

Nehemiah 9

6 Hour Service

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. **Slide2 Sun, 3-5pm** guest speaker for Children at Risk is...Dr, Andrew Doan [Author: Hooked on Games] Video Game addictions.
 - 1. ***The Endgame:*** Protecting Your Family Against Internet Gaming Disorder and Online Predators.

I. Slide3 Intro: 6 Hour Service

- A. It is interesting that 3 of Israel's **great national prayers** are in Dan. 9, Ezra 9, Neh.9.
 - 1. We have here ***the longest recorded prayer in the bible.*** vs.5-38.
- B. Just two days after the glad **Feast of Tabernacles** the people came together in a **solemn assembly**. This was a solemn public confession of their **sin**, and it was to be directed by the **Levites**. When they came together, **the book of the Law** was again **read aloud**. Then they **confessed their sins**.
- C. The prayer in chapter 9 is a **spiritual summary** of the OT history of the Jews:
 - 1. The **Creation** (6); the call of **Abraham** (7,8); the **Exodus** (9-14); the nation's **wilderness** experiences (15-23); the **conquering** of the land (24-25); the period of **Judges** (26-29); the period of **prophets** up to the captivity (30-31).
 - 2. **Now therefore...**in vs.32, brings us up to Ezra/Neh's day **and** the need of the nation to **repent** and **confess sin**.
- D. **What list would you give a Christian friend that is seeking to get their life right with God?** [Let's find that list in the 1st 3 verses]

II. Slide4 THE LAITY (1-3)

- A. We find here **5 steps** to Intimacy with God:
- B. **Slide5a Self-Humbling** (1) – (*Fasting, sackcloth, ashes*) [cloth made of **black goats' hair**, coarse, rough, thick]
- C. **Outward demonstration** of deep mourning & heaviness of heart.
- D. **Slide5b Separation** (2a) –
 - 1. We must **separate ourselves from the world** as we draw near to the Lord.
 - a) Here, most likely didn't marry foreigners.
 - 2. **Separation w/o devotion to the Lord becomes Isolation, but devotion w/o separation is hypocrisy.**

- E. Slide5c Sins confessed (2b) Do not expect God to cover what you are not willing to uncover¹
1. “A man should never be ashamed to own he has been in the wrong, which is but saying, in other words, that he is wiser today than he was yesterday.”
Alexander Pope
- F. Slide5d Scripture read (3a) –
1. They **read** for **3 hours** about **the sins of their fathers**, and then **confessed** for **3 hours doing the same awful deeds**.
 2. In the **Scriptures** He speaks to **us**. In **prayer & praise** we speak to **Him**.
- G. Slide5e Worship (3b) – True worship encompasses all of these (just named).
1. Note **confessed & worshiped**. *Never let self-examination extend to the place of ignoring the Lord.*
 - a) The more you look at **yourself**, the more discouraged you will become.
Slide5f Ultimately focus on His **perfections**, not your own **imperfections**.
 2. Slide5g How would you describe **your relationship w/God today?** [eyes closed]
 - a) Is it warm & steady or is it cold? Is it interrupted & distracted?
Is it a surface relationship or a deep relationship? Is it slow? Is it stale?
Is it an exciting personal adventure or, is it a mechanical routine?
- H. This then is a fine model for *a confessing people* to approach God.
1. We must cultivate **closeness w/God** w/these **spiritual disciplines**.
 2. **Involvement, yes...but...Intimacy???** [what do you plan to do w/this sermon?]
 3. **Do you feel lonely, hallow, shallow...frayed or frustrated on your spiritual journey? I have this against that you, that have left your 1st love.**
 - a) *Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people.* Richard Foster
 - b) Swindoll gives **4 spiritual disciplines** to cultivate this *Intimacy with the Almighty: Simplicity, which requires reordering our lives. Silence, which asks us to be still. Solitude, which involves cultivating serenity. Surrender, which beckons us to let go*
- I. This prayer includes **20 sins** of **Israel**...but **74 facts** about **God**.
1. **God** is the subject matter here...don't miss that.

¹ Duncan Campbell

2. This deals 1st with **Who** He is. **Then**, **What** He does for His people. **Then**, **What** His people must do for Him.

