



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Corinthians 1:21). So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading (Nehemiah 8:8). Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend (Proverbs 27:17).

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The Preservative Nature of Scriptural Fellowship Lines

When we consider the preservative nature of Scriptural fellowship lines, we probably first of all think of preserve and/or fellowship lines. What do we want to preserve? To preserve is “to keep from harm and danger and damage and evil,” or “to keep up or carry on, and to maintain.” These are all very truthful if we think of fellowship lines and why we have fellowship lines. It is

because we want to keep the church from harm, damage, danger, and so on. To preserve is to safeguard. We do not pass judgment or are censorious, although that might be included. It might appear that way at times, or it might even be the case sometimes that we need to pass judgment for a certain thing. Nevertheless, our goal and aim is to preserve. We want to preserve.

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That is why we need to have fellowship lines. That is why we need to know who we can fellowship and with what we cannot, when there are dangers involved and so on.

We want to protect the church from harm, danger, and evil. We want the church to be pure, clean, and holy. Therefore, we think of preserving more than to judge. People might say, “Why are you so judgmental? Why can you not accept this group over here? You

are judging.” We hear that all along, all the time. Be that as it may, our aim is to preserve. Even though there are pressures like that we cannot lower our standards or go and fellowship with things that are questionable or unScriptural.

We need to deal with sin in order to preserve. Yes, we want to preserve the Church. The Church is Christ’s glorious possession. It is Christ’s most cherished treasure, we could say.

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There is nothing in this world that the Lord cherishes more than the Church. We are responsible for preserving that, to have clear fellowship lines, to know what is in the church, and if there is sin that will be dealt with.

We are held accountable for that as leaders in the church. Yes, we are. Ephesians 5:27 says “That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” That is what the Lord is looking for in the Church. We as leaders in the church are also looking for the church to be without spot or wrinkle and that there would not be any sin. There is no room for any sin in the church, is there? No, there is not. The church needs to be kept without spot or wrinkle “that it should be holy and without blemish.” Paul says, “For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2). We cannot be espoused to one and then go and court with another. The Lord will not accept that. Christ will not share His love with another.

We need to understand what is the church, and where is the church and it needs to be holy, pure, and blameless. The church is preserved for Him and Him

only. The bride which is the Church is preserved for the Bridegroom Christ Jesus. The bride is espoused to the Bridegroom Christ Jesus. The Church cannot go all over the place and court with something else then with Christ and be in fellowship with, and mingle with, almost anyone, anywhere, and anything and still maintain a relationship with the Lord. That will not happen. If that would be our experience then we could relate that to a wedding here in the earth, in the church — one man and one woman courting together. If that woman would go and court all over the place then maybe come home after a while and say, “Well, yes I love you. I want to be near to you. I want to be with you,” but then go on and court something else again. When would there ever be a wedding? I say there would not be.

It is the same in the Church. We will not experience the wedding supper of the Lamb if we will be going out all over the place and courting another than Jesus Christ. That is right. We will not make it to heaven. Therefore, we need to realize the necessity of the purity in the Church and that we need to preserve it. Our calling is to preserve. Whatever it takes

Scripturally, we need to do that.

In Acts 20 we have Paul's admonition to the Church leaders at Ephesus. We see how he had a burden for the Church. It is necessary that we have a burden for the Church, and for the well-being of the Church. We must desire to see the Church grow and prosper. We must do all we can in order that it will grow and prosper, and in order that it will remain pure and holy and blameless and without spot. Acts 20:18, 19 says, "And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, (19) Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews." Paul had a great burden for the Church. He desired that they would grow even though he would leave. He desired that the Church would go on and prosper and that the Lord's blessing would be upon it.

Paul gives the leaders instruction as to what to do in verses 27, 28. "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Can we say that this afternoon? Have we been doing that to "declare . . . all the counsel of God," to the people? And

he says, "(28) Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." We see a great responsibility here. We are charged with this same charge to take heed, first of all, unto ourselves. Where do we stand? What is our personal relationship with the Lord? Yes, how do I stand personally with the Lord? Then, it says, "and to all the flock, over the which" . . . who? The "Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church."

