

Nehemiah 13:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?

Analysis

Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?

This verse within Nehemiah 13 addresses themes of reform, confronting compromise, vigilance, finishing well. Nehemiah's return from Persia reveals backsliding, requiring renewed reforms in areas previously addressed—showing constant vigilance's necessity. This passage demonstrates biblical principles applicable across both testaments—God's sovereignty combined with human responsibility, faith expressed through obedient action, and the necessity of both individual and corporate commitment to covenant faithfulness. Nehemiah models leadership that combines vision, prayer, courage, integrity, and perseverance amid sustained opposition.

Historical Context

Nehemiah's account occurs during Persian imperial dominance (539-331 BC), specifically 445-433 BC under Artaxerxes I. Nehemiah's final reforms address recurring covenant violations, demonstrating the ongoing challenge of maintaining spiritual commitment across generations. The Persian period was crucial transitional time when Jewish identity shifted from monarchical nationalism to Torah-centered covenantal community. Without political independence, the people's cohesion depended on shared scripture, temple worship, and covenant

obedience. This established patterns persisting through the Second Temple period into New Testament times. Understanding this context illuminates Jesus's ministry among a people shaped by these reforms and challenges.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does regular engagement with Scripture transform understanding of God and His will for your life?
2. What specific commitments do you need to make (or renew) regarding Bible reading, worship, and obedience?
3. How can the principles demonstrated in this passage inform your response to current challenges in your life or church?

Interlinear Text

מָה לְבָבִים תַּאַמְּךָ הַיְהוּדִים וְאָמַר יְהִי
Then I contended with the nobles of Judah and said
H7378 H854 H2715 H3063 H559 H0 H4100

עֲשֵׂים אַתָּם אֲשֶׁר פָּזָה בְּעֵבֶד רַע
unto them What evil is this that ye do
H1697 H2088 H834 H859 H6213

הַשְׁבָּתָן יְהוָה אֶת מִתְּמָלֵל יִם
and profane day the sabbath
H2490 H853 H3117 H7676

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 13:11 (Parallel theme): Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place.

Nehemiah 13:25 (Parallel theme): And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves.

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