



Nehemiah 10:1-39

A Solemn Covenant with God

A true God-sent revival brings about a solemn covenant that results in long lasting changes in people's lives.

The Jewish leaders put into writing a formal declaration for spiritual reform. Now because of all this we are making an agreement in writing; and on the sealed document are the names of our leaders, our Levites and our priests (Nehemiah 9:38).

As a result of their confession of sin and praise to God they declared, We are making an agreement in writing. It was a covenant with God.

There follows in chapter ten the names of the signers of the new covenant. The name of Nehemiah the governor tops the sealed document. Then follows the names of groups of priests, Levites, leaders and the common people.

"Now the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants and all those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the law of God, their wives, their sons and their daughters, all those who had knowledge and understanding, are joining with their kinsmen, their nobles, and are taking on themselves a curse and an oath to walk in God's law, which was given through Moses, God's servant, and to keep and to observe all the commandments of God our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes" (Nehemiah 10:28-29, NASB 1995).

Their binding signatures to the covenant were to preserve and continue to perpetuate the revival. It covers six important areas of Jewish life, and there are practical applications for Christian living today.

A COVENANT TO AVOID UNEQUALED YOKE IN MARRIAGE (10:30)

These people were responding to the Word of God. They based everything on the authority of Scripture.

It is far too easy to follow the herd instinct or peer pressure and the latest religious fads.

Israel's Gentile neighbors were degenerate, immoral, idolatrous pagans who sacrificed their children by throwing them alive into the fiery furnace to

sacrificed their children by throwing them alive into the fiery furnace to Molech. Pagan worship practices led to the fall of Israel and Babylonian captivity. It came about because of infidelity to God. The people committed spiritual adultery by worshipping false gods of their neighbors.

The people affirmed that we will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons (v. 30). The word peoples is referring to the non-Jewish people or Gentiles.

The LORD God demands that His chosen people worship Him alone. Judges 3:5-8 is an excellent example when they compromised. "The sons of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and they took their daughters for themselves as wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods. The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth. Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, so that He sold them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years." It is not a beautiful picture, is it? The same truth holds for our day, too.

Tolerance for everything that is not Christian is the iff thing foday. You can tolerate anything and everything but Christianity. It is time for Christian to cōme out of the closet ānd take a stand for the righteousness of God and Christian values.

Do you follow the latest fads and humanistic anti-Christian philosophies? A crisis exists in most evangelical churches because you can t tell the difference between a true born again Christian and the unsaved. We live like the world. With a kind of selective vision we worship God on Sunday and live like the pagan world on Monday, but we never realize it. Our spiritual senses are dull. We are blind to our own actions.

Łbst distinctions and conformity to the world go hand in hand, says Chuck Swindoll.

How many Christians fail to take seriously the clear New Testament teachings in Second Corinthians 6:14-17? "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. "

There is no guarantee that if you marry another believer that you will be happy. However, you will stand a lot better chance than a marriage covenant with someone who does not hold the same family and spiritual values as you do.

The home is a priority in God s eyes.

The critical issue is will I commit myself to obedience to what God has taught me in the Bible. God has

The critical issue is will I commit myself to obedience to what God has taught me in the Bible. God has spoken in His Word; will I submit to it?

A COVENANT TO KEEP THE SABBATH (10:31)

The Mosaic Law declared: Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy (Exodus 20:8).

In six days God created the heaven and the earth and on the seventh day He rested, and He no longer created. God also created us so that we need rest from our hectic activities.

"As for the peoples of the land who bring wares or any grain on the sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the sabbath or a holy day; and we will forego the crops the seventh year and the exaction of every debt" (v. 31).

Spiritually it is a picture of the believer learning to rest upon God. "For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His" (Hebrews 4:10).

God takes our efforts and uses them to accomplish His eternal purposes.

Sunday is not the Sabbath Day. Christians have been given a new day. It is the Lord's Day. It celebrates the resurrected and ascended Lord Jesus Christ. It is a day of rejoicing, worship, witnessing and celebration of God's activity in our lives.

The seventh year teaches us to rest in God's supply (Lev. 25:18-22). In providential care our sovereign God supplies all our needs (Phil. 4:13, 19; Matt. 6:24-34).

