

Remember (Part 1)

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[0:00] Last week we looked at the final verses in Nehemiah chapter 12.

! These verses focused on the worship service for the dedication of the wall.! The purpose of the occasion was made very clear. It was to celebrate the dedication with gladness.

That comes from Nehemiah 12.27. Two choirs walked in opposite directions around the city, symbolically enclosing the entire city with their praise, and it was a symbol of consecration. Musicians were playing stringed instruments, trumpets, and cymbals, and they also accompanied the choirs. Ezra proceeded with the southern group and Nehemiah with the northern group. And if you'll remember, the climax occurred when both choirs entered the temple where they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced because God had made them rejoice with great joy. And that comes from verse 43 of chapter 12.

[1:05] So when we were studying that last week, we saw the people preparing for worship. We saw the people singing in worship. We saw the people rejoicing in worship. And we saw the people giving in worship.

Despite everything we did see, one thing seemed to be missing that had always been present since the spiritual revival started in chapter 8. Did you notice what seemed to be missing last week?

Nowhere did the verses talk about them reading and studying God's Word. And every time they had come together since chapter 8, they spent a lot of time reading and studying God's Word.

Well, that's because the first three verses of chapter 13, actually, wrap up Nehemiah's account of the dedication day. And in those verses, we have confirmation that the people did read and study God's Word that day.

And they also took action based upon God's Word. So the first point of our lesson tonight actually is the fifth point from the lesson last week. The chapter break came at an unfortunate time.

[2:11] And in 13, 1 through 3, we see the people applying. We see the people applying God's Word. So let's go ahead and read 13, 1 through 3.

Those verses say, From verse 1, we can infer that the reading for the day included Deuteronomy 23, verses 3 through 6.

And here are Deuteronomy 23, 3 through 6. Those verses say, No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the Lord, even to the tenth generation.

None of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever, because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam, the son of Baar from Pether of Egypt, or of Mesopotamia, excuse me, to curse you. Nevertheless, the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam, but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loves you. You shall not seek their peace, nor their prosperity, all their days, forever.

[3:42] So the scripture is very clear about why God wanted Israel to be separate from the Ammonites and Moabites. That's because they refused to help Israel on their journey out of Egypt.

And the Moabites also hired Balaam to curse Israel. And you can read the full story of Balaam's attempts to curse Israel in Numbers 22 through 24, but here's a quick summary.

When the king of Moab initially sent messengers to Balaam to curse Israel, Balaam refused. And the king sent more messengers and the promise of more honor to entice Balaam to curse Israel. And this time Balaam went. And on his way, Balaam was confronted by the angel of the Lord, which of course is a pre-incarnate version of Christ. And the angel told Balaam that Balaam could only say what the angel told Balaam to say.

Four times Balaam tried to curse Israel, instead his prophecies were prophecies of blessing. Balak, the king of Moab was so upset that he refused to give Balaam the honor that he promised.

[4:45] Listen to Balak's words to Balaam after the third prophecy. And these verses are Numbers 24, 10 and 11. They say, Then Balak's anger was aroused against Balaam and he struck his hands together.

And Balak said to Balaam, I called you to curse my enemies. And look, you have bountifully blessed them these three times. Now, therefore, flee to your place. I said I would greatly honor you, but in fact, the Lord has kept you back from honor.

So you can see from the background why Israel would be convicted to obey God's word here. Most of the nation's problems could be traced to associating with pagan nations who had no respect for the true God.

We need to be careful here, though, because removal of foreigners should never be viewed as racial exclusivism. As always, foreigners could become part of Israel by conversion.

And for proof of that, we only need to look a few pages back to Ezra 6:21. And Ezra 6:21 says this. It says, Then the children of Israel who had returned from the captivity ate together with all who had separated themselves from the filth of the nations of the land in order to seek the Lord God of Israel.

[5:57] So you can see Israel did associate with everybody from the pagan nations if they renounced their former practices and started following the true God. The biblical Ruth is a prime example of that because Ruth was from Moab and she was welcomed readily into Israel.

