

SERMON FOCUS: I must honor God in all the areas of my life.

SERMON FUNCTION: The hearer will examine various areas of his life to see if they are God-honoring.

BACKGROUND:

Last week, in the first twelve verses of chapter 8, we saw the people of Israel hear the word, become sorry for their sins, and then celebrate God's goodness. Their godly sorrow has led to repentance. Chapter 9 covers the people's confession of the sins of their people from the time of the captivity in Egypt all the way until the exile. Then we come to a key verse, 9:38. "**Because of all this**, we make a firm agreement in writing, and on that sealed document are inscribed the names of our officials, our Levites, and our priests." The first 27 verses of chapter 10 are the names of those important people who agreed to this covenant. Starting in verse 28 is where we get to reading what the people agreed to. We will pick up there today.

SCRIPTURE READING: Nehemiah 10:28-39 (ESV)

**28**"The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, **29**join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord and his rules and his statutes. **30**We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons. **31**And if the peoples of the land bring in goods or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on a holy day. And

we will forego the crops of the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.

**32**“We also take on ourselves the obligation to give yearly a third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God: **33**for the showbread, the regular grain offering, the regular burnt offering, the Sabbaths, the new moons, the appointed feasts, the holy things, and the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God. **34**We, the priests, the Levites, and the people, have likewise cast lots for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, according to our fathers’ houses, at times appointed, year by year, to burn on the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the Law. **35**We obligate ourselves to bring the firstfruits of our ground and the firstfruits of all fruit of every tree, year by year, to the house of the Lord; **36**also to bring to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God, the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, as it is written in the Law, and the firstborn of our herds and of our flocks; **37**and to bring the first of our dough, and our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the wine and the oil, to the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and to bring to the Levites the tithes from our ground, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all our towns where we labor. **38**And the priest, the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive the tithes. And the Levites shall bring up the tithes of the tithes to the house of our God, to the chambers of the storehouse. **39**For the people of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of grain, wine, and oil to the chambers, where the vessels of the sanctuary are, as well as the priests who minister, and the gatekeepers and the singers. We will not neglect the house of our God.”

#### INTRODUCTION:

It is very easy to fall into neglect. I used to be in good shape. When I retired from the Marine Corps, I didn’t deliberately stop working out. I just sort of didn’t get up and do it anymore. I

recently started again and discovered how weak I had become over the last few years.

The same can happen with property. It doesn't deteriorate immediately, but if you look at it over time, you can see it, like that house on Lee Avenue that disappeared into the trees. This is why it is important for us to be careful not to neglect honoring God in certain areas of our lives. Today, we're going to see three areas in which we cannot neglect honoring God: Our relationships, our business dealings, and our religious observances. First...

MESSAGE:

1. I MUST HONOR GOD IN MY RELATIONSHIPS

- a. (10:30) We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons.
- b. We discussed in Ezra the prohibition on intermarriage.
  - i. It was **not** about race, but about religion.
    1. Moses' wife, Rahab, Ruth
    2. Contrast with Solomon's wives who led him to worship idols.
    3. (2 Cor. 6:14) Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?"
  - ii. Pagan spouses will lead our children away from God.
    1. David Guzik points out that if this covenant were written today, it wouldn't have been addressed to the parents, but to the ones wanting to get married.

2. At this time, all marriages were arranged by the families to form beneficial alliances.
3. I have a friend whose marriage was arranged. When he met her, he asked if she was a Christian, and she was. Their marriage is good.
4. Today, we marry for love, whatever that happens to mean to us that day.
  - iii. If our spouse is not honoring God, he/she is leading us away from Him. There is no neutral territory here.
  - c. The need to honor God should show itself in our friendships as well. If your friendships are leading you away from God, you need new friends.
  - d. Not only do we see that I must honor God with my relationships, but I must honor God in my dealings.

