

Large Group Time on Nehemiah 10 (March 11, 2020)

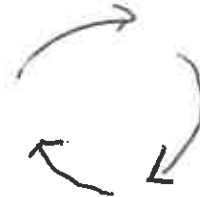
Introduction/Review

- Nehemiah 9 was a thorough review of the history of the people of Israel and confessions of their wandering, time after time in spite of God's patience and repeated forgiveness sometimes harsh consequences, and ongoing restoration. A similar confession occurred _____ years earlier, as recorded in Ezra Chapter 9
- Last verse of Nehemiah 9 transitions into chapter 10 where once again, the **Priests** (religious leaders), the **Levites** (the temple keepers), the **leaders of the people**, and the rest of the people (numbers so great -50,000 was number given in Nehemiah 7:66-67 that probably represented by the leaders) made a solemn oath.

Nehemiah, Chapter 10

- Significance of **lists of specific names**
 - Person's name considered of importance
 - Record of census
 - Distinguish among teams of people such as Levites, Priests, Song Leaders, lay people – so areas of responsibility are clear and documented
 - Accountability –
 - Of note, the lists in Ezra and Nehemiah have many of the same names.
 - About half the names listed in 10:1-27 (ones making the binding agreement) are repeated later in 12:1-6 when **repeated offenses** had occurred
 - Almost half of the names listed in 10:14-27 (and/or in Ezra 2:1-61) were also found in the list of 7:8-63 (the first to return) who made similar oath
 - Committing name to what follows – not anonymous
- **Pattern** through history of
 - repeated provision of God;
 - sin of people;
 - sometimes severe consequences;
 - confession, sacrifice, and new promises;
 - forgiveness and eventual restoration
 - only to be followed again by wandering of people.
 - A cycle throughout Old Testament that also **continues** in modified ways right up to the present.
- In this chapter, we see Focus on what **WE** will do (11 times in chapter 10) with no reference to power other than will power. How will they be able to change? Promises they made centered around these areas:

1. To obey **carefully** all of God's commands



2. No intermarriage
3. Refraining from commerce on the Sabbath
4. Taking responsibility for the expenses and care of the house of God and workers
5. Reimplementing the Year of Jubilee every 7 years

Quote from old Bible commentary out of Scotland and England: (not dated)

*"This solemn pledge (referring to binding promises in 9:38 and 10:39) was repeated at the close of the covenant as an expression of the _____ by which the people at this time were _____ for the glory and the worship of God. Under the _____ of _____ and _____ for their national sins, of which apostasy from the service of the true God was the chief, and under the yet _____ and _____ remembrance of their protracted captivity, they _____ and feeling the _____ of _____ as well as of _____ for their restoration, _____ themselves they would **NEVER** _____ their _____ to be Lord's.*

- Comfort to know that we are not the only ones who are "prone to leave the Lord we love" but also a solemn reminder of our condition.

"What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun" Eccl. 1:9

- Reminder of the weakness of human promises and oaths

***Section on oaths** – in your homework to be discussed in small groups

- Pattern of out of sight, out of mind -
 1. Moses, golden calf (Exodus 24: 3-4, 31:18, 32)
 2. Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem after several years (some commentaries say 7) in back in king's court
 3. Paul's words in New Testament (___Exodus 22:4??? Acts 7:41)
 3. possibly hiding behind the group, going with the flow, not taking to heart as individual commitment
 4. Disobeying or forgetting is like looking in a mirror and forgetting what was seen. (see James 1:23-24)

Peeking ahead to Chapter 13 – in same generation, the pattern repeats itself. (also had in Ezra) Nehemiah indignant, and the book ends soon followed by 400 years of silence before God's plan redemption is clearly spelled out.

Yet, There Is Hope!

We can come to a place where the vicious cycle of the people of God seems to be impossible to interrupt – discouraged, hopeless, cynical. But, in midst of this pattern, let us also remember that:

1. God created this world and is ever faithful.
2. He doesn't give up on His people.
3. He has provided solid leaders and prophets throughout time to help us stay the course.
4. He has a plan to end this cycle and alludes to it throughout the Old Testament.
5. He reveals His plan to save us in the New Testament.
6. Christ's work and the indwelling Holy Spirit have broken the cycle.
7. The time is coming when all the struggle will be over and we will dwell with Him forever.

