

Nehemiah Sermon #21

Nehemiah 9 is one of those chapters where I could easily spend ten weeks, but I have decided to finish the chapter today.

Next week is Missions Sunday; I will preach a missions message.

When I get back from India, we will pick up Nehemiah 10, Lord willing.

The focal point of Nehemiah 9 is God Himself.

We see God and His “great kindness” (Neh. 9:17), “great mercy” (v. 31), and “great goodness” (vv. 25, 35), but Israel responded to God with “great provocations” (vv. 18, 26) that resulted in “great distress” (v. 37).

This chapter reminded them of God’s greatness and of their own failure to adequately live for His glory.

As you read this chapter, notice that it reveals three things – the greatness of God (Neh. 9:1-6), the goodness of God (vv. 7-30), and the grace of God (vv. 31-38).

I’ve entitled today’s sermon “The Revival of Israel, Part 2”

Nehemiah 9:6

Let us stand for the reading of God’s Holy Word

Nehemiah 9:6-10:1

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

The Revival of Israel, Part 2

1. The greatness of God – Vs. 6

Throughout verses 6-15, God is the subject of every sentence.

God is the main subject of this chapter—who He is and what He has done for His people.

God is great!

First, God's greatness is seen in the fact that He is God alone (Neh. 9:6a).

There are no other Gods – no Buddha, no Allah

Our God is Jehovah God – He is God alone

A second evidence of God's greatness is the fact that *He created the universe* (Neh. 9:6b).

He created in six days – 24-hour periods.

Thirdly, God's greatness is seen in the fact of *His providential care for His creation* (Neh. 9:6c).

He did not simply make everything and then abandon it to its own course.

He did not wind the world up like a toy and let it go and it's winding down—that's fatalism

He is involved in the affairs of His creation: He sees even when a sparrow falls.

God covers the lilies of the field.

God is involved in sustaining the earth.

Finally, God's greatness is seen in the fact that *the hosts of heaven worship Him* (Neh. 9:6d).

The praise which Israel offered on earth was also echoed in the heavens by angelic hosts.

In our worship, it's wise to begin with the greatness of God.

God is great!

Secondly, God is good.

Beginning in vs. 7, the history of Israel is given – revealing God's goodness to His people and their repeated failure to appreciate His gifts and obey His will.

The word “give” is used in one way or another at least sixteen times in this chapter, for our God is indeed the "giving God," who delights in meeting the needs of His people (I Tim. 6:17).

God gave Israel a land (Neh. 9:8, 15, 35), a law (v. 13), the ministry of the Spirit (v. 20), food and water (vv. 15, 20), deliverers (v. 27), and victory over their enemies (vv. 22, 24).

What more could they want?

Centuries before, Moses had warned the people not to forget God.

The nation didn't thank God in times of blessing, but they were quick to turn to God for help in times of suffering (see Ps. 105-106).

In my years of pastoral ministry, I have met people who had little interest in God or the church until a crisis – a loved one was in the hospital or there was a death in the family.

Then the pastor and all the church family had to drop everything and give them help! But just as soon as the crisis was over, these people were back to their old life again, ignoring the things of the Lord and living for the things of the world.

You can trace this tragic pattern in every stage of Israel's history.

In verses 7-18, God is establishing/forming the nation of Israel (Neh. 9:7-18).

How Israel came about!

God called Abram and revealed Himself to him, for Abram was an idolater in a pagan city (Josh. 24:2-3).

Get thee out of thy country – leave your relatives and go to a place I will show you.

Eventually, God changed his name from Abram to Abraham, because God had promised to make him a great nation (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:1-8).

Though Abraham had occasional lapses of faith, for a century he trusted the Lord and walked in obedience to His will.

His obedient faith was made especially evident when he gave his son Isaac on the altar (Gen. 22; Heb. 11:17-19).

God's covenant was the basis for all that God did with and for Abraham and his descendants.

Genesis 12:2-3, *“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”*

It was God's purpose that *all the world* be blessed through Israel, and He did this in the sending of His Son Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:8, *“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, ‘In thee shall all nations be blessed.’”*

In the land of Egypt the nation multiplied greatly, saw God's power over the pagan gods – remember the ten plagues – and experienced deliverance from bondage by the mighty hand of God (Ex. 1-15).

God opened the sea – vs. 11 – to let Israel through and then closed it again to destroy the Egyptian army.

God led His people by day and by night, giving them food to eat and water to drink.

He also gave them His holy Law (vs. 13), so that they knew the will of God.

God is not an impersonal force but a personal God who communicates with human beings.

God wants a personal relationship.

Vs. 14 – many Christians wrestle with the Sabbath.

The Sabbath was given as a special sign between God and His people, Israel (Ex. 31:13-17).

The Sabbath was simply a day of rest for man and animals – it was a provision for man. It was for man's sake.

Mark 2:27 – Jesus said, *“The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.”*

Colossians 2:14-17

Nehemiah tells us how the nation responded to all that God had done for them.

A major change is signaled in this verse by the words “but they” – vs. 16

“Stiff-necked” is a common Biblical expression for stubbornness.

