

P A T I E N T E N D U R A N C E

Hand me another brick.

(3) "You Have a Role"

HIGHLIGHT: Nehemiah 9:1-38 NLT

H

Below are excerpts from the overall passage for use with the APPLICATION and RESPOND. It will be beneficial for the group to read the whole passage to understand the entire context.

Nehemiah 9 (NLT)

vv. 1-38

1 On October 31 the people assembled again, and this time they fasted and dressed in burlap and sprinkled dust on their heads. **2** Those of Israelite descent separated themselves from all foreigners as they confessed their own sins and the sins of their ancestors. **3** They remained standing in place for three hours while the Book of the Law of the Lord their God was read aloud to them. Then for three more hours they confessed their sins and worshiped the Lord their God. **4** The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Kenani—stood on the stairway of the Levites and cried out to the Lord their God with loud voices.

5 Then the leaders of the Levites—Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah—called out to the people: "Stand up and praise the Lord your God, for he lives from everlasting to everlasting!" Then they prayed:

"May your glorious name be praised! May it be exalted above all blessing and praise!

6 "You alone are the Lord. You made the skies and the heavens and all the stars. You made the earth and the seas and everything in them. You preserve them all, and the angels of heaven worship you.

7 "You are the Lord God, who chose Abram and brought him from Ur of the Chaldeans and renamed him Abraham. **8** When he had proved himself faithful, you made a covenant with him to give him and his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Girgashites. And you have done what you promised, for you are always true to your word.

9 "You saw the misery of our ancestors in Egypt, and you heard their cries from beside the Red Sea. **10** You displayed miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh, his officials, and all his people, for you knew how arrogantly they were treating our ancestors. You have a glorious reputation that has never been forgotten. **11** You divided the sea for your people so they could walk through on dry land! And then you hurled their enemies into the depths of the sea. They sank like stones beneath the mighty waters. **12** You led our ancestors by a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night so that they could find their way.

13 "You came down at Mount Sinai and spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and instructions that were just, and decrees and commands that were good. **14** You instructed them concerning your holy Sabbath. And you commanded them, through Moses your servant, to obey all your commands, decrees, and instructions.

15 "You gave them bread from heaven when they were hungry and water from the rock when they were thirsty. You commanded them to go and take possession of the land you had sworn to give them.

16 “But our ancestors were proud and stubborn, and they paid no attention to your commands. **17** They refused to obey and did not remember the miracles you had done for them. Instead, they became stubborn and appointed a leader to take them back to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God of forgiveness, gracious and merciful, slow to become angry, and rich in unfailing love. You did not abandon them, **18** even when they made an idol shaped like a calf and said, ‘This is your god who brought you out of Egypt!’ They committed terrible blasphemies.

19 “But in your great mercy you did not abandon them to die in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud still led them forward by day, and the pillar of fire showed them the way through the night. **20** You sent your good Spirit to instruct them, and you did not stop giving them manna from heaven or water for their thirst. **21** For forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out, and their feet did not swell!

22 “Then you helped our ancestors conquer kingdoms and nations, and you placed your people in every corner of the land. They took over the land of King Sihon of Heshbon and the land of King Og of Bashan. **23** You made their descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and brought them into the land you had promised to their ancestors.

24 “They went in and took possession of the land. You subdued whole nations before them. Even the Canaanites, who inhabited the land, were powerless! Your people could deal with these nations and their kings as they pleased. **25** Our ancestors captured fortified cities and fertile land. They took over houses full of good things, with cisterns already dug and vineyards and olive groves and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate until they were full and grew fat and enjoyed themselves in all your blessings.

26 “But despite all this, they were disobedient and rebelled against you. They turned their backs on your Law, they killed your prophets who warned them to return to you, and they committed terrible blasphemies. **27** So you handed them over to their enemies, who made them suffer. But in their time of trouble they cried to you, and you heard them from heaven. In your great mercy, you sent them liberators who rescued them from their enemies.

28 “But as soon as they were at peace, your people again committed evil in your sight, and once more you let their enemies conquer them. Yet whenever your people turned and cried to you again for help, you listened once more from heaven. In your wonderful mercy, you rescued them many times!

29 “You warned them to return to your Law, but they became proud and obstinate and disobeyed your commands. They did not follow your regulations, by which people will find life if only they obey. They stubbornly turned their backs on you and refused to listen. **30** In your love, you were patient with them for many years. You sent your Spirit, who warned them through the prophets. But still they wouldn’t listen! So once again you allowed the peoples of the land to conquer them. **31** But in your great mercy, you did not destroy them completely or abandon them forever. What a gracious and merciful God you are!