If you get down reading some of the history, remember the future we have along with God's people from all the centuries.

What Difference Does Christ Make? Is Vicious Cycle Unbreakable?

- In Nehemiah's time – in the whole of time since creation in the Old Testament, God's people had his guidance, provision, discipline often announced through his prophets and leaders. His Spirit was present but not indwelling. The people had faith in deliverance, in a future that had not been totally revealed yet – just hinted at. There was more corporate response rather than individual. With Christ, no longer could people just go along with the flow of "**WE.**" Now the need for individual encounter with Christ is presented.
- The Bible was not yet completed – so no written word to learn from. Relied on OT documents explained by prophets, priests, leaders.
- **In Nehemiah's** time, people didn't specifically know about grace through Christ's death and resurrection. They weren't maybe realizing that each person's heart was key, not just group. Fellowship is key for Christians, but it doesn't take the place of individual response to God's call.
- The Israelites didn't have the provision of the **Indwelling Holy Spirit**. Jesus even told his followers that it was to their **advantage** that he leave them physically – because then the Holy Spirit would come and would indwell them (John 14:15-20) Whole study in

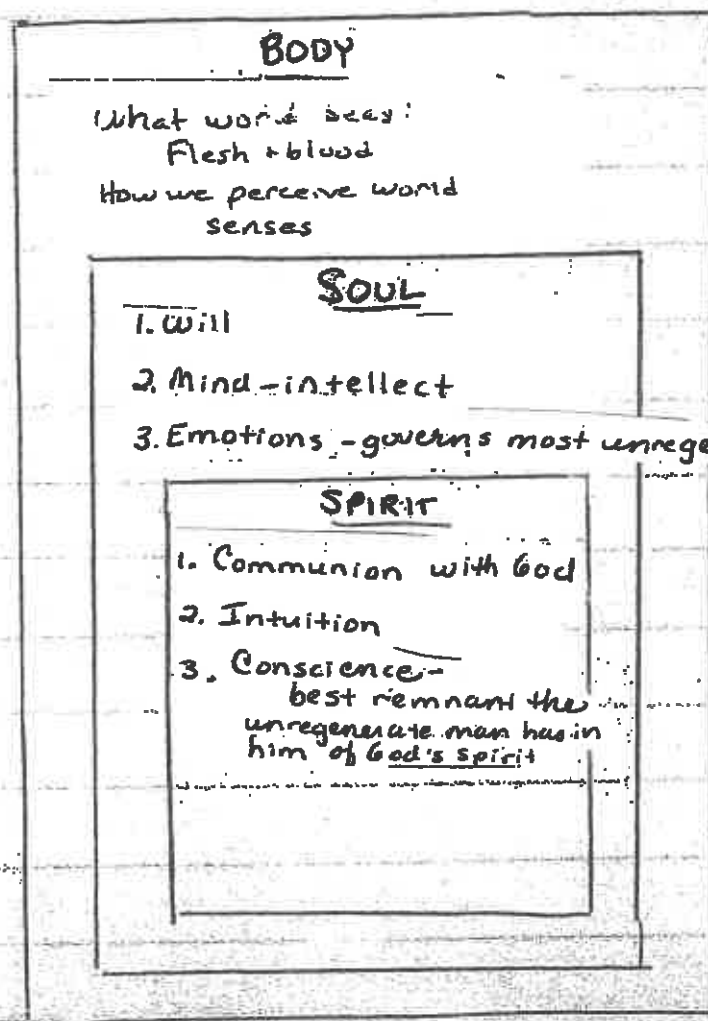
itself. In Acts 1:8, in parting, Jesus assures his followers that "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses.

- Old Testament hinted at what was to come, at a feature that would especially characterize the "New Covenant" - that of God's commands being written on our hearts rather than on stones or in scrolls
 - "Hear me, you who know what is right, your people who have my law in your hearts." Isaiah prophesying in chapter 51, especially verses 1-7
 - Jeremiah in Chapter 31:33: "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Diagram of 3 parts of person: Body, Soul, and Spirit

I Thessalonians 5:23

World



God

Man was created with these 3 – BUT, before Pentecost, the Holy Spirit influenced from outside the person. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would come to dwell IN us. What difference does this make? Depend on him to control mind, will, emotions as I yield to him – makes changed behavior come from heart and not just from my good intentions. In Acts 2, Note the difference in Peter who had earlier covered and denied Christ.