III. Slide6 **THE LEVITES** (4-38)

- A. (4,5) They **stood**, cried out, then got everyone else to their feet. [*why stand* 4x's]

IV. Slide7 **FROM CREATION** (6)

- A. (6a) They start with God as ***Creator***.
- B. (6b) **His Providential Care** - you preserve them all
 1. Ps.145:16 **You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing.**
- C. (6c) We can't **duplicate** the angels worship, **but** we can **imitate** their devotion to the Lord.
 1. **We have more cause to worship than *angels* do.** [Would you agree? why/why not?]
 - a) We are not just **servants**...**but children**. We have been **forgiven**.
- D. In our **worship, praise, & prayer**, it's wise to begin w/the **Greatness of God**.
 1. **Why is doing this important in all our praying? Ask?**
 2. **Did Christ model this for us? Ask?** (yes, the beg of the Lord's Prayer)
 3. **Isn't this proper for any dignitary...how much more the Lord God Himself?**

V. Slide8 **FROM ABRAHAM TO MOSES** (7,8)

- A. It is good to review the dealings of God with **ourselves** & w/those who have **gone before us**.
 1. **At times** in our walk w/God we have stood on **hilltops** where **the air is clear**, seeing in all directions, rejoicing that...**life is good**.
Other times, standing waist deep in **mire**, w/**fog** all around us.
 - a) What do you do when you're driving & it is foggy outside? **You slow down to the brightness of your headlights.**
 2. Like a **rest** in a piece of music, the **silence** helps **define** the significance of the **sound**. - Slow down & be silent before God.
 3. **God will not always scream & shout because life is noisy. He expects us to provide some quietness where His still & small voice can be heard.**²
 - a) This section rehearses the history of Israel, **but** it is also a very accurate summary of **our own personal lives** in Christ.
- B. The word **give** (or **gave**) is used 16x's in this chapter.

² Chuck Swindoll; pg. 4 "Intimacy with the Almighty."

- Our God is a **Giving** God. He gave Israel *a Land, a Law, the ministry of the Spirit, food & water, deliverers, & victory over their enemies...*to name a few mentioned here.

VI. Slide9 FROM MOSES TO JOSHUA (9-23)

- A. In the last verses (7,8) God was the **Founder** of a Nation. In (9-12) God, the **Deliverer** of a Nation. In (13-15) God, the **Guide** of a Nation. In (16-31) God, **Long-Suffering** towards a Nation.
- B. Side by side w/the story of God's **care**...runs the story of **sin/sorrow/suffering**.
 - The Gold & Black strands are closely interwoven.* (Meyer)
 - This Oriental tapestry* is put together with many exquisite strands.
 - It has the **gold** of happiness, pleasures, good days, w/God's Faithfulness.
And the **black** of bruising sorrows. [it takes **both** to make it beautiful]
 - He will use both in your life to make it beautiful.*
- C. (16) What *lessons from the past* do you need to remember today, to keep you from making foolish choices, w/devastating consequences?
 - It's just best for me if I just don't take even one drink. It's just best if I stay away from casinos. It's just best I don't hang around w/certain old friends for awhile.*
- D. (20) Your Good Spirit – The Holy Spirit here in the OT.
 - He is the **good Instructor**, the **good Comforter**, the **good Guide**,
The **good Sanctifier**, the **good Quickener**, & the **good Intercessor**.
 - Let us always **adore** Him, **revere** His person, **seek** His aid, **own** His power,
speak to His praise, & **never grieve** Him.
- E. (21) They lacked nothing – Like Ps.23 (same word)
 - The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want.* (nlt) *The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need.* (msg) *God, my shepherd! I don't need a thing.*

VII. Slide10 FROM JOSHUA TO JUDGES (24-26)

- A. (25) As a nation they **didn't thank** God in times of **blessing**, **but they were** quick to turn to Him in times of **suffering**.
 - Yet before we point at them...what about us?**
 - For every 100 who can stand **adversity**, there is only 1 who can stand **prosperity**.**

VIII. Slide11 FROM JUDGES TO THE TIME OF EZRA & NEHEMIAH (27-31)

- A. They wanted the Father's ***wealth*** **but** nor the Father's ***will***.
- 1. What a record of Israel's **sins**...**but** what a **greater** record of God allowing **new beginnings** & allowing them to ***bury the past***.
- B. (28) What does this prayer tell you about Human stubbornness & pride?
 - 1. **Can you relate to this verse? Is this not our testimony?**
- C. (31b) In His **Mercy**, God **didn't** give them what they deserved.
And in His **Grace**, He gave them what they **didn't** deserve.³

IX. Slide12 AT THE TIME OF EZRA & NEHEMIAH (32-38)

- A. (32) You enjoy living **like** the heathen? Then go live **with** the heathen.
- B. (33) Unapproachable purity reaching out to ***sinful humanity***.
- C. The song ended with the people entering into a **covenant** w/the Lord.
 - 1. **A Covenant – A formalized relationship w/commitments to loyalty.**⁴
- D. **Prayer:** God, may you sit upon the throne of our **lives** arrayed in royal apparel.
May we be quick to own our sin. Quick to repent. Quick to return again.

³ Wiersbe pg. 116

⁴ John MacArthur; pg.90