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C1337 – November 6, 2013 – Nehemiah 9:1-38
Historical Framework

If you'd open your Bible to the Book of Nehemiah we will continue our study. The book easily divides into two halves; the first half, chapters 1-6 recount the political restoration/leadership of the city, the second half, chapters 7-13 recount the spiritual restoration/leadership of the people. We are in the second half of the book and we have been studying chapter 8. In chapter 8 we saw Ezra doing what he does best; giving exposition of the law. So you should be able to detect that a spiritual restoration is on the horizon for the nation. Every genuine spiritual restoration is Bible based, it is never emotion based. There may be emotion but underneath the emotion is a new found respect for the Bible. Someone asked last week why in chapter 8 the people suddenly had such an interest in the Bible. It's an interesting phenomenon that 30-50,000 people come up to Jerusalem and request that Ezra read them the law. The only explanation for such a large number of people all wanting the word of God simultaneously is that God was doing a work in the life of the nation, stirring them up to desire the word of God. If it was just three or four people we wouldn't conclude that but because it was such a large group of people all having the same desire simultaneously I credit that to God. God was working amongst the nation, stirring them up to have an interest in the word of God so they asked Ezra to read the word of God to them. However, one of the problems was that they had been in Exile for several generations and had lost their Hebrew. And the word of God was written in Hebrew. So there was a language barrier between the word of God and the people. How did they overcome that barrier? Ezra had multilingual trained teachers who could circulate through the audience and translate the Hebrew into their language so they could understand. And these men also gave an explanation of the intended sense. That's called Bible exposition and it's obviously necessary today in America because people don't know Greek and Hebrew, they know English. What's nice about English is there are several sufficient

translations of the entire Bible. Not every language group has a Bible in their language, some have parts, some have a few verses but very few have every book of the Bible in their own language. That's what the Reformation was about, getting the Bible in the language of the common man and for that men were burned at the stake. So we are very blessed to have the Bible in our own language. But even then it's not as good as the original. There is normally something lost in translation. So if you have access to someone who knows the original language then you can solve discrepancies and clarify things. Someone likened it in seminary to watching black and white TV vs watching color TV. The point is that refinements can be made and detail can be seen. That's what these men were able to do with the text and so they were bringing the people into close contact with the voice of God. In response the people mourned and wept because they were living contrary to the word. But the leaders commanded the people to stop weeping and to enjoy the day since it was the Feast of Trumpets. So they went about and celebrated a great feast, provided gifts for the poor and enjoyed the Lord. On the second day of the month they gathered again for the reading of the word of God and in it they found that on the fifteenth of the month they were to celebrate the Feast of Booths. All of a sudden they started to realize that the word of God told them to do certain things. So since this feast was scheduled by God just a few days later they sent out a proclamation for everyone to come to Jerusalem and do what God said; gather branches in order to build booths and live in them for seven days. So the people did and they came up and they built booths all over the city. Imagine what it must have looked like. And they lived in these little makeshift booths for seven days to remind them of the wilderness generation who was living in a makeshift situation, they were on their way to the Promised Land but they weren't there yet, so they lived in a temporary situation. And this particular celebration was the largest since the days of Joshua. Now during these seven days they would go up each day, and in accordance with the Law, hear Ezra read from the law. He was reading the entire book of Deuteronomy which was their national constitution. So every day they were hearing a large portion of the word of God and on the eighth day the people solemnly reflected on what they had heard.

Tonight we come to Nehemiah 9 and we get to see how the people responded to the word of God. How did they respond? Verse 1, **Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the sons of Israel assembled with fasting, in sackcloth and with dirt upon them.** ²**The descendants of Israel**

separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. ³While they stood in their place, they read from the book of the law of the LORD their God for a fourth of the day; and for *another* fourth they confessed and worshiped the LORD their God. ⁴Now on the Levites' platform stood Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani *and* Chenani, and they cried with a loud voice to the LORD their God. This is a picture of the conviction, confession and restoration cycle. The people were evidently way out of fellowship. They weren't following the word of God. They didn't even know the word of God. These people were a lot like people in our culture, biblically illiterate. So when Ezra read the word of God and the teachers translated it and explained it the people's eyes were opened as to what this book was all about. And consequently they came under conviction. What's conviction? Conviction is when your conscience judges according to a standard and says, "That's right!" or "That's wrong!" So conviction has to do with the conscience. Now obviously these people were not convicted of their sin prior to the reading of the law and the basic reason is because they were biblically illiterate, the word of God was not the standard by which their consciences were judging. It didn't mean their consciences didn't judge according to some other received standard, it most certainly did, but it wasn't the standard of Scripture, it was the standards of the surrounding pagan culture. What happens when a people don't know the word of God is that a vacuum is created in their conscience and they begin to soak up pagan standards. That's what we see in our culture. Gradually as the word of God's influence disappears a vacuum is created in people's conscience and what vacuums do is suck so the people suck up pagan standards and you see it in the legislation of same-sex marriage, you see it in affirmative action, you see it in climate change, you see it in wealth redistribution, you see it all over the place. These people are operating off of different standards. Their conscience is judging according to a very different received standard. The same is true of these Israelites. So when the word of God was being read to them and explained their conscience was being informed with a different standard and consequently they were being convicted of their sin. So the key to conviction is the word of God informing the conscience. Then you can confess and get restored.

