

How Can You Turn Your Anger into Action?

- Well Pastor Mark here. Last Sermon of the year and we're in Nehemiah chapter 13 finishing that great book of the Bible. Truth is, I'm up in the mountains with the family, getting a little bit of a post holiday recovery and break. Hope you are getting some good downtime as well and had a great holiday season and didn't feel like heading into the studio. So the only quiet place with the family, the size of mine is to go outside and yes, this is still Arizona. You can get a mile plus high and the temperatures and the seasons really change. It's quite beautiful. And this might be a short sermon 'cause it's cold outside, man. It's as chilly as a Trump-Biden double date. But we're gonna power through. Where we find ourselves is at the end of the year. And I just wanted to say as well, thanks to everyone who prays for us, partners with us. And if you'd like to join us in helping us getting Bible teaching out to the world next year, best thing you can do is just go to real faith.com and set up recurring giving. Next week, Grace and I will be starting a brand new sermon series, Real Romance, Sex in the Song of Songs and releasing a book around Valentine's Day with our friends at XO. And so it's cold outside but we're gonna heat it up next year. Nonetheless, let's just jump right into Nehemiah 13 and then I'm gonna go sit by the fire. The question is how can you turn your anger into action? And a lot of the fairy tales and stories that we tell in the western world end, "and they lived happily ever after," as if everything was perfect and there was no problems ever again. Well, the Bible is not a fairy tale, it's actually more of a horror story if you look at it from God's perspective. And it's the most honest book that's ever been written. And it tells us about the pains, problems in perils of human sin, folly and rebellion. And that is on full display in Nehemiah 13. And so Nehemiah is angry, he says in chapter 13, verses seven and eight, that people were just continually doing evil. He uses that word evil. Today, we would call it tolerance, diversity, pluralism, or an alternative perspective. God would call it evil. So Nehemiah calls it evil and it says, quote "That he was very angry," and he shows and demonstrates his anger. He tells some guys in chapter 13, knock it off or quote, "I'm gonna lay my hands on you." He actually gets into a few physical altercations and even scalps a couple of dudes. Now the issue is, is this a good idea? Is this what we should do? Well the issue of anger is an important one. And if anything Christianity today in its evangelical form is too soft, it's too woke, it's too weak, it's too tender and it's too accommodating and it's not tough enough. And the truth is, there are some things going on in Christianity that quite frankly, if you love God and believe the Bible, you should be angry about. You should be frustrated by, you should have an emotional response to, and somehow just this, I dunno, even jellyfish that lacks any spiritual vertebrae, kind of predominant Christianity that we find in the West, basically says that the essence of Christianity is just to be a really nice person and to always be joyful and happy and to let everybody do whatever the heck they want and just support them with love, tolerance and diversity. And never get frustrated by anyone or anything. Well that's just not how God is. God gets angry in the Bible, the Bible says that God is slow to anger. Jesus shows up on the earth, he's perfect, never sins or makes a mistake and he gets angry. And here Nehemiah gets angry. You can consider maybe it's a good discussion or debate. We can have it in the comments if you like. Whether or not him laying hands on guys, getting in a few fights and scalping a few dudes is a good idea. I'm not gonna defend what he did, but I will say that his anger is justified. And here's where his anger is justified, is it's not selfish. It's not just him wanting to get his way and defend his rights. And most of our anger, quite frankly, it's really

selfish. We got inconvenienced, we got hurt, we got taken advantage of or in some regard we didn't get what we feel we had coming. His anger is related to God. It's not selfish, it's unselfish. They're hurting one another, they're hurting, their relationship with God, they're dishonoring their witness to the world and they're gonna ruin the entire coming of Jesus eventually back to the city of Jerusalem, back to the temple 'cause that was their job. To rebuild the temple and rebuild the walls and rehang the gates and reignite the worship of God to welcome the return of Jesus. And so that's what ultimately was at stake. And he's got a journal entry here. And really Nehemiah has a lot of journal entries. The dude prays throughout the book and he processes through journaling that's on full display in Nehemiah 13. It's a page from his journal entry and he prays multiple times in Nehemiah 13. So the point is this, when you're frustrated, when you're angry, when you're sick of it, when you just don't know what to do, when you're bewildered, when you're scared, when you've just had it up to here or maybe up to here, it's good to stop and pray and process through journaling, work it out with God, let