

Remnant Life Church

September 10, 2023

Protect This House

Part 1

Nehemiah 13:1-14

- We have been spending the last few weeks talking about the gift of discernment
- One of the reasons that discernment is so important is to recognize the enemies plans against our personal lives and against God's people
 - Within that is also a responsibility we carry to guard our lives, our homes and our church
- I want to talk this morning and next Sunday about what we must do as a church family to protect this house
 - Sowing division into churches is one of satan's grandest plans
 - From the formation of denominations
 - I'll talk more about the history of the church next week
 - To the splits in churches
- How can we avoid becoming another sad statistic?
 - Let's look first at the nation of Israel
 - During a time of their efforts to reestablish themselves as a people again

READ – Nehemiah 13:1-14

- What has happened in Nehemiah's time that helps us to recognize the dangers we still face today as a church family?
 - Background:
 - The nation of Israel has been under Babylonian rule since 586 BC when Nebuchadnezzar conquered the southern kingdom and took the people into exiled captivity
 - Persia then defeated the Babylonians in 539 BC ending the Neo-Babylonian rule that had been in existence for only 73 years
 - Cyrus is king and has inherited the Jewish people as the spoils of their conquest
 - But look what **Ezra 1:1** tells us that *God moved the heart of Cyrus King of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm...*
 - That proclamation was to allow the Jewish people to return to Jerusalem
 - This fulfills the prophesy of Isaiah written 160 years earlier
 - **Isa 44:26-28** - *This is what the LORD says — your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself, who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense, who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers, who says of*

Jerusalem, 'It shall be inhabited,' of the towns of Judah, 'They shall be rebuilt,' and of their ruins, 'I will restore them,' who says to the watery deep, 'Be dry, and I will dry up your streams,' who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid."

- God had a plan to return His people to Jerusalem just as He had a plan of restoration from the sin in the Garden of Eden and just as He has a plan for the time we are in now.
- Now, as strange as it may seem, not everyone was excited to pull up their stakes and leave (remember how the people in the desert were so quick to say they wanted to go back to Egypt)
- It will be over a period of about 75 years, involving three separate groups, that the people will slowly return
- The time of **Nehemiah 13** is taking place during the third and final return of the people during the reign of Artaxerxes
 - Nehemiah is the king's cup bearer
 - Not just a position of servitude
 - But a high position in the royal court - a trusted advisor
 - Nehemiah receives a report from his brother who has returned from their homeland that things in Jerusalem are not going well
 - He comes to find out that the walls are broken down, the city gates have been destroyed by fire, the homes and temple are in disrepair, and the people are not supporting the priests so they can lead them in worship
 - He asks the king's permission to go back and repair the damage – rebuild the walls of the city and the temple
 - The king not only gave his permission but also agreed to provide all the supplies that would be needed
 - We see the power of Nehemiah's prayer life in the king's response
- Not only was Nehemiah concerned about the physical condition of God's people but also their spiritual condition
- Of special grievance to him was what he found the priest Eliashib doing
 - Eliashib was the high priest who had several close advisors
 - That was not the issue
 - All those in church leadership need those who they are accountable to and to give counsel
 - But Tobiah was one of the men who had put up opposition to the re-building of the wall (**Neh. 4:3,7**)
 - Tobiah was an Ammonite – a constant thorn and enemy of Israel yet he was not only in the temple – against Nehemiah's word (**Neh. 2:20**) - but had rented a room for storage!

- This is the very picture of compromise
- It is also the first steps, that will get increasingly worse, when moving away from God
- Nehemiah got things straightened out, but the people spent many years living outside of God's will and the condition of their lives showed the consequence
- And so, how do we prevent those things from coming into our house?

Three distinct areas that need to be protected:

1. Our mission

a. What is our mission as a church?

- i. Worship God and God alone
 - 1. We will not become enamored with ourselves
 - 2. How we do things
- ii. Minister to each other
 - 1. Love unconditionally
 - 2. Accept the uniqueness of our lives
 - 3. Refuse to gossip or speak negatively of others
 - 4. Nip possible situations in the bud
- iii. Grow in the things of God
 - 1. Learning from God's Word
 - 2. Participating in the things of God here
 - 3. Be a part of all things in humility
- iv. Witness to others
 - 1. Show Jesus everywhere you go
 - 2. Live as one who has been forgiven
 - 3. Love the people in your life wastefully

2. A reputation

a. Notice that I did not say our reputation

- i. People are going to think what they are going to think regardless of your efforts or concerns
- ii. My reputation, and I pray yours, should only matter to us as to what God thinks of us

b. It is the reputation of God's work in this area

- i. It is never doing anything to injure the presence of God at RLC
- ii. IOW – who are you when you are not here?

c. What do I want the reputation of this church to be?

- i. A place of love, acceptance, integrity
- ii. A church that refuses to compromise

Protect our mission and the reputation of God's work here

3. Our people

- a. We are called, as an extension of the love of Jesus, to guard one another
- b. A place of refuge and sanctuary

- c. A place of hope and acceptance but not a place where sin is ignored or allowed to continue
 - d. The best way to do that is to put into practice the “one another’s”
 - e. These are taken from Paul’s teachings to the new churches
 - f. They are distinguished by his call for them to do these things for “one another”
 - i. Serve – Gal. 5:13
 - ii. Bear the burdens – Gal. 6:2
 - iii. Forbearing – Eph. 4:2
 - iv. Being kind, tenderhearted, forgiving – Eph. 4:32
 - v. Teaching and admonishing – Col. 3:16
 - vi. Loving – I Thess. 4:9
 - vii. Edifying – I Thess. 5:11
 - viii. Exhorting – Heb. 3:13
- When we embrace and integrate the “one another’s” we foster a vital element for the life, health, and growth of the church – **unity**
 - Unity is necessary in order to achieve anything of value or worth within a church
 - That is also true for family, business, government
 - Any group that wishes to achieve the same purpose or goal
 - But this is most true in the church
 - Unity is one of the key themes found throughout the Bible
 - And it is the responsibility of EVERY ONE OF US to develop, foster, and protect the unity of RLC