

## ZEAL FOR THE LORD: NEHEMIAH 10:1-39

“...during the half-century that I have been a Christian [Nehemiah] has helped me enormously, more perhaps than any other Bible character apart from the Lord Jesus Christ...no one should wonder, therefore, that I now regard him as a particular friend.” - J.I. Packer, *A Passion for Faithfulness*, 29.

### I. Review

A. 444 B.C. in the 7<sup>th</sup> month (mid-September to mid-October), the “feast month” (Feast of Tabernacles celebrated, Neh 8:13-18).

B. The Word of God has been read and expounded:

“So Ezra the priest brought the Law... And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.” (Neh 8:2-3)

C. The people give themselves to a covenant before the Lord:

“Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept your law or paid attention to your commandments and your warnings that you gave them...Because of all this we make a firm covenant in writing; on the sealed document are the names of our princes, our Levites, and our priests. (Neh 9:34, 38)

### II. Covenant Making—What Is It?:

“A covenant is a bond in blood sovereignly administered.” - O. Palmer Robertson

#### Essential Components:

- (a) A **“bond”** - between two living parties, whether between greater and lesser parties (e.g., *suzerain* and *vassal*) or between equals (e.g., Gen 26:28-31)
- (b) **“In blood”** – signifies a life or death relationship (e.g., Jer 34:8-20, Gen 15:8ff), based on conditions
- (c) **“Sovereignly administered”** – God alone determines the *stipulations* (i.e., the commands and prohibitions) as well as the *sanctions* (i.e., the respective blessings and curses) of the redemptive covenants.

### III. Nehemiah 10:1-39

On the seals [of the covenant] are the names of Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah, Zedekiah, <sup>2</sup> Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, <sup>3</sup> Pashhur, Amariah...

<sup>28</sup> “The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, <sup>29</sup> join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord and his rules and his statutes. <sup>30</sup> We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons. <sup>31</sup> And if the peoples of the land bring in goods or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on a holy day. And we will forego the crops of the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.

<sup>32</sup> *"We also take on ourselves the obligation to give yearly a third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God: <sup>33</sup> for the showbread, the regular grain offering, the regular burnt offering, the Sabbaths, the new moons, the appointed feasts, the holy things, and the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God. <sup>34</sup> We, the priests, the Levites, and the people, have likewise cast lots for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, according to our fathers' houses, at times appointed, year by year, to burn on the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the Law. <sup>35</sup> We obligate ourselves to bring the firstfruits of our ground and the firstfruits of all fruit of every tree, year by year, to the house of the LORD; <sup>36</sup> also to bring to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God, the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, as it is written in the Law, and the firstborn of our herds and of our flocks; <sup>37</sup> and to bring the first of our dough, and our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the wine and the oil, to the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and to bring to the Levites the tithes from our ground, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all our towns where we labor. <sup>38</sup> And the priest, the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive the tithes. And the Levites shall bring up the tithes to the house of our God, to the chambers of the storehouse. <sup>39</sup> For the people of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of grain, wine, and oil to the chambers, where the vessels of the sanctuary are, as well as the priests who minister, and the gatekeepers and the singers. We will not neglect the house of our God."* (Neh 10:1-39)

1. What was the general promise the people made to God (v. 29)? Was this covenant a return to the “covenant of works” of Gen 1-2?
2. Was this covenant a mark of legalism? Why or why not?
3. What was the specific promise made regarding social relationships (!)? How might this specific promise be wrongly applied today? How should it be applied today?

*"Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? . . . Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup> What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>17</sup> Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, <sup>18</sup> and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.'* (2 Cor 6)

4. What was the specific promise made regarding their time?
5. What do the people promise in v. 31? What is the principle behind both promises?
6. Since this covenant commitment of God’s people occurred 450 years before Christ was born, explain the “how much more” argument.
7. In this “New Years Resolutions” phase of the year, do you think it is reasonable or wise to make such commitments? How would such a commitment relate to our social relationships? Our time? Our possessions? Our money?

*"...the Word of God gives us not only permission to make resolutions, it gives us good reasons for doing so. Various biblical passages seem to provide us with reasons for resolutions and examples of men of God who resolved to live for Him in a particular manner for a particular reason (**Dan. 1:8; Matt. 1:19; Acts 19:21; 1 Cor. 10:14–32; Col. 3:12–17; 2 Thess. 1:11**). As such, in considering how to glorify God in all that we do in our particular circumstances and callings, we would be wise to resolve to make particular resolutions to assist us in our sanctification. This we do by the power of the Holy Spirit, resting assured that we have been declared righteous by the Father because of the completed righteousness of the Son."*

- Burk Parsons