We see the responsibility here, and how Paul was concerned that the church leaders would take heed. *Paul was concerned what kind of fellowship they would have, what kind of diet they would have, what they would feed on.* Paul had a concern for the church that they would be fed the right things and that they would be able to grow in their Christian experience. He desired that they would be clean, clear, and holy, without spot, and blameless. Paul had that clear vision of the Church. Paul said that is the way it should be. We likewise need to realize the need of taking heed. We simply need to open our eyes such that we will see the dangers, and that we

would have a burden for the people, for the Church, Christ's Church, the Lord's Church. It is not our work, but it is the Lord's work. Therefore, we are stewards of the things that are entrusted into our care. We need to take heed because the Holy Spirit has set us over, to be overseers and we need to feed the church.

For further introduction, Peter has a great concern for the Church. 2 Peter 1:12-15 says, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. (13) Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; (14) Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. (15) Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance."

Peter is saying, "I want to always remind you of the truths of God's Word, of these things, of the present truth. Yes, even though you know them a long time already, but yet I realize the need. I am reminding you again and again of the dangers that surround you and of the importance of keeping the church clean, of

the importance of clear church fellowship lines." He wanted to remind them again and again. Then, he says, "Not only now while I am with you, but after I have passed from this life and I have gone to my reward. Then I still want you to remember these truths." That is a tremendous truth which we want to keep in our minds as we think of fellowship lines.

Where will our posterity be after our decease, after we have left this life? We have a lot with that today where they will be tomorrow, and we are responsible for that. We need to preserve them, while there is something to preserve. Certainly there is and we need to do that. As we think of fellowship lines, we need to preserve. Where will our posterity be tomorrow? We want them to remember the truths that we have taught. We want them to know.

Many of our churches are quite young. Some are older. Do we have a burden that those fellowship lines will remain the way we had them at the beginning of the conservative movement? Our fellowship movement, are we concerned that it will remain Scriptural? Is there something in our minds that we want to preserve that we started out several years ago? Certainly, in each one

of our hearts and minds are things that we feel we want to preserve. We want to keep those things. We do not want to grow lax. We want to keep. Again, when we have passed from time our little children, our young people, when they grow up we want them to have a sound church.

Many times people have said, "Wait fifteen, twenty or, twenty-five years then you will see it. Your church will be down the road into apostasy like all the other churches." I do not believe that because the Church of God will remain. We need to have faith that it will continue on. Yes, it will, but do we have a vision? Do we realize the need of preserving something today if we want to have a church tomorrow? We cannot simply let the thing slip and then expect to have a church tomorrow. It cannot be done. No, we need to have that burden.

Nehemiah shows us several things that he faced in his days and how he worked with some of those things. There is much that we could say about Nehemiah. We want to simply skip through several chapters and then draw out a few points. *Nehemiah had a vision of the Church, or we could say, he had a vision of Jerusalem how it lay in waste.*

Further, he had a vision of what it would be like if that wall would be rebuilt. He wanted that wall to be rebuilt because he had a desire to see Jerusalem being built up and then to be preserved. He had a burden for the work. He wanted it to be built back up so that it would be a place of safety.

1) *Nehemiah brought this burden to the Lord.* He prayed that the Lord would guide and direct in this matter. He was in captivity but he called on the Lord to open a way that he could go back to Jerusalem and build that wall. In Nehemiah 1:11 he prayed like this, "O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer." He called upon the Lord to direct the heart of the king that if he would ask for a leave to go back to Jerusalem to build the wall that the king would be intreated of him.

We see here how the Lord heard that prayer. Nehemiah prayed with a burden on his heart. He desired from the depths of his heart that the wall could be rebuilt. That was very near and dear to his heart. He

wanted to do all that he could in order to rebuild that.

The church today needs to be very near and very dear to our heart. We need to realize the terrible situation that the church would be in if the walls would be all broken down — that the fellowship lines would all be broken down. Where would we be today? Why, the church would lie in waste. We need to call on the Lord to help us if it needs to be rebuilt such that it will be rebuilt, and if it is up that it will stay up. Yes, we need to call on the Lord, and the Lord will hear because it is His desire that the Church will be preserved.