What I can't do:

- Transform myself
- Consistently obey
- Control my soul (mind, will, emotions)
- Make myself right with God

Only God can do those things

What am I called to do? So where does that leave me? Passive? No! God gives the grace and the power to be what He calls me to be. I have the choice to refuse, rebel, wander – and experience God's discipline, or confess and be forgiven. If I accept His grace, He does call me to assume responsibility, however.

Responsibility for what? For putting myself in position to be available to Him.

- Light bulb can't make light – just receptacle and vessel. Needs to be plugged into the power source.
- Car, amazing a human invention as it is, can only sit there til source of energy made available and ignited.
- Doctors can stitch torn skin and set broken bones, but they can't heal the tissue. I can only lie there and accept the treatment and only God can knit the bones back together or heal the skin.

What does that look like to be available to Him? (Last part of your assignment) Here are some ideas you can add to:

Set up forms for him to fill. Concrete steps – He gives substance. He says to make myself available. (I am a broken record to those who have heard me before! But not really.) God's recognizes that I am dust, that I -as an independent human being, need to be filled DAILY. It is a daily walk, not a one time oath. These "forms" don't in themselves empower. They are just means through which He does the work of transformation.

1. I can choose where I park my body – where I go, what activities I participate in, how we use my time. If I never open the pages in Bible, if I never ask Him for

guidance, for peace, for changed heart, etc. He is not in habit of forcing. If I am scanning pornography on the internet or spending time in steamy novels or watching soap operas describing illicit affairs, it pretty much blocks the genuineness of prayer request I might make asking Him to keep me from lusting. Sometimes yes, He does like He did with Saul on the road to Damascus and can stop me in my in my tracks. He can use my circumstances, my suffering to draw me to Himself.

2. **Spiritual Disciplines** – as long as I remember that it is not **MY doing** any of these things that changes me but His action through the means (“forms”, if you have been in one of my classes before!) He has given me and commanded me to use:

- **Prayer**
- **Worship**
- **One focus** ask Him to keep my eyes fixed on Him
- **Fellowship with other believers**
- **Being in His word**
- **Admitting our weakness and need** “Without me, you can do nothing” John 15:15b
- **Asking for and relying on his power** “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” Phillipians 4:13 Psalms are good reads on dependence and God’s power
- **DAILY** – Romans 12:1. Offer myself as living sacrifice.
- **Being quiet before him** – *am I so busy telling Him what I will do that I forget to listen? “Be still and know that I am God” Psalm 46:10.*
Also see Psalm 37:7
- **Confessing sins and asking for forgiveness** I John 1:9
- **Accepting His forgiveness and yielding to His restoration**
- **Taking personal responsibility for action**
- **Daily**, not just on Sunday or in small group
- **Music** can flood my soul – speak to my spirit, calm, redirect
- **Remembering whose I am** “You are not your own. You were bought at a price.” I Corinthians 6:19-20; Galatians 2:20
- **Asking for clarity/confirmation through impressions, still small voice, verse, circumstances** “Isaiah 30:19-21 This is the way, walk ye in it.”

- **The “Four Flees” run the other way!!! My running won’t empower me – but distances me from temptation, from sin, and puts me in a posture where I can hear God’s still small voice, and He can work on my heart.**
 1. Sexual immorality (I Cor 6:19)
 2. Evil desires of youth (II Timothy 2:22)
 3. Love of money (I Timothy 6:10-11)
 4. Idolatry (I Corinthians 10:14)

