

Nehemiah 10 **All Scripture,"** says the Apostle Paul in his second letter to Timothy, 3:16

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God^[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- **All of Scripture, therefore, has practical application to our lives today. All of it, whether it be a list of names as dry as dust, or the poetry from one of the psalms or the prophets, it all has great value for us.**
- **The first seven chapters tell the story of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.** This teaches us how to restore our defenses -- how to rebuild the walls and the gates of our lives -- to close the gaps where the enemy has been getting at us, either through some outward practice or an inward attitude that has been destructive and damaging in our relationships with others.
- **Then, beginning with Chapter 8 and on through the middle section of the book, we have the need to be reinstructed in the truth, to correct our thinking so we begin to think as God thinks.** That involves a careful hearing of the Word of God. Remember the great scene of all Israel standing before the Water Gate and listening, hour after hour, to the reading of the Scripture. **That is what changed that nation. As we apply this to our own lives, it also involves, as it did for them, acknowledging our past error and failure and confessing to God and praising him for his wonderful goodness.**

That brings us to the natural outcome of this, which is commitment to a new lifestyle. We find this in Chapter 10, though it actually begins with the closing verse of Chapter 9:

Nehemiah 9:38 In view of all this, [i.e., their confession and praise of God] we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are affixing their seals to it.

- **This agreement represents a kind of universal urge found among humans to publicly and seriously pledge themselves to be loyal to a cause they feel is right. There are many instances of this recorded in history. For instance:**

When the Pilgrims were about to land at Plymouth, they formed what they called the *Mayflower Compact*. They drew up rules for living in the new land and they all signed it as an agreement to live by these principles and laws.

Probably the most famous document in American history is the Declaration of Independence. Our forefathers signed that great statement setting forth the reasons why they felt God was leading them to establish a new nation upon this continent. Recall the closing words of that document:... "We mutually pledge to each other our

lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor." History records that most of those signers of the Declaration actually did have to give up their lives. Many who did not lost their fortunes. But all of them retained their sacred honor.

Some of the greatest saints of the past did this. They drew up for themselves rules for their own conduct practices they felt would help them to walk with God and to grow in grace and favor before him. Perhaps you have done something like that in your own life.

- What follows in the beginning of Chapter 10 is a list of the signers of this new covenant, or new agreement, that Israel is making to God. They declare to perpetuate the changes in their lifestyles to follow the word of God; and they sign this agreement to bind themselves to it.
- They fall into four groups, who are identified for us in a rather intimidating list of names. which I will not read...however I suggest that if you have a newborn son in your home, you may want to look through this list and pick out a name for him.
- But the first to sign was Nehemiah himself...

10¹Those who sealed it were: Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hakaliah.

- Then a group of **Levites**, those who serve the temple, sign this agreement.
- Then there is a group of **the leaders**, the **rulers or nobles** of the land, who sign it.
- Finally, in Verses 28-29, **we have the people**. I propose to look at this paragraph in detail.

Nehemiah 10:28-29²⁸ "The rest of the people—priests, Levites, gatekeepers, musicians, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, together with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand—²⁹ all these now join their fellow Israelites the nobles, and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God given through Moses the servant of God and to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the LORD our Lord.

In the remainder of the chapter, beginning with Verse 30, we find the specific commitments that these Israelites made. I would like to summarize them for you first and then we will look at them a little closer.

There are six of them:And if we heed these they will bless our lives also!

1. First, they committed themselves to avoid the unequal yoke in their marriages.

Nehemiah 10:30 We promise not to give our daughters in marriage to the peoples around us or take their daughters for our sons.

- That may look discriminatory, but there is an excellent reason for that. The peoples among whom Israel was called to live were unusually degenerate. They practiced

public lewdness. They worshipped sexual organs. Their immorality had spread diseases among their people.

- They killed their children by throwing them alive into furnaces of fire in worship to their god, Molech. To protect the Israelites from these dangerous practices God had told them not to intermarry with these peoples.
- Though intermarriage might look right and proper to us, it would introduce into Israel attitudes and concepts that would ultimately undermine their faith and destroy them and their nation. This is what actually happened.
- Though Solomon, David's own son, was said to be the wisest man who ever lived, he nevertheless contracted over a thousand marriages with foreign women, who brought their gods with them and eventually introduced pagan practices into the worship of Israel. By the time Solomon's son came to the throne, the nation was so divided they could no longer exist as one but were separated into two. So this was a very wise pledge to make.

What we are concerned about, of course, is the practical application of this to us. This command is actually repeated in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, not concerning racial distinctions, but religious.

The Message...2 Corinthians 6:14 Don't become partners with those who reject God. How can you make a partnership out of right and wrong? That's not partnership; that's war. Is light best friends with dark?