In Nehemiah 2:8 we see how the Lord answered that prayer. The last part of the verse says, “And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.” Nehemiah had the privilege to go back to Jerusalem and start a work on that wall.

2) *If things seem to go right then the enemy will also be around.* We dare not fool ourselves or think that we are exempt to the enemy getting a hold of us or that he cannot touch us. He certainly is restricted — his head is bruised — he cannot overthrow the Church — by no means. Yet, he will do his utmost to try and come in to work havoc,

to get us discouraged, and to get people’s attention to draw them away from the truth. We are in that day and age. We have an enemy that will try and do that. We need to reckon with that. Here, the Lord opened up the way for the walls to be rebuilt and yet the enemy was there too. The enemy came and tried his utmost to get the people discouraged or to mock them, or whatever way he came. He came in different ways — Sanballat and Tobias — they came in different ways. They tried one way or another to somehow break down the courage so that the people would give up.

Let us look at some of them. The enemy sought to hinder in Nehemiah 2:10, “When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.” Today too, our enemy is grieved exceedingly to see men building the church. He is doing his utmost to try and get us discouraged. Let us not think that we are exempt of that because he is trying every way he can. Thanks be to God there is a victory and we will see that also.

3) *We see how Nehemiah answered this enemy.* The enemy

was grieved that there was a man who rose up and would rebuild the wall, or seek the welfare of the children of Israel. We are seeking the welfare of our people. We are seeking the welfare of our children. We want to be at work. We want to preserve the Church. We are at work. We have an enemy that is grieved with that. Let us answer the enemy the way Nehemiah did time and again. Nehemiah 2:19, "But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?" They laughed them to scorn. We can expect that today too. People might laugh us to scorn. "Why are you so narrow? Why do you think it is so important?" and all kinds of things.

What kind of answer did Nehemiah have for them? He said, "Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem" (verse 20). I see here that Nehemiah was very strict, very stern, we could say. What was he trying to do, or what was he doing? He had in mind to pre-

serve the Church, we could say. He had in mind to preserve Jerusalem. That is what his concern was. He said, "ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial [with us]." "The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build." That is the determination we need to have. We, his servants will arise and build, regardless what the enemy tries to do to us. Are we convinced that we want to do that to preserve the truths that we have? We, His servants, together work to preserve the truth.

In Nehemiah 3, the wall was built. It is outlined there how they were building it. We will not look into that. The enemy was not ready to give up at that time yet. Although Nehemiah had given him a very clear answer, yet the enemy was not finished. He came again and again. That is the way it is today too. The enemy seeks to hinder again and again. Nehemiah 4:1-3 says, "But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. (2) And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an

end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? (3) Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." We see here that is liberally mocking — mocking the people of God. "Do you think they will fortify themselves? Do they think they are that strong? Do you think they know that much? Do they think they have all the answers?"

That mocking sounds very familiar today. A lot of people are saying the same thing. "Well, what do these people think? They have all the answers for everything, and all they are doing is going around and judging. Everybody is wrong and we are right." Let them say what they want, but we want to be convinced that we are following the truth and that we are building the Church. We need to have that clear.

4) *Nehemiah 4:9* says, "Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God," — "Whatever they said we made our prayer unto God" ". . .and set a watch against them day and night, because of them." Where is our watch today? It says that they "set a watch against [the enemy] day and night, because of

them." It was because of the enemy that was constantly trying to get their minds off the work. Therefore, they watched. Again, that is the way we need to do it. We need to watch day and night. "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" (Matthew 26:40) Jesus said when He was out in the garden praying. He came and found the disciples sleeping when He came back. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41). We dare not do anything less brethren and sisters. Why? It is because of the enemy. The enemy is there. That is why. We cannot lower our standards. We cannot lower our fellowship lines. We cannot do it. We need to keep them right up, and watch and pray that the enemy will not get any entrance, not at all, not in the slightest way. We do not have any room at all for any influence whatsoever from our enemy. No room. No room at all.

5) *Cleaning house*. We see that in *Nehemiah 4:10*. "And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall." Things need to be cleaned up and certainly there might be that. If the enemy is hard at work, we need to also think of within. The enemy might be without, but

what is happening inside? He might have come in unawares — whatever. There might be rubbish in the way. We need to clean that out in order to gain the victory and continue on.