We know she even became part of the line of Christ and the issue is allegiance rather than nationality. And the same is true today. Aside from the importance of applying God's word to our lives, we can learn something else from these first three verses.

Verse 2 reminds us that God can and often does turn a curse into a blessing. When you think about it, many experiences and situations in our lives look like a curse upon us.

But in reality, God makes them a blessing. Think about when Joseph was sold into slavery by his brethren. That looked like a terrible curse on his life.

But it wound up bringing him tremendous blessings. It resulted in his becoming the prime minister in Egypt and in his saving the world from destruction during a famine.

[7:05] When he talked about this situation years later, Joseph told his brothers, but as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good. That verse is Genesis 50:20.

And that, of course, is simply another way of saying that God turned the curse into a blessing. God is still in the business of turning curses into blessings. Many trials and troubles God experienced will prove to be blessings in disguise.

It may be difficult to perceive the blessing at the time of the curse, but the blessing is not dependent on our being able to perceive it. The blessing is dependent upon the power and wisdom of a loving God who is always turning curses into blessings for his people.

That wraps up the coverage of the wall dedication. And in fairness, we need to acknowledge something else. The commentators actually are split about if when Nehemiah said on that day at the start of chapter 13, he really is talking about the day of the temple dedication.

And that's part of the reason why you see the verses starting another chapter rather than being part of chapter 12. We could spend a lot of time debating the pros and cons of whether the day really was the same day as the dedication, but I think it's pretty clear it was the same day because we can be confident from what we saw in chapters 8 through 10 that Nehemiah and Ezra would have included the reading of God's word in the dedication ceremony.

[8:33] Verses 1 through 3 have the first mention of God's word being read on that day. Actually, though, the timing is of little consequence because the message is the same regardless.

God expects his people to read his word. God expects his people to apply God's word to their lives. And then God often turns negative circumstances to our benefit. As we move into verses 4 through 31 now to finish the book, Nehemiah clearly tells us that the following events took place well after the dedication ceremony.

We'll see that at least 12 years have passed. During that time, Nehemiah has gone back to Babylon and then later returned to Jerusalem at least once. Rather than covering the verses all in one lesson, we're going to split these verses in two parts under the title of Remember.

You'll see when we read the passage that Nehemiah uses the word remember himself quite a bit in these verses, but the title has multiple implications. We'll see Tobiah return to the scene and we'll see that Nehemiah definitely remembers him.

We'll also see that Nehemiah remembers Sanballat. And when Israel was starting to slip back into its old habits, God himself must have been thinking, remember. So even though we'll only study through verse 9 tonight, let's read verses 4 through the end of the chapter so that we can get the full context of what is happening here.

[10:03] So starting in Nehemiah 13, verse 4, it says, Now before this, Eliashib the priest, having authority over the storerooms of the house of our God, was allied with Tobiah.

And he had prepared for him a large room where previously they had stored the grain offerings, the frankincense, the articles, the tithes of grain, the new wine and oil which were commanded to be given to the Levites and singers and gatekeepers and the offerings for the priest.

But during all of this, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes, king of Babylon, I had returned to the king. Then after certain days, I obtained leave from the king and I came to Jerusalem and discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah in preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God.

And it grieved me bitterly, therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room. Then I commanded them to cleanse the rooms and I brought back into them the articles of the house of God with the grain offering and the frankincense.

I also realized that the portions for the Levites had not been given them, for each of the Levites and the singers who did the work had gone back to his field. So I contended with the rulers and said, Why is the house of God forsaken?

[11:22] And I gathered them together and set them in their place. Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain and the new wine and the oil to the storehouse, and I appointed as treasurers over the storehouse Shelemiah the priest and Zadok the scribe and of the Levites, Padaiah, and next to them was Hanan the son of Zechariah the son of Mataniah, for they were considered faithful and their task was to distribute to the brethren.

Remember me, O my God, concerning this and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God and for its services. In those days I saw people in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath and bringing in sheaves and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day.

And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions. Men of Tyre dwelt there also who brought in fish and all kinds of goods and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah and in Jerusalem.

Then I contended with the nobles of Judah and said to them, what evil thing is this that you do by which you profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers do thus and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city?

Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath. So it was at the gates of Jerusalem as it began to be dark before the Sabbath that I commanded the gates to be shut and charged that they must not be opened until after the Sabbath.

[12:55] Then I posted some of my servants at the gates so that no burdens would be brought in on the Sabbath day. Now the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares were lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice.

Then I warned them and said to them, why do you spend the night around the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time on they came no more on the Sabbath and I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves and that they should go and guard the gates to sanctify the Sabbath day.

Remember me, O my God, concerning this and spare me according to the greatness of your mercy. In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab and half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod and could not speak the language of Judah but spoke according to the language of one or the other people.

So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair and made them swear by God saying, You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons nor take their daughters for your sons or yourself.

Did not Solomon, king of Israel, sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him who was beloved of his God and God made him king over all Israel.

[14:14] Nevertheless, pagan women caused even him to sin. Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women? And one of the sons of Joada, the son of Eliashib, the priest, was a son-in-law of Sanballat, the Horonite.

Therefore, I drove him from me. Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites. Thus I cleansed them of everything pagan.

I also assigned duties to the priest and the Levites each to his service and to bringing the wood offering and the first fruits at the appointed times. Remember me, O my God, for good.

Let's think about what we've seen as we've progressed from Nehemiah 8.1 to 13.3. We might have expected the book to stop at 13.3 with the phrase and they lived happily ever after.

After all, the Jews had shown a commitment to the scripture. We saw that in verses 8-12 of chapter 8. They'd shown genuine thankfulness for God's mercies. That was in verses 13-18 of chapter 8.

[15 : 24] They'd shown a sincere repentant spirit and prayer and that was chapter 9. They also showed a loyalty to God by a covenant renewal which started at the end of chapter 9 and continued all the way through chapter 10.

They'd shown a willingness to move back to the holy city of Jerusalem in chapter 11. Then we just talked about how they showed an exuberant joy in dedicating the city walls in chapter 12.

They also showed delight in the priests and Levites who ministered in their behalf at the end of chapter 12 and they supported those leaders very generously as well. And then also in the first three verses of chapter 13 that we just read they made a strict policy of separation from the pagans in accordance with the word of God.

What we've just witnessed in 8.1 through 13.3 is something that we should long to see in our day and that's a visitation from God and the power of the Holy Spirit that removes lethargy and indifference and restores a vitality to our churches.

But reading in these chapters Nehemiah probably was thinking about Psalm 85.6 where the psalmist said will you not revive us again that your people may rejoice in you because we can see that the people have slipped backwards.

[16 : 42] If the Bible had no intention of being realistic we might have expected Nehemiah to finish the book at the end of chapter 12 but as we turn to the final chapter we discover that Nehemiah admits that all is not well in God's holy city.

And what needs to be remembered here is that 12 years have elapsed and a lot of things have changed in that 12 year period. You know so much has happened in the book of Nehemiah that it's possible for us to forget that Nehemiah actually is an employee of Babylon.

Until now barely seven months have passed since we first met Nehemiah as cupbearer to King Artaxerxes in the city of Susa which is capital of the Persian Empire. Because of Nehemiah's spur of the moment request the king commissioned him to return as the governor and he gave him authority to rebuild Jerusalem's walls but now all of a sudden we've gone forward in time 12 months so or 12 years and in those dozen years several things have happened because the events recorded in verses 4 through 5 are to be understood as having taken place after Nehemiah's departure from the city of Jerusalem.

And so you may wonder why it says now before this in verse 4 that almost implies that these events happened before what we looked at at the beginning of the chapter. Most people agree that because verse 6 clearly indicates that Eliashib's actions took place while Nehemiah is away from the city a better translation would be in the face of it all instead of before this.

And because this last chapter of Nehemiah is about perseverance in some ways it's the most important chapter in the book because the gap in which the problems of chapter 13 developed seems to have been between the end of Nehemiah's first 12 year assignment and his second assignment several years later.

[18 : 40] And we know at least 12 years have passed but it's probably more than that. Presumably a considerable period of time elapsed. The problems of the final chapter are major ones which would have taken several years to develop.

