

## Amazing Grace! Nehemiah 9

- God is the main subject of this chapter - who He is, what He does for His people, and what His people must do for Him.
- The prayer reviews the history of Israel and reveals both the majesty of God and the depravity of man.
- notice that it reveals

↳ the greatness of God (Neh. 9:1-6),

↳ the goodness of God (vv. 7-30),

↳ the grace of God (vv. 31-38).

### Video – Indian Pastor

#### ↳ 1. The greatness of God (Neh. 9:1-6)

- ↳ The Feast of Tabernacles had ended, the people wanted to hear more of the Word of God. Feasting had turned to fasting as the Word brought conviction and people started confessing their sins. A six-hour service—three hours of preaching and three hours of praying... no complaints from the Jews of that day, it was the beginning of a new life for them and their city.
- ↳ We live in the age of the digest and fast food, and this mentality has invaded our churches. We piously sing, "Take Time to Be Holy," but we aren't willing to pay the price to do it.

**"I would suggest first of all that all of you Christians, missionaries and all, begin to live more like Jesus Christ.**

**Second, practise your religion without adulterating or toning it down.**

**Third, emphasise love and make it our working force, for love is central in Christianity.**

**Fourth, study the non-Christian religions more sympathetically to find the good that is in them, so that you might have a more sympathetic approach to the people."**

#### **Mahatma Ghandi**

- ↳ God's greatness is seen in the fact that *He receives our worship (vv. 1-5)*. True worship involves many elements: hearing the Scriptures, praising God, praying, confessing sin, and separating ourselves from that which displeases God. Each of these elements is recorded in this paragraph.
- ↳ Worship involves the Word of God, because the Word of God reveals the God of the Word. The better we know the Scriptures and respond to them, the better we will know God and become like Him.

- ✚ In the Scriptures, God speaks to us; and in prayer and praise, we speak to Him. **"Stand up and bless the Lord your God!" (v. 5)** is a command every believer should want to obey. and we should honour his Name, It should be "exalted above all blessing and praise" (Neh. 9:5).
- ✚ The people also took time to confess their sins (vv. 2-3) and seek forgiveness. The annual Day of Atonement was past, but the worshipers knew that they needed constant cleansing and renewal from the Lord. John 1:9 is always applicable.
- ✚ Finally, the people separated themselves from the world as they drew near to the Lord (Neh. 9:2; Ezra 6:21). Separation without devotion to the Lord becomes isolation, but devotion without separation is hypocrisy (see 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). The nation of Israel was chosen by God to be a special people, separated from the pagan nations around them. **"You are to be holy to Me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be My own" (Lev. 20:26, NIV)**. The Apostle Peter applied those words to Christian believers in the church today (1 Peter 1:15; 2:9-10).

## ✚ 2. The goodness of God (Neh. 9:7-30)

- ✚ This prayer recounts the history of Israel, revealing God's goodness to His people and their repeated failure to appreciate His gifts and obey His will. The word "give" is used more than a dozen times emphasising that our God is indeed the "giving God," who delights in meeting the needs of His people (1 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?
- ✚ **Forming the nation (Neh. 9:7-18)**. The recounting of the history from Abraham to the descent into Egypt and through the suffering and the deliverance into the wilderness where they abandoned God for idols.
- ✚ **Leading the nation (Neh. 9:19-22)**. **'Because of your great compassion you did not abandon them in the wilderness.** 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 the cloud and fire, taught them the Word, provided them with the necessities of life, and gave them victory over their enemies. God keeps His promises and fulfils 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 short-sighted: They forgot the glorious purposes that God had in mind for the nation. Had they meditated on God's promises and purposes (Gen. 12:1-3; Ex. 19:1-8), they would not have wanted to go back to Egypt or mingle with the godless nations around them. Israel was a people who lived beneath their privileges and failed to accept fully God's will for their lives.
- ✚ **Chastening the nation (Neh. 9:23-30)**. 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.

✚ "For every one hundred men who can stand adversity, there is only one who can stand prosperity," said Thomas Carlyle. Novelist John Steinbeck wrote, "If you want to destroy a nation, give it too much—make it greedy, miserable, and sick." It's possible for a local church to get proud of its "riches" and become poor in God's eyes (Rev. 3:14-22).

✚ **"Give me neither poverty nor riches," prayed Agur the wise man. "give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread. <sup>9</sup>Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God" (Prov. 30:8-9, NIV).** Through the power of Christ, Paul had learned by experience "how to be in need" and "how to have plenty" (Phil. 4:12); and that is the lesson all of God's people need to learn.

✚ Once in the promised land and settled Israel's sins finally became so disgusting to God that He decided to discipline them *away from their own land*. He used the Assyrians to destroy the Northern Kingdom, and then He brought the 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"

### ✚ **3. The grace of God (Neh. 9:31-38)**

✚ God was good to His people when His people were not good to Him. He sent them prophets to teach them and to warn them, but the nation refused to listen (2 Chron. 36:14-21). He was merciful to forgive them when they cried out for help, and He was longsuffering with them as they repeatedly rebelled against His Word. He could have destroyed the nation and started over again (see Ex. 32:10 and Num. 14:11-12), but He graciously spared them. In His mercy, God didn't give them what they deserved; and in His grace, He gave them what they didn't deserve.

✚ As the Levites prayed, they acknowledged the sins of the nation and God's justice in sending punishment. **"In all that has happened to us, you have been just; you have acted faithfully, while we did wrong" (Neh. 9:33, NIV).** Note that the Levites identified with the nation and acknowledged their own guilt. Nehemiah had prayed the same way at the beginning of the book (1:6-7). It is easy to be convicted about other people's sins, but God forgives only when we repent and confess our own sins. **1 John 1:9 if WE confess!**

- ✚ In the past, although the nation had enjoyed abundant blessings, they still sinned against the God who had blessed them. Now those blessings had been taken away from them. They were back in the land, but they could not enjoy the land; for everything they worked for was given to somebody else!
- ✚ 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 servitude they were in, 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 (1 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 broken 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 (Judg. 2:6-15).
- ✚ Samuel had led the people in renewing their covenant vows (1 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.
- ✚ Throughout the history of Israel, there was always a remnant of faithful people who trusted God, obeyed His will, and prayed for God to fulfil His promises (1 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 fulfil His promise and bring the Saviour into the world. The Jews in Jerusalem in Nehemiah's day were a part of that remnant, and God heard their prayers.
- ✚ Our God is a glorious God (Neh. 9:5). He is powerful (v. 6), faithful (v. 8), and concerned about the needs of His people (v. 9). He is a pardoning God (vv. 17-19, 31), who is longsuffering when we sin (vv. 21, 30) but who chastens if we rebel (vv. 26ff). He is a generous God (vv. 24-25, 35), 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 loving obedience!
- ✚ Perhaps the time has come for a new beginning.