Studies In Nehemiah 8

**Making A Commitment to the Lord**

Neh. 9:38-10:39

Introduction:

1. I have witnessed people who have become very emotional about their relationship with the Lord.

2. Usually it happens in a very short period of time and they begin to make grand promises.

3. Some of them are baptized in this high level of emotional fever.

4. But then in the next several weeks or in a few months their emotions diminish and they have slipped back into old behaviors and rebellion against the Lord. I am sure you have witnessed situations like this. Perhaps this has been your experience.

5. In Neh. 8-9-10 the returning exiles have been brought face to face with their sin through the reading of the law of God.

6. Grief was their initial response.

7. But their leaders reminded them of the gracious compassion of God. By His forgiveness their mourning was turned into rejoicing.

8. Where will they go from here? Will there be genuine long-term changes or only a swell of emotion with little meaning over time?

Discussion:

I. It appears that the returning exiles are genuine in their change.

 A. It was the reading of the law that produced their mourning and weeping (8:4ff).

 1. Any kind of genuine repentance must be brought about by a confrontation with the law

 of God. It must be read, understood and brought to bear on the conscience.

 2. Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). Not by listening to the

 religious and their demands of us. Not by “going to church.” Not by “emotional

 assemblies.” When there is no personal involvement with the word faith does not

 result.

 3. While an emotional response is appropriate, even critical, emotions are fickle. Faith is

 more stable. Faith needs to be stimulated, increased, nurtured and grown, but it is

 longer lasting than mere emotion (cf. Deut. 6:1ff).

 B. They acknowledged God’s greatness and His justice.

 1. They did not see God as unfair, nor respond to Him in anger. Like some children

 see their parents and so respond in rebellion.

 2. They saw God as just and also forgiving.

 3. Therefore accepted responsibility for their sin.

 C. They openly confessed their unfaithfulness throughout history. Personal confession is

 appropriate and is an indication of genuine repentance and sorrow for sin.

 1. Psa. 32:3-5: “When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my

 groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality

 was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You,

 and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’

 and you forgave the guilt of my sin.”

 2. Psa. 51:6a, 17: “Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being.” “The sacrifices of

 God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”

 3. God brings comfort to those who mourn over their sin (Matt. 5:4).

II. They made an agreement in writing and signed their names to it (9:38; 10:1ff).

 A. They separated themselves from the peoples to the law of God (9:2).

 1. This separation had been demanded from the earliest days—Moses and the

 Exodus (Deut. 7:1ff).

 2. This separation is demanded of us (2 Cor. 6:14ff).

 B. They took upon themselves a curse and an oath (10:29).

 C. Their devotion to God was evident in their marriages (10:30).

 D. Their devotion to God was evident in their finances (10:31-39).

 E. An agreement in writing and signing of one’s name makes things public. There is a

 high level of “bindingness” perceived when we write out a document and sign our

 names to it.

III. Sometimes Christians want to return to the Lord without any open confession. They hope to return to the Lord without any acknowledgment of unfaithfulness. They want to slip back in even though their unfaithfulness is publically known. Sometimes people want to make a commitment to the Lord in baptism but do so secretly??? Cf. Nicodemus in Jn. 3.

 A. You cannot separate yourself from the world and to the Lord in secret anymore than

 John Hancock could sign the Declaration of Independence in secret.

 B. If you can’t go public you can’t make a commitment to the Lord.

 1. These in Neh. 10 signed their names to an agreement in writing.

 2. Just as those who signed the Declaration of Independence. John Hancock wrote

 his name LARGE. Any who signed it were signing their lives away. John Hancock

 wrote his name LARGE. In so doing he made his commitment clear.

 3. I wonder who wrote their name LARGE on the document of Nehemiah 10.

 C. We cannot deny the Lord and be His people.

Conclusion:

1. When you make a commitment to the Lord you commit yourself, your life, the lives of your family, your marriages, your finances, everything!!!!

2. Better not make that commitment on an emotional whim.

3. Better make it on faith in a just, but forgiving God.