

Two Steps Forward, One Step Back¹

Nehemiah 13:1-9

INTRODUCTION:

1. Leaders often have to deal with hardheaded people.
2. Some good things happen at the end of the book of Nehemiah, but not everything is “hunky-dory.”
3. One of the great things about God is that He tells us the whole story, good and bad.
4. He tells us even about the shortcomings of His own people.
5. The Old Testament was written for our learning (Rom. 15:4). Whenever you see God’s people make mistakes, remember that you will make mistakes as well.

DISCUSSION:

I. Good News

- A. The people were still making reforms (vv. 1-3).
- B. It may seem strange that some people were not allowed to worship God, but keep a few things in mind.
 1. The excluded groups had a chance to serve God but failed.
 2. Certain people are excluded from the worship of God today.
 - a. It is a matter of lifestyle choices.
 - b. The church in Corinth was told to withdraw from an adulterous man (1 Cor. 5:11).
- C. When the people heard what the Law commanded, they immediately separated those who were not supposed to be with them. There was no questioning the Law.

II. Bad News

- A. When Nehemiah was not in Jerusalem, Eliashib became friends with Tobiah.
- B. Eliashib gave Tobiah a place to live in the temple area (v. 5).
- C. An enemy found someone to let him in.
- D. Evidently, he had not changed from his original opposition (Neh. 4).
- E. There were two reactions upon Nehemiah’s return to Jerusalem:
 1. Nehemiah was bitterly grieved (v. 8). He shook with deep anger and sadness.
 2. Nehemiah “cleaned house” (v. 9).
- F. Whenever we have sin in our lives, we need to get rid of it...all of it.

CONCLUSION:

1. Nehemiah was quite a man who teaches us what a real hero is and does.
2. He saw an opportunity to help God’s people, and he did what needed to be done.

¹ Adam Faughn, *Building a Hero A Study of Nehemiah for Young People* (Haleyville, AL: Christian Homes Publishers, 2006), pp. 83-87. Adapted by Andy Kizer.