6) *Nehemiah 4:11* — “*And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.*” The enemy still was scheming and they wanted to come right into the midst without them realizing that they were coming. Dearly beloved, I again say that is what he is trying today. In the church of Jesus Christ we are aware of what is happening. We need to be aware what is happening such that Satan will not be able to play that trick on us to come in unaware some place and spoil us. Again, that is a reason why we need to have these fellowship lines clear. If Satan is around trying to scheme those things, we need to know what is happening. Nehemiah knew that. The enemy could not come in unawares. He did not creep in unawares. Nehemiah knew what was happening. Therefore, he could have the victory again.

7) *In Nehemiah 6:1–3 the enemy is using another method.* “Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and

Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) (2) That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. (3) And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?” These men had a very good scheme to come out to the plains of Ono and simply discuss the matter peacefully. “Why can we not reason a little bit? You know, we are not that far apart. After all, we are all going to the same heaven. Do you not expect to go to the same heaven as what I am?” There are all kinds of questions people are asking today. “Why so far apart?”

He knew that the enemy thought to do him mischief. Sad to say, people today sometimes do not realize that the enemy is trying to do us mischief and they go about and reason with the enemy. “Maybe it is not that important. Maybe we can fellowship a little bit here and there.” No, let us realize that our enemy

is thinking to do us mischief. He is trying to break down the church and we are not going even though he might have a sound reason and it looks very good on the surface. We are not going along with our enemy's ideas. We cannot do that. We need to stay clear from that altogether.

8) *Nehemiah 6:7-9*, "And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together." — "Why could we not sit down and discuss this thing through." (8) Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. (9) For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands." Sometimes Satan comes in a subtle way and tries to break down our fellowship lines. He tries to break down conviction in the church such that there would not be any reserve. It almost seems to sound reasonable. "Look at the reasonable program these people have here. Why would we not simply go out there and serve a little bit maybe? Why would we

not simply allow our young people to go and fellowship with a certain congregation? Oh yes, it is questionable but after all, they give us such good counsel, and we are not that far apart."

That is the time when we need to call on God that He would strengthen our hands and that we would not give into that kind of a soft reasoning. Then, we need to call on the Lord that He would strengthen our hands, and He will. Yes, He will. We know how Tobiah sent letters to try to make him fear in *Nehemiah 6:19*. Yes, Tobiah tried to make Nehemiah fearful. We are thankful for the testimony that Nehemiah left.

9) *As we think of preserving — the preservative nature of Scriptural fellowship lines, there needs to be unity.* Unity is a must to preserve. I also appreciate what Nehemiah had to say about that. *Nehemiah 4:16-23* says, "And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. (17) They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a

weapon. (18) For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me. (19) And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. (20) In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us. (21) So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. (22) Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day. (23) So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing.”

We see here a united force that Nehemiah had to go forth and stay the enemy, and to do what was necessary to stay the enemy. They were united. They were as one man. Nehemiah 8:1 says, “And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate.” That is a must for us today if we want to preserve our

churches. The ministry must be united 100%. I do not see any other way than a 100% united ministry in the congregations to preserve. If we cannot think alike then we are defeated already in a measure. If there is not unity, if we find ourselves in a situation where the ministry is not 100% united, there will be needs. We need to be united if we want to keep up those fellowship lines in a safe place. There is no way that we will be preserving the church if there will not be that. May God help us that there would be a united force going forth.

We think of a congregational basis. However, it is also necessary on a larger scale, churches one to another, between congregations. There needs to be unity working for the same cause, holding forth the same truth. We need to do that.

10) *There needs to be clear teaching.* That also was taking place in Nehemiah’s day. They had a clear teaching program. It is so necessary for us today that we will understand, that people will understand what is meant with what is said and that we will not lead them in the dark. We need to point out clearly what does it mean? What do the Scriptures say? What will happen if there is sin? It needs to be

a clear ringing tone. There is no other way.

