

Holiness & Revival

Text: Nehemiah 10:1-39

Introduction:

1. Chapters 8-10 reveal the three key pillars in spiritual revival: 1. The Word of God (8) 2. Repentance & confession of sin (9) 3. Practical holiness (10)
2. In this chapter, the people of God put their confession into action and commit to a covenant to walk in obedience to God's Word. Their repentance more than just words.

I. The Signatories of the Covenant (Vs. 1-27)

84 people signed their names to this covenant

A. The National Leader (Vs. 1a)

1. 'Nehemiah' = set the example for God's people. Important that those in leadership lead God's people in their quest for practical godliness.
2. 'Tirshatha' = Persian title for Governor

B. The Spiritual Leaders (Vs. 1b-13)

1. The priests (Vs. 1-8)
2. The Levites (Vs. 9-13)
3. Note: Some of the names already mentioned in the previous chapter show up in this list (e.g. Jeshua, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Hodija, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Bani). These men prayed **and** practiced!
4. Illustration: In a certain church, there was a man who always ended his prayers with, "And, Lord, clean the cobwebs out of my life! Clean the cobwebs out of my life!" One of the members of the church became weary of hearing this same insincere request week after week, because he saw no change in the petitioner's life. So, the next time he heard the man pray, "Lord, clean the cobwebs out of my life!" he interrupted with, "And while you're at it, Lord, kill the spider!" (Wiersbe)

C. The Civil Leaders (Vs. 14-27)

1. "chief of the people" = these men were representatives of the families in Israel
2. Note: It is a blessing when the men of a church "sign up" to the godly vision of God's leaders rather than sitting passive, indifferent or outright opposed to a godly direction.

II. The Supporters of the Covenant (Vs. 28)

A. The Leaders (Vs. 28a)

1. The rest of those in key ministry positions
2. E.g. Singers, porters
3. Highlights the tremendous unity amongst the people of God in this decision

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B. The Laymen (Vs. 28b)

1. Separated people
 - a. Observe the two aspects of separation – ‘from’ and ‘unto’
 - b. Note: It is the separated Christian who will take holy living seriously. Compromised believers see little value in purity of life.
2. Commitment of whole families
 - a. ‘clave’ (Vs. 29) = to hold fast. They **strongly** supported the covenant
 - b. Spouses – ‘wives’
 - c. Children – “every one having knowledge and having understanding” Young people need to live godly lives as well as older people
 - d. Note: A church is made up of families and the individual strength of each family contributes or contracts something from the strength of the church as a whole.

III. The Subject of the Covenant (Vs. 29)

A. The Words describing the Covenant (29a)

1. “curse...oath” = they made a vow to God.
2. ‘curse’ = reveals the seriousness of the covenant. They were calling for Divine chastisement upon them if they failed to do as they had vowed. This was likely based on the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 28

B. The Walk committed to in the Covenant (29b)

1. ‘walk’ = they would seek to pattern their lifestyle in accordance with Scripture
2. ‘all’ = comprehensive. They were committed to a sold out, whole-hearted obedience to God’s Word
3. John 15:10 *“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.”*
4. 1John 2:5 *“But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.”*

IV. The Specifics of the Covenant (Vs. 30-39)

Three specific areas are highlighted from the covenant. Covenant was more than a general commitment to holiness.

A. Commitment to Godly Marriages (Vs. 30)

1. Parental leadership & involvement – parental blessing important **is** important for a marriage!
2. Destructive nature of unsanctified marriages already highlighted in the Book previously (6:18-19)
3. Nehemiah also reminds them of Solomon’s downfall in 13:26.

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4. “As long as we love each other, it will work out!” Question should not be “will it work out?” but “will this marriage enjoy God’s blessing and fulfill God’s will.”

5. 2 Cor. 6:14 “*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:*”

B. Commitment to God’s Day (Vs. 31)

1. The three Sabbaths

a. Weekly Sabbath

b. Special Sabbaths – e.g. feast days like the ones described in Chapter 8 & 9

c. Seventh Year Sabbath – rest for the land & relief for the needy

d. Key underlying principles: Obedience to God’s Word, focus given to spiritual things rather than material things

2. The N.T. Lord’s Day

a. Not the Sabbath but should be cherished as a day of worship, rest and service

i. Christ rose from the dead on a Sunday

ii. Coming of Holy Spirit on a Sunday (Day of Pentecost)

iii. Lord’s Table observed on Sunday (Acts 20:7)

iv. Preaching of God’s Word on Sunday (Acts 20:7)

v. Offerings given on Sunday (1 Cor. 10:1-2)

vi. Apostle John “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” (Rev. 1:10)

b. Practical challenges

i. Be an ESC not a SMO or a SNO! Prioritize your schedule! “...and we will **not forsake** the house of our God.” (Vs. 39b) Heb. 10:25 “**Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.**”

ii. Make spiritual things the focus! E.g. a day free of internet browsing and news reading

iii. Moody on the Sunday Paper:

Their contents make them unfit for reading any day, not to say Sunday. Some New York dailies advertise Sunday editions of sixty pages. Many dirty pieces of scandal in this and other countries are raked up and put into them. "Eight pages of fud"- that is splendid reading for Sunday, isn't it? Even when a so-called sermon is printed, it is completely buried by the fiction and news matter. It is time that ministers went into their pulpits and preached against Sunday newspapers if they haven't done it already.