They didn't just happen overnight. And guesses for the return of Nehemiah to Jerusalem run anywhere from 425 B.C. to 420 B.C. And if you remember he first went there in 445-444 time frame. So that's quite a difference there. And the reason why people think it's between 425 and 420 for his return is because it's close to the end of the reign of King Artaxerxes.

We know though that Nehemiah kept his word to the king way back in Nehemiah 2.6 Nehemiah recorded the king's response to his request to go rebuild Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 2.6 said Then the king said to me the queen also sitting beside him How long will your journey be and when will you return? So it pleased the king to send me and I set him a time.

[19:45] So Nehemiah doesn't tell us exactly when he said he would be back but he does tell us that he told the king that he would go back to him. Nehemiah was a man of his word.

He always planned to go back to Babylon and we see from chapter 13 that he did go back to Babylon. Regardless of how long Nehemiah stayed in Babylon between his terms as governor of Judah the significant thing is that Nehemiah was now considerably older.

He probably was at least 40 when he left Susa for Jerusalem the first time. The end of his first governorship would have brought him to the age of 52 and now if we're talking about 425 to 420 B.C.

Nehemiah must have been nearly 65 and so this is the age in which most people retire today but Nehemiah didn't retire. In this chapter we see him returning to Jerusalem and he's acting like a much younger man and achieving some very important victories there.

When he returned to Jerusalem Nehemiah had to address four main issues. We'll cover one of those issues tonight and the other three next week. In verses 4 through 9 we see the first issue and that is the issue of compromise.

[21:01] So compromise is what goes into your blank there and one compromise started a downhill slide that led to the other three issues Nehemiah had to address. So let's look at verses 4 through 9 again.

Nehemiah wrote, Now before this, Eliashib the priest having authority over the storerooms of the house of our God was allied with Tobiah. And he prepared for him a large room where previously they had stored the grain offerings, the frankincense, the articles, the tithes of grain, the new wine and oil which were commanded to be given to the Levites and the singers and gatekeepers and the offerings for the priest.

But during all of this I was not in Jerusalem for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Then after certain days I obtained leave from the king and I came to Jerusalem and discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah in preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of our God.

And it grieved me bitterly. Therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room. Then I commanded them to cleanse the rooms and I brought back into them the articles of the house of God with the grain offering and the frankincense.

So do you see what the compromise was there? The compromise was letting Tobiah live in the temple precincts.

[22:28] So the compromise was letting Tobiah live in the temple precincts. Do you remember Tobiah? He's one of the three most often mentioned opponents of the wall building.

We first met him way back in chapter 2 in chapter 2 Nehemiah documented how King Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah permission to rebuild Jerusalem and then after that verse 2.10 had the first mention of Tobiah.

2.10 said when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of it they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.

Keep in mind what we read tonight in the first three verses of Nehemiah 13 Ammonites were supposed to be excluded from association with Israel unless they renounced their former ways and began following God.

Now we have an Ammonite living in the temple precincts. Verse 2.10 might have been the first time that we saw Tobiah wreaking havoc against Israel but it was only the first of many.

[23:38] Still in chapter 2 verse 19 said but when Sanballat the Horonite Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard of it they laughed at us and despised us and said what is this thing that you are doing will you rebel against the king?

Then we had a break from Tobiah for a little bit until chapter 4 he showed up again in chapter 4 verse 3 that's when he said now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him and he said whatever they build if even a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall and we talked last week of course about how Nehemiah had the choirs actually march on the wall in part to show how strong it really was still in chapter 4 verses 7 and 8 said now it happened when Sanballat Tobiah the Arabs the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and gaps were beginning to be closed that they became very angry and all of them conspired to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion when all of these efforts failed we saw in chapter 6 how Sanballat Tobiah and others tried to lure Nehemiah out of Jerusalem so that they could kill him so

