



Sunday, August 11, 2013

ADMITTING SHORTCOMINGS

Unifying Topic: **COMMUNITY OF CONFESSION**

Lesson Text

I. **The Israelites Confess** (Nehemiah 9:2)

II. **God is Faithful** (Nehemiah 9:6-7, 9-10, 30-31)

III. **From Confession To Petition** (Nehemiah 9:32-36)



The Main Thought: And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. (Nehemiah 9:2, KJV).

Unifying Principle: It is often hard to tell the truth about ourselves, especially our misdoings. What brings us to be honest about our shortcomings? The writer shows us that confession and repentance are necessary acts of worship, because God is merciful in every generation and gives people another chance.

Lesson Aim: To understand how the returning Israelites practiced confession in light of their rebellion and exile.

Life Aim: To understand what it means to be a community that confesses its sin(s) and God's faithfulness.

9:2 And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.

9:6 Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

9:7 Thou art the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham;

9:9 And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea;

9:10 And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day.

9:30 Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands.

9:31 Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them: for thou art a gracious and merciful God.

9:32 Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day.

9:33 Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us: for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.

9:34 Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them.

9:35 For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works.

9:36 Behold, we are servants this day and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it:

HISTORY:

Nehemiah 8 Ezra the scribe and priest on the first day of the people gathering themselves together as one man had read and explained the Law to them. On the second day of their gathering, they find out about the feasts of the seventh month in which they were now in. They celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles (*Booths; Shelters*) which had been commanded by God to Moses. The people hear and obey and began to gather the branches to make and live in the booths. Day after day for seven days Ezra read the Book of the Law to them; they feasted and on the last day, the eighth day a solemn assembly was called according to scripture.

Nehemiah 9:1 Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and sackclothes, and earth upon them. You've got to remember, they departed the river Ahava on the 12th; came to Jerusalem and stayed 3 days; the 15th to 22nd Day of the 7th Month began The Festival of Booths, two days afterwards comes Day 24th of the seventh month, the children of Israel assemble to place themselves in sackclothes to fast. The wearing of sackclothes (burlap fabric or grave clothes), and placing dirt upon themselves is a symbol of great mourning and sorrow.

LESSON:

Nehemiah 9:2 The Israelites Confess

9:2 And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. The seed of Israel meant those who were of the pure lineage of Israel, separated and confessed their sins and their father's sin. Their sorrow and mourning was evidenced by the fact of Ezra's reading of the Law. They were willing to make a clear separation from the heathen nations around them. And the fact of coming clean to repent by confessing their sin and the sins of their fathers separated them unto God. They had just come out of a festive time and were told not to weep (Neh.8:9-11) and now they decide to take it a step further and really be sincere to obey God's Law by striping themselves and confessing their sins and their father's sins in fasting and wearing mourning clothes, pouring dirt over themselves. They wanted to begin again and this brought them closer to God.

NOT APART OF THE LESSON (verses 3-5)

They began to read (actually the Levites read the law to them) one fourth part of the day (this would be about three hours of listening). For another fourth part of the day they confessed, and worshiped the Lord their God (v.3). Then stood Jeshua and other Levites on the stairs (probably the wooden platform Ezra utilized), and cried with a loud voice unto God (leading with repentance, confession, and mourning) (v.4), then the Levites said *"Stand and bless the Lord your God for ever and ever: and blessed be the glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise."* The people had been lying prostrate in grief before their Lord. They were, now, told to stand up and bless and praise the Lord. As one body, they read, they confessed, and they worshiped the Lord their God (v.5).

Nehemiah 9:6-7, 9-10, 30-31 God is Faithful

9:6 Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. They remembered God's Greatness: that God was God alone who made the heaven, the heaven of heavens meaning all Creation and including the angels. He made the earth and all things in it: the seas preserving them all; the angels of heaven that worship Him. They let us know all that God has done for them

9:7 Thou art the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham;— They remembered God's Goodness. God chose Abram who was an idolater in a pagan city, brought him out of his homeland, Ur of the Chaldees, whereby God even changed Abram's name (exalted father) to Abraham (father of a multitude) because He had promised to make him a great nation. All of these continued verses are rehearsing the history of Israel and revealing God's goodness.

