Nehemiah 9

Repenting, Remembering, & Returning

Welcome & Intro:

- Hello my name is Cameron Seely, and I'm the HS youth pastor here at calvary, and I'm really grateful to God that I get to be in the word with you all tonight. (Say how I'm jealous of Pastor Andrew hanging out with RISE High tonight)
- Announcements:
    - Harvest Festival is **October 31st** from **5:30–7:30 PM** right **here on our church campus**! Bring your friends, family, and neighbors for games, bounce houses, food, desserts, line dancing, and plenty of candy! We still need 20 volunteers for our second shift, plus donations of candy and baked goods. Help us make this a fun and memorable night for our community! This event will happen RAIN OR SHINE! We are prepared for the upcoming weather forecast!
    - Church Camp Out Friday **November 20th** for a one-night campout **here on the church property**. RV's will be in the parking lot and tents in the softball field. Arrival on the **20th** will be **anytime after 10:00 am**. **Check out** will be anytime **before 3:00pm Saturday, November 21st**. This event is a free event with planned activities, s'mores, and a pancake breakfast all provided. Come join us for this fun family event. Even though this is a free event, you must register through the church website or app.
    - Church Prayer: Join us **Sunday** at **1:30p** in the **Agape Room**
- **Allow me to pray before we get started**
- **Reference Last Week:** Shane did a phenomenal job going over Chapter 7-8, where he read the names of all the captive families who were returning from Exile…What a beast. But remember he also closed it with Ezra reading the Law to the people.
- We think…ok big woop. The Jews knew the law. BUT REMEMBER! These people have been out of the land, captured in and in exile in Babylon, and have been apart from their practices and worship of the Lord for 70 years!

Today we are in Nehemiah Chapter 9, and we will see the people. Repenting, Remembering, and Returning!

Initial Outline:

Context Again - Where we find ourselves today, Nehemiah and the people have built the walls, gotten past the discouragement (Sanballat and Tobiah) and now they are reading God's word and responding to it.

- After 70 years in Babylonian captivity, the people are now finally back, and finally back in the word. (Not simply clinging to tradition, but remembering and meditating on God's Law)

And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law
- Nehemiah 8:9

- After the work was finished the people began to return to the word. And after a long and lengthy exile, they are cut to heart because of the words of the Law that their God had given them so many years ago.
    - This passage reminds me of what Hebrews 4:12 says, that the word of God is "Living and active, sharper than a two edged sword" The word is alive by the Spirit and cuts to the heart when it reveals truth and motive.
- Now here in Chapter 9, we see the people's actions and heart response to finally getting back to the word, **in a real way.** (Read vs. 1-5)

Ask this questions: How do we know someone's repentance is true repentance?

Pastor Damien Kyle pointed out that He loved the order at which this response is happening. It starts with a deep reading and meditation on the word, and then prayer, confession, and brokenness begins.

He made the point that in James 1:22-25 (Be doers not just hearers), it says that when a man is looking at the word its like looking at a mirror, now James says that when someone looks at it and walks away and forgets what He looks like that's foolishness.

Same with the Word of God. As followers of Jesus, it is the word that should be a mirror to help us best see ourselves. (Obviously under grace) But think about it. Do we allow culture to be our mirror, are we trying to align with that? (Shakey ground) Do we allow Financial status or Surrounding relationships to be our mirror, to show us how we are doing? (These things are not bad markers to look at, but ultimately they find their true standard in the word)

- It's God's word that has revealed to us who He is, who we are, and how to relate to Him and those around us.
- And returning exiles are realizing now just how far they have gotten from it! And its **A GOOD THING**
- **I imagine alot of what the responses are will be what we see Israel doing. So here are a few marks of true reptenace looking at the returning exiles:**

1. **Nehemiah 9:1-5 "The Look of True Repentance"**
    - **The People were Broken** (Fasting, Sackcloth, Ashes & Dirt on their heads)
      - Fasting: complete dependance on the Lord
      - Sackcloth & Ash: Showing humility before the Lord
      - Dirt on their heads, signifying their low state, almost remembering where they came from..the dust.
    - **The People were Set Apart** (Separated themselves from the foreigners)
      - Separated themselves from the Foreigners (began to make a distinction again from the world)
      - The children of Israel were meant ot be set a part not because they were a superior line of humanity…but to be a WITNESS of God's covenant goodness to the nations.
      - But they had gotten FAR from that.
      - So in this moment, those truly from the line of Abraham, step forward to confess, they separate themselves to show they are meant to be that sanctified people.
      - This is not a prideful or arrogant action. Remember, they are going to CONFESS SIN!!! This is an example to the foreigners of how God's people return to Him after sin.