are you starting to see now why

Nehemiah was so upset to find Tobiah living in what once had been a storage room for temple supplies Eliashib the high priest with whom Nehemiah had worked closely during his earlier governorship and whom he had placed in charge of the temple storerooms had affiliated himself with Tobiah the Ammonite Nehemiah's old enemy later we learn that Eliashib had given a daughter in marriage to Nehemiah's other arch enemy Sanballat the Horonite of Samaria and here we're told that he had provided Tobiah with a large room in the temple putting him where the temple articles tithes and offerings had formerly been stored so said another way Eliashib had moved the things of God out of the room and had moved an enemy of God into the room during Nehemiah's previous administration and as long as Nehemiah remained in Jerusalem Eliashib was held in check but when Nehemiah left for Babylon the high priest began to engage in a diplomatic role and who knows he might have said something like we're living in a new day

Nehemiah's return to Babylon his aggressive style of leadership was alright in the past but it's not the politically astute thing to do for this time what we need today is compromise a building of bridges and a handout to old friends you know he might have been an old example of can't we all just get along and we can be sure that Tobiah had been working his side of the allegiance to he would have been maneuvering for entry into the highest leadership positions in the city Tobiah had a Jewish name and when Nehemiah had first come to Jerusalem he discovered and reported that Tobiah had married the daughter of Shekariah son of Arah who was one of the leaders of the city then later Tobiah's son married the daughter of Meshulam son of Berechiah another leader so Tobiah would have done anything to get a foothold in the city he must have been delighted then with his new living arrangements that Eliashib had made for him because in the temple precincts he had a base from which to increase his bad influence he didn't have to work from the outside anymore he could work from the inside out so when

Eliashib moved out the various offerings and supplies given to the Levites and the singers and the gatekeepers for their service in the temple this action was very cruel to these ministers it effectively cut off their salary which made it impossible for them to continue their ministry in the temple and it forced them to seek secular work to support their families it said they were less important than Tobiah and it gave an enemy of God's work more honor than those who served to promote the work and honor God so this really had to hurt the people who were forced out of the temple ministry and when Nehemiah left Jerusalem we're not told whether he acted like an early version of Arnold Schwarzenegger and said I'll be back but he certainly did come back and when he did he was the terminator of Tobiah's living arrangements but look again at what happened when Nehemiah returned verses 7 through 9 say and I came to Jerusalem and discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah in preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of

[28:23] God and it grieved him bitterly therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room then I commanded them to cleanse the rooms and I brought back into them the articles of the house of God with the grain offering and the frankincense so does that sound like something somebody in his mid to late 60s would do by tossing everything out to the curb!

basically the Hebrew word translated discovered in verse 7 means that Nehemiah knew clearly about the evil to know clearly here would mean that Nehemiah had to do some investigating earlier in the book of Nehemiah we knew that he ascertained the facts before he acted one example of that is how he investigated the broken down wall at night to discover the facts about the wall before he announced his wall building project plan Nehemiah knew that accusations must be based on fact or the accusation is nothing but slander Nehemiah found out exactly what was going on and then he took action and that's a very commendable characteristic of Nehemiah and we need to emulate that in our lives we need to discover the facts before we take the action but when Nehemiah found out about the desecrated temple he said it grieved me bitterly the Hebrew word rendered grieved there has wide meaning indignation is obviously part of the meaning here and this indignation revealed Nehemiah's heart his devotion to God and God's honor was great therefore when God's house was defiled Nehemiah became very upset it's one thing to find out about evil in a church but it's another thing to get upset about that evil corrupt people often know about the evil that is going on but they aren't upset about it they only get upset when someone tries to stop the evil but good people are very upset about evil and will as a result take strong action against it Nehemiah simply threw Tobiah and all of his possessions out he dumped the possessions outside the door onto the sidewalk then he had the room fumigated and he restored the temple articles so just like that Eliashib was back on

the street so you know some people might say was Nehemiah right to be angry there the answer of course is yes many Christians are uneasy with anger and some have not hesitated to criticize Nehemiah for the anger here they're forgetting a few things though first Nehemiah's angry cleansing of the temple is a foretaste of the similar cleansing taken later by somebody else do you remember who else cleansed the temple Jesus was angry and he was correct to be angry in that case too going back to Nehemiah's action here although Nehemiah was displeased with what Eliashib did and he calls what Eliashib did the evil Nehemiah is less outspoken in condemning the evil of these days than God had already been through the prophet Malachi Malachi had said that God was sending a curse on this priesthood indeed Malachi's whole prophecy is a denunciation of the evils for which spiritual leaders like Eliashib were responsible and to give you a flavor of Malachi's prophecy listen to just a portion of it these verses are Malachi 2 verses 1-3 God said through