## 2. I MUST HONOR GOD IN MY DEALINGS

- a. (10:31) And if the peoples of the land bring in goods or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on a holy day.
- b. The reason for this is simple: If you're busy out buying things, you're not resting and worshipping God. That is what the Sabbath was made for.
- c. It is very easy to get distracted by all that the world has to offer. We need a day away from that distraction and focused on God.
- d. (Saint Bede the Venerable, 735) "We, too, should always keep a spiritual sabbath, should always take a rest from servile work (i.e., sin), should always make time for and consider that the Lord is God, so that after such a sabbath, when we have been freed from the sins of conscience, we may come to

the sabbath of future glory in heaven. But the peoples of the land seek a way to profane our sabbath by bringing in all sorts of things to sell us on the holy day because unclean spirits try hard to pollute the cleanness of our heart; and once they have received the payment of our consent, they heap on us the enticements of the vices in order to defile the day of greatest holiness (i.e., to darken the light of our devout thought or action with the sins they have sent in). But we should entirely shun merchandise of this sort with the walls of our closedoff city, that is, with the protection of a more perfected life.”

- e. Things to realize:
  - i. The Sabbath is ceremonial law, nor moral law.
  - ii. The Sabbath is Saturday, not Sunday.
  - iii. Sunday, the day we worship, is the first day of the week in honor of Christ’s resurrection.
  - iv. Taking a day of rest and worship each week is *still* good practice, and I would argue, necessary.
  - v. We don’t do this out of obligation, but because it is a privilege to rest in what the Lord our God has provided.
- f. Why the importance of the sabbath?
  - i. God’s people were to live and worship differently than those around them.
  - ii. The people had previously neglected the sabbath day and the sabbatical year.
  - iii. The reason that they spent 70 years in exile was because of the number of sabbatical years that they had not let the land rest.
  - iv. The Israelites were not going to take a chance of messing up the Sabbath again.

- g. Now: take a day off sometime. Take a vacation. Enjoy time with God and with your family. Follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in your life for this one.
- h. If you are opposed to people working on Sundays, don't put them in positions where they have to.
  - i. Sunday lunch-rush servers
  - ii. Store clerks
- i. Every day, my interactions with people should honor God. Whether they are personal interactions or business interactions, God must be glorified by my actions. Also, I must honor God in my religious observances.

### 3. I MUST HONOR GOD IN MY RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

- a. (10:39) We will not neglect the house of our God.
- b. Apparently, the Jews had gotten lax on their giving for the work of the Temple.
- c. Before the exile, they had neglected the temple and let it fall into disrepair several times. Scripture records the need of repairs during the times of King Joash and King Josiah. They knew that they needed to not let the temple fall into disrepair and disrepute again.
- d. The law required a tithe to be given by everyone to the Levites. This was for their living while performing their duties. Then the Levites were to give a tithe of the tithe for the Temple itself, to provide the things needed to run the temple. This covered the showbread, the grain offerings, the burnt offerings, the festivals, the sin offerings.
- e. They came up with a schedule for the wood that was needed to keep the fire burning the whole time.

- f. They reinstated the temple tax. It was this tax that Jesus paid with the coin that he sent Peter to get from a fish.
- g. Do you remember how the Pharisees during Jesus' time were so picky about tiniest details in the law? This was where it started to happen.
- h. They wanted so badly to not offend God that they became legalists.
- i. They also became hypocrites, or stage actors, without any real faith. We do not want to become that.
- j. (John 4:23-24) But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."
- k. This means not just going through the motions of worship. It means actually being in awe of God and celebrating who He is and what He has done for us.

## CONCLUSION:

- Do I honor God with my relationships?
  - At home?
  - At work?
  - Other relationships?
- Do I honor God in my business dealings?
  - Do I conduct my business with integrity?
  - The slumlord church member.
  - The rude customer who is a pastor.
- Do I honor God with my religious observances?
  - Do I bring my first and best to God?
  - Do I give Him my leftover time and attention?
- Do I even know Him?

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