

Sermon Outline

“Revival and Commitment”

Nehemiah series, part 8 – Nehemiah 9:38-10:39 – Robin Boisvert – April 3, 2011

Main Idea: When God revives His people, they respond in grace-filled recommitment.

Introduction

1. The year is 445 B.C, almost 100 years after the first exiles returned. The city walls have been rebuilt, and now the people have entered into a great covenant renewal ceremony that begins in Nehemiah 8.
2. The main concern of Ezra and Nehemiah is the faithfulness of the people. It was their unfaithfulness and disobedience that led to the exile in the first place. They wanted to make sure it did not happen again.
3. So in Nehemiah 8 and following, we read about a covenant renewal ceremony. Over a couple of weeks, the Spirit of God accompanied the reading of God’s Word and touched the hearts of the people. God was reviving His people! And when God revives His people, they respond in grace-filled recommitment.

Making a Connection (9:30-10:31)

1. The people of God made an important connection, an essential connection that everyone must make or suffer disastrous consequences. They made a connection between their predicament and their lack of obedience to God. They connected how they had been living to the mess that they were in.
2. In Nehemiah 9:30-31, 33, and 36-37, the people understood an important principle: “God, you have dealt faithfully, we have acted wickedly, and this is the reason we are in such distress.” They understood the principle that whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. If you sow to the flesh, you will of the flesh reap corruption. If you sow to the Spirit, you will reap life.
 - a. It is important to note that not all problems are the result of disobedience. Just ask Job. But some problems are the consequence of disobedience and rebellion. And making this connection is an essential point for salvation and spiritual growth.
3. Because of all they had been through, God’s people made a specific and firm covenant in writing, signed by their leaders. But the rest of the people were involved, too, as they recommitted themselves to obey God in four specific areas: 1) forbidding intermarriage with foreign women, 2) observing Sabbath laws, especially regarding commerce, 3) regarding the poor among them, and 4) caring for the house of God.

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Desiring To Be Distinct (10:30-31)

1. When God revives his people, they recommit themselves to be distinct and be different, in a good way.
 - a. First, the people of God recommitted themselves to avoid intermarriage with foreigners. This was not ethnic pride or exclusivism. Marriage to foreign women was the chief avenue by which idols traveled into Israel. For example, when king Solomon married foreign wives, they turned his heart away from the Lord.
 - b. They also committed to keep the Sabbath holy by not engaging in commerce on the Sabbath. The Sabbath day of rest began when God rested following six days of creative activity. The Sabbath was to be a blessing to Israel – a time to rest from their labors; a time to worship and rejoice in God and his goodness to them. But it was also intended to keep Israel distinct from the surrounding idolatrous peoples of the land.
2. The purpose of this recommitment to be distinct was to offer hope to all the families of the earth, as it was through the Jewish people (the seed of Abraham) that the Messiah would come and be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth. This is no less true today. In order to bear witness to the gospel and glorify God, the people of God must be distinct from the world around us.
3. In what particular way should the church be distinct from the world? The answer is love for God and love for others. Nehemiah 10:31 expressed care for the poor and regard for the needs of others. It was a demonstration of love as commended by Jesus in John 13:35: "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Caring About the Church (10:32-39)

1. The people of God had neglected care for the temple, so they obligated themselves to provide for God's house in the following ways:
 - a. Giving financial contributions so that sacrifices and offerings could be offered for the sins of the people
 - b. Bringing first fruits of food, livestock and sons. Giving first fruits was the way they acknowledged that everything they had came from God. To give the first meant putting God first and trusting in him for all their provision
2. In other words, the people of God obligated their treasures (time, effort, possessions, and money) and invested those treasures in the house of God.

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3. The same should be true of us. The church has replaced the temple. The Lord invites us to love the church and participate by using our gifts, our time, and our financial resources to care for the church.

Fellowship Starters

1. As a small group, read Nehemiah 9:30 – 10:39.
2. In Nehemiah 9:30-31, 33, 36-37, what connection did the people of God make about their predicament and their lack of obedience to God?
3. In Galatians 6:7-8, the Apostle Paul writes, “for whatever one sows, that will he also reap ... the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption ... the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” Is your current predicament largely the result of sinful choices and sowing to the flesh? If so, what specific steps can you take to repent, grow and change?
4. Robin shared that to bear witness to the gospel and glorify God, the church must be distinct from the world around us. In what ways is your life distinct? In what ways are you no different from the world? Where would you desire to grow?
5. In what specific and important way should the church be distinct from the world (see John 13:35)? Where can you grow in demonstrating this important characteristic?
6. Robin shared that God’s people obligated their treasures (time, effort, possessions and money) and invested those treasures in the house of God (see Nehemiah 10:32-39). How are you investing your treasures (gifts, time and finances) to care for God’s church? Where would you desire to grow?