

I. God's Glory Deserves Our Whole Heart

A. NT Context

1. Paul provides the spiritual context for understanding Nehemiah 13
 - a. Sets before the Christian church God's intent that Christ hold the preeminence in the life of the church and the life of the Christian
 - b. **Colossians 1:15-18 (ESV)** ¹⁵ *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.* ¹⁶ *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.* ¹⁷ *And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.* ¹⁸ *And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.*
2. Jesus lovingly brought a well-intentioned but misdirected Martha to the same conclusion:
 - a. put Jesus first: God deserves the focused attention of our whole heart
 - b. **Luke 10:38-42 (ESV)** ³⁸ *Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.* ³⁹ *And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.* ⁴⁰ *But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me."* ⁴¹ *But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things,* ⁴² *but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."*

B. Nehemiah

1. Building the wall to restore the witness to God's glory among the people
 - a. Devotion of time and effort to building the wall
 - b. Devotion of heart and mind to personal advancement of God's glory
2. **God's glory deserves not only our best effort but our whole heart.**

II. Three attitudes that promote whole-hearted devotion to God's glory in the world.

A. Nehemiah 13:1-3 Fill your life with relationships that further God's plan for your life to fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory.

1. **Deuteronomy 23:3-6 (ESV)** ³ *"No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the LORD forever,* ⁴ *because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way, when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.* ⁵ *But the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam; instead the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loved you.* ⁶ *You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever.*
 - a. God does not hate non-Jewish people,

- b. but God does know that the attitudes and heart philosophies of those who hate Him will undermine the faith and commitment of God's people to Him.
- 2. Choose relationships that advance the cause of Christ in your life!
 - a. You don't have to avoid all non-believing people
 - b. You do have to avoid marrying unbelievers or entering into significant relationships where your devotion to Christ might be compromised by the inherent demands of a relationship with a non-believing person
 - (1) May not share your value in putting God first
 - (2) May not share your value in worship or giving or serving
- 3. **God deserves not only our best effort but our whole heart:** Fill your life with relationships that further God's plan for your life to fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory.

B. Nehemiah 13:4-9 Guard your heart from spiritual parasites

- 1. Parasites steal nutrition from the host but give nothing back.
 - a. They replace themselves with what the nutrition is intended for
 - b. Tobiah took from God what belonged to God making himself a parasite in the temple
- 2. Your heart belongs to God, don't let anything displace Him
 - a. Pride/sin
 - b. Work
 - c. Relationships/people
 - d. Money - You cannot serve both God and money
- 3. Guard your heart and don't be afraid to scrape off the barnacles!
 - a. Repent
 - b. Boldly throw out the spiritual parasites
 - c. Commit to pure devotion

C. Nehemiah 13:10-14 Make worship a life priority

- 1. Cascade effect of sin
 - a. Because of the parasite in the temple the people ceased bringing the offerings necessary for worship
 - b. Because the offerings were not available the priests and Levites were forced to go work their land to feed their families
 - c. Because there were not priests to serve there were fewer occasions for worship until, eventually, worship suffers through neglect
- 2. Nehemiah makes worship a new priority
 - a. Even though genuine, grace-filled giving is an act of worship, this is not primarily about money
 - b. This is about doing everything necessary for God's people to worship God whole-heartedly, with joy and reverence, as they experience the promises of God being fulfilled in their lives.

III. The Sum of It All: God put Christ first and foremost over all creation and we ought to put Christ first and foremost over all our life