

The Covenant Commitment (Part 2 of # 27)

Nehemiah 10: 1-39

In our last study we began to consider the covenant the people of Jerusalem had made with the Lord. They had experienced a spiritual renewal and sensed the need to draw nigh to the Lord and live according to His will for their lives.

The process involved in their lives continues today. Spiritual renewal begins with conviction that leads to repentance. Repentance leads to worship and a renewed awareness of the holiness of God. God's holiness compels us to seek Him with a desire to draw nigh to Him. Once this process is complete, one has experienced revival.

Let's take a moment to review our last study:

I. The Approval of the Covenant (1-27)

A. The Political Leaders (1) – Nehemiah the Tirshatha, or governor.

B. The Spiritual Leaders (2-13) – Priests and Levites

C. The Social Leaders (14-27) – The chief of the people.

II. The Acceptance of the Covenant (28-29)

A. The Support of the People (28) – The rest of the people; all of the people.

B. The Steadfastness of the People (29) – They clave to their brethren.

C. The Sincerity of the People (29) – They entered into a curse, and oath, to walk in God's law.

Next we discover:

III. The Aspects of the Covenant (30-39) – Consider first of all:

A. The Separation (30) – And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons: The people had been corrupted by their intermarriages with those of the neighboring nations. The influence of their marriages had brought defilement to the people by leading them away from the Lord and unto their idols and pagan gods. They made a commitment to separate themselves from those of other nations whose faith was not in Jehovah. This had been a problem for the Israelites since their fathers entered the land.

- This fundamental truth remains today, but many choose to ignore it. All should seek the Lord and His will before entering a marriage relationship. God will not lead you to enter a relationship with one whose faith is in sharp contrast to your Christian faith. He will never lead you contrary to His Word. [2 Cor.6:14 – Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?](#)

B. The Sabbaths (31) – Here the people of Jerusalem mention the Sabbaths in their covenant. This involves more than just the weekly Sabbaths; it includes the religious Sabbaths like Passover and the various Feasts throughout the year, as well as the year of Sabbaths. There are several aspects concerning the Sabbaths that we need to consider. Notice:

1. The Reverence – [And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath.](#) The nations around them did not honor or worship the Lord; they had no regard for the Sabbath day. To them, it was just another day to buy, sell, and live as any other. The people realized the need to reverence the Sabbath and set an example of holiness to others.

- We are not expected to keep the Sabbath day, but we ought to reverence the Lord's day. For many Sunday is no different than any other day. I know that we ought to live for God and honor Him each day of the week, but we are also obligated to set a godly example of Sunday. If the Christian acts or behaves no differently at church or in public on Sunday, then the world sees no difference in us. We need to set the example before others. A lot of places would have to honor the Lord's day more if Christians would do the same!

2. The Renewal (31) – [And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day.](#) Here we find reference to the [holy day](#). This speaks of the Passover and the other Feasts that the Jews celebrated throughout the year. These were set aside as times of remembrance and worship. They ought to have been a time for spiritual reflection and renewal, a time to repent of sin and draw closer to God.

- We typically have special occasions throughout the year that are dedicated to seeking the Lord in spiritual renewal and revival. I am thankful for those times, but we need not wait until then to seek the Lord. Every day ought to be a holy day for the believer, especially on Sunday. We ought to gather at the house of God with a hunger and desire to worship the Lord, to hear from Him, gaining strength, direction, and encouragement for our lives. In our modern society, we need those times of spiritual renewal and refreshing.

3. The Rest (31) – [and that we would leave the seventh year](#). This speaks of the sabbatical year that occurred every seventh year. The people were to allow the land to rest during the Sabbath year, not planting or harvesting any crops that year. The wisdom of God knew that even the land needed rest in order to produce in abundance. (God is the greatest environmentalist because He created it all.)

- We are no longer obligated to keep the Sabbath year, but the principles remain and should be applied. Common sense and godly wisdom reveal that rest is essential, whether it concerns the environment or our human bodies. We need rest from our labor. We need time to relax and replenish our physical bodies. Sunday is a great day to experience that rest. In creation God rested on the seventh day and humanity needs to incorporate a day of rest as well.

