**Nehemiah 13:4-9**

4 Now before this, **Eliashib the priest**, who was **appointed over the chambers of the house of our God**, and who was related to Tobiah, 5 **prepared for Tobiah a large chamber** where they had **previously put the grain offering, the frankincense, the vessels, and the tithes of grain, wine, and oil, which were given by commandment to the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests.** 6 While this was taking place, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I went to the king. And after some time I asked leave of the king 7 and came to Jerusalem, and I then **discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, preparing for him a chamber in the courts of the house of God.** 8 And I was very angry, and I **threw all the household furniture of Tobiah out of the chamber**. 9 Then **I gave orders, and they cleansed the chambers,** and I **brought back there the vessels of the house of God**, with the grain offering and the frankincense.

Well, we have come to the **final chapter** of our study of Nehemiah and chapter thirteen is an interesting chapter because it takes place about **8 years after chapter 12.**

Nehemiah has had to **return to Babylon** according to **His commitment to the king** and while he has gone some **things have slipped**, some things have **gone backwards,** there has been **some drift** and **ground has been lost.**

It is good **challenge** for our lives – because

**Quote:** **William Booth**

***“The tendency of fire is to go out; watch the fire on the altar of your heart. Anyone who has tended a fireplace fire knows that it needs to be stirred up***

Skip Heitzig use the term **spiritual entropy** to describe this tendency.

The **law of entropy states** it is the **nature of things to wind down** and **lose energy** in a closed system to go from **order to chaos.**

It is true of all the nature, but it also **applies in our spiritual lives if they are left untendered.**

**We need to careful** that this **does not happen.**

**Romans 12:11-12**

11 Do not be **slothful in zeal**, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be **patient in tribulation**, be **constant in prayer.**

Fervent in Greek is - zeō; to be **hot boil**, of liquids; or **glow of solids.**

The **environment** in which we live **resists our spiritual growth** – life requires that we **actively stoke the fires** of **spiritual passion.**

Not letting the **tribulations, trials** and **challenges** of life take the **edge off our zeal.**

**Romans 12:11 (NLT)**

1 Never be lazy, but work hard and **serve the Lord enthusiastically.**

**2 Timothy 1:6**

6 For this reason I remind you to **fan into flame the gift of God**, which is in you through the laying on of my hands

anazōpyreō; to **re-enkindle**: — **stir up**, **to kindle up**, strength, zeal.

We need to ask are we **still** **zealous for the things God** has called us to do?

Are we **committed to the call of God** to use **our gifts** for His kingdom?

We need to **tend the fire** and get it **ablaze.**

**Hebrews 2:1**

​1 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, **lest we drift away from it.**

The Greek here means; **to flow by**, **carelessly pass**, miss, **let slip**, **slip away from.**

Drift is so **insidious** - **proceeding in a**[**gradual**](https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=1c3a2f112a8e4e48&sxsrf=AE3TifNvBHaBJoaEFdXiVDHI3R24NIKCNA:1752900844223&q=gradual&si=AMgyJEtpyiSdZyr-ht-KvQyAhGlDiHMn_c5bVuOP0Qf3iYZeilNPYjMOV0nkJoe93c_ieI_4QzSpYdJKNj3KjvQGJmW-p0PV6A%3D%3D&expnd=1&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjKyZXBkMiOAxXAglYBHS58Eu4QyecJegQIOxAR), **subtle way**, but with **very harmful effects.**

**Illustration:** Currents and winds.

**Slide:** Image of shipwreck

**Hebrews 3:12-13**

12 Take care, brothers, lest there **be in any of you an evil**, unbelieving heart, leading you to **fall away** from the living God. 13 But **exhort one another every day**, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

This is the most **fatal of drifts** – to **fall away** from the **living God.**

We need to keep **stirring up the fire** so that we don’t grow cold.

We need to **keep a constant baring** on the know landmarks so that we **don’t slowly drift.**

We must be **aware of spiritual entropy** and be **proactively** on our **guard against** its effects in our lives.