They refused to bow to His authority, listen to His Word, or obey His will.

Vs. 17-18

At Kadesh-Barnea, they tried to take matters in their own hands and appoint a new leader to take them back to Egypt (v. 17; Num. 14:1-5).

I don't know why they wanted to go back to slavery. Do you?

I don't know why Christians want to go back to sin. Do you?

When Moses was on the mountain with God, the people made and worshiped an idol – vs. 18 (Ex. 32).

Moses interceded for the people, and God pardoned them.

How could these people turn their backs on God after all He had done for them?

They did not truly believe in Him – Psalm 78:22

Do you ever doubt God? Is God real? Is this a game?

Creation – prophecy – Israel back in her land

It's quiet – it was quiet 400 years before Christ came.

God is at work – He's alive and He's coming – just as He said.

Their obedience was an outward form; it didn't come from their hearts.

In their hearts, they were still living in Egypt and wanting to return there.

They did not have living faith in God, but were more than willing to receive his help and enjoy His gifts.

Not only did He form the nation, but He led the nation (Neh. 9:19-22).

During the forty years of Israel's discipline in the wilderness, the old generation died and a new generation was born; but God never forsook His people.

He led them by a cloud in the day and fire by night, taught them the Word, provided them with the necessities of life, and gave them victory over their enemies.

God keeps His promises and fulfills His purposes.

If we obey Him, we share in the blessing; if we disobey Him, we miss the blessing; but God's purposes will be fulfilled and His name glorified.

Like too many of God's people today, the Jews were shortsighted.

They forgot the glorious purposes that God had in mind for the nation.

Israel was a people who lived beneath their privileges and failed to accept fully God's will for their lives.

God promised to multiply His people, and He kept His promise (Gen. 22:17).

He also promised to give them a good land, and He kept that promise (13:14-18; 17:7-8).

Under the leadership of Joshua, the army of Israel invaded Canaan, conquered the land, and claimed all its wealth.

It was God who gave them victory and enabled them to possess cities, houses, lands, and wealth in the land of Canaan.

It was a "fat land" and Israel became a "fat people" (satisfied); this led to their downfall, and this led to God chastening the nation.

★ Israel delighted themselves in God's great goodness, but they did not delight themselves in the Lord.

Like the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-24), they wanted the Father's wealth but not the Father's will.

Proverbs 30:8-9, *"Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."*

Once in the land, Israel enjoyed it during the days of Joshua, but when those Godly leaders were gone, the new generation turned away from the Lord (Jud. 2:6-15).

So God disciplined them, so they cried out for help; and God raised up judges to rescue them.

Then they would walk in God's ways for a time (awhile), then lapse back into sin; and the cycle would be repeated.

Vs. 27-28a

This section presents the historical cycle evident in the Book of Judges
(see Judg. 2:10-20):

Israel seems to have needed a crisis to recognize its need of dependence on God.

“That men do not learn very much from the lessons of history is the most important of all
the lessons that history has to teach.”

“Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it.”

The rhythm of that era with its steady repetition of sin, decline, appeal and rescue, a
cycle which no warnings from experience or from preaching could do anything to
break.

By the words “nevertheless they” in the opening verse of the paragraph (26) and
“nevertheless” (31) . . .

They forsook God and His word and His will.

Against the dark background of Israel’s unfaithfulness shines the bright light of the
faithfulness of God.

When Israel obeyed Him, He was faithful to bless; when they disobeyed Him, He was
faithful to chasten; when they asked for mercy, He was faithful to forgive.

★ God is willing to give His people many privileges, but He will not give them the
privilege of sinning and having their own way. ★

God’s purposes are more important than our pleasures, and He will accomplish His
purposes even if He has to chasten us to do it.

Israel's sins finally became so disgusting to God that He decided to discipline them
away from their own land.

The totality of sins through the ages forced the Lord to take steps against His people.

The Israelites were delivered into the hands of foreign kings, who oppressed them and made slaves of them.

Sin will be punished.

God used the Assyrians to destroy the Northern Kingdom, and then He brought Babylonians to take the Southern Kingdom (Judah) captive and to destroy Jerusalem and the temple.

It was as though God said to His people, "You enjoy living *like* the heathen so much, I'll let you live *with* the heathen."

The nation's seventy years of captivity in Babylon taught them to appreciate the blessings they had taken for granted, and they never again returned to pagan idolatry.

God's chastening is as much an evidence of His love as is His bountiful supply of our needs (Heb. 12:1-11).

We should be grateful that God loves us too much to allow us to become "spoiled children."

Psalm 94:12, "*Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD.*"

God was good to His people when His people were not good to Him.

After the judges

He sent them prophets to teach them and to warn them, but the nation refused to listen (2 Chron. 36:14-21). God raised up Kings (v. 32) for the people.

As the Levites confessed and worshipped, they acknowledged the sins of the nation and God's justice in sending punishment .

Nehemiah 9:33

The wrongdoing was not God's but was that of the kings, leaders, priests, and fathers who did not keep the Torah, the written revelation contained in Genesis through Deuteronomy. **Vs. 34**

They were back in the land, but they could not enjoy the land; for everything they worked for was given to somebody else!