4. The Release (31) – [and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt](#). This deals with the forgiveness of all debt in the seventh year. God did not want his people enslaved to their brethren. [Deut.15:1-2 – At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. \[2\] And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the Lord's release.](#) This prevented the corrupt and greedy from dominion over the less fortunate. (We dealt with this in [Chapter 5](#).)

- God's people ought to always be just and fair in their dealings, never seeking to take advantage of others. There is also another application that we can make. Every seventh year all debt was released; it was pardoned, forgiven, and forgotten. I rejoice for the release that is found in Jesus. All who come to Him enjoy complete pardon from sin; our debt is paid in full.

C. The Sanctuary (32-39) – Here the people speak of their covenant regarding the sanctuary (Temple) and their obligations to give for the Temple worship. Consider:

1. The Purpose for Giving (32-33) – Their giving was for the service and work of the house of God. They gave in order to supply for the needs of the Temple so that its ministry and worship could continue. Without their giving, the Temple would not have functioned as it should. Their giving honored the Lord through their faithfulness.

- Giving is essential in our day as well. We give our tithes and offerings unto the Lord so that the church can carry out the work He has given us. Your tithes support the ministry of the church and other ministries that we collectively support. We give so that we can have a place to worship our Lord and Savior and so that others have the opportunity to hear of His saving grace as well.

2. The Participation in Giving (34) – This reveals the participation of the people for all the necessities of the Temple. Wood was needed in order to offer the sacrifices. This was not given as a burden upon one particular person or group. They cast lots (took turns) in bringing in the wood. All of the people worked together to ensure the ministry of the Temple continued.

- I have emphasized this many times in our study, but it bears repeating: the work of the Lord takes all of us working together, with each of us contributing our time, talents, and tithe unto the Lord. We cannot assume that someone else will do what the Lord expects of us. They will be blessed for their participation, but that doesn't excuse us from our obligation to participate.

3. The Purity in Giving (35-37a) – We find "first" mentioned several times in these verses. That means exactly what it says. The people brought the first of their fruits unto the Lord, their harvest, fruit, flocks, bread, oil, etc... This simply reveals that they brought God the very best they had. They did not reserve the best for themselves and give God the leftovers.

- We must ensure that we give the Lord our best as well. He has given all that we enjoy and without Him we would have nothing. Surely He deserves our best. I fear that many reserve the best for themselves and give God a portion of the leftovers. I want to remind us that this isn't limited to our tithe; we are expected to give God the best of our service as well. We ought to make Him the priority in our lives in every way!

4. The Percentage in Giving (37b-38) – The people mentioned their [tithe](#) in the covenant. This literally means "*the tenth part.*" They gave one-tenth of their abundance unto the Lord.

- This has been a point of contention and debate for centuries. How much are we actually supposed to give? We are expected to give our tithe, but our giving is not limited to that. The people gave of the firstfruits as well. Our tithe does not include our offering. I will say that we ought to give at least ten percent, but that alone should not be sufficient. I seek to give an offering above my tithe. That is something that you will have to work out with the Lord, but I can assure you, you will never out-give the Lord if you give from a pure heart!

5. The Priority in Giving (39) – The people sensed the need to give unto the Lord. [We will not forsake the house of our God.](#) They were in the midst of hard times, but they remained committed to giving unto the Lord. They determined not to forsake the house of God in any way.

- Giving unto the Lord ought to come naturally for the believer. It is a means of worship unto the Lord. By giving unto Him we display our commitment and confidence unto the Lord. He has blessed us with what we possess, and we ought to make it a priority to give back in return.

This has been a challenging and encouraging passage. I pray that we will renew our commitment to the Lord and seek to serve Him passionately and sacrificially. When we consider all that Christ has done for us and all that we have in Him, how could we not have a desire to serve Him in every way possible?

Where is your commitment tonight? Does Jesus have priority in your life? Do you want to serve and honor Him above all else? If you are saved you should, but if you have never trusted Christ in salvation that desire is not there. I can assure you, there is nothing greater than a personal, committed relationship with Christ. Why not seek Him for the need in your life?