

associations paved the way for their vow.

b) One who is not willing to separate is not ready to vow to obey God.

2) Only those who knew and understood vowed.

**b. The vow was to obey the Bible (10:29-39)**

1) To walk in God's laws (10:29)

2) To **observe** to **do** God's commands (10:29-39)

a) Many Bible commands apply to us today, but not all. For example, God commanded Christians not to be unequally yoked in marriage and to separate from sinful associations and activities. (2 Corinthians 6:14-17) "*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*"(15) "*And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?*"(16) "*And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*"(17) "*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.*"

b) Some commands, including those in verses 31-39, were commands for the Jews only.

**Conclusion:** After a weeklong revival, the people of Israel sealed their decisions with a day of humble confession and worship, acknowledging God's sovereignty, and vowing to walk with God, obey him, and separate from evil.

Having a personal revival and truly getting right with God is very important. That could be the greatest need in your life! However, sealing that decision is also important. That is more than raising your hand for prayer. It is promising God that you will follow through. It may mean coming forward during an invitation to testify of the work that God has done in your life. At the least it is telling your pastor or a close friend. But most importantly it means walking in the Spirit by daily obeying the Bible and God's leading.

**Song:** Take My Life and Let - 393

# Sealing Spiritual Decisions

31 December 2017 PM - Nehemiah 9-10 - EzNe17 - Scott Childs

**Introduction:** There is a big difference in closing a box and sealing it – especially if you are going to send it overseas. Before postage prices skyrocketed, we used to have things shipped from the USA. Over the years my Mum became an expert box sealer. First, she made sure that the contents are individually wrapped and padded, with no movement space. Next, she securely closed the box and sealed all edges with tape. Finally, she wrapped it tightly in all directions with wide tape. Why did she go to all this trouble? She wants the contents to endure the rough road they have ahead of them.

When we make a decision to live for the Lord, we also need to seal it tightly if it is going to last. In Nehemiah 8, we learned that the people of Israel had a revival and they got right with God.

**Transition:** This evening I want us to note the **three steps** that they followed which helped them seal their revival decisions.

*The first step they followed was ...*

## 1. They Humbled Themselves (9:1-3)

### a. They humbled themselves outwardly

1) The people fasted.

a) "**Fasting was an act of self-denial that involved placing spiritual concerns over physical needs.**" – S. K. Evers

b) They willingly refused food while burdened over their sin.

2) They dressed in sackcloth

a) Sackcloth was cloth made of black goats' hair that was coarse, rough, and thick. It was used for sacks and also worn by mourners (Ge 37:34; 42:25; 2 Sa 3:31; Es 4:1-2; Ps 30:11; etc.), and as a sign of repentance (Mt 11:21) – OLB

b) Sackcloth was humiliating to wear

3) They put earth on their heads

a) This was another sign of mourning

b) It was also a sign of humiliation

- 4) They separated from strangers (unbelievers)
  - a) They broke ungodly ties that had developed with unsaved people. Separation is mentioned repeatedly throughout the Bible.
  - b) Does separation require isolation or to live like a Christian hermit? No! It requires:
    - (1) Scriptural prohibition (obey God's commands: marriage & partnership, 2 Cor 6:14)
    - (2) Selective association (choose associations carefully, whether friends, partners, activities, groups, etc., 1Co 15:33)
    - (3) Clear identification (let Christ be seen in you, Mt 5:16)
    - (4) Protective insulation (stay close to the Lord, 1Jn 1:7)

☞ *By these outward expressions of sorrow and humiliation they gave glory to God, took shame to themselves, and stirred up one another to repentance. Though it is not necessary to fast and wear sackcloth and dirt to humble ourselves, separation from all that offends God is required.*

#### b. They humbled themselves inwardly (9:2-3)

- 1) They confessed their sins to God (9:2)
  - a) It is impossible to get right with God without searching the heart and confession of sin. (Psalms 139:23-24) "*Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*"
  - b) Solomon explained it better than I can when he said, (Proverbs 28:13) "*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*" Every sin we commit is either covered or confessed.
- 2) They read God's Word (9:3)
  - a) Reading God's word is beneficial in getting right with God because it reveals areas of failure. **The closer we get to God's light, the smaller particles of sinful dirt we can see in our lives that need to be confessed.**

- 3) They worshipped God (9:3)
  - a) Worship speaks of bowing before God.
  - b) Prayer ought to be a time of honouring God. We ought to bow our heads when we pray. Kneeling and bowing aid in our worship, especially in private.

☞ *NOTE: If you ever enter a room when someone is praying, honour the Lord by waiting to enter until the prayer is finished. During the offering prayer, worship God by praying in your heart not digging through your wallet. The offering bag will wait on you.*

*The second step they followed was ...*

## 2. They Acknowledged God's Sovereignty (9:4-38)

God's sovereignty speaks of His absolute right to do all things according to his own good pleasure.

### a. They acknowledged God ...

- 1) As Creator (9:6), this is an excellent verse
- 2) As omnipotent:
  - a) He caused the plagues (9:10)
  - b) He opened the Red Sea (9:11)
  - c) He provided cloudy/fiery pillars (9:12)
  - d) He gave daily manna (9:15)
  - e) He caused their clothes to no wear out (9:21)
- 3) As merciful (9:17, 19, 27, 28, 31, 32)
- 4) As righteous (9:8, 13, 33)

### b. They acknowledged their own ...

- 1) Wickedness (9:33)
- 2) Disobedience (9:34), God is always right

☞ *An important part of getting right with God is acknowledging God's sovereignty in our lives. He can do as he pleases and we, his creation, must obey him.*

*The third step they followed was ...*

## 3. They Made a Vow to God (10:1-39)

### a. The vow was a personal choice (10:28)

It is hypocritical to make a vow that is not your personal choice. Vows must be from the heart.

- 1) Only those who had chosen to separate unto God vowed
  - a) Personal willingness to separate from wrong