- Now there is no guarantee that if you marry a Christian you are going to have a happy marriage because there are other principles involved.
- But it is much more likely to happen because there are principles and practices taught to us in the Word that make for happiness in marriage. It is certain that if you disobey this command, however, you are opening the door to greater heartache, and struggle
- There are passages designed to help people who have already done that for God is very practical and merciful. He recognizes that for various reasons intermarriage may occur. There are guidelines to help handle those situations. But by and large this is practical wisdom that needs to be adhered to today.
- [Bottom line...Marry those who share the same faith you have, because faith is the basis for all of life.](#)

2: The second commitment the Israelites promised is to observe the seventh day and the seventh year.

Nehemiah 10:31 When the neighboring peoples bring merchandise or grain to sell on the Sabbath, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on any holy day. Every seventh year we will forgo working the land and will cancel all debts.

- This is a rather amazing commandment God gave to Moses. God had said, "Six days shall you labor but on the seventh day you shall rest." the Sabbath is the Lord's Day. A day for rest and celebration. it is the day to stop worrying and rest in the truth that God is in charge! rest for the body, rest for the mind, Praise for God.
- **What God is teaching us is that we need rest,** You cannot maintain health by constant activity. We need a regular repeated periods of rest. So the seventh day is still a very wise thing to observe.
- **But spiritually** The Sabbath followed the pattern of creation. In six days God created the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day he rested. He no longer created. He stopped working.
- **The Old Testament is teaching is: We are to work. We are to make decisions. We are to act. We are to make choices. But we must not forget that our activity will never be enough to accomplish what we hope to achieve. It cannot do it by ourselves. God must be at work in it as well. He will back up our labor and use it in ways that we could never anticipate.**
- **We are to do what we can do and then expect God to use that.**
- **That is the teaching of the seventh day.**

But the seventh year teaches us to rest in the supply of God. God promises to supply his people's needs. We see this in the 25th chapter of the book of Leviticus where the LORD says to Israel:

Leviticus 25:18-22 "Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, and you will live safely in the land. Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety. You may ask, 'What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?' I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in."

- **Again, that is God's way of teaching his people that we cannot do enough to supply all our needs, but he can and will. One of the great lessons taught to us again and again is that God will supply.**
- **We are not left to our own efforts. It is not up to us to do all the planning, programming and arranging and to supply everything. Our God is a God of supply. That is what the sabbatical year means. Honor these principles and he will increase your productivity!**

3: The Third commitment they make was to provide the money, the grain and the animals for the sacrificial offerings.

10:32-34 "We assume the responsibility for carrying out the commands to give a third of a shekel each year for the service of the house of our God: for the bread set out on the table;

for the regular grain offerings and burnt offerings; for the offerings on the Sabbaths, New Moon festivals and appointed feasts; for the holy offerings; for sin offerings to make atonement for Israel; and for all the duties of the house of our God.

We -- the priests, the Levites and the people -- have cast lots to determine when each of our families is to bring to the house of our God at set times each year a contribution of wood to burn on the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the Law.

They recognized the need for offerings and sacrifices, and that they had to continue from year to year. The history of Israel clearly reveals that the primary character of this nation was an emphasis on shedding the blood of animals and offering up their crops and grain to God.

- **By so doing they were never allowed to forget the cost of redemption. Blood shed means a death has occurred. God is teaching his people that their problem with sin within was of such a serious nature it cannot be solved by merely instructing the mind. Only death can cure it.**
- **These bloody offerings prepared the way for the death of Jesus and even our remembrance of that death at the Lord's Table. We ought to meditate on this every day. We should never allow ourselves to forget the cost of our redemption. It took all that God had to open a door that we might return to him. As Peter put it, "We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," 1 Peter 1:18-19).**

4: The fourth commitment they make, and very closely related to the third, was the promise of these people to bring the firstfruits of their crops, herds, flocks, and even their sons to God.

10:35-37a We also assume responsibility for bringing to the house of the LORD each year the firstfruits of our crops and of every fruit tree. As it is also written in the Law, we will bring the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, of our herds and of our flocks to the house of our God, to the priests ministering there. Moreover, we will bring to the storerooms of the house of our God, to the priests, the first of our ground meal, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees and of our new wine and oil...

Why did they do this? Why was God so concerned about getting the first of everything dedicated to him? God tells us in his original command found in the book of Exodus.

Exodus 13:11-16 After the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you, as he promised on oath to you and your forefathers, you are to give over to the LORD the first offspring of every womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the LORD. Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its

neck.[You have no right to have it unless you will redeem it.] Redeem every firstborn among your sons.

In days to come, when your son asks you, "What does this mean?" say to him, "With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed every firstborn in Egypt, both man and animal. This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons. And it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the LORD brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand.

- **What they are doing, of course, is recognizing the ownership and rights of God in their lives.**

A corresponding truth for us today is written in:

1 Cor 6:19b... "You are not your own; you are bought with a price," **God owns us. We do not own ourselves.** The world says, "You are your own. But the Bible says, "No, you are not your own. You do not have a right to do anything you like with the body God gave you."

