

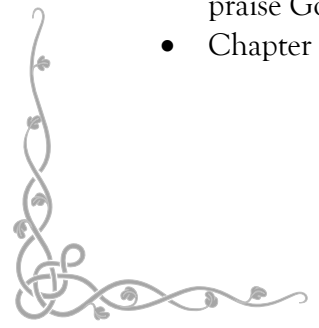
<b>Topic</b>	Leaning Forward in the Dark – A Failed Reformation
<b>Reference</b>	Nehemiah 13
<b>Date</b>	16 February 2020
<b>Speaker</b>	Samuel Khew

This is the eighth and the last installment of our study on the book of Nehemiah. And just like every good book or every good movie, there's been suspense, there's been action, forbidden romance, right? And it's an honor and a privilege to be able to close out the book today to conclude the matter. I wish there was a happily ever after sort of ending to the book, but as Salome read there isn't right. The people turned back into sin. And if you remember when I preached on Nehemiah chapter one, I told you that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah originally, they used to be one book. And both these books, the end in exactly the same way. There is reformation, celebration, worship, and then the last chapter, people fall back into sin.

So as I preach today, I'm going to be blasting through anytime we have to read through the 13th chapter of Nehemiah because it's quite a long chapter and I think I'm a little bit over time in the amount of time that I need to preach this sermon. So if you can read along in your own Bibles, that would be great because I'm going to be blasting through when I read...

So let me remind you of what has been happening in the past 12 chapters. We are in chapter 13, the last chapter, let me remind you what's been going on.

- Chapter 1, Nehemiah, hears the bad news about how Jerusalem's walls are broken down. And so he prays a prayer of confession.
- Chapter 2, he speaks despite his fears to King Artaxerxes and requests to go back to Jerusalem to build the walls.
- Chapter 3, there's a glimmer of hope, a glimmer of success. There are families building the wall right in front of their house next to each other, in partnership with one another
- Chapter 4, opposition comes along. They're ridiculed and insulted and even threatened by Sanballat and Tobiah. Such that half the men had to stand at arms with their swords and their Spears and the shields, while the other half of the men would continue working on the wall.
- Chapter 5, Nehemiah discovers that the Jews are mortgaging out their fields and their vineyards, and even their children for food from their fellow Jews. And so Nehemiah calls the nobles and officials together and he rebukes them and tells them to fear God and not to treat their fellow countrymen that way.
- Chapter 6, Sanballat and Tobiah come up again. They try to lure Nehemiah out of the city to harm him, and when Nehemiah refuses to go, they tried to frame him for revolt. They spread rumors saying that Nehemiah is trying to become the next King of Judah.
- Chapter 7, the wall is rebuilt and God fearing leaders are appointed.
- Chapter 8, Ezra reads the law to everyone for seven days. Wow! For seven days, they read the law, praise God, and worshiped him.
- Chapter 9, the Israelites gathered to fast mourn and confess their sins.



- Chapter 10, they decided to make a binding agreement that were sealed, sealed by the leaders and the Levites and all these people bound themselves under oath, under the threat of a curse, saying, if we go back into our sinful ways, let God curses.
- Chapter 11. Leaders and Levites and some of the Jews move into the city.
- Chapter 12, there is the dedication of the wall where the Jews come to Jerusalem, they sing, the Levites purify themselves and the people and the wall, and there is great celebration, there is great revival and reformation. And this is where we enter into chapter 13 okay.

You got your Bibles open, you're ready. Here we go. Chapter 13 verse 1,

*On that day the Book of Moses was read aloud in the hearing of the people and there it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever be admitted into the assembly of God 2 because they had not met the Israelites with food and water but had hired Balaam to call a curse down on them. (Our God, however, turned the curse into a blessing.)*

So as Ezra was reading the law to them, they came across Deuteronomy 23 which calls out to nations, the Ammonites, and the Moabites. It specifically calls out these two nations because of how they treated the Jews. So the Jews exited Egypt with God's mighty hand. They're moving into the Promised Land and they come across to the nation of Ammon, and they said to the King of Ammon, dear King, we would just like to pass through your country instead of having to walk all the way around, we won't turn left or right. We won't even drink water or eat food. We just would like to pass through. And the King of Ammon, instead of meeting them with hospitality, he meets them with hostility. He brings out his armies and battles with the Israelites. Naturally without God on their side, the Ammonites lost and so they continue on, they continue on and they come to the nation of Moab. Same thing happens. We would just like to pass through. We won't drink, we won't eat, just pass through, can we do that? And the King of Moab again instead of meeting them with hospitality and saying, yes, please, of course, hey, have some water, have some food. He hires Balaam to curse them.

