

Nehemiah 9-10

Look up, Look Back, Look Forward

There are two themes in the Book of Nehemiah – the first deals with the rebuilding of the Wall around Jerusalem – Ch.1-6

A) **The 2nd deals with the rebuilding of the people – Ch.7-13**

B) When the Wall was completed and the people came together we saw that one of the **first things** they did was **turn to the Word**

C) Ch.8 V.1-12 They spent their **first day** hearing the word being taught and explained –

1) there was a priority placed on the word – [The Law]

D) **Reaction: Wept – Conviction it brought:** But Nehemiah and the Leaders instructed the people to rejoice – **For the Joy of the Lord is their strength !**

E) Which means - God was rejoicing over them – that was to carry them –

1) that was to be their sense of confidence and strength

F) SO the people went home and celebrated

On the second day they gathered again – to hear from the word –

A) It was then they discovered that there was a celebration they had been neglecting

B) The feast of Tabernacles – or Booths

[Explain – reminder of wandering years – reminder that their real home is in heaven]

C) So they spent the next 7 days celebrating the feast of Tabernacles – V.17 of Ch.8 tells us there was very great gladness among the people.

Why?

1) They were getting back in touch with their God – with their heritage – they were feeling closer to God

D) Rejoicing in the goodness of God / His Joy over them

E) Revival had broken out the people were **EXCITED** to serve the Lord, **they were ENCOURAGED in the Lord.**

YET as we come to Ch.9 there is a marked change in the people. It is now the 24th day of the month

A) There is no longer CELEBRATION, there is **HUMILIATION**

B) No longer are they **bubbling in the Lord** / now They are **BROKEN before the Lord.**

1) Their FEASTING has turned into FASTING:

Why the Change?

C) Was God calling the people to FAST rather than feast?

1) Was God calling the people to CONFESSION rather than celebration?

D) The Scriptures don't state that

1) there was no instruction given that they should cease from celebrating and feasting

E) So the Lord was not calling for this – BUT it seems that the people were feeling a need for it!

That is an important understanding & insight –

A) The Lord is calling us to JOY and to experience His GRACE.

B) The Lord is calling us to bask in His goodness

C) As we do that, and as we get CLOSER to the Lord

we become more aware, painfully aware of HOW FAR we are from the Lord.

THAT is the inevitable response of getting nearer to the Lord.

A) Remember Isaiah *I Saw the Lord high & lifted up ..*

1) **Woe is you – Woe is me !!!!**

B) Peter after a great haul – *Depart from me I am a sinful man*

C) So even in this time of **rejoicing / renewal and revival** the people fall before the Lord in CONFESSION before the Lord.....

Neh 9:1-3

Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust on their heads.

Fasting - You know people are serious when they start fasting – Neglect of food.

V.2 Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they 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 one-fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the LORD their God.

Note: that they stood and read of the Lord for ¼ of the day – 3hrs – {Don't complain again – 1 hour}

A)Another ¼ of the day – confessed their sins and worshipped.

B)This is Revival - Time goes away – no longer concerned about anything but being with JESUS

C)Note V.2 They separated themselves and confessed.

1)Worth noting: Separation is not just from something – it has to be to – SOMEONE! JESUS

Don't miss this Key – separated life. – Many do.

A)Come out from among them and be ye separate...

Drag – can't drink, go to Vegas Movie

B)They Miss – First separated unto Jesus –

C)We love HIM because He first loved us!

1)Our love is a Response.

WHEN God talks about our relationship with Him.

A)It is as a Loving father to his kids – Remember when kids were born – holding them?

B)**First words – Dada – First bike ride** – Excited

C)God's heart toward us.

The other picture that is used the most frequently is that of – Bridegroom and his bride.

A)Not husband and wife – NO COOLING DOWN

B)But Bridegroom – Bride – Never forget how I felt the day Denise walked down aisle – Blessed!

1)Isaiah 62:5 As the bridegroom rejoices over the Bride.....

C)That is the Lord's heart toward us – He wants us to respond to that as we separate ourselves to him

I can always tell people around the Church who are falling in Love

A)They start sitting together in Church.

Walking in hand-in-hand – **Dressing alike**

B)They start losing weight and getting in Shape.

1)Funny how that often changes after marriage

C)People who are falling in love start spending more time with each other and less with friends.

1)And again it is not a Drag that they are not spending time with friends – it is a preference.

D)Their affections are growing toward that person

1)My Friends – dating Denise – Denise have a ball and chain around your neck? - No, Cuter – Funnier

Same is true with Jesus – Growing in our walk with Him – Naturally gravitate toward Him

A)Gravitate toward things that enhance your relationship with Him – You're here Wed. night.

