

PUT IT IN WRITING!

Nehemiah 9:38-10:39

Boice: "We live in a **day of psychiatry and psychology**. Thousands visit therapists every week." *Why do problems persist?* Once asked a psychologist friend: "Why is there so little change?" He replied: "*Because people do not really want to change.*"

We don't want to give up our sin or reorder our priorities.

At times we might even be moved to tears by our failures.

We don't progress; we want to keep doing what we're doing."

This danger was just as real in Nehemiah's day as it is today

THREE STEPS TO SPIRITUAL RENEWAL:

Neh. 8 1) **Reading**, teaching, hearing **God's Word**.

Reading God's Word 3 hr/day for 3 weeks

=> NOW they're ready to do business with God.

Neh. 9 2) **Repentance** –confession and turning from sin

Last day: 3 hr reading

+ 3 hr praising God and confessing sin.

Neh. 10 3) **COMMITMENT TO CHANGE**

Expressed by restoration of covenant

–binding agreement with God.

Total commitment to do God's will–whatever it may cost.

**God's people commit themselves to obey Him,
they put it in writing.**

When we make significant agreements, we put it in writing.

LEGAL SIGNING OF AGREEMENT 9:38-10:27

9:38 *"In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are affixing their seals to it."* **10:1** *Those who sealed it were: Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah. Zedekiah, ...*

9 *The Levites: ... [names]* 14 *The leaders of the people: ... [names]*

All their leaders sign and seal the agreement.

Signers listed by name.

Nehemiah starts it, then priests, Levites, other leaders.

Willing to "sign on dotted line!"—serious commitment!

POPULAR ACCEPTANCE OF AGREEMENT 10:28-29

28 *"The rest of the people—priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, 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 brothers the nobles, and bind themselves with a curse and an oath ...*

3 facts about those who make this commitment:

1) They determine to separate from the world.

2) They determine to follow God's Word.

They separate selves FROM the world (from pagan lands around them) but also TO God's Law.

3) They know what they're doing.

This is no mistake. They don't act in ignorance

They're people of discernment.

Head of household takes a stand;

the rest of the family identifies with it

Whether anyone else goes along or not,

they will follow God's standards.

It's a voluntary commitment.

No one pressures them to sign to satisfy them.

They're motivated by desire to please God.

You make this kind of commitment

because you want to seal your commitment.

CONTENTS OF THE AGREEMENT 10:29b-39

**Basic promise: to follow God's law
and obey His revealed will.**

29 *"All these ... bind themselves ... 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.*

Their commitment: to DO whatever God says

They want to please God—whatever it takes!

Not only do they make *commitment* to live this way,
they also take on *a curse*.

It's like saying, *"May God zap us if we don't!"*

They mean business with God.

Would WE make that kind of commitment?

=> **3 Specific issues:** What this commitment means to them.

Affects 3 areas of life: marriage, Sabbath, and worship

THREE SPECIFIC APPLICATIONS:

1. SEPARATION (marriage)– Godly Family Lifestyle

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

Concerning intermarriage, the law names nations.

None of those named are still around—different nations!

They aren't in danger of disobeying the law!

NOT racial prejudice!

People of other races were always among them.

Rahab and Ruth are ancestors of Christ!

"Peoples of the land" refers to *pagans*
who worship other gods

and seduce God's people into idolatry.

Deut. 7:3-6 *Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods. ... For you are a people holy to the Lord your God.*

2 Cor. 6:14-16 *Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? ... What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?... For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."*

They're surrounded by pagans,
marching to beat of a different drummer.

Walking in God's way =>
marrying godly people.

Conformity test: Multiple choice question: identify longest line.
Divided in groups of 10. 9 out of 10 were told to select next to longest. 75% of others gave in to peers, and chose wrong line.

That's how world operates; **Truth doesn't matter!**

We must maintain identity as God's people –esp. in home.

2. SABBATH OBSERVANCE

– **Godly Business Practices 31** *"When the neighboring peoples bring merchandise or grain to sell on the Sabbath, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or any holy day. Every seventh year we will forgo working the land and will cancel all debts.*

**Walking in God's way =>
doing business by God's standards.**

No business deals permitted on Sabbath

Buying on Sabbath isn't mentioned in the law.

They aren't working on Sabbath,
 but they are permitting sellers and buying.

They recognize inconsistency of supporting foreign
 commerce in God's land on the Sabbath.

They're encouraging *others* to disobey God's law
 while living in God's land.

They've failed to let land remain inactive every 7th yr.

Keith Miller: "It has never ceased to amaze me that we have
 developed a selective vision which allows us to be involved in
 worship and church, yet pagan in the day in, day out guts of our
 business lives and *never realize it.*"

**Swindoll: "In the *nuts and bolts of living*,
 God honors the person who honors Him."**

3. STEWARDSHIP

– **Godly attitude toward worship 32-39**

*"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: ... 39 ... "We will not neglect the house of our God."*

Worship binds us to each other and to God.

Nine times the "house of the Lord" (of God) is mentioned.

Their way of giving for worship isn't spelled out.

They'll do what's necessary to support God's work.

They'll give whatever it takes! Specifically, . . .

The temple tax 32-33

Giving to support corporate worship of God's people.

Other provisions for the temple 34-35

Wood for altar

Firstfruits of crops and trees

Not all giving is financial– Supply what's needed.

Dedication of firstborn 36

Reminder *they all owe everything* to God.

Tithes 37-39

To support ministry among God's people.

Later generations neglect tithes–allow temple to languish.

Focus on temple–*not* because it's so important, but because its neglect has been a major problem on return to land.

Walking in God's ways =>

concern for God's house.

Worship binds us together and binds us to God.

They survived without it in captivity; *could* survive without it.

"Their religion isn't a religion of religious, ritual sacrifices!"

They're to love God and to do good for humanity.

But they don't love Him enough to go back and obey His Word.

Their attitude is the opposite of Pharisaic legalism.

They aren't looking for loopholes! They want to obey God.

Are **WE** more like Pharisees, or committed followers of God?

Do **we** seek to do the minimum of what God demands?

Are we committed to do whatever it takes as God's people?

APPLICATION FOR US TODAY:

The danger of making commitments to God.

He holds us to them!

The importance of making commitments to God.

They look at their lives in comparison to God's Word.
They determine to obey God's Word that they're ignoring.
They make a commitment to God to do something about it.

What this commitment means to us today:

Our issues aren't the same.

Things in our lives we know God wants to change,
but we don't *want* to change.

We must make a commitment—to do *whatever* He says!

Central Issue: Walking in God's ways =>

commitment to do whatever God says!

My will becomes subject to GOD'S will!

What does God want YOU to do about that commitment?

PUT IT IN WRITING

– MAKE A WRITTEN AGREEMENT WITH GOD.

Sign general affirmation of commitment?

Make a specific commitment to do whatever God says?

Write your agreement and put it in a safe place, as a reminder.