Balaam had made a name for himself as some sort of sorcerer. So that people who he cursed were actually cursed. So he hires Balaam, but God tells Balaam you can't curse my people, you can only bless them. And so Balaam says, okay I have no choice. So he blesses the people of Israel, and the King of Moab says, you are of no use to me. If you cannot curse them, you have no use to me. I would have made you rich beyond your imagination. But now just get out of my sight. And Balaam goes, wait okay I can't curse them because God said I can't. But you want to beat the Israelites you have to get their God angry with them. You have to make them sin. That's how you beat them. This is what you do King of Moab, send beautiful women into the Israelite camps. They will sin and God will be angry at them. And so, I mean, I don't want to get into the story, but you understand what I'm trying to say. God promised Abraham those who bless you, I will bless. And those who curse you, I will curse. And this is a fulfillment of that promise. So this command is for a specific people for a specific reason.

You see other foreigners were allowed into the assemblies of God, not Jews could marry other non-Jews. It was okay as long as they adopted Judaism, as long as they worshiped Yahweh, as long as they follow the law of Moses, it was okay. So when the Old Testament speaks against marrying wives of foreign nations, it's not because there are other foreign race, it's because they're off a foreign religion, right? Solomon is a

prime example of this. You all know the story. He has a thousand women, and he builds temples and high places in Jerusalem for them. And so notice in verse 3,

*3 When the people heard this law, they excluded from Israel all who were of foreign descent.*

Did you get that? Under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, they ordered a nationwide decree to divorce their spouses and to send them away and their children as well, because they were half Jews. And to send them away, to exile them just because they were foreigners. And Ezra did the same thing 15 years earlier, and you can read about this in Ezra 10. Do you notice something terribly wrong with this? God never ever commanded this. He never told them to divorce their wives and send their children away. In fact, on the contrary, in Malachi chapter 2:6,

*the man who hates and divorces his wife does violence to the one he should protect.*

God equates divorce with violence. Matthew 19 Jesus said the same thing. What God has joined let no man separate. One Corinthians 7 says, any brother who has a wife who is not a believer, and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. So what's happening in the midst of this revival and reformation is legalism has slipped in. Self-righteousness has slipped in. They're trying to show God how Holy they are. They're trying to be holier than God. They are saying, God, I see this command. Guess what? I'm so holy, my wife is a foreigner, I'm going to divorce her. I'm going to send my children away. That's how holy I am. God. That's what I'm going to do for you God. They're being pharisaical, they creating rules and regulations that God never gave, and it was all for pretend. In a few verses later, you'll see that they fall back into the same sin all over again. Even though they were so holy and banish their wives and their children, they fall back into the same sin. It was all pretend. They chose pretense over principle.

*4 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, 5 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 and olive oil prescribed for the Levites, musicians and gatekeepers, as well as the contributions for the priests.*

The storeroom where the temple articles and the tithes are supposed to be stored for its workers has been given to Tobiah to live in. Does that name ring a bell? Tobiah and Sanballat. You remember those guys, the people who insulted and threatened to kill the Jews as they were rebuilding the wall? This is an enemy of God, and yet one of the priests, Eliashib gives his buddy Tobiah a room in the temple, not even in Jerusalem, in the temple itself, a large room. In the NIV it says, Tobiah was a close associate. In the ESV it says, Tobiah was closely related. So somehow some way they were probably close friends or even family, it is likely that they were family given all the intermarriage that was going on.