him be your release valve, let him be your lightning rod to ground out the storm that you're feeling in your soul. That's what he does. Now the the storyline of Nehemiah is this, I've got a few notes, hand scratch: remnant, rebuild, revival, ruin and return. And that's the storyline of Nehemiah. First there's a remnant. It starts with a small group of people who really do know and love the Lord. There would be a lot of people in that day who professed faith but they didn't possess faith and they weren't practicing it. But there were a few true believers. Nehemiah was among them. And this is the way that God works. Paul talks about this in the book of Romans as well. That is that God preserves a remnant of people who really do believe in him, belong to him, and wanna love and serve him. Think of it kind of like a fire. One of my favorite things, I like to chop wood and I like to make fires. I'm gonna make one over here in just a little bit. But what happens with a fire is once the fire is raging, it's quite incredible. And then slowly it begins to burn down and die down. And at the end there's just a few hot coals and embers that remain. And it's pretty amazing how long a few hot coals and embers can remain hot if they stick together and they can maintain some sense of heat and light for a long time. Well, Christians are like that. Sometimes there'll be a big move of God and there's a lot of people. And then over time the faith wanes and dissipates down to just a few people, just a few coals and embers that remain. But they are still hot and bright and they do belong to and want to serve the Lord. That's a remnant. So what happens is in Nehemiah, they had this remnant that had scattered for 141 years as their nation was attacked by the Babylonians in the days of Daniel. But this remnant finally got together and they rebuilt. So the remnant moved back to Jerusalem and they rebuilt. Now their city, their temple, their worship of God, their life devoted to God had really been on pause for 141 years and they were a succession of rebuilding efforts that were undertaken and they all failed. But under Nehemiah and Ezra's leadership, they completed the task. The Bible tells us, in 52 short days. So the remnant came back and they rebuilt the temple, the walls and the worship of God. And then there was a revival. Ezra gets up and preaches a six hour sermon, my personal new life verse. The band sings, the choir leads the small group leaders meet with people, answer questions. There's this mass revival, tens of thousands of people show up, they commit themselves to the Lord and there is this amazing revival. They then take a whole week off of work. They go to a Bible conference, they just wanna learn God's word. And in this revival, it's really led and instigated by the Holy Spirit working in and through the men. And so the men get

together and one of the chapters in Nehemiah and they covenant together, "Okay, we're gonna love God, we're gonna be faithful to our wife. We're only gonna marry believers. We're gonna raise our kids to love the Lord. We're gonna give generously to fund local ministry." And they make these public commitments, oaths that bind them together in the sight of God to do what God is calling them and created them to do. Well, this revival carries and carries for a while and eventually Nehemiah comes to the conclusion that perhaps his work is done. And so he served as governor in Jerusalem and things were going pretty well for about a dozen years. And then he decided to move back through the place that he was living previously, Susa, which is a capital city in Persia, we don't know, but he may have been called back by the political leadership as he had a governmental job. Scholars are unsure. He was gone from Jerusalem, the temple, God's people for anywhere from two to seven years. He was probably, they think, in his 50s or 60s. So I'm 52. So Nehemiah was maybe my age, maybe a little older. He spent millions of dollars, gave 12 years of his life, put his life on the line, gave it all for God. Things seem to be going good. So he transitions and he hands over leadership to others. Well immediately then what happens is, everything goes to ruin. And Nehemiah is very angry and upset that they're right back to where they started. And so then that leads him to return and he returns and he moves back to Jerusalem. And immediately what he sees angers him, frustrates him and compels him towards some aggressive action. And really the heart of what frustrated Nehemiah and should frustrate us is something called apostasy. apostasy is a Greek term that originally came from military. Let's say you're part of a military unit and you are fighting for your nation and you're fighting against an enemy nation. apostasy is treason. It's where you turn sides and you attack your own king and kingdom and you oppose your own fellow soldiers. It is the worst betrayal of all. And it is something that happens in the physical realm and it happens in the spiritual realm. And so spiritual warfare is where God's people are trying to do ministry and God's enemies are trying to do anti ministry. We see this in Nehemiah with Sanballat, Tobiah and others who are working with them. We see this in our own day with the pajama hadin, you