1)Away from things that negatively affect our relationship with Him.

Someone recently asked me if I watch Baseball anymore – NEVER! {World Series – 1-2 live with friends

A)Not that I don't like Baseball – I do – But Denise hates it – Boring!

B)Choice – 4 hrs Saturday afternoon by myself watching a Baseball game –

1)OR 4 hrs – with my best friend Denise? – No brainer for me.

C)When I am in the mood for watching a game – I pick sports she likes to watch – Basketball – March

1)Football – Golf – Phil Mickelson

D) People who are in love do that – Not a drag!

So the People are separating themselves to the Lord in Confession and Worship

A) We read in V. 4 that some of the Levites stood up on the stairs of the Levites and cried out with a loud voice.

"Stand up and bless the LORD your God Forever and ever! "Blessed be Your glorious name, Which is exalted above all blessing and praise!"

Personal Revival usually involves these 3 things

A) CONFESSION before the Lord, REFLECTION on the Lord and REDEDICATION to the Lord.

B) That is what we see happen in this Chapter –

C) They look UP at the Lord – See themselves in light of Him: Confession is made of their sinfulness

1) They Look BACK on their life in the Lord and all that he has done

D) They look FORWARD to the years ahead and all that the Lord has for them :

1) Which results in a Rededication of their lives and Covenant to the Lord

They begin by looking up V.6-7

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

God is praised as the Creator, the Maker and sustainer of everything.

They start by focusing on the bigness of God – the greatness of God – Made everything – holds it all together.

A) Are you glad that God holds it all together?

B) Often times you can't hold yourself together - right?

C) I have times – Crisis going on with someone here – every 3 weeks – Crisis at home – something breaks

1) Crisis with one of my kids – they need help – I am ready to blow a gasket.

D) God is holding this altogether – {keeps it all going

It is so good for us to remember the goodness of God and the Bigness of God.

A) See everything else in the right perspective.

B) Teaching 1 & 2 Samuel at the Bible College – interesting to note the Psalms David wrote – right before Goliath

1) Psalm 8 and 19 both reflect on the greatness of God

C) David shows up to the battle and everyone is freaking out about how big Goliath is

1) David is like – He is nothing – why? He had just been reflecting on the bigness of God

They Look Back V.7-37

So that is where they Start: - Creator/ Sustainer

A) Then they move to consider God as the great Initiator in their relationship V.7-8

You are the Lord God, Who chose Abram, And brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, And gave him the name Abraham; 8 You found his heart faithful before You, And made a covenant with him To give the land of the Canaanites, The Hittites, the Amorites, The Perizzites, the Jebusites, And the Girgashites — To give it to his descendants. You have performed Your words, For You are righteous.

B) Abram was a pagan Idolater God reaches out to him shows him grace – invites him to follow Him

1) Promise of blessing – new thing in him/ thru him

C) God does with us - God is the initiator of our Salvation – Jesus left heaven – came – died – rose

1) God calls us – when we were His enemies

D) Promises to do something new and amazing in our lives and with our lives!

Then they Praise Him for His deliverance v.9-11

“You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, And heard their cry by the Red Sea.

¹⁰ You showed signs and wonders against

Pharaoh, Against all his servants, And against all the people of his land.

For You knew that they acted proudly against them. So You made a name for Yourself, as it is this day. And You divided the sea before them, So that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; And their persecutors You threw into the deep, As a stone into the mighty waters.

Delivered them out of the hand of the enemy and from enslavement.

A) God does that in our lives! Our Deliverer

B) The Appreciation and excitement is building

V.12-15 They Praise Him for His Provision. His Providential care in their lives.

¹² Moreover You led them by day with a cloudy pillar,
And by night with a pillar of fire, **To give** them light on the road Which they should travel.

¹³ “You came down also on Mount Sinai,
And spoke with them from heaven,
And **gave them** just ordinances and true laws,
Good statutes and commandments.

¹⁴ You made known to them Your holy Sabbath,
And commanded them precepts, statutes and laws,
By the hand of Moses Your servant.

¹⁵ You **gave them bread** from heaven for their hunger,
And **brought them water** out of the rock for their thirst,
And told them to go in to possess the land Which You had sworn to give them.

God’s care for them consisted of two things: 1st Spiritual direction

A) He gave to them His ordinances and laws – He gave them instruction on how to live – what they were to avoid – what they were to do!

B) Going into a dark land – He gave His word to guide them.

C) So first His Providential care involved their spiritual life –

1) But it also involved their Physical needs -

15 You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger, [MANNA] And brought them water out of the rock for their thirst, And told them to go in to possess the land Which You had sworn to give them.