Before we get to their confession notice in verse 1 they **assembled with fasting, in sackcloth and with dirt upon them.** You might argue that

they were putting on a big show, that all this sackcloth and dirt was just religious motion, and it can be, but if verse 2 is added to the picture then we see it's not just religious motion.

Verse 2, **The descendants of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners.** Why did they do that? Why separate from foreigners? Because the law forbade them from worshipping with foreigners. There were provisions by which a foreigner could be admitted to worship with them but the point is that they weren't following those provisions. They were allowing every Canaanite, Jebusite and Ammorite to worship with them in the formal assembly. This was a violation of Deut 23:3-8 and they had heard that read and taught. So this is not mere religious ritual, they actually separated themselves from foreigners in these worship assemblies. And to separate just meant they were first and foremost committed to the principles in the word of God, it didn't mean they didn't like the foreigners, obviously they did or they wouldn't have let them in in the first place. But God's word had to come first.

Now you also see in verse 2 that they **confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.** Notice they confessed their own personal sins and the sins **of their fathers**, past sins committed by past generations. Why did they confess past sins of their fathers? Because they had done the same sins. And they recognized that sin patterns pass through families. What do your kids tend to do? They tend to pick up on what you do and take it one step further. That's why it's so important to recognize this principle; we pass our sin patterns or tendencies on to our offspring and so when we see them cropping up in their life what are we supposed to do? Cut it off, stop it, get that sin problem out of their life. That's a parental responsibility under discipline. The problem with the nation Israel, and most people, is that they don't cut the sin patterns off, they just allow it to fester and so what happens is the sin pattern becomes more deeply engrained generation after generation and unless someone in the family finally recognizes it and does something about it, God has to judge it. Out of grace God only lets it go about three or four generations and then He cuts it off. It's like cancer that grows and finally God as a master surgeon has to cut out the cancer. So it's much better to prevent the need for surgery. So they're confessing their sins and the sins of their fathers; they recognize they're repeating the same sins as their fathers.

And verse 3, **While they stood in their place, they read from the book of the law of the LORD their God for a fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the LORD their God.**

There must have been a lot of sins to confess. They'd hear the word of God for a fourth of the day which was three hours and then they'd confess for another fourth of the day, another three hours. That's amazing, they'd confess as long as they'd heard the word of God. They'd also worship. These people were serious about the word of God.

In verse 4 you see some of the Levites confessing. These were the people who were supposed to know the word of God and some of them probably did they just didn't follow it so it was doubly egregious for them. **Now on the Levites' platform stood Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani and Chenani, and they cried with a loud voice to the LORD their God.** So vv 1-4 show the conviction, confession, restoration cycle and that whole cycle depends on the word of God. If people don't know the word of God and allow it to penetrate into their conscience and form a standard then they can never be convicted of their sin. But it did with these people, it resonated with them and so they confessed and were restored to fellowship.

Now after that, starting in 9:5 all the way to 10:39 the people are going to follow up with a covenant renewal. This meant they were going to make a pact with God to keep the law from this day forward. So it's going to be drawn up in a covenant format and we happen to know this covenant format because we've discovered several ancient Near Eastern covenants and the structure in all these covenants is the same. They all begin with a Preamble (9:5b-6), some introductory words, then they are followed by a Historical Prologue (9:7-37), citing the works of the great king on behalf of his servants, then an Acceptance of the Covenant (9:38-10:29) and finally some Stipulations (10:30-39). The entire Book of Deuteronomy follows this structure and what is happening here is this structure is being repeated because the people have broken the covenant and so they are going to renew the covenant and this is the way they would do it.

In verse 5b you find the Preamble, these are opening words that introduce an ancient Near Eastern covenant. They were words of blessing to the great king. We should point out, in this context, the great king is God. God was the

great king of Israel and Israel was the servant. The Great king had done first for the servant and the servant was to respond to the blessing of the king by obedience. So the first words praise the great King. **“Arise, bless the LORD your God forever and ever! O may Your glorious name be blessed And exalted above all blessing and praise!** So they’re exalting God, their King.

Then in verse 6 starts the Historical Prologue and this is a recitation of the works of the great king on behalf of his servants and how they responded to Him. Since God is the great king then God is the one who did for them first and they were supposed to be grateful and respond by obeying him. So it’s something like a historical track record of how their relationship went.

