

Looking for a Few Good Men

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I. Introduction.

A. Text: Nehemiah 13.

B. This is the story of a backward slide on the part of these people.

II. The Israelites excluded the Ammonites and the Moabites from their assembly.

A. The Israelites had taken a vow to exclude these some time ago, but they had eventually gotten in because of intermarrying. (Deuteronomy 23)

B. The reason for the exclusion was the Ammonite and Moabite mistreatment of the Israelites 900 years earlier through Balaam.

1. Some question whether this shows God to be too great in retribution.

2. However, God knows the hearts of people.

3. The Ammonites and Moabites filled Israel with impurities, so they were to remain apart from them for their own benefit. (Ezra 2)

III. These stories indicate something going on inside of the Israelites and the church today.

A. The Ammonites and the Moabites are related to Israel—they constantly polluted Israel, but Israel could not get rid of them because they were related to them.

B. The flesh pollutes us as well, but we cannot get rid of it because it is a part of us. We are called to live above it and rebel against it.

C. Two wrongs picture the problem with the flesh: an Ammonite was living in the temple contra the Law, and the Levites were being deprived of their rights.

D. Nehemiah reacts harshly to this.

1. Some people think Nehemiah responded too harshly.

2. Jesus reacted similarly to Nehemiah when He drove out the moneychangers from the temple.

3. There is a time for strong stances against evil.

4. Jesus said to take drastic action against sin. (Matthew 5-7)

E. The result of this kind of “intermarriage” is the neglect of the ministry.

IV. A priest, scribe, Levite and a layman were chosen to represent the ministry because they were trustworthy.

- A. It is required of a steward that he is found faithful. (I Corinthians 4)
- B. Nehemiah does not look for macho-ness or personality—he looks for faithfulness.
- C. The reward of faithfulness is the Lord’s commendation.
- D. Four things to look for in men and women who serve.
 - 1. A searching mind.
 - 2. A humble heart.
 - 3. An evident gift.
 - 4. A faithful spirit.
- E. The work of the ministry involves all Christians wherever they are.

V. Nehemiah’s prayer.

- A. He is recognizing his own frailty and proneness to self-deception.
- B. He asks God to search him out to find any wickedness in him and lead him in ways everlasting.

VI. Conclusion: God calls us to faithful ministry in an era of great need in Nehemiah.

Application questions:

1. How does the picture of a servant in the church differ from that of a servant in the world?

2. What example comes to mind of a Christian or a group of Christians failing to take drastic action against sin at the appropriate time? What was the result?

3. How does Nehemiah’s prayer reveal the appropriate attitude we ought to have concerning our own status before God? Explain.