Nehemiah 8:2, 3 says, “And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. (3) And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.” People were attentive. There needs to be a teaching program, a sound, clear teaching program. The Word needs to be brought out before all the congregation, before all our brethren and sisters, our young people and our children, all need to clearly understand what does the Word say? What is the teaching of the Word? It needs to be done. We are preserving. We want to keep that safe such that there will not be damage or danger involved but that everyone will be preserved. We need to have a clear teaching program.

Nehemiah 8:4 says, “And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose.” Ezra was at a place where people could see, and where people could observe him. There, he held forth the Word of

life clear and true for everyone to see and for everyone to hear. What is meant by what we preach? What is meant by the message that you preached last Sunday? Did the people know? Was it crystal clear to everyone? It needs to be.

“And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: (6) And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground” (Nehemiah 8:5, 6). They were taught. Then, in verse 8, “So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.” It was distinct and they gave the sense. The people promised that they would do whatever it took to be faithful to the Lord. Nehemiah had led them to a wonderful place.

11) *In Nehemiah 10:29 the people promised to do all the Law.* They made a covenant, we could say. “They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God’s law, which was given by Moses the servant

of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes.” The people were committed to the cause. They wanted to do whatever it took. They wanted to be faithful to the teachings of Ezra and Nehemiah. Whatever it took they promised to be faithful.

12) They promised not to be mixed with the people of the land in verse 30. There would be no mixed marriages. They said, “We promise not to do that, or to sell and buy on the Sabbath day,” because it was outlined in the Law that they were not supposed to do that. They said, “We will not do it.” They brought all the firstlings to the house of God. They were committed to the cause. “Preserve the priesthood,” they said. They would do that. “Respect the priesthood.” They promised very boldly to do all of God’s cause. They were willing to go all the way.

13) *Calamity overtook them because of compromise.* A very tragic thing happened. We want to look a little bit at that yet. That was a sad situation. The Ammonites and Moabites were not allowed in the congregation of God. We read that very clearly here in Nehemiah 13:2. It gives the reason why they were not supposed to. “Because they

met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing.” We know the account and will not go into that. For that reason these were not allowed in the house of God that they “should not come into the congregation of God for ever” (Nehemiah 13:1). They were not allowed to go in.

However, when Nehemiah was gone (he had promised the king that he would go back after a while) Eliashib the priest had oversight of the house of God. To me, it seems that Eliashib and Nehemiah must not have been united very well, or else Eliashib would have continued to teach that what Nehemiah had. Eliashib was careless. He allowed Tobiah to come right into the house of our God. “And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah” (Nehemiah 13:4). Yes, he was allied. He was joined to him, or he had a friendship with Tobiah. He had not cut clear lines with Tobiah. The fellowship lines had not been clear. Consequently, something very precious broke down. Eliashib brought Tobiah right into the chamber of the house,

where up until then they had the meat offering, the frankincense and the vessels and so on, in the most holy place. He brought this man right into this place where they were not allowed to enter in at all. Yes, he brought him right into the holiest place, we could say.

Today, we might say that he allowed him to preach. I do not know what application we could make. I am sure there could be different ones. Nevertheless, Tobiah, the man whom God has said was not supposed to enter in, was right inside. That was very sad. The people broke their promises. They said that they would keep all these covenants, all these promises, and that all fell by the wayside because of one unfaithful leader, because of one unfaithful man. He was careless about fellowship lines and the whole thing broke down. That is a very sad position. Nehemiah was grieved when he returned. He came back and cleansed the house. Nehemiah 13:7–10 says, “And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. (8) And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. (9) Then I com-

manded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense.”

We see Nehemiah cleaning house. He put out the sin and the man that was involved. He put them out, and everything that he had brought in, and brought back again the vessels of God, and the things that belonged in the house of God. He was very sorely grieved at all the things that he saw. The people had promised that they would not trespass and they would not buy and sell on the sabbath day. Nevertheless, he saw people treading the winepress on the sabbath day [see Nehemiah 13:15], which they so faithfully promised they would not do. Nehemiah saw mixed marriages which they also said they would not do, they would not be involved in that. The priests had fled because they were not giving the priests recognition anymore, which they also had promised they would do.

