

Grace Bible Church
The Tree of Life
A Weekly Review
Week ending 012212
Nehemiah. Part 7.

Nehemiah, was a real McCoy—a genuine, authentic follower of God. We are allowed to observe, not only the strengths of Nehemiah, but also his weaknesses. We are able to watch him when he is fearless and courageous, and also when he is weak and afraid. We will now begin to discover both sides of this great man as we continue to study chapter 2.

Neh 2:1-6, And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. So the king said to me, “Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart.” Then I was very much afraid. And I said to the king, “Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?” Then the king said to me, “What would you request?” So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, “If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it.” Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, “How long will your journey be, and when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time.

It's interesting that the word for queen is not the normal word for queen but the Hebrew noun shegal meaning a close intimate friend, a close contact, a partner and one the king consults with.

Now, notice that the last part of verse 6 says, “I gave him a definite time.” This tells us first of all, both the king and the queen didn't want him to go. Why? Because Nehemiah was doing a great job. He was not the type of individual who would make a decision or a commitment and then take on another one without fulfilling the original one. Many believers do not take their vows and commitments seriously.

Ecc 5:4-5, When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it, for {He takes} no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.

God has a way of teaching us that is important to keep our vows. This is also what we call making a commitment. And this is addressed to the believer. By the way, some do not believe in making a commitment to something, I do.

Psa 37:5, Commit your ways to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He will do it.

Pro 16:3, Commit your works to the Lord, And your plans will be established.

Notice in these three verses we have; Commit yourself. Commit your ways. Commit your works. I personally believe in vows or commitments because the word of God teaches that God does as well. Let me quickly give some passages which reveal that God accepts vows and commitments and expects you to follow through with them.

Num 30:2, If a man makes a vow to the Lord, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

God does not demand that you make a vow! However, if you have or if you do, it begins with you making the vow or commitment privately to God and then, if so required, to God's people.

2Co 8:1-5, Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they *first* gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

Any vow or commitment that you make should be made, first of all with God and then to the people you have made the vow with! For example, if you commitment to a part of the local assembly, then you make that vow to God and then that commitment to your local assembly! Now remember, you don't have to vow! However, if you do, God expects to carry the vow!

Look at **Deu 23:21-23, "When you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for it would be sin in you, and the Lord your God will surely require it of you. However, if you refrain from vowing, it would not be sin in you. You shall be careful to perform what goes out from your lips, just as you have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God, what you have promised."**

When vows are made to God they are usually paid before God's people!

The King James translation says in **Psa 16:2-3, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight."**

Psa 22:25, "From Thee comes my praise in the great assembly; I shall pay my vows before those who fear or respect Him."

Psa 50:14, "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High;"

Psa 76:11, "Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill {them}; Let all who are around Him bring gifts to Him who is to be feared."

Psa 116:14, "I shall pay my vows to the Lord, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people."

Think of a vow that you've made to God. Think of a commitment that you've made! Perhaps some of you have made a commitment or a vow to meet early with God every day of the week! Maybe some of you have made a commitment or a vow to God to set aside certain priorities in your life for your intake of doctrine. Or perhaps some of you have made a commitment or a vow to support the communication of Bible doctrine!

The question is, have you kept that vow or commitment?

Solomon says in **Ecc 5:4-5, When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it, for He takes no delight in fools. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.**

You see, God doesn't forget it! You see, God doesn't command you to make a vow, but if you have or if you do, he expects you to pay it! Now, let me warn you about something that is very important for you to understand in all areas of life! We are living in a very troublesome time in which there are alleged authorities who feel that it is their calling to relieve us from any guilt...whatsoever. I'm all for the relief of *false* guilt, it has no place in our lives. I think *false guilt* is a killer! It is destructive! It leads us to poor mental health and certainly gives us emotional turmoil!

But, there's a place for true guilt or conviction. I think at times it is the work of the Spirit of God. We call it another word, we call it conviction but it's there nevertheless.

There are many who would take away even the convictions and say you don't have to live under that load of guilt. And this is where we have to be very careful. Conviction is something for our own benefit that feels like guilt at times. Conviction is the process of being rebuked by one's own conscience because of God's demands.

Notice what David said in **Psa 32:1-5**, "**How happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! How happy is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit! When I kept silent {about my sin}, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away {as} with the fever heat of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin to Thee, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord;' And Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin. Selah.**"

The idea of conviction is a major theme of Scripture. Remember what Joh 16:8 says, "**And He [Holy Spirit], when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment.**"

1Th 1:5 says, for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

Now, what in the world is a vow if it isn't a commitment to accountability? What in the world is a commitment if it isn't saying to our heavenly Father and maybe to other people on occasion, *I will carry this out, you can count on me!* That is being a Nehemiah. That is being an apostle Paul.

Be careful about relieving all commitments so that you can be quote, free! That's dangerous! Furthermore, it's **not** biblical! These people are usually the type who are in bondage to their liberty. Paul put it this way in **Gal 5:13**, **For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.** I wonder how many members of this congregation can say I'm doing my part to serve God's people!

In Rom 3:19 there is a legitimate guilt that all members of the human race face as a result of the divine judgment of God. **Rom 3:19 says, Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become guilty before God;**

God desires the human race to experience this guilt and to recognize their need for the Savior. In this passage, true guilt is to condemn the unbeliever and is used in order to awaken him or her to the fact that they need a Savior! However, this particular guilt is not for the believer, only for the unbeliever! And once an individual believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, guilt and condemnation are no longer an issue, and have no place in the Christian way of life.

Joh 3:18, "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

However, what happens is that many believers have a difficult time learning the difference between condemnation and conviction. We need to learn to identify the difference between true guilt (i.e. conviction by Holy Spirit), and false guilt (i.e. condemnation by Satanic accusation). True guilt or conviction will always **free us** and produce **rest**, whereas false guilt will divide us from the Lord and make us feel condemned and without hope. If we do not learn to distinguish the difference between the two and if we confuse the two, we will end up being condemned even when under Holy Spirit conviction.

Conviction is simply the act of convincing a person of his error, and preparing him to admit the truth about his condition. And once the believer receives this conviction and he names and cites his sins then he is free from any condemnation that would follow.

However, this does not mean that he or she should not keep the vows and commitments that they've made to the Lord or His people. So true guilt from above is really conviction, and will always produce freedom and never condemnation.

Satan's policy is to place us on a guilt trip so that when Godly conviction comes into play the believer will be confused as to which is conviction (legitimate guilt) and which is condemnation (illegitimate guilt). Bible doctrine in a believer's soul will give the believer the ability to spiritually discern when God is correcting, and when Satan is accusing. So, the believer must identify the difference between true guilt which is conviction, and false guilt which is condemnation. True guilt or Holy Spirit conviction will always produce freedom and liberty. False guilt will produce legalism, religion and manipulation and condemnation.