

The INPUT	The OUTPUT
1. giving ourselves to God. (Neh. 11:1-12:26)	1. The separation promise (Neh. 13:1-9, 23-31)
2. giving our praise to God. (Neh. 12:27-42)	2. The support promise (Neh. 13:10-14)
3. giving our gifts to God. (Neh. 12:44-47)	3. The Sabbath promise (Neh. 13:15-22)

Committing to a cause requires that you follow through ...

... remember Gym membership is only useful if you follow through with what it offers.

1. The separation promise ([Neh. 13:1-9, 23-31](#))

Nehemiah had returned to the king's court having completed the task he was released to do. The people have committed themselves to serving the Lord honourably and to defend both the city and their Faith. When Nehemiah returns he discovers that many of the Jews had only taken out their Gym Membership and had not followed through.

The mixed multitude ([Neh. 13:1-3](#)). According to [10:28-29](#), the Jews had willingly separated themselves from the people of the land and united to obey the Law and walk in the way of the Lord. But apparently some of the people formed new alliances; because there were Ammonites and Moabites in their congregation, and this was contrary to the Law of Moses ([Deut. 23:3-4](#)).

Ammon and Moab were born from the incestuous union of Lot and two of his daughters ([Gen. 19:30-38](#)), and their descendants were the avowed enemies of the Jews. Somehow this "mixed multitude" had infiltrated the people of Israel in spite of previous purging ([9:2](#); [10:28](#)).

Converts to Judaism have always been included in the congregation (Ruth was a Moabite And is an ancestor of Jesus) So the issue is to do with allegiance to God.

There is a tendency in the church at large to compromise and accept the standards of the world in the interests of unity. However, knowing something is wrong and failing to stand against it is indefensible ... The old Youth for Christ slogan is still true: In ministry, we must be "geared to the times and anchored to the Rock."

Oswald Chambers wrote, **"Today the world has taken so many things out of the church, and the church has taken so many things out of the world that it is difficult to know where you are" (*The Servant As His Lord*, p. 17).**

An enemy intruder ([Neh 13:4-9](#)). Not only were some of the Jews married to Ammonites or Moabites, but also *an Ammonite was living in the Jewish temple!* Tobiah the Ammonite ([4:3](#)) had been given a room in the temple by Eliashib the high priest ([13:28](#)).

Eliashib is the first one named in the list of workers (3:1), and yet he had become a traitor. Why? Because one of his relatives was married to Sanballat's daughter (13:28), and Sanballat and Tobiah were friends. They were all a part of the faction in Jerusalem that was fraternizing with the enemy (6:17-19).

Eliashib's relative was privileged to be born into the priestly family, yet he threw away his future ministry by marrying the wrong woman (Lev. 21:14; Deut. 23:3); and Eliashib apparently approved of it.

All this happened while Nehemiah was away at the palace, which suggests that those he appointed to lead in his absence had failed in their oversight.

It was bad enough that an Ammonite was living in the temple, and that a Jewish high priest had let him in; but this intruder was using a room dedicated to God for the storing of the offerings used by the Levites. He defiled the temple by his presence and robbed the servants of God at the same time. Nehemiah lost no time throwing out both the man and his furniture, rededicating the room to the Lord, and using it again for its intended purpose. Like Jesus, Nehemiah had to cleanse the temple; and it appears that he had to do it alone. Leadership is sometimes a lonely road.

Mixed marriages (Neh. 13:23-31). "We promise not to give our daughters in marriage to the peoples around us or take their daughters for our sons!" was the promise the Jews had made to the Lord (see 10:30); but they did not keep it. In his survey of Jerusalem, Nehemiah saw women from Ashdod (see 4:7), Ammon, and Moab married to Jewish men; and he heard their children speaking foreign languages. (A child is more likely to learn how to speak from his mother, with whom he spends more time, than from his father who is away from home each day working.) If these children did not know the language of Israel, how could they read the Law or participate in the holy services? If a generation was lost to the faith, what was the future of the nation?

Nehemiah dealt with the problem by first expressing his horror that such a thing should be done in Israel (Neh. 13:25). In a similar situation, Ezra had plucked his own hair and beard (Ezra 9:3); but Nehemiah plucked the hair of some of the offenders! Ezra had dissolved the mixed marriages (Ezra 10), but Nehemiah only rebuked the offenders and made the people promise that they would not continue the practice.

Nehemiah also delivered a sermon, reminding the people that Solomon, one of Israel's greatest kings, was ruined by marrying foreign women (Neh. 13:26; 1 Kings 11:4-8). In Solomon's case, his mixed marriages were a threat to the throne and the kingdom; and in Nehemiah's day, mixed marriages even threatened the priesthood. The Law of Moses was clear, but both the priests and the common people had deliberately disobeyed it. Nehemiah then purified the priests and made certain that only those who were qualified served (Neh. 13:30). However, the problem with the priests was not completely settled, because the Prophet Malachi had to deal with disobedient priests in his day (Mal. 1-2).

