

Nehemiah: FreeNotFree
Week 9 – freedom comes from committing

Transition: Last week we saw how the desire for God continued to work in the hearts, minds and lives of the Jews who returned to Jerusalem and Judea. They were eager for it, they made themselves receptive to hearing it, they wanted more of it, and they obeyed it. A few days after celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles, they gathered together once more to get back on track in living for God as they always ought to have done. In order to do this, they went through a Levite-led history lesson of what God had called them to do, and how they had fallen short of it.

Context: As the Jews re-lived their people's history, they were cut to the heart. One indication of this was admitting (confessing) their ancestors' sins. Although they were not directly responsible for those sins, nonetheless, they knew that being stiff-necked (rebellious) was part of their national identity. Recognizing and owning it (in the sense that the rebellion and subsequent rightful disciplining from the Lord is what caused their exile) then served as impetus for renewing their people's original covenant with the Lord.

Opening Question:

- What are some things that you are deeply committed to? Why? How would someone recognize the level of your commitment?
- What is a covenant? Have you ever entered into one? Why do people enter into covenants? How is a covenant similar to but also different from a contract?

Scripture/Storing: Nehemiah 9:38 – 10:39

Discipleship Questions:

- Chapter 9 ends with the people of Israel (9:1) making a covenant in writing that is signed by the leaders (princes, Levites, and priests...9:38) and is later confirmed by the people (10:28-29). In the original covenant with Israel given to Moses at Mt Sinai, the leaders did not sign it. Why do you think these leaders signed it?
- The covenant that is signed is basically a renewal of the Mosaic covenant (10:29). Yet, only certain stipulations are mentioned in this passage specifically. What stipulations are named? Make a list together as a group. Why do you think these are mentioned specifically (and not all the others that were part of the original Mosaic covenant)?
- The first stipulation pertains to marriage. What do the people of Israel vow not to do? Why? Is there a principle from this that carries over into our day? If so, what is it and how might we apply it?
- The second stipulation pertains to the Sabbath. What do they vow not to do? Why do you think the Sabbath was important enough to mention specifically? What is your view of the practice of Sabbath for the Church? Explain the reasons for your belief(s).
- The next stipulation involves offerings. How many offerings are mentioned? What sticks out to you about the offerings? What are some of the purposes for receiving the offerings? What principles still apply today?
- What are some of the duties mentioned of the priests and Levites? Why do you think some of their tasks were mentioned specifically? When have you served the Lord in a way that was meaningful to you? What made it meaningful? Were you recognized for your service? What can we do to make sure that the people we know who are faithfully serving the Lord are recognized (and affirmed or honored or encouraged in some way)?

Prayer time: Pray that God will show us how to live as people of the new covenant.