It's also likely I think that Eliashib must be getting some sort of kickback from this, some sort of rent in whatever form that is. Because this right here is prime real estate, those of you in the real estate business how much does rent go in the holy city and in the holy temple and it says a large room in the holy temple in the holy city. This is city center. This is penthouse, surely Eliashib must be getting some sort of

kickback from this. Now, how was this allowed to happen under the watchful eye of Nehemiah? We read on verse 6

*6 But while all this was going on, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Some time later I asked his permission 7 and came back to Jerusalem. Here I learned about the evil thing Eliashib had done in providing Tobiah a room in the courts of the house of God.*

Nehemiah was gone for some time. In chapter two it says in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes, he comes to Jerusalem. He rules as governor for 12 years, and then he goes back to serve King Artaxerxes, and then it says sometime later, sometime later he comes back and finds all this wickedness and nonsense going on. The Bible is not clear on how long this sometime later is, but with the research that I've done, scholars believe it's anywhere between one to five years. So he rules as governor for 12 years. He's gone for one to five years. He comes back and he finds this going on and he is not happy. So what does he do?

*8 I was greatly displeased and threw all Tobiah's household goods out of the room. 9 I gave orders to purify the rooms, and then I put back into them the equipment of the house of God, with the grain offerings and the incense.*

Nehemiah throws Tobiah and all his stuff out. He doesn't care. Nehemiah is a bit of a gangster kind of guy I think, he is kind of like an angry lone shark kind of character. He sees Tobiah in the temple. He can't believe his eyes. This guy used to threaten us, right? And so he throws out the couch, he throws out the bed, he throws out his clothes, he throws out his TV. He says, get out of here and tells the Levites to purify the rooms and put the tithes and the temple articles back.

But notice again the heart, the heart of Eliashib and the heart of the other people of Judah who allowed this to happen. They chose promotion over piety.

*10 I also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to them, and that all the Levites and musicians responsible for the service had gone back to their own fields. 11 So I rebuked the officials and asked them, "Why is the house of God neglected?" Then I called them together and stationed them at their posts.*

They were supposed to give their tithes to the Levites and the musicians and all the other workers in the temple. And yet when Nehemiah comes back, he sees them working in the fields, plowing, planting, harvesting, maybe even selling. We ought to be thankful for the people who work in the church, whether it's part time or full time people who serve in ministries. It takes a lot of work to put this together. Someone needs to clean the floors that we stand on. Someone needs to pay the bills to keep these lights and this aircon running. Someone needs to clean the bathrooms. Someone needs to organize events. Where are your children, right now, they're in youth, they are in Sunday school, someone needs to run that. On Saturdays, they're boys brigade. Someone needs to run that. Buildings don't run themselves. People don't pastor themselves. People don't minister to themselves. They don't counsel themselves. Someone needs to do all that, and more often than not the people who do all that have all the skills necessary to make it big and to be successful in the secular world. And yet they choose to service.

So we ought to be thankful. We need to be grateful for these people, and these people deserve to earn a fair wage, which is why we pass the offering bags around every week. So if you know who these people are,

if you know who works here full time, part time, if you know who your pastors are, who your elders are. Shake their hands, encourage them, appreciate them, and be thankful for them.

*12 All Judah brought the tithes of grain, new wine and olive oil into the storerooms. 13 I put Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and a Levite named Pedaiah in charge of the storerooms and made Hanan son of Zakkur, the son of Mattaniah, their assistant, because they were considered trustworthy. They were made responsible for distributing the supplies to their fellow Levites. 14 Remember me for this, my God, and do not blot out what I have so faithfully done for the house of my God and its services.*

When Nehemiah sees the Levites working in the fields, he is enraged, he is furious. He calls them back. He stations them at their post and he decrees a nationwide tithe, give these people what they deserve. But again, look at the hearts of the people of Judah. They chose possessions over their pledge.

So let's recap.

- They chose pretense over principle.
- They chose promotion over piety
- They chose possessions over their pledge.

*15 In those days I saw people in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys, together with wine, grapes, figs and all other kinds of loads. And they were bringing all this into Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Therefore I warned them against selling food on that day. 16 People from Tyre who lived in Jerusalem were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them in Jerusalem on the Sabbath to the people of Judah.*

They are breaking the Sabbath. They are working on their day of rest. And we understand this. FBC is primarily upper middle class Chinese. And nobody gets there by being lazy. You understand the value of hard work. You understand what it means to work overtime. Working on weekends is expected. I mean normal. We all understand the drive to get some extra work done on a Saturday and a Sunday. So that our Mondays will go a little smoother so that we can impress our boss. You all understand that if you open shop on a Sunday, there is profit to be made. Now while keeping the Sabbath holy is a Old Testament law, which means it's no longer binding on us. Don't you think that it would be wise to consider that it was God who instituted the Sabbath. Out of all the laws that God could have given us, his top ten list included keeping the Sabbath, resting in him one day of the week. Do you not think it would be wise to consider that?