    - **The people were Honest** (Confessing their sins before the father)
      -The people don't hold their heads low in despondent shame, they stood and confessed their sins and the sins of their fathers before the Lord.
      - I believe they are practicing what David did in Psalm 51, and what John spoke of in 1 John 1:9, They are broken and contrite before Him but know he won't despise them, and they bring that confession to the Lord knowing He is FAITHFUL to forgive!!! (This doesn't look like a people, fearful to bring honesty before the Lord)
      - **Questions Break: What makes us fearful to be honest with God and others?**

- Guzik points out “confession is something that happens even after great victories. We grow in repentance as we grow closer to Jesus”
- “Repentance grows as faith grows. Do not make any mistake about it; repentance is not a thing of days and weeks, a temporary penance to be got over as fast as possible! No it is the grace of a lifetime, like faith itself. Repentance is the inseparable companion of faith.” (Spurgeon)

- **The People were Devoted** (Worshipping God for who He is)
- They as a result of their brokenness are displaying a cool picture to me of “Worshipping God in Spirit and Truth” (John 4:24)
- The Spirit has cut them to heart through conviction of the Word, and Now is leading them to the only response a sinner truly has before their God. To cry out in humble worship and still keep reading His word!!!!
- When the enemy tempts you and me to draw back from the word and worship when we sin. Let this moment right here remind us, a heart of true repentance or Godly sorrow leans back into His word and His worship not AWAY.
- Because we know who our God is right…Mericful, gracious, abounding in Steadfast love. And especially as followers in the New Covenant, we know our REDEEMER LIVES!!! (1 Peter 1:3)

2. **Nehemiah 9:6-31 “A Healthy & Honest Remembrance”**
   - **The Next 31 verses from Vs. 6-37 are known by many as the longest prayer in the Bible.**
     i. **Now I’d argue Psalm 119 could be considered a prayer!**
     ii. **But sticks out, because it's the prayer of all the Priests, Levites, and the People as they are making their return back to the Lord in their hearts.**
   - God’s Faithfulness and The Peoples Unfaithfulness

– Being the God who chose them through Abrham & kept the promises made to Him

(though they had been unfaithful to those promises)

– Being the God who delivered them from Egypt, provided for them in the wilderness, and gave them your Law.

(Yet they stiffened their necks, complained, and forget him.)

– The God who gave them the promised land, multiplied their decendants, and fought for them in battle.

(Still they disobeyed your commandments, and closed their ear to your propheets)

– Being the lone creator of all things

(though they had worshipped the creation)

- Note though…God's response to their unfaithfulness and foolishness everytime.
  - i. **Vs. 17** "But you are a God, ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and did NOT FORSAKE THEM.
  - ii. **Vs. 27,** "So you gave them into the hands of their enemies….and in the time of their suffering they cried out to you, and you heard them from heaven and according to your GREAT MERCY you gave them saviors who saved them from the hands of their enemies"
  - iii. **Vs. 30-31** "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. Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God."

David Guzik said this in regards to verse 31:

"We sometimes feel as if God has gotten tired of us; that we can't ask him to forgive us for something He has forgiven us for so many times before. But God never gets tired of us, and never turns away the repentant heart."

And though the exiles are remembering the great sins of their fathers and how they too have acted in the same ways. They ultimately never forget, that God's great mercy and grace have been mighty then the sin of their forefathers.

Remember that today, those of us who carry deep shame. From your own sin or maybe carrying the weight of those who have come before you.

In Christ, you are forgiven, free, and loved.

3. **Nehemiah 9:38 "Returning to the Covenant God"**
   - Important to note - God has stayed faithful to His covenant - Its the people who need to return to His covenant love.
   - Repentance's final destination is back to the Lords grace and love.
   - Bible Commentators have called this a "Renewal of Obedience"
   - God has been the one faithful to His covenant, and HE WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO.
   - But, it's beautiful to have these moments of commitment and return!

i. **Has anyone ever done a commitment to Jesus at a camp or in youth group?**
ii. I love the genuineness of heart in those moments. Its not that the student or person needs to be saved again. Rather, they need their heart refocused and renewed to who God is and what HE has done.
iii. If repentance is something we DO AS WE GROW IN FAITH, then moments of return should not be a strange occurrence. Rather a faithful sign of the Lord's word and work in us.

The exiles make a written FIRM covenant on a sealed document with the names of the Princes, Levites and Priests on it.

They wanted their devotion and serious repentance to be official before the Lord. And though I don't believe the Lord needed that document, I believe the broken and contrite hearts that put it together made it an acceptable sacrifice and commitment to Him.

Think about this today, me and you are sealed. When our hearts are convicted of sin by the Spirit, we turn in broken obedience to Jesus by the Spirit, we can be confident that we are SEALED as HIS very own people BY the Spirit.

13And in Him, having heard and believed the word of truth—the gospel of your salvation—you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14who is the pledge of our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession, to the praise of His glory.
Ephesians 1:13-14

Lets take time tonight, confessing our sin, committing our hearts and resting sealed