know, online attacking Christian leaders, magnifying minor errors, falsifying data, lying, slander, defamation, attacks of all sorts and kinds. The enemy's always recruiting people, even some who pretend to be a bit spiritual for anti ministry. And so it's war, it's God's people trying to advance and enemies trying to stop them. It's ministry versus anti ministry. And apostasy is when you're with God's people and then you turn around and you oppose and attack them. And you are doing the work of Satan and maybe even claiming that it is in the name of the Lord. And this is where apostasy is so dangerous and damnable and deadly 'cause it's confusing to unbelievers. If you just say, "Hey, I'm not a Christian," nobody's confused if you say "I am a Christian." But what you do and say, what you believe in how you behave as opposed to God. It's very confusing. And there's always people that want to create a new kind of Christian, some sort of progressive Christian, some sort of hyphenated Christian, some sort of compromised Christian. In our day, the apostasy is e-pi-de-mic, it is unbelievable. It's easier to find false teaching than it is good Bible teaching. It is much easier to find people who think that love is God and don't know that God is holy. It's a lot more popular to say that you get to sleep with whoever you want. You don't need to repent of your sin or change your life and nobody's going to hell. And the truth is, if we're all good people and God just loves us as we are and has no desire to change us and his only response to our behavior as tolerance, diversity,

celebration, and pride, then why in the world did Jesus come? Why in the world did Jesus die? Why in the world did Jesus rise? And why the heck do we need to be saved? Saved from who? Save from what? And so ultimately there's always apostasy in our day. It's everywhere, man. It is everywhere. You've got the transgender issue, you've got the rainbow flag flying "churches", which has come outta Satan's closet. You've got the BLM that hit us a few years ago and it's a Marxist woke apostate, anti leadership, anti father, anti law, anti-God movement. And you've got Christians that are always wanting to get followers and they want to trend online. They don't wanna be worshipers and tell the truth. And so that's what happens. It's always fear of man, just follow the dollars. And most of the time apostasy is just connected to your pants. People will say, "Oh, we have this big huge theological reason we studied the Greek text. We found people educated beyond their intelligence and they came up with a new translation or interpretation of God's word that allows us to take our pants off." Let me just tell you this. If your Bible study causes you to take your pants off with someone you're not married to, you are a bad theologian and you are a heretic and you are an apostate and it doesn't matter how many books you read, it doesn't matter how many people you attack, it doesn't matter how many scholars you quote, if you disagree with God, you're wrong. And that is the heart of apostasy. And so what you have here, you have people who are professing a faith but they don't possess it and they're not practicing it. The classic example of this in the Bible is Judas Iscariot, he practiced faith and he's hanging out with Jesus. He is taking notes at the Bible study, he's singing songs, he's taking the Sabbath day off. And he would profess faith, "Oh yeah, I'm a believer," but he doesn't possess it. And that's what these people are doing. They are the Judas of the Old Testament and they're today legion. They are everywhere. And let me just say this, if you're a younger Christian, be careful man. Be careful. If you're a creative, if you're a worship leader, if you're someone who's into the creative arts, you just need to know that that whole side of Christianity is cratering into apostasy. If you're a youth pastor, man, please buy some books. Please spend more money on your library than your wardrobe so that you don't become an apostate false teacher. Well here's what really upsets Nehemiah. First, it's governance. And the war is over governance. And here's what happens. Satan doesn't tend to build things, he tends to steal them and occupy them. And so what happened in heaven? God creates a kingdom. Satan wants to take it over and rule it. It's governance issue. He gets kicked down to earth and there's Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and they're supposed to rule and reign and Satan comes and he tries to remove them from leadership and replace them with himself. Satan is always trying to replace God and God's people in every sphere of leadership. That's why he went after heaven. That's why he went after the first marriage. That's why he still goes after churches and ministries and Christian business leaders to this very day. Well there were a couple of guys who were enemies of God's people named throughout the book of Nehemiah. Sanballat and Tobiah are two of them. And by the time that Nehemiah comes back in Nehemiah 13, they cleared out a section of the temple and they literally moved Tobiah in. Mind melt. You get the guy who is the enemy of God and you move him into God's house and you put him in leadership and you let him have influence and access. This happens all the time. Satan's always trying to get a bad dude on the board, bad person in leadership, bad person in the pulpit, trying to get them on the board at the Christian school or in the Christian University or the Christian ministry. And these are people that couldn't build something but they like to occupy and steal things. It's a governance war. And just know