2. The support promise (Neh. 13:10-14)

"We will not forsake the house of our God," was the final statement the Jews made in their covenant with the Lord (10:39). This meant paying the temple tax, providing wood for the altar, and bringing

the required tithes and offerings to the priests and Levites (vv. 32-39). Without the faithful support of the people, the ministry at the temple would languish; and the Levites would then scatter to the villages, where they could work the land and survive (13:10).

When Nehemiah returned to the city, he discovered that the people had failed to keep their promise. (This helps to explain why one of the storage rooms was available for Tobiah.) The priests and Levites were without support and were deserting their work in order to survive. The people ignored the warnings of Moses, "Be careful not to neglect the Levites as long as you live in your land" (Deut. 12:19) and "And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no land allotted to them or any inheritance of their own" (Deut. 14:27).

Nehemiah rebuked the leaders for breaking their promise and disobeying the Law..... Before his survey of the city was completed, he also rebuked the nobles of Judah (Neh. 13:17) and the men married to foreign women (v. 25). While the Hebrew word can refer to arguing or even physical combat, it also carries the judicial meaning of "to plead a case." Since Nehemiah presented God's case and defended it from the Law, the offenders had to admit that he was right.

The temple officers in charge of the gifts had forsaken their posts because there was nothing coming in or going out, so Nehemiah "set them in their place" (v. 11; "stationed them at their posts,"). He then saw to it that the people brought to God the offerings that rightfully belonged to Him (Mal. 3:7-12). He appointed four men to supervise the treasury and distribute the tithes and offerings.Notice that these men represented the priests, Levites, scribes, and laymen; but they all had one thing in common: They were faithful to the Lord. **"Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful"** (1 Cor. 4:2).

When God's people start to decline spiritually, one of the first places it shows up is in their giving. **"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"** (Matt. 6:21). The believer who is happy in the Lord and walking in His will has a generous heart and wants to share with others. **Giving is both the "thermostat" and the "thermometer" of the Christian life: It measures our spiritual "temperature" and also helps set it at the right level.**

The prayer in Nehemiah 13:14 is the first one recorded since 6:14 and is the seventh of Nehemiah's "telegraph" prayers found in the book. You find three more such prayers in 13:22, 29, and 31. He was in the habit of talking to God as he served Him, a good example for us to follow. He reminded God of his faithfulness and prayed that what he had done would not be blotted out. Nehemiah was not pleading for blessings on the basis of personal merit, because he knew that God's blessings come only because of God's mercy (v. 22). This prayer is similar to the one recorded in 5:19 where Nehemiah merely asked God to remember him and what he had done. He wanted his reward from God, not from men.

Someone wrote in *Modem Maturity* magazine, **"The world is full of two kinds of people, the givers and the takers. The takers eat well—but the givers sleep well."**

3. The Sabbath promise (Neh. 13:15-22)

When they signed the covenant, the Jews promised not to do business with the Gentiles on the Sabbath (10:31); but Nehemiah found the people not only doing business on the Sabbath, but also

doing their daily work and carrying unnecessary burdens. The Jewish merchants didn't want to lose the opportunity to make money from the Gentiles, and the Gentiles were quick to make a profit from their Jewish neighbours.

It is important that as Christians we make the choice of spiritual wealth rather than material wealth and claim the promise of **Matthew 6:33, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well"**). Whoever wrote Psalm 119 made it clear that he chose God's Word rather than money (vv. 14, 72, 127, 162). King Saul made the wrong choice (1 Sam. 15), and so did Achan (Josh. 7) and Demas (2 Tim. 4:10).

Nobody can rob God and profit from it. If our priorities become confused and we start putting money ahead of God, then we must expect to be the losers.

Nehemiah took three steps toward changing the situation. **First**, he rebuked the Jews who were working and selling on the Sabbath and made them stop (Neh. 13:15). **Then**, he rebuked the nobles for allowing business on the Sabbath Day, reminding them that the nation's violation of the Sabbath was one cause for their captivity (vv. 16-18; Jer. 17:21-27).Did they want to have more anger come on the people?

His third step was a very practical one: He ordered the city gates shut on the Sabbath Day. The guards had been willing to open the gates to the Gentile merchants, possibly because they were bribed; so Nehemiah put some of his own servants on duty. He also ordered the Levites to set a good example on the Sabbath and minister to the people.

The Lord's Day, the first day of the week, is not a "Christian Sabbath," because the Sabbath is the seventh day of the week and belonged especially to the Jews. Therefore, the Old Testament laws governing the Jewish Sabbath don't apply to the Lord's Day. But Sunday is a special day to God's people because it commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead as well as the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We ought to use the Lord's Day to the glory of the Lord.

Nehemiah closes with two prayers (Neh. 13:29, 31) that God would remember him for his faithful service. His conscience was clear, because he knew he had done everything for the good of the people and the glory of God. There would probably be little appreciation from the people, in spite of his sacrifices; but he knew that God would reward him accordingly.

"They gave themselves first of all to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5)