D) As I look back on my Journey with Jesus – so glad for His provision – taken care of us.

So Looking back – they Praised God as their:

- 1) Creator / Sustainer
- 2) The Initiator of their relationship
- 3) Their Deliverer
- 4) Their Provider

Next they Praise Him for His Patience and forgiveness

¹⁶ “But they and our fathers acted proudly,
Hardened their necks, And did not heed Your commandments.

A) Here we have such a familiar picture of the Christian life –

B) For four verses building on what God did – God gave – God supplied – God rescued – God gave more.

C) But – His people rebelled – His people walked away.

1) Why this surprises me – been happening for 1,000’s of years.

D) The rest of the song is basically a retracing of the centuries upon which this pattern occurred with God and his people.

E) He would save – they would repent – walk for a while and then Rebel.

Rd v.16-31 Praise Him for His patience.

As Nehemiah and the People look back they are thankful that the Lord never completely forsook the people of Israel.

A) If He did no one would have questioned it – They were deserving

B) This just further Magnifies the Love /Patience / Grace and Mercy of God.

1) However in His Love – He is not going to allow us to just do whatever

C) There are consequences to sin! – Sin hurts and rebellion needs to be corrected –

1) That is what God did with them – That is what He will do with you! When you rebel – Chastening will result

D) Whom the Lord loves He chastens – No Chasten – not God’s Kid!

1) He doesn’t want to see your life completely destroyed by sin – so He will bring some form of Chastening influence into your life.

E) His Goal is to Bring you back !!!!

Two ways to learn

A) One is the **hard way**: Rebel – do your own thing and suffer the consequences – that = scars

B) The other is God’s way: Just follow His leading / His direction / His word = smiles
So Looking back they Praised God for His patience with them – and even His Chastening Hand –

Finally Looking Back They Praised God for His Restoration. RDV 32-37

“Now therefore, our God, The great, the mighty, and awesome God, Who keeps covenant and mercy: Do not let all the trouble seem small before You That has come upon us, Our kings and our princes, Our priests and our prophets, Our fathers and on all Your people, From the days of the kings of Assyria until this day.

³³ However You *are* just in all that has befallen us; For You have dealt faithfully, But we have done wickedly.

³⁴ Neither our kings nor our princes, Our priests nor our fathers, Have kept Your law, Nor heeded Your commandments and Your testimonies, With which You testified against them.

³⁵ For they have not served You in their kingdom, Or in the many good *things* that You gave them, Or in the large and rich land which You set before them; Nor did they turn from their wicked works.

³⁶ “Here we *are*, servants today! And the land that You gave to our fathers, To eat its fruit and its bounty,
Here we *are*, servants in it! And it yields much increase to the kings, You have set over us, Because of our sins; Also they have dominion over our bodies and our cattle At their pleasure; And we *are* in great distress.

Notice that they are no longer talking in the Past tense – they / their / them

A) **But now it is the present tense – we / us.**

B) They have looked back at God’s past dealings with the nation of Israel

1) That brought them to this current place –

C) Back in the land – back in a rebuilt city – back in the good graces of God

D) Looking back - now inspires them to Look FORWARD –

1)v.38 tells us of how they sought to Rededicate themselves to the Lord

38 "And because of all this, We make a sure covenant and write it; Our leaders, our Levites, and our priests seal it."

As we move into Ch.10 – V.1-27 gives us the list of the names of the people who signed the Covenant. (not Rd)

A)V.28-39 Give us the specifics of the Covenant that consisted of 4 Promises they made to the Lord

B)These 4 promises reveal 4 Principles for our lives in walking with Jesus in this day and age.

C)So skip down to v. 28 begin reading
Now the rest of the people -- the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the Nethinim, and all those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, everyone who had knowledge and understanding 29 these joined with their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and His ordinances and His

statutes: 30 We would not give our daughters as wives to the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons;

1st Promise: Promise not to inter-marry!

A) This is a good promise – something that the Lord consistently warned His people of.

B) Call to be separate from the World

1) NT – John 17 IN the world but not of the world

C) Always been the place and purpose of God's people to be lights in the world

1) But at the same time to remain separate – distinct

D) What is meant by that is not adopting the Values and goals and mindset of the world.

Romans 12 don't let the world squeeze you into it's mold - it's system.

A) God's word shapes our view of Culture – not the other way around/ Culture shaping view of the Bible

B) Good friends – stir us up - not drag us down.

And with that they also promise to not let our kids marry unbelievers.

A) They are making a stand against being unequally yoked.