And here we see a **key strategy** of God’s to **make sure we don’t drift** – it is to **be in fellowship** with others because it says **exhort or encourage each** other **every day.**

We need to be in **regular relationship** with the **other believers**, which is why the bible says **don’t forsake** the **gathering together** of the saints.

With all this in mind let us **consider** our Nehemiah text.

Last week we started looking at an **interesting** **metaphor.**

This is the picture of how when Nehemiah was away the **High Priest allowed** **Tobiah to move in and live** in one of the **rooms of the temple** that should have been used for the **purpose of temple ministry.**

Now if you remember **Tobiah** from the beginning of the book – he was one of the **sworn enemies** of the work of God.

So here the **enemy has been given space** that should have **been a holy space.**

He was allowed to **move in** and **dwell in a place** that was **intended for the purposes of God.**

He had **no right to be there**, but he was there because the chief priest who **should have known better** had **allowed him** not only to move in but to **settle in** and **make himself at home.**

This is a challenging image for us if we apply it to our **personal lives.**

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

19 Or do you not know that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit** **within you**, whom you have from God? **You are not your own**, 20 for you were bought with a price. So, glorify God in your body.

We are the **temple of the Holy Spirit** and **He dwells with in us.**

For that reason, we **cannot do as we wish** with any area of our lives.

It is true that because we are all **given freedom of choice by God**, we are the ones who like **Eliashib have the authority** to chose **who or what takes up space in our hearts or lives**, what the **members of our body** get **used for.**

All humans **have this authority** but when we come to Christ, we **lay down the right to do as we please** and we **follow His Lordship** and choose to do what He pleases.

When Jesus gave His life to save us, we became His so if we want to **enjoy the fulness of the new life he has for us** we need to exercise our authority to **live for Him** because we are **not our own.**

Tobiah was **allowed to inhabit** a room that should have **been filled with the blessings** and **the resources** of God that were intended for **effective ministry.**

We do **not want to let the enemy** get **into any area of our lives.**

As we **take our guard against** the **drift** or seek to address and **spiritual entropy** that has taken place it is worth considering if there “**is any place?”** in our lives where the **enemy** has been **allowed to creep in.**

There is an interesting phrase in:

**Ephesians 4:26-27**

26 **Be angry** and **do not sin**; do not let the **sun go down on your anger**, 27 and give **no opportunity** to **the devil.**

This passage says **give no opportunity** to the **enemy** –

The Greek word is **topos** from which we get the English **topography** and it means a **space or a place to stand.**

**Ephesians 4:27**27 and do not **give the devil a foothold.**

The NIV uses an interesting phrase – **a foothold** -

Here is one **definition** of **foothold**:

***A secure position from which further progress can be made.***

This passage speaks about **anger** that is **not properly dealt with** and **becomes a** sin.

But it could just as easily apply to **anything sinful or harmful**, **big or small** that we **do not address** and deal with through **confession** and **repentance** and **restoration** in regard to **any relationships** that have **been affected.**

When **tolerate, entertain** or **accommodate attitude** or **actions** that are not **honouring to God** or **His word.**

This gives the **devil a foot hold** – a **toe in the door** that he can us to force his way in.

And that is the way of the enemy, he will **always try to strengthen** his **position.**

The foothold **could be** a **lie or a thought** or a **temptation** that we **entertain** and **allow to grow** until it **becomes an action.**

**Quote:**

***"Sow a thought, and you reap an action; sow an action, and you reap a habit; sow a habit, and you reap a character; sow a character, and you reap a destiny,"***

**2 Corinthians 10:4-6**

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy **strongholds.** 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 6 being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

Here we find the **word stronghold** – which can also be translated as **fortress or castle.**

When give the enemy the **opportunity to progress** from **a foothold -** the **incorrect thought** or **lie** or **the attitude** or **the sin gets** so **well established** it becomes **strongly entrenched.**

This is where what was a **wrong thought** or **demonic suggestion** is **acted on** and then **repeated until** it becomes a **habit** and starts to **define our character.**

We obviously **need to be alert** because the **battle is easier** if we are **careful not to even let** the enemy **get the tip of His tow** into any area of our lives.