We see the effect of an unfaithful man who did not hold the fellowship lines in a place that he needed to keep them, and the people were gone, sad to say, very far away. We need to cry out against sin like Nehemiah did, even though there might have been someone who was

careless and the fellowship lines were not kept. We still need to cry out against sin. We still need to go back and clean house.

14) *We need to be in the place where God has called us to be.* One thing I was thinking of when I was studying this was that Nehemiah went away a while, and what happened at home? Most of us are not at home this week. Do we know what is happening at home? We are not only meaning our physical presence but our influence that we leave when we are there and in whatever way. We need to hold our hand on the pulse of the congregation. We need to know who is in charge in our absence. We need to know that it is a sound man who will keep fellowship lines where they need to be, and that he will address sin — what needs to be dealt with. We dare not be negligent at home and run all over the world and forget about our work at home. We are not getting any place if that is what we plan to do, or if that is what we are doing.

We need to keep house at home, but we also need to go out into the outermost part of the world and preach the Gospel throughout the world. Nevertheless, we cannot neglect the responsibility at home. Notice what happened where, in

the absence of Nehemiah. It was a sad situation. Yet, Nehemiah was very strong. He carried out very strong discipline and we do not know what all happened after he cleaned out, but he took some very strong measures.

In Nehemiah 13 let us notice a few things what he did. What did he do? Was he judgmental? Was he censorious? Or, did he have a concern to preserve? Well, he wanted to preserve. That is why he took these sharp measures. Nehemiah 13:25 says, “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.” Yes, he carried out very sharp discipline measures. He realized it needed to be done. Then, in verse 28 it says, “And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me.” It was different from what God had outlined it should be. Nehemiah had a burden for God’s people. He chased this evil person from him. He could not be part of it anymore. It needed to be dealt with, and in very severe measures, we could say.

A few more instances in the Scripture where clear fellowship lines were drawn because of sin. In Numbers 16 we have the account of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, men who spoke against leadership and the leaven spread. That is exactly what is happening today. If people are allowed to continue on and to sin in the congregation, or to speak up against leadership disrespectfully like these people did, the leaven spreads. God says here. “Separate yourselves from these wicked men” [Numbers 16:26]. “Do not fellowship with these wicked men. Draw the line. Those men you cannot be with. They will draw you away from the truth.” Do we have that as clear as that — questionable fellowship — things that are unScriptural that we simply, and absolutely separate ourselves from them? God says that Separate yourselves from these wicked people. We know what happened. The ground opened up and the people were swallowed. They “went down alive into the pit” (Numbers 16:33), because of disobedience to the Word of God.

“And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in

all their sins.” We will be consumed the same way if we will be careless. We cannot do it. We need to be separate from sinful situations such as that.

A few things in the New Testament. Acts 5 we say is an account where the Church disciplined sinners (and it was) after Ananias and Sapphira were dealt with. A fellowship line was drawn “And great fear came upon all the church” (Acts 5:11). Ananias and Sapphira were dealt with “And great fear came upon all the church.” That is the way it needs to be too. We need to outline clearly what our fellowship lines are, with whom we can fellowship with and which people need to be dealt with. Sinners need to be put out of the church. That needs to be clear and we need to work toward that. Then, there will be great fear among the rest of the people, like it was in this case. It was an extreme case we say. Nevertheless, sin always leads to death. It does not matter what kind of sin it is. We might talk about smaller sins or big sins. It does not make any difference. Sin always leads to death. We need to deal with that as such. Then, it says, “great fear came upon all the church.” That is what will happen today.

Another thing it says in verse 13, “And of the rest durst no man

join himself to them: but the people magnified them.” That means that people who do not mean business will not come and knock on our doors and try to be part of us. We need to have that clear. Fellowship lines need to speak to the people. If someone plans to continue on in sin and he comes and wants to join himself to us, I wonder where we stand. Why would a person want to join us and bring in sin? Apparently, he is seeing something amongst us that he figures his sinful situation might not be that bad. Here it says, “And of the rest durst.” In other words, of the rest no one dared to join themselves to the Church.