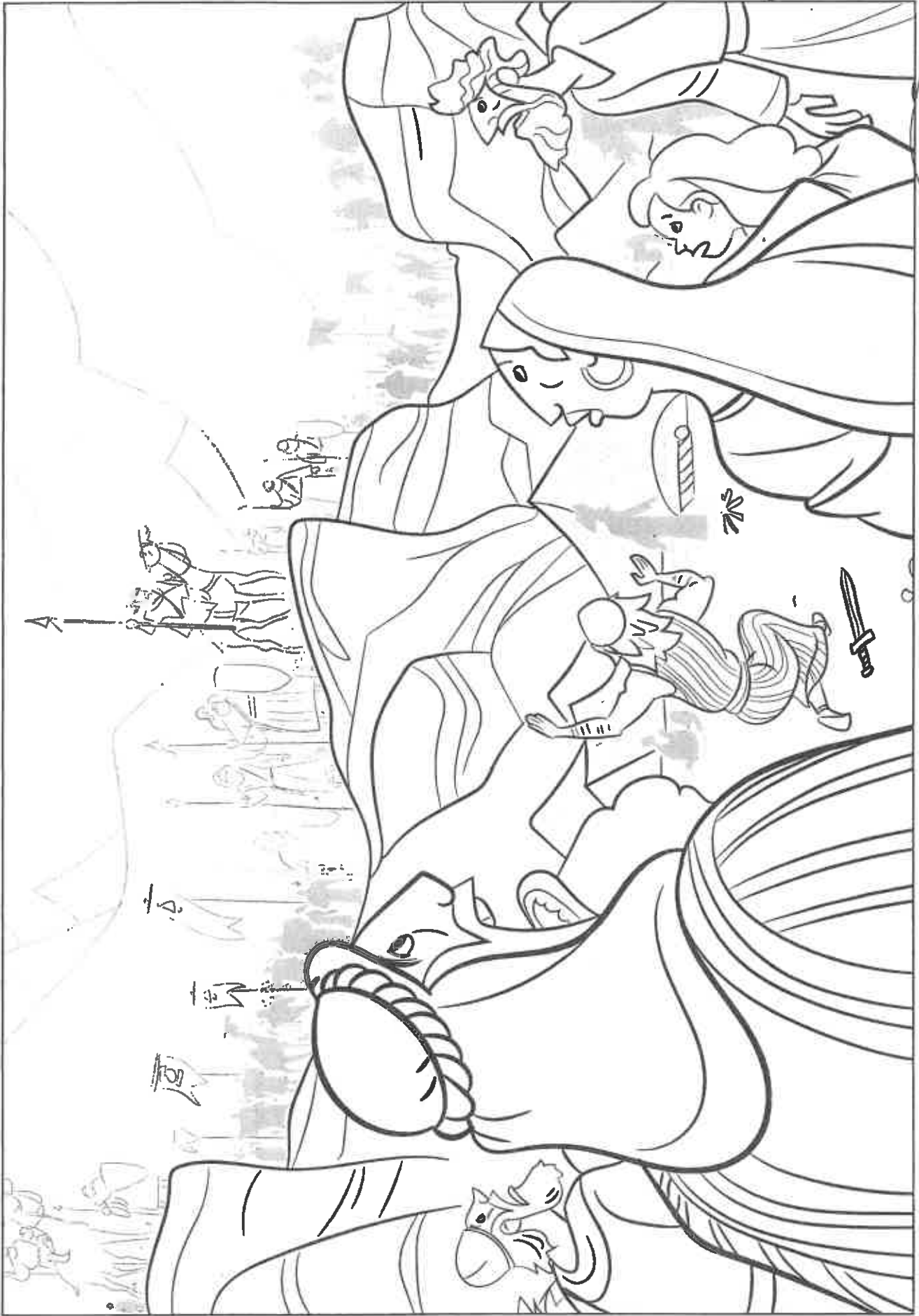
Will these things make me sin free? No, but shorter accounts, growth out of old patterns, not stuck, Israelites had God’s mercy and faithfulness but often stuck in vicious cycle. I don’t have to live in that pattern! Christ can and will bring liberty from habitual sin – and eventually, after this long “Silent Period”, will bring final freedom! Jeremiah hinted at new covenant in Jeremiah 13:13. Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:26, among other Old Testament entries, also point toward this.

Romans 7 addresses this, and Romans 7:25 gives us the answer! _____

Nehemiah, Chapter 10 -- March 11, 2020

Sunday School Handout

March, 2020



Israel's Unfaithfulness
Judges 1-3

STORY POINT: GOD'S PEOPLE REPEATEDLY TURNED FROM HIM.

GOSPEL PROJECT