And **as we advance spiritually**, we also do **not want to leave** areas where we **haven’t fully cleared out** the enemy’s control.

**Illustration:**

When the Allied forces were recapturing the European continent they grove the enemy back and **took back the port of Antwerp** but they **left the small Islands** to the **West** of the port **occupied by the enemy** – this later proved to be a **serious hold up** because they **could not use the port** to **bring in supplies close** to their **front lines** because the **enemy** could **interrupt the shipping.**

We have to be careful about **leaving some little areas** of our lives **not fully recaptured** from the enemy, some little **character flaw**, some **besting sin –** though small it can **stop us from getting all** that **God has** for us.

It **does not mean** we are **going to be perfect**, but we must be **willing to do all we can** with the **Lord’s help** to **rout the enemy** in those areas.

The **good news** is for us if we any sort of eviction – **there is help.**

**Jesus:**

**Luke 11:20-23**

20 But if I am casting out demons by the power of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you. 21 For when a **strong man is fully armed** and **guards his palace, his possessions are safe**—22 **until someone even stronger attacks** and **overpowers him, strips him of his weapons**, and **carries off his belongings.**23 “Anyone who isn’t with me opposes me, and anyone who isn’t working with me is actually working against me.

What a **great passage**.

Jesus is **talking about His authority** over **satan** and **all his demons.**

Jesus drives them **out by God’s authority**, but the **picture** here is **powerful.**

The **devil is** the **strong man** who is **well armed** and **well-fortified**, but Jesus is the **stronger man** who attacks, **defeats and disarms** the devil and **takes all his spoils.**

**Jesus captures back** all the **space,** the **people** and the **things** that the enemy has stolen.

Jesus **has all authority**; there is **no strong man** or **strong hold** **more powerful** than Him.

**Colossians 2:15**

15 He **disarmed the rulers** and **authorities** and put them to **open shame**, by triumphing over them in him.

**Philippians 2:8-11**

8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore **God has highly exalted him** and bestowed on him the **name that is above every name**, 10 so that at the name of Jesus **every knee should bow,** in **heaven** and **on earth** and **under the earth**,
11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Both these **passages refer** to what **Jesus did on the cross** when he died to **break the power of sin** over our lives when He **took all the punishment** and the **consequences** of our sin **upon himself.**

When He did this, he also **totally defeated** the **devil** and **stripped him of all His authority.**

Jesus is a **great Nehemiah** and He will **expel the devil**, He **is willing**, and He is **able.**

We see also that because of **Jesus’ total submission** and **obedience** to the Father God gave Jesus a **name above all things** over everything and **brough everything under His authority.**

The **key** however is that we need **grant Jesus the rights to our lives** - because despite all the authority that He has, **He will not override the free will** and the **authority** He has given to **each person.**

But as soon as we **cooperate with Him** all **His power and authority** are **brought to** **bear** and the is **no force or power in hell** that resist the **expulsion** of the devil and all his lies and ways.

**James 4:7-8**

7 **Submit** yourselves therefore to **God**. **Resist** the **devil,** and he will **flee from you**.
8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Just as Jesus **obeyed and submitted** and consequently **walked** into **great authority.**

So, when we **submit and obey**, we will also **walk in authority.**

We **don’t want to be** like **Eliashib** and **give the enemy** even and **inch of space.**

We don’t want the **enemy to be at home**, and we **don’t want Him to come back**.

We need to let **Jesus in**, and we need to let Him **set the guest list.**

**Furniture:**

There is an **interesting element** in the Nehemiah story.

**Nehemiah 13:8-9**

8 And I was very angry, and I **threw all the household furniture of Tobiah out of the chamber**. 9 Then **I gave orders, and they cleansed the chambers,** and I **brought back there the vessels of the house of God**, Furniture is what makes you comfortable in a place.