Yet, we see the next verse (verse 14), “And believers were the more added to the Lord.” Believers were added to the Lord. We talk about believers’ baptism. Believers were added unto the Lord. It was not people who have a wishy-washy idea of Christianity, are not sure of their salvation or simply trying somehow or another way to get into the Church. No, that needs to be clear. Believers were added unto the Church — “Were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women,” because of clearness of teaching.

“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Corinthians 5:6;

Galatians 5:9). We hear that also and we might as well hear it again. “Purge out therefore the old leaven” (1 Corinthians 5:7). “Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1 Corinthians 5:13). “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:11). We cannot have fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness. We have much to preserve. The Church of Jesus Christ.

We can think of the work that our church is involved. Let us think of for a moment, say our publishing work — the publishing houses. We need to encourage our brethren that are involved in that to censor and to judge very closely the material to be printed with this preservative thought in mind. We want to preserve our sound teaching program in the printed page. As it goes forth to all the world around that it would be a sound clear tone that is coming forth to everyone who will be in hearing distance or that will get a hold of this material, whether other schools or our own. We need to be on guard that this will be preserved even after we are deceased. It must be preserved so that our children will have the privilege of attending sound Christian day schools and also of

reading sound Christian books.

If we are careless, and if we compromise, or we could say if we are simply a little lax, that means we are compromising a little already. “Why? This is nothing. Why be so censorious? Why be so judgmental?” Then, we are compromising already. We need to have that always in mind. We could also say about where we go to fellowship. Let us get a little more specific. A brother made the remark that “It is not the most liberal or the most conservative groups where most pressure will come from.” Well, where will it come from then? We sometimes use the expression, “halfway houses” [or modified conservatism]. They are churches that do not have clear standards. They are churches that do not clearly teach, or do not have a clear teaching on dress, hair, and casual wear. Sports cars, musical instruments, radios and young people who are not in subjection. Are we judgmental if we draw the fellowship lines there? Are we too judgmental to say that we cannot fellowship with people like that?

We might turn the question around. Do we want to have radios, let us say in five or ten years from now? I am sure everyone will shake their head no. I, at least, hope so. Then, we

must have those fellowship lines clear. We cannot go and court with people who say “A radio — that is nothing.” We might as well tolerate that. We might as well give into that. We cannot court with that kind of thing and think and try and fool ourselves that five or ten years down the road we will still be clear of that thing. That is simply one example. That goes for all the other things that I mentioned.

We need fellowship lines that preserve. What about going to worldly weddings? Yes, our relatives have a wedding that is worldly as can be, can we go? “It is my sister, or my uncle,” or whatever it is, or “my niece.” Should we not go and at least show some love? Well, it is the most worldly wedding. It might be in a church, but it is the most worldly wedding, and it is the most abominable thing in the sight of God. Here all the people are sitting together and praising the Lord and saying, “Well, the Lord bless this union,” and so on. Can we have part in that? No, we cannot. We want to preserve. Therefore, we must. It might seem judgmental, but we need to draw the line and say “No.” I do not see any other way.

How about a minister in our pulpits where they have these things? He himself says, “Oh, I

have my home clear of that,” but how about his congregation? Are we too judgmental if we would draw our line on that? Or, how would we weed things out like that if there would be some? Fellowship lines that preserve.

In closing, I would just like to read a few verses. This goes with the thought that we had before, about our posterity. It is worthwhile to look at a few verses here. 2 Timothy 2:2 says, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the

same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” That means probably your son, or your son’s son that there will be a continuation of the same teaching, of the same truths of God’s Word such that the same thing will be preserved for them. That is right. Verse 22 says, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with. . .” whom? “With them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” May the Lord bless His Word.

Scripture References

	Numbers	8:4	61	20:27, 28	52
16:26	65	8:5, 6	61	1 Corinthians	
16:33	65	8:8	61	5:6	66
	Nehemiah	10:29	61	5:7	66
1:11	54	13:1	62	5:13	66
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2:10	55	13:4	62	11:2	51
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4:1–3	56	13:25	64	Ephesians	
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8:2, 3	61	5:14	66		
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	Peril of the Process of Accommodation, The	<input type="checkbox"/>

From the Previous Issue:

1944 — The Turning Tides in the Mennonite Church

From a message by Luke Sensenig

Wednesday, November 29, 2000

Thirty-Fourth Annual

Ministers' Bible Study Fellowship

Numidia Mennonite Bible School

Book Reprint *(continued)*

The Seven Laws of Teaching

CHAPTER V

THE LAW OF THE LESSON *(continued)*

Rules for Teachers

This law of knowledge, thus explained, affords to the thoughtful teacher rules of the highest practical value. It offers clear guidance to those who are teachers of children and anxious that their task shall be well done.