- We have certain choices granted to us, but not all choices. One of the important aspects of becoming a Christian is to recognize the rights of God, and to live our lives within the limits he establishes.
- It is the way by which Israel recognized They belonged to God. Therefore He has the right to direct their affairs and make many choices for them.

5: The fifth commitment is the matter of the tithes, or the tenth part of their wealth.

And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all the towns where we work. A priest descended from Aaron is to accompany the Levites when they receive the tithes, and the Levites are to bring a tenth of the tithes up to the house of our God, to the storerooms of the treasury. The people of Israel, including the Levites, are to bring their contributions of grain, new wine and oil to the storerooms where the articles for the sanctuary are kept and where the ministering priests, the gatekeepers and the singers stay. (Nehemiah 10:37b-39a NIV)

- It was about this time that the prophet Malachi was saying to the people, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD, that I will open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing such as you are not able to contain," (Malachi 3:10).
- This promise to pay the 10% is the response of the people to that appeal. God ordained that the tithes would be used for the support of the temple and the ministry of the Levites and the priests, in order that there might be spiritual guidance among this people.

- **When you come to the New Testament the tithe is no longer laid upon believers as a requirement of belonging... but it is a principle God honors..**
- **The New Testament teaches that Christians are to give a proportion of their wealth to the Lord to recognize that it all came from him. You are permitted to determine that proportion yourself, "according as God has prospered you" (1 Corinthians 16:2 and Chapters 8 and 9 of Second Corinthians, are devoted to this subject. **There we are told to choose ourselves how much we can give to God.** The motive is God's primary concern.**
- **We are to give as a response of gratitude for the blessings he has given us. God pays careful attention to the motive.**
- **God has ordained this as the way by which the ministry, the spiritual guidance of the church, would be supported.**

Some people can only give perhaps as little as 3%. I knew a man who gave 90% of his wealth to God all of his Christian life, and God used him greatly. But that is something we are freely to determine.

The final promise is given in the last phrase of the chapter:

Nehemiah 10:39b... "We will not neglect the house of our God."

- **This is the commitment of these people to faithfully attend the worship services of the temple. All through the history of Israel the temple, or the tabernacle before that, was called "the house of God."**
- **God signified his presence there by the Shekinah Glory that was located in the Holy of Holies.**

Today, under the New Testament, no building is called "the house of God." the teaching of the New Testament, you will find that it is not a building but the people who are "the house of God."

- **Where the people of God meet together, there you have the house of God.**
- **What this is teaching us is that we need the ministry of the saints to us all.**

The Apostle Paul prayed: *that the Ephesians may come to know "with all saints, what is the height and depth and length and breadth and to know the love of Christ which passes understanding," (Ephesians 3:18-19 KJV).*

- **You cannot do that without the ministry of other people. This is of God.**
- **Hebrews has a specific admonition to that end:**

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

- As we see the day of Jesus nearing, we need all the more to gather together because we need each other's support.

These are wonderful guidelines for successful living. And both Testaments teach Them. Let me review them quickly for you:

1. Marry in the faith. Do not choose a mate who does not know the Lord.
2. Learn to work and live out of rest. .Learn that God will pick up what you do and use it far greater than you were able to do. Expect him to do so and rest on that fact.
3. Frequently remind yourself of the cost of your redemption. Do not forget the precious blood of Jesus. We are all sinners by nature. We have not done anything that can ma
4. Daily remember that you are not your own. We are responsible to the Lord to follow his guidelines, to obey his words, and to honor him.
5. Support the ministry out of gratitude -- do so out of a sense of blessing and thanksgiving.
6. And, finally, do not neglect meeting with others for mutual support, worship and prayer.

Granted all this takes discipline. You will not do this casually. You must decide and stick with that decision. It is not wrong to do that. It is merely recognizing the goals and the principles God has given you. That is what a disciple is -- one who disciplines himself or herself.

Phil 4:13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength

But there is one other very important point here....Ultimately, these people failed to follow through with their commitment. Subsequent history reveals that all the old habits returned.

All the old sins were revived among them. The nation once again lost the blessing of God upon it. Why? We discover the key in Verse 29.

Nehemiah 10:29 They said, "all these now join their brothers the nobles, and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God given through Moses."

- They were depending on their own efforts to obey.
- They bound themselves with a curse and an oath. They were saying, "We will do this or else."
- They were relying upon their own self-determination, their own will power. They were gritting their teeth and swearing to perform properly. **There is no expression of any need of help from God or of any provision for failure and return.**

That is what the New Testament adds. It is right to write it down for your own benefit and remind yourself frequently of your goal. But we must always add the words that Paul uses of himself...

Phil 3:13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

That is what makes the difference.

Heb 4:16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

we come boldly into his throne room in our time of failure and need...and he will help us

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