Hudson Taylor lived and ministered by the principle: God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply. "

Ray Stedman observed: God supplies our needs if we are careful to see the work is done in His way. "

Often we ask ourselves how will we be able to meet expenses in ministry. How will God provide for our mission projects in Latin America? The God who knows who we are knows where we are and is the God who can touch anybody, anywhere, and cause him or her to know where we are and provide through them. He says to us, I'm your provider! And He goes on to demonstrate it over and over again. And with joyful response we declare I saw God do it!

The Lord knows whom He has chosen to provide and He always has a backup.

The LORD, Jehovah, the Becoming One, is all I need. Have you seen that to be true in your life?

The important question is what do you sense God is doing? Where is He at work? Is He inviting you to come and join Him in what He is doing? If He is doing it, He will always provide.

We are not left to our feeble efforts. The LORD God supplies for His work. We need to make ourselves available to Him.

Enter into your rest in Him.

IT WAS A COVENANT TO PROVIDE FOR THE TEMPLE OFFERINGS (10:32-34)

The temple tax provided for the needs of the temple worship.

"We also placed ourselves under obligation to contribute yearly one third of a shekel for the service of the house of our God: for the showbread, for the continual grain offering, for the continual burnt offering, the sabbaths, the new moon, for the appointed times, for the holy things and for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and all the work of the house of our God. Likewise we cast lots for the supply of wood among the priests, the Levites and the people so that they might bring it to the house of our God, according to our fathers' households, at fixed times annually, to burn on the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the law" (vv. 32-34).

The daily sacrifices were a constant reminder that the people of Israel were a redeemed people. They were a chosen people of God and now they belonged to Him.

The bloody sacrifices in the Old Testament prepared the people of God for the Lamb of God who would permanently take away the sins of His people. We need to keep before our eyes the great sacrifice of Christ on our behalf. Never forget that we are a redeemed people, purchased through the blood of Jesus Christ.

"Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

THE COVENANT PROMISED TO BRING FIRST-FRUITS TO GOD (10:35-37)

The Law stated that God was to receive the first of everything dedicated to Him (Exodus 13:11-16).

The Law of the first fruits taught the chosen people to recognize Yahweh's ownership and right to claim their lives. It asked the question, am I any different from the rest of the world?

The first born of every household, the land and the flocks belonged to God. All life is a gift from God who owns everything.

The apostle Paul applied this great truth in First Corinthians 1:19-20. Every believer needs to remind himself daily: You are not your own; you are bought with a price. God owns you. He has the right over your life. We do not own ourselves.

What a contrast Christianity is to the humanistic secular world system. The worldview is you are your own. You own your body. If you get pregnant and you do not want the baby, you can kill it because you have the right to do as you please with your body. Christianity says, No, you do not. You are not your own. You do not have a right to do anything you like with the body God gave you and redeemed. "

This principle is true in all areas of our lives. We are not our own; we have been bought with a great price. Recognize God's rights over your life, and live within those rights. You belong to God. He has the right to direct and guide you in the choices in life.

Settle the question that God does know what is best in your life. He is not going to cheat you out of the very

best that life has to offer.

Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

The life Christ gives is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control, etc. He gives you Himself. Jesus keeps on giving you Himself in order that you might keep on having His kind of life abundantly. The life Christ gives His people overflows, and is always in a surplus of superabundance.

THEY COVENANTED TO GIVE A TITHE (10:37-39)

"We will also bring the first of our dough, our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the new wine and the oil to the priests at the chambers of the house of our God, and the tithes of our ground to the Levites, for the Levites are they who receive the tithes in all the rural towns. The priest, the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes, and the Levites shall bring up the tenth of the tithes to the house of our God, to the chambers of the storehouse. For the sons of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of the grain, the new wine and the oil to the chambers; there are the utensils of the sanctuary, the priests who are ministering, the gatekeepers and the singers. Thus we will not neglect the house of our God" (vv. 10:37-39).

The prophet Malachi wrote about the same time saying, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows" (Malachi 3:10).

God ordained the tithes would supply the needs of the temple and its ministry. It was ten percent of everything. That was the minimum. It was owed to God.

The principle in the New Testament is a much higher standard than the Old Testament. God owns it all, not just ten percent. All that we are and have belongs to Him.