When we **evict the enemy** from a place that **he has gained ground in our lives** we must be careful to **throw out the furniture as well.**

The **furniture** is the things stuff that makes someone **feel comfortable** and **at home.**

If we **leave stuff in our lives** that **the enemy likes to sit on** – **put out the welcome** mat for the **enemy to return.**

It is worth taking a bit of time **to think about what things** would **make the enemy comfortable** – that would give him **some kind of pass** to **keep creeping back in.**

It is **no** **good throwing him out** but **keep doing the things** or **thinking the things** that made him **comfortable** in the **first place.**

To Understand more about this, we can go back to:

**Ephesians 4:26-27**

26 Be angry and do not sin; **do not let the sun go down on your anger**, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil.

This passage teaches that to be **angry is not sinful** – it does not **negate our emotions** – it **does not sugges**t that we just **bottle them** or **suppress them**, but it does say we should **not let then spill over into hurtful** **words** or **sinful actions.**

The term **not letting the sun go down** indicates that **we should not sit** on **unresolved issues.**

If we **harbour in our hearts** **unrepented sin** or **sinful attitudes** or **habits**, they create a **comfortable places** for the enemy to feel at home with.

When we **leave things undealt** with it **gives him an in.**

Sometimes we **have to look into our hearts** to see is there **is something there that is unresolved.**

Sometimes we **our emotions respond in a way** in a way that does not **seem proportional to the current situation** –

We get way **angrier** than the **events seem** to **warrant** or we get **anxious, fearful** or **discouraged** to a **greater degree** that would seem **normal.**

this is often an indication of an **emotional allergy.**

If we have had **bee stings** in the past and our **body develops an allergy** we get to a point **where one sting causes** a **massive over reaction** of our **immune system** that can kill us.

This happens the **same with our emotions** – we have a **traumatic incident** in our lives where we **could not handle the intensity of emotion at the time**, and it **creates an allergy.**

Then we are **triggered** by something that **reminds our soul** of the **earlier event** -which then that brings this **unresolved emotion** to the **fore and we overreact** in a way that is **over the top** and is **hurtful to those others or ourselves.**

If the initial event was a **sin against** us or **caused offence** and a **wounding** it can be possible that we **allow unforgiveness** into **our heart** that can **cause bitterness** or **resentment.**

If that hurt has been from an **authority figure** it could cause us to really **battle to relate to authority.**

If it was **abuse by a man**, it may cause all **men to trigger** the reaction.

These are **sometimes very deep** and **sensitive issues**, but the beautiful thing is **Jesus knows us better** that we **know ourselves** – He is the **most gentle and loving healer** – and if **we welcome him into** those **deeply painful places**, **he will set us free.**

He sometimes does this **miraculously** but more **often that not** he **uses other** people to **bring His love** and **counsel to the tender wounded parts.**

He most often **uses a community** and sometimes He may use a **professional counsellor,** but the key is to **trust Him** with every **area of our lives** and **not leave** some rooms **tightly locked from Him.**

If we **give Him all the keys**, he will **set us free.**

**John 8:36**

36 So if the **Son sets you free**, you will **be free indeed.**

**Illustration.** The **Cuckoo** and the **Hoopoes.**

**Slide: Image of birds**

It seems that **an aberration** - it **was a lazy**, fat and **demanding** and I was thinking **why are you feeding this thing?**

Why are we **rushing around frantically giving** into its **demands of our time and energy?**

The enemy will always try to lay an **illegitimate embryo into the soul.**

An **unforgiven grievance or offence**, a **sinful practice** that we **return to habitually**, deep **sense of shame** or **guilt over that sin** or even a **past failing** that has **already been forgiven**, a **fear,** a **prejudice**, a **gnawing anxiety**, a **character flaw like harmful anger** or **selfishness**, whatever it may be.

If we **nurture it** and feed it, it will **hatch and grow** and it will **consume all our resources** and **rob us of the dream God** wants to **incubate in us.**

We need to **stop feeding it** and **kick it out.**

We need to let our **great Nehemiah have all the keys** – let him into **all the deep recesses of our hearts** – to throw **the enemy** and his furniture – and **bring freedom and blessing.**

**Communion.**

**Hebrews 12:1-4**

​1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, **let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely**, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 **looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith,** who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 **Consider him** who **endured from sinners** such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. 4 In your **struggle against sin you** have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.