Put the man in the scales that buys and reads Sunday papers. After reading them for two or three hours he might go and hear the best sermon in the world, but you couldn't preach anything into him. His mind is filled up with what he has read, and there is no room for thoughts of God. **I believe that the archangel Gabriel himself could not make an impression on an audience that has its head full of such trash.** If you bored a hole into a man's head, you could not inject any thoughts of God and heaven. Ladies buy the Sunday papers and read the advertisements of Monday bargains to see what they can buy cheap. Just so with their religion. They are willing to have it if it doesn't cost

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anything. If Christian men and women refused to buy them, if Christian merchants refused to advertise in them, they would soon die out, because that is where they get most of their support.

They tell me the Sunday paper has come to stay, and I may as well let it alone. Never! I believe it is a great evil, and I shall fight it while I live. I never read a Sunday paper, and wouldn't have one in my house. They are often sent me, but I tear them up without reading them. I will have nothing to do with them. They do more harm to religion than any other one agency I know. Their whole influence is against keeping the Sabbath holy. They are an unnecessary evil. Can't a man read enough news on weekdays without desecrating the Sabbath? We had no Sunday papers till the war came, and we got along very well without them. They have been increasing in size and in number ever since then, and I think they have been lowering their tone ever since. If you believe that, help to fight them too. Stamp them out, beginning with yourself.

- iv. What would Moody say to our generation of Facebook frolicking, Twitter tittering, Google plus gaggling, Web wandering Christians who haven't got enough love for God's Day to give it a break for at least one day and focus on God and His Word.

C. Commitment to God's House (Vs. 32-39)

The house of God is mentioned in every verse (9 times total). Same phrase used to describe N.T. church - "...*the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*" (1 Timothy 3:15). The text reveals that **giving** was at the heart of their support of the house of God. Note the four offerings in the text:

1. The Temple Tax (3rd) (Vs. 32-33)
 - a. It's origin – first introduced by Moses (Ex. 30:11-16) and used to make the sockets upon which the tabernacle rested and the hooks for the pillars (Ex. 38:25-28). It was collected every time there was a census. In time it was used to support the wider ministry of God's house. In Nehemiah's day, they went beyond the "letter of the law" and made it an annual offering.
 - b. It's use – "for the service of the house of our God" (Vs. 32) & "for all the work of the house of our God"
 - c. Principle: They gave to cover the running expenses of God's House
2. The Wood Offering (Vs. 34)
 - a. May have seemed insignificant on the surface but a necessity for the fire that was to be continually burning on the altar (Lev. 6:12-13)
 - b. Principle: They gave to specific needs
3. The First fruits Offering (Vs. 35-37a)
 - a. Note the word 'first' appears 5 times – 'firstfruits', 'firstborn', 'firstlings'
 - b. Principles taught: 1. Priority – giving to God before anyone or anything else 2. Quality – giving the best to God, the "cream of the crop"

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- c. Prov. 3:9-10 *“Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with **the firstfruits of all thine increase**: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”*
 - d. How different is this to the prevalent attitude of giving God our leftovers, our unwanted junk, or worst still, nothing at all!
4. The Tithe Offering (Vs. 37b-39)
- a. The use of the tithes (37b). Was used for the support of the Levites (Num. 18:21).
 - i. Full time servants of the Gospel are to be supported (1. Cor. 9:13-14; 1 Tim. 5:17) *“A timeless yardstick by which we judge any group of people claiming to be the Lord’s, is their treatment of the Lord’s servants who are among them.”* (S. Carson)
 - ii. Mal. 3:8 *“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.”*
 - b. The collection of the tithes (Vs. 38). Received by the Levites, with one of the sons of Aaron (priests) present. Accountability important in the administration of God’s money.
 - c. The storage of the tithes (Vs. 39). They were kept in the ‘chambers’ of the temple to be distributed as needed.
 - d. N.T. Scriptures
 - i. 1 Cor. 16:2 *“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, **as God hath prospered him**, that there be no gatherings when I come.”* (proportionate giving)
 - ii. 2 Cor. 9:6-8 *“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as **he purposeth in his heart**, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:”*
 - iii. Illustration: Widow’s 2 mites (Luke 21:1-4). ‘mite’ = a small copper coin worth about one-eighth of a cent. Reveals God’s perspective on giving. God judges giving not so much on the amount given but, on the amount, retained. A lot of sinning goes on in the name of stewardship!
 - iv. Challenge: When the offering bag comes our way, do we approach it in the spirit of worship?

Conclusion: Are we pursuing a life of practical godliness? **Read Church Covenant**