32 “And now, our God, the great and mighty and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of unfailing love, do not let all the hardships we have suffered seem insignificant to you. Great trouble has come upon us and upon our kings and leaders and priests and prophets and ancestors—all of your people—from the days when the kings of Assyria first triumphed over us until now. **33** Every time you punished us you were being just. We have sinned greatly, and you gave us only what we deserved. **34** Our kings, leaders, priests, and ancestors did not obey your Law or listen to the warnings in your commands and laws. **35** Even while they had their own kingdom, they did not serve you, though you showered your goodness on them. You gave them a large, fertile land, but they refused to turn from their wickedness.

36 “So now today we are slaves in the land of plenty that you gave our ancestors for their enjoyment! We are slaves here in this good land. **37** The lush produce of this land piles up in the hands of the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins. They have power over us and our livestock. We serve them at their pleasure, and we are in great misery.”

38 The people responded, “In view of all this, we are making a solemn promise and putting it in writing. On this sealed document are the names of our leaders and Levites and priests.”

E

EXPLAIN

The purpose of this section is to deepen everyone's understanding of the Word.

The context of chapter nine is important. The wall of Jerusalem has been built. Chapter eight demonstrates the power of the Word of God. When the Law of God is read and explained there is repentance, worship, and great celebration "because they had heard God's words and understood them" (8:12). One of Southern Hills' great blessings is the strong teaching of God's Word week-in and week-out that results in people surrendering their lives to God because of His kindness and mercy extended by means of Christ Jesus (1 Peter 5:10).

Nehemiah 9:1-38

vv.1-4 Coming into the Presence of the Living God—seeing Him for who He is and seeing the great mercy He has showered on us should bring about **confession of sin** and repentance. This can only come about through the Word of God that reaches deep into our crusty old hearts and brings about transformation (*Hebrews 4:12-13*).

vv.5-6 True worship begins with the recognition that God is creator and we are creation. Denying that reality results in pain and misery (*Romans 1:21-26a*). The remainder of chapter nine demonstrates that reality.

vv.7-21 **God has always been true to His word.** Beginning with **Abraham's call** all the way through the **Exodus from Egypt** and **the giving of the Law from Sinai**, through **their pride and stubbornness and terrible blasphemies** God showed himself *gracious and merciful, slow to become angry, and rich in unending love* (vv.19-21).

vv.22-27 God gave them the Land He had promised—a land full of blessing (v.25). But they were **disobedient and rebelled** against [Him]. They suffered, they cried out, and **in His great mercy God rescued them.**

vv.28-31 The never-ending story of Israel's sin, suffering, receiving God's mercy, only to return to her sinning. **What a gracious and merciful God!**

vv.32-37 We have no one to turn to but God. We still want to be our own little kings in our own kingdoms—disregarding God and His warnings. Wallowing in the miseries that we have made for ourselves we cry out again for God's mercies. Martin Luther is reported to have said, "If I were God and the world treated me the way it has treated God I would kick the wretched thing to pieces." And I suppose he would have!

v.38 This is our Great God—He who could squash us like bugs, chooses to reach down and pick us up. "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved" (*John 3:17*). As we come into this season of thanksgiving, let's ask God to open our eyes that we may experience the Love of Christ Jesus our Lord (*Ephesians 3:14-19*).

APPLY

A

Be comfortable with some silence as people think back to the sermon or reread the text. Answer honestly. You don't have to answer every question.

1. What stuck out to you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?

2. The leaders pray and call to mind Israel's sinfulness (see vv. 16-18, 26, 28-30). In what ways has the church at large lost sight of God, either in the past or in the present?
3. The church, like Israel in the Old Testament, is the bride of Christ. God will be faithful to her, despite her failures to obey at times. How do we see God's faithfulness even today?
4. Throughout this chapter, the leaders give glory to God for the many amazing truths about him (see vv. 6-8, 10, 17, 19-20, 27, 30-32, 35). Discuss with your group some of the aspects of God's character that stick out to you the most.

R

RESPOND

The purpose of this section is to take action with the truths you're learning. Answer honestly. Find someone who will hold you accountable to living out your response to Scripture.

1. We see God's faithfulness throughout all history - with Israel, in the times of Jesus, and today in the church - reflect on how God has been faithful to you over the years.

Take some time to share with your group AND journal this week some of the things you are grateful to God about from over the years.

2. At the end in verse 38, in light of reflecting on who God is and has been for them, the people commit to follow God's laws and commands. What areas of your life is there a lack of obedience? In what ways do you need to commit to God and fully surrender to him?