Sabbath!”
 - Noone Allowed In - Noone Allowed Out!
 - For A Set Time! Until After The Storm Of The Temptation To Sin Passed!
 - God’s Day Was To Be A Special Day!
- Aggressive Partnership!
 - “Some Of My Servants Set I At The Gates!”
 - Provided More Accountability!
 - These Servants Were Faithful & Trustworthy!
- Aggressive Persistence!
 - 13:20-21 - The World Will Continue To Attract & Distract Us From Doing The Will & Work Of God!
 - And There Was Victory!

- This Kind Of Aggressive Correction Is Essential!
 - So That, As It Says In 13:19, “No Burdens Be Brought In On The Sabbath Day!”
 - No Burdens! Compare To “All Manner” In 13:15!
 - Nothing Gradual About This!
 - Not About Doing Less & Less, But None!

* There Needs To Be:

4. *A Cleansing From Sin!*

- 13:22 - “And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy!”
 - Now, The People Were Ready To Be Restored! This Is The Wonderful Thing About God’s Grace! Makes Forgiveness & Restoration Possible Through Jesus Christ!
- It Takes A Daily Purification!
 - “And I Commanded The Levites That They Should Cleanse Themselves!”
 - This Was A Ceremonial Cleansing / But It Was An Illustration Of What Needed To Take Place On The Inside! In Their Hearts!
 - This Is Where Cleansing Must Start!
 - This Is Why Christ Came! Ephesians 5:26-27 - “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, / That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish!”
 - 1 John 1:9 - “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness!”
- It Takes A Daily Pursuit!
 - “Come And Keep The Gates!”
 - A Daily Pursuit & Practice Of Keeping Temptation On The Outside!
 - “Keep” - To Watch Over / To Guard!
 - We Do Need Specific Standards In Order To Help Us Keep Watch & Guard Over Our “Gates!”
- It Takes A Daily Purpose!
 - “To Sanctify The Sabbath Day!”
 - To Keep It The Way God Intended & Commanded!
 - Turning The Negative Commands Into A Positive!
 - Not: “I Don’t Get To” Or “I Have To”
 - But: “I Do Get To” & “I Want To!”
 - This Is The Goal Of Restoration!
 - Complete Sanctification / Consecration To God!
 - Not Just A Day - But Your Entire Life!
- It Takes A Daily Prayer!
 - Like Nehemiah’s!
 - For God’s Approval! (“Remember Me!”)
 - For God’s Attention! (“Spare Me!”)
 - For God’s Abundance! (“According — Mercy!”)
 - Remember John 15:5 - “Without Me Ye Can Do Nothing!”
 - Remember Philippians 4:13 - “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me!”
- With This Cleansing Comes A Character & Conduct That Is Pleasing To God!
 - But It Can Only Come Through The Grace & Mercy Of God! And Nehemiah Realized This! So Must We!

Conclusion:

1. These Are The Steps We Need To Take To Deal With Sin!
 - In Our Own Life / Family / Church!
2. The Specific Sin Nehemiah Dealt With Was:
 - The Profaning Of The Sabbath!
 - Is This Something That We Need To Deal With As Well?
3. Are There Other Sins That We Need To Deal With In This Way?

- Through:
 - A Consciousness Of Sin!
 - A Confrontation Of Sin!
 - A Correction Of Sin!
 - A Cleansing From Sin!
- Now, Every Day Can Be A Special Day For The Lord!

***Grace Baptist Church
Stephen Elmer, Pastor
4245 North 200 West
Greenfield, Indiana 46140
317-326-2362
www.sermonaudio.com/wordofgrace
www.growatgrace.org
pastor-elmer@hotmail.com***