What if one day in the week when your children ask you to play with you, you would actually play with them. What if one day in the week you would cook in and eat as a family? What if one day in the week you would read the Bible and pray together as a family? What if one day in the week you allowed yourself to sleep in, play football, have a barbecue or a picnic with friends. What if one day in the week you allowed yourself to rejuvenate your soul with a Bible in one hand and a coffee in the other. What would that do to change the landscape of FBC and our families and even our nation. I don't know what kind of work you do. I don't know what kind of stress you face. I don't know what kind of boss you work for. All I know is that God knew what he was doing when he instituted the Sabbath.

*17 I rebuked the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this wicked thing you are doing—desecrating the Sabbath day? 18 Didn't your ancestors do the same things, so that our God brought all this calamity on us and on this city? Now you are stirring up more wrath against Israel by desecrating the Sabbath."*

Why are you doing this again? Was this not part of the reason God sent us into exile in the first place and now you want to store up more wrath against us? What are you doing?

*19 When evening shadows fell on the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I ordered the doors to be shut and not opened until the Sabbath was over. I stationed some of my own men at the gates so that no load could be brought in on the Sabbath day. 20 Once or twice the merchants and sellers of all kinds of goods spent the night outside Jerusalem. 21 But I warned them and said, "Why do you spend the night by the wall? If you do this again, I will arrest you." From that time on they no longer came on the Sabbath.*

Nehemiah orders the doors to be shut and he puts his own men to stand guard. Don't let anyone in, don't let anyone in or out on the Sabbath. It's a day of rest. We need to keep the Sabbath Holy, and even when the gates are shut, he looks down from the wall and he sees that there are some merchants who are waiting there in some sort of hope that the doors would be open. The NIV says, Nehemiah said, I will arrest you if you do this again. You know what the ESV says? The ESV says, Nehemiah said, if you do this again, I will lay hands on you. Wow! I told you this guy is some sort of gangster, right? I don't think I just picture Nehemiah as this big beefy guy, you know, with a big beard and long hair, because can you imagine a small guy saying, I will lay hands on you. It just doesn't work. I just picture him as a big loan shark kind of guy with some tattoos on his arm. I don't know. But he's angry. He's angry that they are disobeying God for what? To sell merchandise on the Sabbath.

Turn your eyes again to the hearts of the people of Judah. They knew the law. They've been taught the laws since they were little boys and girls and Ezra read the law to them for seven days. They knew the law. But they chose profit over the presence of God.

*23 Moreover, in those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. 24 Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah.*

What's the big issue, by the way. What's the big issue with this? You know, I'm Chinese and I don't speak a word of Chinese, right? I don't speak even dialects, right? You can laugh at me. It's okay. I've been called banana for many years now. Okay, but what's the issue? The issue is this, if their children could not even speak Hebrew, it means that their fathers were so hands off in the raising of their children that they could not even speak the language of Judah. The raising of the children was left to their foreign wives. How do you think this would affect the next generation? Would the next generation of Jews know love and treasure Yahweh, creator God. Would they know, let alone one to obey the laws of God? Would they know of the mighty works that God did in rescuing them from Egypt? Absolutely not. This is why it's such a serious issue. Jump to verse 28 with me.

*28 One of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest was son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite. And I drove him away from me.*

You remember Sanballat, Tobiah and Sanballat the enemies of God who threatened Israel as they were building the walls. This evil practice, this wicked habit of marrying pagan wives was so rampant such that it even affected the family of the high priest, the high priest grandson married Sanballat's daughter. This problem had penetrated right into the deepest recesses of Judah. So what's going on here? What's going on? Why is this sin being repeated again and again and again? Are there no beautiful women in Judah? Are they all just really ugly? Are they all rude and like unkempt and dirty and smelly, their hairs all messy, there are cornflakes in there. They're walking around like zombies. Is that what's going on? Why do the men keep flocking to foreign women?