this, if you've got a church, Satan's gonna try and get somebody to be a pastor, a leader, a staff member or a board member. If you've got a Christian business ministry or organization, some yahoo is always gonna try and come in, attack you, remove your authority, set themselves up as your replacement. And that's exactly what Tobiah is doing. Also, what makes him upset Nehemiah, is theft. They stopped giving to God in ministry and they started spending all the money on themselves. They had done this for years, they stopped for about 12 years and then they start stealing again. And ultimately the big idea is this, that God owns everything and we're supposed to manage and steward it. And he wants us, he commands us as worship and faith to give first and best to him so that he is first in our schedule, he's first in our budget, he's first in our heart, he's first in our mind, he's first in our life and they decide God ain't gonna be first, he's gonna be last. And of course there's nothing left at the end. So God and ministry get virtually nothing. And so ultimately he's frustrated because they're taking care of their house but not God's house. They're making sure that all of their hobbies and their desires are met, but the worship of God is not funded. Thirdly, he's really frustrated because they're violating the principle of Sabbath. God told us to take a day off to worship him, to go to church, to pray, to enjoy family and friends and they just kept working because they could make more money. And so, the question is do we take a day off? Are we just like them? And so they keep their businesses open seven days a week to make more money that they don't even tithe to God anyway. So they're making more than ever and giving less than ever. Now Nehemiah says, "That's it, I'm closing the gates to the city" in Nehemiah 13 "so that you can't have people come in to transact business." So then the merchants line up outside like some sort of Black Friday holiday shopping and they're waiting all night to do business. And so all of a sudden Jesus' words ring true. You can't love simultaneously and serve God and money. And they decide we're serving money. And that's what we're doing. And what really sets Nehemiah off is inner marriage. The men, the believing young men were marrying unbelieving women. They had just pledged prior not to allow this to happen. They weren't gonna let their daughters marry unbelievers or their sons. Well, now all of a sudden the next generation is marrying unbelievers. And like I always tell young men, "Yeah she's hot, so is hell, stay away. It's not a good idea." And so what happens is these believers decide, well what's the big deal? We'll just date unbelievers. We'll live with unbelievers, we'll sleep with unbelievers will marry unbelievers. Well here's what's at stake: everything. Because Christianity, belief in God is always one generation from extinction. And so if you don't disciple your kids and send them into the future to love and serve Jesus, the worship of Jesus could literally go from that sort of fire to a few embers to burning out and smoldering all together. Now that being said, today there's a sociologist named Bradford Wilcox. He is in my estimation, the best sociologist on faith and freedom and family and fatherhood. And he has accurately reported that the lowest satisfaction rates and the highest divorce rates are between two people who are actively practicing different religions. Jesus says a house divided can't stand. Division literally means two visions. So if you worship one God and they worship another, you have division, you have two visions, you've got the Holy Spirit and the unholy spirits. You've got the Bible and some other crazy tradition or book and there's no way to be one. And the Bible says that a husband and wife need to be one. And that would include at the level of the soul. If you're worshipping different gods, you're not connected at the most essential level. And the highest divorce rate is among unbelievers. And talk about

confusion for your kids. Wow! I mean Grace and I both love Jesus. We're very different. We've fought through our issues and overcome our obstacles. And the thing that holds us together is Jesus Christ and the powerful work of the Holy Spirit through the word of God. If we didn't know God, we'd be divorced. If we didn't know God, we'd not have a good healthy marriage. If we didn't know God, we wouldn't be releasing a marriage book and starting a marriage series next week. It just wouldn't be that way. And so Jesus doesn't just get you to heaven, he keeps your life from being hell and he can keep your marriage and family from being hell. So ultimately by marrying unbelievers, it then led to his final point and frustration in Nehemiah 13. They're not even raising their kids to know and love the Lord. They're not praying with their kids, they're not taking 