The Persian king was in control of everything, including their own bodies. **Vs. 36**

When they rebelled against His will, they found themselves enslaved to kings who had no compassion on them.

Samuel had warned them (I Sam. 8), and Moses had prophesied that the nation would forfeit its wealth to its conquerors (Deut. 28:15).

III. The Levites had acknowledged God's greatness and goodness; and now, on the basis of His grace, they asked Him for a new beginning for the nation.

They couldn't change the slavery they were in (they were still under Persian rule), but they could surrender themselves to a greater Master and seek His help.

No matter who exercises dominion over us, if we are yielded to the Lord, we are free in Him (I Cor. 7:22; Eph. 6:5-9).

If God had been merciful to Israel in the past, forgiving their sins when they cried out to Him, would He not be merciful to them now?

But they did more than ask God for mercy; they also made a solemn covenant with God to obey His law and do His will.

The nation had made a covenant with God at Mt. Sinai and then broke it (Ex. 24:3-8).

They had renewed the covenant when they entered Canaan (Josh. 8:30-35) and after they had conquered the land (24:14-28), but then they rebelled against the Lord.

Samuel had led the people in renewing their covenant vows (I Sam. 11:14-12:25), but King Saul led the people back into sin and defeat.

As soon as his throne was secure, David sought to bring the people back to the Lord (2 Sam. 6); and Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple was also a step in that direction.

Sad to say, however, Solomon sinned against the Lord and almost destroyed his own kingdom.

because of all this (v. 38)

The history of God's faithfulness, in spite of Israel's unfaithfulness, caused the people to decide to obey God and not repeat the sins of their fathers.

Before the sun went down, a decision was taken to draw up a solemn covenant in which the people bound themselves under oath to maintain the integrity of their commitment to the Lord.

Rededicated their lives to God – recommitted themselves

We make a sure covenant and write it (v. 38)

The nation initiated this covenant with God.

I don't know why people can sign up for everything else in life, but they are afraid to sign up with God.

My friend, if you mean it, sign up with Him – put it on the dotted line.
I am His and He is mine.

Our God is a glorious God (Neh. 9:5).

He is powerful, faithful, and concerned about the needs of His people.

He is a pardoning God, He is longsuffering when we sin, He chastens us if we rebel.

He is a generous God, who gives us far more than we deserve.

He is a God who keeps His promises even if we are unfaithful.

Surely this God deserves our living obedience!

Perhaps the time has come for a new beginning.

Let me give you _____ principles from Nehemiah 9.

Principle #1 – let us never forget God and behave as though He doesn't exist or doesn't care.

Principle #2 – let us remember they had separation 9:2

There is no worship without confession.

Nothing can bring wholeness and happiness to the believer who is unwilling to confront and forsake his sin.”—John MacArthur

The church that is going bad is the church that is not separating.

Principle #3 – Let us come to God for a fresh start

Oh, how many of us have failed Him, but He is gracious.

If we mean business with Him, He means business with us.

Will you rededicate your life? Recommit yourself?

Principle #4 – Let us do right regardless of what will happen or change.

Principle #5 – Let us remember that God chastises His children

Church discipline begins with preaching against sin.

A preacher must stand against sin in the church.

God blesses the denunciation of sin.

If more of this were happening, less of the other forms of discipline would be needed in the churches.

The pastor ought to love his people enough to talk with them plainly about their sins.

Is preaching too controversial if it is Biblical?

By silence, the pulpit spares the rod, and the pastor abuses the people.

Will not the pollution of minds hinder revival in the churches?

Pastors should awaken the people to the sin of not praying, not giving, not witnessing, and not living for Christ.

Preaching against sin may not make a church popular at first, but it could make it holy and then powerful.

And a holy, powerful church will eventually draw many to Christ.

Are we mourning over sin?

We could at least mourn about the sin amongst us.

Are we purging our sin?

We must purge some things out of our lives in order to be holy.

We must purge some things out of our churches in order to have the smile of God's countenance.

Every man of God and every congregation at some time or another must actually purge sin out!

Such times are times of testing.

Will we return to the Lord?

Will we take up our cross and follow Him?

When will we have revival?

Let us stand for closing invitation.

Believer, we are not too far from Israel's poor example – are we?

Do we need to sign up for God's army again?

Do we need to rejoin the ranks of the faithful?

Our sin is why Christ died on the cross.

Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission/forgiveness of sin.

God is gracious and merciful.

He has provided a way for us—by faith in His Son – by trusting in Jesus Christ.

Rear of Document

Throughout the history of Israel, there was always a remnant of faithful people who trusted God, obeyed His will, and prayed for God to fulfill His promises (I Kings 19:18; Isa. 1:9; Luke 2:38).

This believing remnant was God's "lifeline" to maintain the ministry of Israel in the world. They kept the light of faith and hope burning in the land; and because of them, God was able to fulfill His promise and bring the Savior into the world.

The Jews in Jerusalem in Nehemiah's day were a part of that remnant, and God heard their prayers.