

City of God Part 25 - **Confessional Worship** (10-18-26)

Introduction: Nehemiah 9 (3 weeks after chapter 8) - fasting and confession of personal and generational sin

Remember: Rooted in a desire for holiness which is an invitation into the festival joy of the Kingdom of God

Nehemiah 9:1-3 (ESV)

[1] Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads. [2] And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. [3] And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the LORD their God.

Note: The people are gathered, fasting, set-apart in worship - confessing their sins and those of their fathers.

What follows . . . Historical remembrance of God's faithful presence and powerful works on their behalf to preserve them, even extending mercy when it was radically undeserved. And their honest reflection on the patterns of brokenness throughout the generations.

1) The Goodness of God

Nehemiah 9:6 (ESV)

You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.

Note: The preeminence of God - creator and sustainer of life!

Spoken of Jesus in NT - "And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:17)

Nehemiah 9:13-15 (ESV)

[13] You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven and gave them right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments, [14] and you made known to them your holy Sabbath and commanded them commandments and statutes and a law by Moses your servant. [15] You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and you told them to go in to possess the land that you had sworn to give them.

Note: The providence of God - guidance, provision, and protection! (by Moses, 40 years trained shepherd)

"The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want" (Psalm 23) / **Jesus** - "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11)

Nehemiah 9:20-21 (ESV)

[20] You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. [21] Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.

Note: The presence of God - nearness, Immanuel (God with us), Parakletos (one called to walk alongside)

John 16:7 (ESV)

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

"the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name" (John 14:26)

2) The Brokenness of the people (their fathers, and so themselves)

Refusal to enter the promised land, and desire to return to Egypt . . .

Nehemiah 9:17-19 (ESV)

[17] They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them. [18] Even when they had made for themselves a golden calf and said, 'This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,' and had committed great blasphemies, [19] you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go.

Settling in and taking possession of promised land . . .

Nehemiah 9:23-25 (ESV)

[23] You multiplied their children as the stars of heaven, and you brought them into the land that you had told their fathers to enter and possess. [24] So the descendants went in and possessed the land, and you subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gave them into their hand, with their kings and the peoples of the land, that they might do with them as they would. [25] And they captured fortified cities and a rich land, and took possession of houses full of all good things, cisterns already hewn, vineyards, olive orchards and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and became fat and delighted themselves in your great goodness.

Sliding into the neglect of the Lord and His ways . . .

Nehemiah 9:26 (ESV)

[26] "Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies.

Pattern of repeated compromise and therefore struggle . . .

Nehemiah 9:27-28 (ESV)

[27] Therefore you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. And in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, and according to your great mercies you gave them saviors who saved them from the hand of their enemies. [28] But after they had rest they did evil again before you, and you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them. Yet when they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven, and many times you delivered them according to your mercies.

Finally culminating in their exile . . .

Nehemiah 9:30-31 (ESV)

[30] Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. [31] Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

Application: Confession of generational patterns of brokenness is not just about saying sorry for what our parents did. It is a recognition that our patterns of brokenness run deep. It is a worthwhile endeavor to reflect and confess generational sin.

Not to cast blame on the previous generation - that's easy, feels cathartic, but is often primarily about making ourselves feel good by blaming someone else for my ills.

True confession of generational sin recognizes and acknowledges that I have been shaped by it and have co-operated with it. And that it is time for that lived pattern to be broken.

3) Confession and Covenant

Nehemiah 9:32-33 (ESV)

[32] “Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love, let not all the hardship seem little to you that has come upon us, upon our kings, our princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers, and all your people, since the time of the kings of Assyria until this day. [33] Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly.

Note: God has dealt faithfully, and we have acted wickedly.

Nehemiah 9:36-38 (ESV)

[36] Behold, we are slaves this day; in the land that you gave to our fathers to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts, behold, we are slaves. [37] And its rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins. They rule over our bodies and over our livestock as they please, and we are in great distress. [38] “Because of all this we make a firm covenant in writing; on the sealed document are the names of our princes, our Levites, and our priests.

Note: These patterns of sin, have caused us to be enslaved. Even as we are being re-established in the land, having returned from exile, we are still under the yoke of the kingdoms of this world.

We know that you are a God who keeps covenant (vs 32), and we long to be your covenant people. Therefore, we have made confession and now stand together to covenant with you (chapter 10).

Conclusion: Corporate Confessional Worship re-establishes a Covenant People brought near.