The New Testament has an entirely new standard for believers. The tithe is not a requirement, but the believers are to give a portion of their income to the Lord recognizing that it all comes from Him. We are to give accordingly as God prospers us. It may be a tenth or it may be ninety percent!

The apostle Paul wrote, "On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come" (1 Corinthians 16:2).

The New Testament way of supporting God's work is given in detail in Second Corinthians chapters eight and nine. The believers in the Roman province of Macedonia were exceedingly poor. However, they gave in spite of "a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality" (8:2). "For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints" (vv. 3-4).

The believers understood what God had done in their lives, and they gave out of a joyful heart. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich" (v. 9).

Paul's principle of giving is clearly stated in 2 Corinthians 9:6-11. "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly

Paul's principle of giving is clearly stated in 2 Corinthians 9:6-11. "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; as it is written, He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, His righteousness endures forever. Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God."

What is the result of such cheerful giving? It is an abundant supply, fully supported ministry.

Remember that God's work done God's way will always result in His supply. If you are doing ministry God's way there is no need to be constantly harping on money.

What is your motive of service? What is your motive of giving? To God be the glory alone.

Jesus reminded His disciples who is the great provider in Matthew 6:19-24. He concluded saying. "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

IT WAS A COVENANT TO NOT NEGLECT THE HOUSE OF GOD (10:39)

These people made a commitment to faithfully attend worship services in the temple. The tabernacle and later the temple were called the house of God. They symbolically represented the place where God dwells.

"For the sons of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of the grain, the new wine and the oil to the chambers; there are the utensils of the sanctuary, the priests who are ministering, the gatekeepers and the singers. Thus we will not neglect the house of our God" (Nehemiah 10:39).

In the New Testament the emphasis is on the people who are the place where God dwells. Your body is the house of God. It is God's dwelling place.

The apostle Paul says, We are the temple of the living God (2 Corinthians 6:16). The word for temple is the *naos*, the holy of holies. In other places Paul writes: "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (6:19-20).

Where the people of God meet together, there is the house of God. Recently I took a medical dental evangelism team to San Judas, Honduras. The day before our team arrived in the mountainous village a storm tore the roof of the church building completely off. We held 25 church services in open-air, both day and night. There was no physical building; we did not need one. The people were the house of God. Jesus said where two or three are gathered together there He was in their midst.

Christ in you is the hope of glory. Have you put your trust in Him? Does He dwell in you? He does if you have trusted Him as your Savior. If you are a believer, are you allowing Jesus to settle down and make Himself at home in your inner life? The apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesians that God grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love" (Ephesians 3:16-17).

The original word for dwell means to settle down in a dwelling, to dwell fixedly in a place, to live in a home. Jesus wants you to invite Him in, to settle down and feel completely at home as a permanent residence.

Verse nineteen tells us God's purpose in this indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer. That you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. The parallel in Colossians 2:10 reads: "and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority . . ."

We are so complete in Christ that in God's sight we lack nothing. In God's sight we are absolutely perfect. Is it because of something we have done? No. We are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We are complete in Him. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21).

We have perfect acceptance with God because of the precious blood of Jesus.

"Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:25).

SOME ABIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

1. Choose a marriage partner who knows and loves the Lord Jesus Christ. The family is the foundation for any society or nation. It is the basic unit of society. If the family is destroyed, so goes the nation. Destroy the family and you destroy the nation. Is this why there is such an attack on the family, family values, and traditional marriage these days?
2. Rest in the Lord, Abide in Christ, are not just slogans, they are vital principles for living the Christian life. Serve Him with all of your heart and rely upon Him to bless it and use it for His glory. Learn to trust Him; rest in Him. That is not a lazy life-style. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). Make a commitment to let Sunday be a day of focus on Christ, and serve Him with all your heart.
3. Remember that you are a redeemed person. You are not your own boss. You belong to the Lord Jesus Christ because He purchased you by His blood.
4. Because we are a redeemed people, we are to be obedient to Him. It is our responsibility to seek His will in all things. The apostle Paul wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20).
5. Give to the ministry out of a cheerful heart. There is no greater joy than being involved in something that will still be worthwhile a million years from now. Give out of the abundance of God's giving to you.
6. Do not forsake assembling with other believers for worship, fellowship and service.

Will you make a lifetime commitment to serve Christ and be faithful to Him?

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