I don't think there was any issue with the women of Judah. In fact, I found a passage that speaks about them, right? You can just write the reference down, don't bother turning to it. You can study it later. 1-Peter 3:3-5

*Your beauty should not come from outward adornments such as elaborate hairstyles or the wearing of gold jewelry, or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self. The unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight for this is the way the Holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted to their own husbands.*

What are some of the adjectives that you find in there? Gentle, quiet, submissive, who, what kind of man would not want a wife who is soothingly gentle, confidently quiet and powerfully submissive, Oh the poor men of Judah they had to deal with gentle quiet submissive women, the poor men of Judah. FBC how many men here would love to heavy a gentle, quiet, submissive wife? Yeah, that's right. All the hands down. That's what I expected. You better keep your hands down. That was a trick question, cause you're sitting next to your wives, right? Or you're sitting next to your girlfriends, so now you can say, Hey, he's talking about you. He's talking about you. That's you. That's you right there.

So what is the issue? Why did they keep flocking to foreign women? I'll tell you why. For this is the way the Holy women of the past. Did you get that? Holy women, the women of Judah knew Yahweh, they knew and loved and obeyed God. They knew the Law of Moses. So anytime the men would want to do a dirty business deal. They would get a dirty look from their wives. Anytime they will want to work on the Sabbath or pocket the tithe or pick your poison, whatever, sin you want. They would be held accountable by their wives who loved and knew God. So what's the solution? Easy. Find a pagan girl to marry. She doesn't care if you work on the Sabbath. She doesn't care if you pocket the tithe. In fact, it's better that you pocket the tithe, so that some of it can come to her, right? You marry a pagan wife, that means zero accountability, and that's what the men of Judah were looking for.

1-John 1:6-7 *If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not devout the truth, but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his son purifies us from all sin.*

I understand that when there is sin in our lives, it's easier to remain in the dark. I get that. I've been there, right? The light is scary. Over here, it is comfortable in the dark, out there it is uncomfortable, here it feels safe, outside in the light it feels dangerous. It's too bright there. I get that no one is ever born with an innate desire to be accountable and submissive to a higher authority. I understand that, nobody is born

with that, right? But out in the light, it's where it's the only place you will find true freedom and joy. Don't be like the men of Judah, don't find ways to continue living in our sin. Live in the light. Let's continue reading to see what Nehemiah does.

*25 I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God's name and said: "You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves. 26 Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women. 27 Must we hear now that you too are doing all this terrible wickedness and are being unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women?"*

Again remember, it has got nothing to do with their race, it has got to do with their religion. They worshipped pagan gods and Solomon like the rest of us would be swayed in by them to worship pagan gods. Nehemiah's gangster character comes out again. He beat the man. He pulled out their hair. This guy's great. I lead a little group of about five campus guys, right? And anytime that they're late for our sessions or they don't do the work that they're supposed to do, I slap them with a fine, right. And some people have told me, oh Sam that is so harsh. That's so mean. Have you read Nehemiah? I should be beating them and pulling out their hair. If anything, I'm too lenient. Until they get bigger than me, then I'll recruit Brandon or someone to do it. But again, look at the heart of the people of Judah. They chose pleasure over purity.

So let's recap.

- They chose pretense over principle.
- They chose promotion over piety.
- They chose possessions over their pledge.
- They chose profit over the presence of God
- They chose pleasure over purity.

So we've come to the end of the chapter and the end of the book, and as you can see, it ends on a pretty low note, right? Both books, Ezra and Nehemiah, they end exactly in the same way. They have the exact same pattern. The leader goes in, accomplishes the goal they set out to accomplish through opposition. There's great revival, reformation, worship, celebration, and then in the last chapter, things take a turn for the worse. And so it's a very clear pattern what is going on here in both books. Exactly the same pattern. And so we have to ask ourselves, why did the author write this. What was the intention of the Holy Spirit to inspire the author to write these two books in exactly the same way? What's the message that we're supposed to get from this and in preparing for this, in my research and prayer over the text, I've come up with two conclusions as to why this is the case.

