

**“REBUILDING BROKEN PLACES”
STUDIES IN THE BOOKS OF EZRA, NEHEMIAH, AND HAGGAI
(Nehemiah 10:1-39)**

“FROM NOW ON, WE WILL NOT NEGLECT WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT”

INTRODUCTION: As the New Year begins, most people embrace the concept of making changes and improvements in different areas of life. We often choose to use the new year to do what we could do any day that God grants us the privilege of staying alive. TODAY is the first day of the rest of your life. Our earthly days are limited, so let's make each day count rather than just count the days. (Psalm 90:12)

BACKGROUND: Under Nehemiah's capable leadership, the people of Israel had finished their wall rebuilding project, and were now focusing on getting their spiritual lives back in order. After hours of listening to Scripture and hours of confessing their sins, they were prepared to make a covenant and publicly commit to a changed lifestyle. ***Are you ready to fully commit to following the Lord in the days to come?***

I. SOME LEADERS LEAD BY GIVING ORDERS. BIBLICAL LEADERS SHOULD LEAD BY “EXAMPLE” WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT NEHEMIAH CHOSE TO DO. (Nehemiah 10:1-27) (John 13:34) (1st Corinthians 11:1) (1st Timothy 4:12)

A. The leaders were willing to publicly write and sign a covenant to show they were serious about obeying God's law. 83 individuals signed it. Nehemiah and Zedekiah were the civilian leaders; 21 priests, 17 Levites, and 44 family leaders are named. This demonstrated the entire community responded to the LORD. They knew they had been forgiven and blessed, and they intended to show their thanks through obedience. **THE PROPER RESPONSE TO GRACE IS OBEDIENCE, NOT CONTINUED SIN EXPECTING FORGIVENESS! (Romans 6:1-2)**

II. PAY ATTENTION TO THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A “COVENANT” AND A “CONTRACT” AND THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF COVENANTS MENTIONED IN SCRIPTURE. MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO KEEP YOUR WORD AND HONOR THE LORD. (Nehemiah 10:28-39)

A. Contracts are signed with conditions to be met by both parties and usually include payment upon satisfactory stages of completion of the work. They can be voided if conditions are not met. Relationships are often not a factor in a contract. Covenants are usually based upon a relationship, and some include a promise to do something no matter what the other party does. Marriage is a covenant agreement. Some biblical covenants are based upon conditional responses (i.e. Mosaic Covenant, Exodus 19-24) while others were God's promise to do something regardless of human response or participation. (i.e. Noahic Covenant, Genesis 9:12-17) (Abrahamic Covenant, Genesis 12 & 15) (i.e. Davidic Covenant, 2nd Samuel 7) (New Covenant Jeremiah 31:31-37)

B. The people were making a covenant with the Lord, essentially promising to do His will in areas that had long been neglected. “Curses” can be simply viewed as the consequences we bring upon ourselves for not doing what God told us to do. *Christ frees us from the curse of having broken God's laws. (Galatians 3:10-14)*

C. Some commitments need to be made publicly, and the sealing of the covenant was a witness to others. ***IS THERE A PUBLIC COMMITMENT YOU NEED TO MAKE AS YOU ENTER 2024?***

D. The Lord expects His people to honor Him in their marital relationships. Believers should only marry other believers, so there will be agreement in the spiritual things that matter most. These agreements should govern all other decisions. (Nehemiah 10:10) (2nd Corinthians 6:14)

E. The Sabbath is a gift from God to teach us the importance of rest, reflection, and reminder that He has everything under His control. He will provide without us working all the time and never stopping to recharge and focus on Him. Christ is our Sabbath, and we rest in His finished work on our behalf. Israel was the only nation commanded to honor the Sabbath to the point of capital punishment for violators. Only Israel had a covenant relationship with the Creator. Their Sabbath observation was a way to teach others about the true and Living God. (Numbers 15:32-36) Exodus 31:12-17) (Hebrews 4)

F. They committed to trusting God for adequate provision without violating the Sabbath. They forgave debts every seventh year which allowed others the chance to live debt free. **ARE YOU DOING THAT WITH YOUR RELATIONSHIPS? DO YOU NEED TO RELEASE SOMEONE FROM “DEBTORS PRISON” AS THE LORD HAS RELEASED YOU?** (Nehemiah 10:31) (Matthew 18:21-35)

G. The people promised to give to the work of the Lord as they had been blessed and to care for the ones who gave their full time work in caring for the house of God and its ministries. They were pledging to be sacrificial and responsible to keep the house of God in order. To make that happen, it would take *intentional effort, not just good intentions.* (**Nehemiah 10: 32-39**)

III. MOST OF US ARE GUILTY OF NEGLECT AT VARIOUS TIMES IN OUR LIVES. THERE IS ALWAYS A PRICE TO PAY WHEN WE DO SO. (Nehemiah 10:39)

A. The people made a covenantal promise to not neglect the house of God. I do not doubt they had good intentions when they made the commitment, but as you likely know, many of them soon fell back into habits of neglect. **DOES THAT REMIND YOU OF NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTIONS IN YEARS PAST? WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT THIS TIME?**

B. Good intentions and human willpower will only get you so far. Full surrender to the Lord is what is needed, and He can strengthen you to do anything and everything that He wants done. We are responsible for maintaining our own physical temples, our fellowship with the Body of Christ, and the building in which the Church gathers for corporate worship.

C. Neglect will eventually cost you far more than the price of paying for regular maintenance. Relationships, spiritual growth, physical health, corporate gatherings and fellowship, prayer time, etc. are often the “victims” of neglect in our lives. It will take more than writing down a list of private resolutions and goals to get back on course. We need one another on this journey and genuine love for the Lord to motivate our actions and habits.

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE HEARD THE LORD SPEAK TO YOUR HEART ABOUT AREAS OF SURRENDER AND RECOMMITMENT IN YOUR LIFE. BE WILLING TO SHARE WITH OTHERS WHAT YOU ARE GOING TO DO DIFFERENTLY, AND PRAYERFULLY HOLD ONE ANOTHER ACCOUNTABLE. IT MAY MAKE AN ETERNAL DIFFERENCE IN OUR LIVES AND IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS IF WE KEEP OUR PROMISES TO THE LORD. HE WILL ALWAYS KEEP HIS PROMISES TO US.

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