NOT APART OF THE LESSON (verse 8)

9:8 And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous:— God made a covenant with Abram. It involved two specific promises.

1. To give the land...
2. To give it to Abram's seed.

God saw a faithful heart toward Him. Therefore, God made a covenant with Abram to give the land and from his seed would come a nation. It is because of this covenant that God continued to deal with the rebellious children of Israel.

9:9 And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea;— Two facts are stated here:

1. God saw the affliction of their fathers in Egypt.
2. God heard their cry by the Red Sea.

In God delivering them, they were to have no further relationship with Egypt.

9:10 And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day. The signs and wonders refer to the miracles done against Pharaoh to compel him to release the Israelites. God established His righteous reputation over the powers of Egypt by the miracles of immense power performed against the Egyptians. He had made a name for Himself as it is known today!

VERSES SKIPPED 9:11-29

9:30 Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands. God had plenty patience for many years with the Israelites. Even in sending His prophets to speak to them of their sins, they failed to listen or obey; therefore, God went another route by sending or delivering them into the hands of the heathen enemies of the land. For the northern kingdom, this meant Assyria (2Kgs.17), while for Judah it meant Babylon (2Kgs.24-25).

9:31 Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them: for thou art a gracious and merciful God. For it was God's mercy that prevented Him from totally consuming them. He always saved a remnant to start again. He gives us chance after chance, again and again. Praise God!

Nehemiah 9:32-36 From Confession To Petition

9:32 Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy,— They recognize God's greatness, His might, and that He is a terrible God meaning awesome. They made known that God keeps His covenant (His promises) toward them and shows mercy. **...let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day.** Now they petition to God is to let not all their troubles be light or insignificant; deal to them what they needed; not to count this as a small thing, this misery that has happened to them. For all the misery that came upon them, their kings, their princes, their priests, their prophets, and their fathers from the time the kings of Assyria became their enemy, even to now, was not a small thing. It's like saying, *"Lord You were right to do this."*

9:33 Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us: for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly. The people recognized that all of the problems that came from their captivity were well-deserved. They had done wickedly and it was the wickedness of the people that had brought on the terrible times and they recognize their sin. God is a just God!

9:34 Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them. The list of people mentioned here is similar to that in verse 32 with the exception of the prophets. The prophets suffered from the captivity, but were not one of the causes of the captivity. The list of people did not keep the law, nor did they pay attention to God's commandments and His warnings that were given. Their actions in turn became a testimony against them.

9:35 For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works. Living in their kingdom, they didn't serve God They lived in the extensive and rich country God bestowed to them and in God's great goodness and blessings they still did not turn from their wicked works. It looks like their blessings made them independent of God instead of being thankful to God

9:36 Behold, we are servants this day and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it: — The Israelites were in the strange position of being slaves in their own land, having to turn over a part of their resources each year to a foreign king. How ironic, since God had given the land to them but they are servants in the land.

SUMMARY:

The seed of Israel separated themselves. They broke off all relations with foreigners, stood up, and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their parents (v.2).

They began to confess God's greatness and His faithfulness: He is God alone; He created the universe and the host of heaven who worship Him. They bring up that God chose Abram and changed His name to complete His promise (vv.6-7).

They knew that God saw the sufferings of their fathers in Egypt and when they were at the Red Sea He heard their cry for help. They remembered the signs and wonders against Pharaoh, his servants, and all the people of his land which still shows His greatness and goodness which establishes His name till this day (vv.9-10).

God never failed them. He brought forth prophets to tell them of their sins, yet they wouldn't listen. God still did not consume them but he was gracious and merciful. In His mercy He didn't give them what they deserved. He kept covenant but now they didn't want the trouble that had come upon them to be light. They truly deserved all that had come on them since the time of the Assyrian king until now. God did everything right. Even those in high offices didn't listen to God's commandments. All of them that ranked in high office and lived in the fat of the land that God generously gave them did not turn from their wicked works. The people acknowledge that they are servants in the land God had given their fathers and now they are servants under these kings because of their sins. Therefore, they are in great distress; deep trouble (vv.30-37)

APPLICATION:

Reviewing our past helps us understand how to improve our behavior, however, reading and studying the Word of God can show us where we are sinning.