'em to church, they're not reading the Bible with 'em. They don't even know the Old Testament language. And so God's kids can't even study God's word. And all of this really upsets Nehemiah and it's apostasy. And the question is, is this continuing in our day? Absolutely. The Christian deconstructionist, the woke joke folk, the progressive Christians, the red letter Christians, the discernment bloggers who tend to be the least discerning of all, I'll just say it, most of 'em are apostate. Most of them are not teaching the Bible. Most of them are not giving generously. Most of them are not leading ministry, most of them are not evangelizing the lost and most of them are attacking and criticizing those who do. And so ultimately Nehemiah is really upset about all of this and it continues in our own day. Well, in so doing, we've gotta ask this question and I'll hustle up 'cause my feet are freezing in my cowboy boots, not built for the snow. But the question is this: Do you want to be on the right side of history or eternity? I could give two shakes about being on the right side of history. I do want to be on the right side of history. It doesn't matter who cancels you, as long as Jesus Christ doesn't cancel you, it doesn't matter who judges you, as long as you're ready for judgment day before Jesus Christ. And so friends, we gotta keep the long view in mind. And I'm telling you, I think courageous, bold Bible teaching is more needed than ever. And it is rare. And so my question to you would be, dear friend, there was some things that got Nehemiah angry. What are the things that get you angry? Anger is a good indicator of what matters to us. And social media in the news, it largely exists just to trigger fear and anger. But how about this? What in your own life angers you about you? Nehemiah had to show up and judge them 'cause they weren't judging themselves. And Nehemiah got angry because there were things that they were not getting angry about in their own life. Paul the apostle says this in the New Testament. He says, "If we judge ourselves then we don't need to be judged." Nehemiah had to judge them 'cause they weren't judging themselves. My question to you would be looking back at the year that we just went through, any things in your own life? Not just online, not just in the government, not just in the world, but in your own life that actually you should be angry about. And I would ask you look at the categories that they have. If you're a leader, are you leading and governing in a way that honors God? Are you tolerating bad leaders to come into your church business or ministry? Is the church or ministry that you're a part of, soft woke, which is just a slippery slide headed south toward hell and eventually full-blown woke? Are you tolerating things and leaders and people as they did Tobiah? In addition, are you stealing from God this year? If you look at your money, can you stand before God and say, "You know, I feel okay about this." Or should you be angry at your spending? Sabbath? Did you take your days off? Are you resting? Are you going to church? You're reading your Bible? You praying? Are you enjoying your life with God or just

working yourself all the time? I'll tell you this friend, I've done it myself. I'm guilty. And if you don't take a break, eventually you just break. And if you don't take a Sabbath, eventually you get a forced Sabbath. Usually you're sick or hospitalized and it's not nearly as fun. So is there something you can pivot next year to get your Sabbath? How about if you're single and dating? Are you looking for someone who loves and serves the Lord? Are you acting with integrity? If you're married, how's your marriage? Anything in your marriage this last year that you should be angry about? Not just with your spouse but also for yourself and changes need to be made? How about your kids and your parenting? Anything this year you should be angry about? Say, "Gosh, I wasn't present. I didn't love, I didn't serve, I wasn't generous, I didn't forgive. I wasn't available, I didn't make my family my priority." And the key then is to do like Nehemiah did and turn your anger into your action. What are you gonna do next year? Looking at your governance issues, leadership in your own life and the leaders that you're under and the people that follow you. Looking at your finances, looking at your romantic relationships, looking at your sexuality, looking at your marriage, looking at your parenting, looking at your work schedule, looking at your day off, any changes that need to be made and it's a great time to do that. And this is the time of year where we look back and the question is, what should we be angry about in our own life? Look forward, what's gonna change next year? Well this just kind of feels a little bit like a rant in the snow. And truth be told, Nehemiah 13 is kind of Nehemiah's rant and so I'll just pivot it to the end of the show. Welcome to the final Real Faith Live of 2022. And I am told that they have got the best rants of '22 where I sort of verbal process, get a little emotional and have a bit of fun. So enjoy the best rants of 2022. See you next week. Real romance, Sex in the Song of Songs. And Grace will be answering your questions live. So pray for my girl.