(1) Find out what your pupils know of the subject you wish to teach to them; this is your starting-point. This refers not only to textbook knowledge but to all information that they may possess, however acquired.

(2) Make the most of the pupils' knowledge and experience. Let them feel its extent and value, as a means to further knowledge.

(3) Encourage your pupils to clear up and freshen their knowledge by a clear statement of it.

(4) Begin with facts or ideas

that lie near your pupils, and that can be reached by a single step from what is already familiar; thus, geography naturally begins with the hometown, history with the pupils' own memories, morals with their own conscience.

(5) Relate every lesson as much as possible to former lessons, and with the pupils' knowledge and experience.

(6) Arrange your presentation so that each step of the lesson shall lead easily and naturally to the next.

(7) Proportion the steps of the lesson to the ages and attainments of your pupils. Do not discourage your children with lessons or exercises that are too long, or fail to rise to the expectations of older pupils by giving them lessons that are too easy.

(8) Find illustrations in the commonest and most familiar objects suitable for the purpose.

(9) Lead the pupils themselves to find illustrations from their own experience.

(10) Make every new fact or principle familiar to your pupils; try to establish and intrench it firmly, so that it will be available for use in explaining new material to come.

(11) Urge the pupils to make use of their own knowledge and attainments in every way that is practicable, to find or explain other knowledge. Teach them that knowledge is power by showing how knowledge really helps to solve problems.

(12) Make every advance clear and familiar, so that the progress to the next succeeding step shall in every case be on known ground.

(13) As far as possible, choose the problems which you give to your pupils from their own activities, and thus increase the chances that they will be real and not artificial problems.

(14) Remember that your pupils are learning to think, and that to think properly they must learn to face intelligently and reflectively the problems that arise in connection with their school work, and in connection with their life outside of school.

Youth Book Reprint *(continued)* **Judith**

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I

HAPPY DAYS OF CHILDHOOD

*The Beloved Daughter— In the Country — Discourse of the Rabbis
— Who was, "Yeshua"?*

The Beloved Daughter

THE LIFE in the home of Mr. Weinberg was happy and undis-

turbed for many years. He was a wealthy wholesale merchant of dry goods. Under his able management, the income had increased yearly. The business was growing and had been especially successful of late. But material welfare was not the main object in the life of Mr. and Mrs. Weinberg. Their greatest treasures were three lovely daughters who filled the hearts of their parents with joy and delight.

The ambition of the parents was to give their girls the best education and, what was even more important, to instill into them the good old Hebrew customs and principles of life, to plant into the hearts of their children the faith in the blessed Jehovah, Who in times past had greatly helped all true and faithful Israelites.

The family Weinberg had among their ancestors a good many fine, stalwart rabbis, who had jealously protected and guarded their fathers' religious tradition. Rightly this family was called the bearer of religious life of which there were only a few left among this nation, which is losing its religion more and more.

There were times when Mr.

and Mrs. Weinberg were sad and sorrowful because God had not given them a son and heir who would continue their old family. The greatest grief in a Jewish family is the absence of a son, who has to pray after his father's death for the latter, to increase his happiness in the hereafter. However, such moments were rare, as their three lively girls always succeeded in scattering the clouds of sorrow. With their merry chatter, they filled the hearts and home of the parents with joy and happiness as little birds fill the air in spring with their chirping.

Judith, the oldest of the three, and the beloved pet of the family, was a special joy to her parents. She had developed her abilities early and proved to be more capable than the others. The early delight and interest of little Judith in religion and her many earnest questions about God, too earnest for her age, kindled the hope in the hearts of her father and mother that she would later become a "true bearer" of their religion and the traditions of their fathers. Often she would ply her parents with questions about the details of the ceremonial side of the religious life.

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