### **Conclusion Number one,**

It's a cultural repentance. We're supposed to read Nehemiah and see ourselves in there. We're not supposed to read Nehemiah and say, Aw man, these Jews, they just can't get their act together. No, that's not how we're supposed to read Nehemiah. We're supposed to read it and see ourselves in there. We may not be divorcing our wives and exiling our children to show God how holy we are but do we look down on others when they fail, instead of showing them encouragement, grace and mercy. Do we sit on our



high horse and look down on them? Do we shun people who walk through those doors who look different to us, who may not be able to navigate the Bible as well as us. Is that not legalism? Is that not self-righteousness? Yeah, it is, and we're guilty of that and we need to repent.

We may not be neglecting the temple of God, right? This place runs great, but are we building his kingdom. Do we seek first, do we put as our first priority God's kingdom and God's righteousness? Are we making disciples? Do we feed the poor; clothe the naked, visit the prisoner? No, we don't and we need to repent. We're not breaking the Sabbath because it's an Old Testament line is we're no longer bound by it. I want to make that clear, if you work on a Sunday, right, that there's no law in the Bible, right? That says you shouldn't. We live in the New Testament era, okay? It's not wrong, but do we treasure the presence of God? Do we long to dwell in the house of God and gaze on his beauty? Are his words sweet and precious to us? Do we rejoice always, pray continually and give thanks in all circumstances? No, we don't. And we need to repent. We may not be marrying pagan wives, so that we can live pagan lives. But boy, do we go to great lengths to run away from accountability. Man, we will not touch that thing with a 10 foot pole, we run from accountability.

As long as the audit reports are clean, I run my business how I want to run my business. I will love and date and marry who I want to date, love and marry. I wear what I want to wear, I go where I want to go, I do what I want to do, I spend my money where I wanna spend my money, don't you dare tell me how I should live my life, right? Yeah. I'll go to church. No, no, no problem. I'll bring my family to church. I'll pay my dues. Right? But don't get me started on joining a small group. I don't need that kind of pressure. I don't want people calling me up or texting me. Where were you last Friday? Why did you miss our meeting? What's going on? And don't try and convince my wife to either, and by the way, my children, no, no, no. They do not want to go to boys' brigade. I don't need that kind of pressure in my home, having my wife and my kids come back and telling me how to live my life. Don't you tell me how I'm supposed to treat my wife and raise my children? That's my business, right? My business, you do with your business, right? I'm not going to tell you how to run your business. You do you, I'll do me, my business.

I don't know what kind of Christianity you have, but it's different to mine because the Bible says admonish one another, Colossians 3:16 that requires accountability. The Bible says, all scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. 2-Timothy 3:16 that requires accountability. It says confess your sins to one another. James 5:16. It says, you have been bought at a price and you are not your own, 1-Cor 6, we do not want to have anything to do with submission or accountability. I hope you hear this. I hope that if one day ever, if ever I become, if ever I treat Salome wrong, if I become abusive, I hope that there are some men in here today that will pull me aside, push me up against the wall if you have to, to get me to listen and say, Sam, what are you doing? What are you doing? You cannot treat your wife like that. I hope that there are some men here in this room today that would do that to me. Isn't that what it means to be in the body of Christ? Isn't that what it means to be a member of a local church? We do not want anything to do with submission or accountability because we want to live our lives the way we want to live our lives and we need to repent.

### **Conclusion Number two**

It is a call to reliance. It's an indication that we are in desperate need of a savior. The Jews put their seal on an agreement and they said, God, if we break this agreement, if we go back into our old sinful ways, let

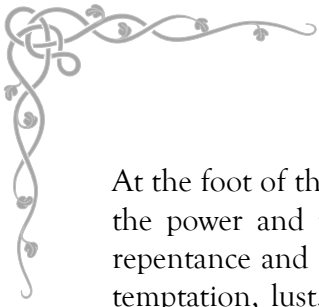
us be cursed. You can curse us God. And even with that, with that binding agreement, they still fell back into their old sins. Don't we see that same pattern happening to us? We, we go back to our old unfulfilling, toxic, hurtful, unsatisfying sins over and over again. Don't we? Kind of like a dog, goes back to his vomit, kind of like how flies hover around a heaping pile of dung. That's a picture of us. We go back to the things that are hurtful, back to the things that are toxic and unfulfilling.