B) Why is that so important? Paul answers that question in 2 Corinthians 6

1) What fellowship has light with darkness

What does God and the devil have in common
Answer is nothing

D) Principle : We will protect our convictions with godly friends !

2nd Promise: V 31 if the peoples of the land brought wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day; and we would forego the seventh year's produce and the exacting of every debt.

A) So they Promise to not do business on the Sabbath

B) The Sabbath was a day that the Lord asked his people to set aside for Worship, Renewal & Reflection

1) Not a day for Business and work

C) God promised that if they would keep the Sabbath days and years –

1) He would bless them He would cause them to Prosper.

D) But if they failed to keep the Sabbath day and the Sabbath year they would be punished

1) Recall their 70 years of captivity was measured out by the fact that for 490 years they had not kept the Sabbath year – they owed God 70 years

Principle #2 Godly Priorities are important!

A) It is a good Principle – Here is the idea – If you want to keep your commitments it is going to require you to set up boundaries for your Business

B) for your walk with the Lord / and for your family!

Now we are not required to keep THE SABBATH – But the concept of keeping a Sabbath is still one that is wise!

A) A day set aside to seek the Lord – a day set aside to relax and reflect with my family.

B) Times that are set aside where we make a decision – nothing is going to impede this.

1) Nothing is going to pull me away from this!

3rd Promise They promise to give support to the work of God. V.32-34

32 Also we made ordinances for ourselves, to exact from ourselves yearly one-third of a shekel for the service of the house of our God: 33 for the showbread, for the regular grain offering, for the regular burnt offering of the Sabbaths, the New Moons, and the set feasts; for the holy things, for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and all the work of the house of our God. 34 We cast lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for bringing the wood offering into the house of our God, according to our fathers' houses, at the appointed times year by year, to burn on the altar of the LORD our God as it is written in the Law.

Principle #3 – The things that you believe in you will invest in.

A) This is true – anything that you truly believe in – you will invest in.

B) They believed in the ministry of the temple – and for that reason they were committing themselves to give to support the Ministry / Building itself

C) Now the word of God encourages us who are Christians to make similar commitments - to invest in spiritual things –

1) Because Something happens to us when we do !

Matthew 6:19-21

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Note The bible doesn't say – where your heart is your treasure will also be !

A) No it says that **where your treasure** is your heart is going to follow

B) Your heart is going to be in that thing that you have made your treasure.

C) That thing your time, energy and resources gets devoted to.

Jesus says: If it is something earthly – going to perish – it is TEMPORAL

A) but IF IT is related to HIS Kingdom – Eternal Last forever.

B) Later is longer! - Eternity is forever!

Promise #4 Give their First Fruits V.35-39

35 And we made ordinances to bring the firstfruits of our ground and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, to the house of the LORD; 36 to bring the firstborn of our sons and our cattle, as it is written in the Law, and the firstborn of our herds and our flocks, to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God; 37 to bring the firstfruits of our dough, our offerings, the fruit from all kinds of trees, the new wine and oil, to the priests, to the storerooms of the house of our God; and to bring the tithes of our land to the

Levites, for the Levites should receive the tithes in all our farming communities

38 And the priest, the descendant of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes; and the Levites shall bring up a tenth of the tithes to the house of our God, to the rooms of the storehouse.

39 For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the grain, of the new wine and the oil, to the storerooms where the articles of the sanctuary are, where the priests who minister and the gatekeepers and the singers are; and we will not neglect the house of our God.

Principle #4 The things that you are serious about you will Sacrifice for.

A) Their Sacrifice was called in the OT their First fruits

B) What does that mean? – well a farmer would plant a seed – the seed goes into the soil –

1) the farmer spends years cultivating – watering pulling weeds

C) That seed starts to grow and after another couple of years it turns into a tree and after another year or so – it finally brings forth fruit

D) Here's what they would do – they would take that first patch of fruit from that tree –

1) the first harvest of their field and give it to the Lord

E) What? After all that time & hard work – waiting to reap the benefits of their hard work instead of enjoying the fruit – they gave it to the Lord

In giving God the first fruits they were saying – two things

#1 Lord we realize that what we have is from you. Your blessing on my life / family

James 1:17-18 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

A) So first of all they were communicating to the Lord – this fact – this blessing is from you.

B) #2 They were saying: Lord I am going to trust you to provide for us in the future.

1) Giving you the first fruits / first crop – trusting that you are going to provide a 2nd and a 3rd and a 4th

C) **TEMPTATION: I will give God the left overs**

What does that look like for us today?

A)Time – best part of our day {Morning

B)Resources – Tithing

1)Talents

C)Don't give God the leftovers –

Like a Couple madly in Love – Respond to Jesus