

Nehemiah: FreeNotFree

Week 8 – freedom comes from confessing

Transition: Last week we were introduced to Ezra and the Levites. Ezra was both a priest and a scribe who had arrived at Jerusalem about 12-13 years prior to Nehemiah. (His story is found in the book that bears his name, which immediately precedes Nehemiah in the Bible.) His singular focus was on getting the priesthood operational again, just as the Scriptures (God) mandated. For his part, he was going to make sure that the people of God did not commit the same sins that got them exiled in the first place.

Context: Within days after the people celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles (aka Booths) together (which was an eight-day celebration), the people are once again eager to hear a word from the Law of Moses. Their hunger for the truth, the goodness, and the beauty inherent within it could not be quenched. Once they had “tasted and seen that the Lord is good” as the psalmist had written, they were changed forever. Such is the power of the word of God in our lives.

Opening Question:

- How important is knowing history to you? Explain. If you do enjoy it, is there an era or aspect that you prefer?
- What kinds of things (if anything) did you stop doing because you were a follower of Jesus? Why did you stop doing it/them?

Scripture/Storying: Nehemiah 9:1-37

Discipleship Questions:

- When have you fasted (from food)? Why did you fast? What was the experience like? How often do you fast? What would you recommend to a new believer in Jesus about fasting?
- In v2 it says that “*the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners.*” Why do you think they did this? Is this a principle we ought to apply to our lives today? If so, in what ways?
- In v2 it also says that they “*confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.*” Why would they confess the sins of their ancestors? Is this something that we ought to practice today? Explain your response.
- Have you ever confessed your sins in a public setting? If so, what was that experience like for you? When is it appropriate? When is it inappropriate?
- What is the point that the Levites (and all) are attempting to make by reviewing Israel’s history? What affect does hearing their history have on you right now?
- In what ways was Israel “*stiff-necked,*” according to the passage? In what ways are God’s people stiff-necked today? To you, what is the biblical remedy for overcoming this condition?
- What has God revealed about Himself or about you through this passage?

Prayer time: Pray that God will help us to be a holy people.