We don't live the life we ought to live. We can't shake. We can't overcome the sin that so easily entangles. But here's the good news. God knew that you and I are fickle. God knew that you and I would fail. God knew that you and I would be unfaithful to him. And so from the foundations of the earth before anything was even created, he had his salvation plan in mind, your sin, my sin is no surprise to God. See, while we chose pretense, Jesus chose principle to the people who are ready to stone the woman caught in adultery. Jesus said, let him who is without sin be the first to throw the stone.

Well, we chose promotion. Jesus chose piety. Do you think that I've come to abolish the law and the prophets? No. I've come to fulfill the law. Though we chose possessions, Jesus chose his pledge. For the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. He humbled himself. He humbled himself to the point of death, even death on a cross. Those of you who know your Bibles, you know these are all verses from the Bible. I'm not making this up. While we chose profit, Jesus chose the presence of God. The father said about Jesus, this is my son whom I love with him I am well pleased and on the cross Jesus said, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Because for the first time in history past and the last time in all of eternity Jesus was separated from the presence of God.

Jesus was not in an under the loving presence of God because God, the father could not stand the stench of our sins. While we chose pleasure, Jesus chose purity. Though he was tempted in every way as we are, yet he was without sin. Jesus did it all. You can't do it, I can't do it, Adam and Eve couldn't do it, all the judges, prophets and apostles could not do it, and so Jesus said, okay I'll do it. I'll live the life you could not live. I'll die the death that you deserve, I'll drink the cup of wrath that was meant for you. And when Jesus drank every last drop, he said it was finished. He said, it is finished. And then he breathed his last and then he gave up his spirit. Three days later, he rose again. He's now sitting at the right hand of God in glory calling out to you, my son, my daughter come to me, come to me. I've made away. I've made away. I've earned your forgiveness. I've lived the life you couldn't live. I've done it all. Come out into the light.

Church like I said, I know what it's like to be in the darkness. I know it's scary. The light looks scary from where we are. I don't want people to see the dirt. I don't want people to see the scars. But you know what? You know what there is at the foot of the cross. There are other broken people. You're in good company, right? God doesn't choose all the holy people and say, okay you guys go make a church. No broken people. This church is made up of broken people. It's in a church that you're going to find recovering alcoholics, recovering drug addicts, you are going to find divorcees, you are going to find mothers who have had an abortion, you are going to find fathers who are violent and abusive, you are going to find children who are angry and bitter, you are going to find young men and young women who struggle with pornography and same sex attraction. You're going to find the depressed, the anxious, the suicidal. You'll find those people in the church because the church was not God picking and choosing Holy people. It's broken people running to the foot of the cross saying God, I can't do it, I need you, I need your help. I want to have freedom. I want to have forgiveness. God, I can't do it. And church, hear me on this, hear.



At the foot of the cross, in the light under the embrace of the father in the forgiveness of the son living in the power and the strength of the Holy Spirit with the saints of God surrounding us and we are in repentance and tears, what hold will sin and Satan have on us. Are you hearing this church, sin, Satan, temptation, lust, anxiousness, depression, suicidal thoughts, guilt, and shame, they are powerless at the foot of the cross because Jesus has forgiven us. There is therefore now no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus.

That's the gospel. That's the good news. You don't have to do it. You can't do it. I don't have to do it. I can't do it. Jesus did it. And he's calling out to us, come out into the light, believe in me, trust in me, have faith in me. I've made a way. So you see the book of Nehemiah ends the way it does, I think because of two reasons.

Number one,  
it's to show us how sinful we are. It's to show us the depths of our sinful nature and it is a call to repentance.

Number two,  
It's to show us that we are in desperate need of a savior. We can't do it. And it's a call of reliance. And while Nehemiah ends on a low note, there's hope. There's hope because it's a small, it's a small puzzle piece in the gospel story and that story my friends ends in a major, major high. With people from every tribe and tongue and nation in complete and utter adoration and worship of the lamb, the son of God, Jesus Christ.