**Spiritual Purity (Nehemiah 13:30-31)**

 Our spiritual purity is contingent on our faithfulness to God. Today we often hear from various sources that faithfulness within families, between husband and wife, has begun to erode and even be considered “inconvenient” for some. Our surrounding culture has in large part been emptied of ideas that reflect God’s will. It is as if two worlds are advancing at the same time: one is atheistic, the other Godly. When Christians try to express themselves within that atheistic cultural space, an immediate clash develops between the two spheres of influence. This would occur less if much of the general population had not become increasingly lax regarding their historic Christian faith. Similarly, today’s passage shows us just how important a people’s faithfulness is regarding God’s Word and His Identity. In one sentence, if we wanted to understand Nehemiah’s purpose in the verses that he penned, we would say that he brought God’s people back to worship. Spiritual purity, therefore, is part of true worship and also contingent on our faithfulness to God. Let us examine for a moment as to what it means to be faithful to God using this passage…

 The believer is called to separate from the worldly and to walk in worship. God had been calling His people for centuries to repentance, to faithfulness, to holiness. God had for centuries been reminding the Israelites that there was no God besides Him; that the stone, clay, and wooden statues and idols were unable to save them (from anything). However much God worked on His people through His prophets, they still by and large were enticed by the polytheistic ideas of the surrounding pagan religions. They thought that making friends with their pagan neighbors was economically more beneficial than working with their God-fearing compatriots. God’s people were losing their spiritual purity because they were looking at the immediate material and political benefits (of befriending their pagan neighbors) and not at the demands of God’s will, who had brought them out of slavery and a nomadic lifestyle. It is true that in working with neighboring pagans that there would be a short-term benefit for the Israelite traders – however, over the long-run, they would be influenced by the non-theists and eventually deny their Savior and Emancipator, who is the only True God.

 Nehemiah, by bring the truth into their lives, forced God’s people to make a decision: either they would work with believers and live where they were, or they were to disqualify themselves from being believers in the true God, and step outside the protective umbrella of God’s protection and become slaves to atheists and their worshipped idols and demons. Because of Nehemiah, they not only separated themselves spiritually from pagans, but their spiritual leaders returned to the worship of God and the people began to hear God’s word once again.

 In the early years of the twentieth century, in Scotland, on a Saturday night, a faithful preacher of the Gospel might be heard preaching `repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ', and repeating again and again the warning, `Turn or burn! Turn or burn!'

 What Nehemiah did represents a call to self-examination for us. We are to examine ourselves as to whether we live for the Lord truly, or superficially? We are to ask ourselves, “Have we separated ourselves from the world’s ungodly and anti-theistic activities and values?” We need to ask ourselves, “Are we walking in the worship of God?” Do we faithfully attend church gatherings? Is our prayer life burning brightly? Are we reading Scripture daily? Do we surround ourselves with believers to be encouraged and remain strong in our faith, hope and love?

 Today, God is reminding us to separate from what is worldly and to renew ourselves in the worship of God. Today review who your friends are: if you are surrounded by atheists, how will you be encouraged and strengthened in your faith? If you do not attend gatherings of Christians regularly, both as a church and in homes, how will you live out your faith practically, loving your spiritual family (the church), serving her and with her, and causing the unbeliever to desire what you have spiritually because of your love? The believer is called to separate from the worldly and to walk in worship.

 Therefore, let us separate from worldly things; let us be well-trained in the worship of God. If these two can be constants in our lives, we will succeed in keeping our faith and love burning brightly both towards God and our church family. Our spiritual purity is contingent on our faithfulness to God. The Lord bless you. Amen.