Malachi and now O priest this commandment is for you if you will not hear and if you will not take it to heart to give glory to my name says the Lord of hosts I will send a curse upon you and I will curse your blessings yes I have cursed them already because you did not take it to heart behold I will rebuke your descendants and spread refuse on your faces the refuse of your solemn feast and one will take you away with it at least Nehemiah didn't throw trash on Eliashib whenever he put him out of the temple the third thing here we need to keep in mind is that critics of Nehemiah forget that the deep seated wrongs are seldom corrected except by people who have first become sufficiently angry about those wrongs it's possible to be wrongly angry of course and that's often the case when a wrong only against ourselves is involved and we can be wrong if we do nothing more than get angry righteous anger though the kind that God approves of always acts to correct the injustice but wrong anger is not a major problem in today's

[33:04] Christianity the bigger problems are cowardice and compromise and of course we see the compromise here Nehemiah prevents it from becoming more of a case of cowardice significantly Eliashib does nothing to oppose Nehemiah Eliashib realizes that in Nehemiah he's met his match and Nehemiah's success may be attributed to the fact that he acts decisively think about what might have happened if he called the city fathers together first or consulted with advisors the cause probably would have been lost instead considering the teaching of the word of God and remaining within the realm of his authority he acted quickly with determination and he corrected the wrong himself so what began with the toleration of the presence of Tobiah in the temple area had far reaching effects on the people because the storage room had been converted into a private apartment the people no longer gave support to the temple the

Levites had to sustain their families and they found it necessary to go back to their farms so with the lapse of spiritual training the people became lax in practical righteousness then we saw commercial enterprises begin to encroach on the Lord's day and the decline in morality was an inevitable result and we'll look at those last three things next week as we finish the chapter but the important thing for us to remember tonight is that whenever room is made in God's house for the ungodly the godly will be cruelly pushed out whenever honor is given by the church to the carnal the spiritual will be dishonored trying to mix both the holy and the unholy in the church only results in demeaning the holy men of Nehemiah's ability are sorely needed today both in the church and outside of it we've long tolerated error on one hand there's false doctrine and a fake piety that allows the enemies of the truth to minimize the cardinal tenets of the faith and to control the curricula of some colleges and seminaries on the other hand the old principles of morality and integrity have been set aside for policies built upon expediency and the belief that the end justifies the means so these trends in both sacred and secular spheres need to be challenged by those who adhere to and practice the principles of godliness but the cause of spiritual decline needs to be attacked at the root and that's in the toleration of evil and that's what we see from the compromise that we looked at tonight we should be thankful that we have a church that's committed to sound biblical teaching but the example that we see tonight should also help us realize that we have a responsibility to ensure that the sound teaching continues because we see just how far

Jerusalem declined in a twelve year period or so in our passage tonight one act led to a series of problems popping up again and even though we have yet to study verses ten through thirty one in detail you probably noticed that the problems highlighted there are problems that Nehemiah had previously eliminated during his first governorship relationship the recurrence of these same problems had to frustrate Nehemiah the good news though is that just as one act can start a

downward spiral Nehemiah showed us tonight that one act can start reversing that downward spiral sometimes when we stand up for what is right we can face trials ourselves but we saw from the beginning of tonight's study in the first three verses of chapter thirteen that God can and often does work these trials for our blessing even if those blessings may be hidden until eternity God's word should give us the courage to heed Paul's advice to the Corinthians listen to first Corinthians fifteen fifty eight Paul wrote therefore my beloved brethren be steadfast and movable always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord and that should be a great encouragement to us because whether we see it here on this earth or not we have the guarantee that our labor is not in vain if we do it for the Lord