And if you just scan down through the chapter what do you find? Event after event after event chronologically recited all the way down to verse 37. Now why do you think these events were chosen? Because they’re the big events of history! These events show us the key works of God in history and how man has responded to them. And yet how many of these did you ever hear of in a history class? Probably zero. And yet these are the big events. I wonder why you don’t hear about them? Why do you speculate you don’t hear about them? Because they teach us about God. These events inevitably point to God and people don’t want to think about this God. They don’t mind talking about the gods, but the God of history they don’t want to think about. That’s why the universal history of evolution as taught in the public school and every university in this country is so damning. Once you re-write history you write God out of history. The shape of evolutionary history, I think, is deliberate in order to remove God from their memory. They can’t just choose any story, there’s something about the story that they have chosen that best writes God out of history. And that’s why the debates over whether creation should be taught in the public school system will always be met with rabid resistance. The very thought of creation reminds them of the God they’re trying to hide from Him. If you think about what creation is saying, if you really think about it, on the most fundamental level, and there is a Creator then who am I? I’m His creature and I have to answer to Him. But I’ve got short accounts so I don’t want to answer to Him, I don’t want to even think about Him, I want to hide from Him. And until Christians understand this agenda that men are hiding from God they’ll never understand the debate! The issue isn’t over science at all; the issue is men hiding from God! They don’t want to

think about God and what creation does is remind you of God. And when I say God I don't just mean a general concept of a god, but the God of creation. It's that God that is a very uncomfortable thought for people. These people aren't stupid but I think a lot of Christians are pretty stupid when it comes to these issues. They think we can drop creation and keep the cross. Nonsense. The same God of Creation is the same God on the cross. So we have the God of history in this passage and this is one of the major passages that was used to justify the framework method of teaching that I've used here for many years. I got this method from Charles Clough and he got the idea from scanning passages like this one and looking at what events they kept bringing up. There are several passages that give you a long list of events on chronological order. Moses does this, Joshua does this, Solomon does this, Daniel does this, Ezra does this, Stephen does this, Paul does this, all the great saints of Scripture recite the great events of history in chronological order. Why are they doing that? Why do we train to do that? So we can remember who God is through what He has done. We have to train, train and train in these historical events until we can't forget them. It's very easy to forget God; especially when the culture around you wants to forget God and constructs everything in the classroom in such a way as to remove God. That's why I won't quit teaching the framework like we're doing in our basics class now. We've got to drill, drill, drill! As one teacher said, "You don't teach so people will remember it, you teach them until they can't forget it." That means repetition. And all the great saints of Scripture repeated this framework. They had it drilled into them from childhood until they could recite these events in their sleep! That's the way the Bible has to be taught.

That's what the Levites are doing here. They're going to march us through these historical events, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom and in the grand scheme of things, ask yourselves, who is it who does these things? Who is the great author of history? Verse 6, what event do they begin with? Creation. **You alone are the LORD.** Who alone is the Lord? God alone is the LORD. There is no other Lord. The word **alone** means there is no other LORD. He is all alone, not to be likened to anything because there is no other Creator. He alone is the Creator. That's what this means. Then they say, **You have made the heavens, The heaven of heavens with all their host, The earth and all that is on it, The seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them And the heavenly host bows down before You.** Who made the heavens, the earth, the seas and all that is in them including the

heavenly hosts? God made the heavens, the earth, the seas and all that is in them. You see it's God who does all these things. He's the big idea; now let's pick up some truths about creation. It says He **made the heavens**. **Heavens** is always plural in Hebrew. There is no singular word for heaven. It's like deer in English, even if you're referring to just one deer you use the plural. So to distinguish the **heavens** the author has to say **the heaven of heavens**, that is, the highest heaven. Later we find out that there are three heavens. In Genesis 1:1 on the first day it says God made the heavens. That refers to the heaven singular where all the angels dwelled. That's the heaven the author is referring to here by the expression **the heaven of heavens with all their host**. This heaven and all the hosts that dwell in that heaven, meaning the angels, were made on day one. Later in Genesis 1:2 our attention is drawn to the earth and at that point the earth is a watery mass. In fact, the earth at that point is the entire universe. That may sound strange but if you think about the description in Genesis the earth at that time is the universe and on the second day you have an expansion of the watery mass so that there are waters above and waters below and an expanse in between which is called heaven. That's the starry heaven where God placed the sun, moon and stars on the fourth day. Then we have the atmospheric heaven where God placed the birds on the fifth day. Originally all that was referred to as the earth but as this expansion occurred the word earth is limited to our present planet. He also created **the earth and all that is on it** and we're saying that the earth went through several stages during creation week to reach its final condition but by the sixth day it was sufficient to serve as a home for all the land animals and man. He also created **the seas and all that is in them**. The seas also went through stages during creation week to reach their final condition but on the fifth day all the creatures in the seas were created in the seas. He was the one who gave **life to all of them**. Life itself is a creation of God and nothing is therefore independent of Him. **And the heavenly host bows down before** Him. These are the angels and their original abode was in heaven, they were fit for heaven to worship Him. So we have God who has done all these things. He alone is the Creator. Everything else is the creation. The Creator-creature distinction.

Verse 7, "**You are the LORD God**, again, who is the emphasis? God. This is all about what God has done. The title **LORD God** is His title for sovereignty. God is sovereign. People, more often than not, don't like that God is sovereign but that's because they don't understand God's sovereignty.

God's sovereignty is something to rejoice about, not something to spurn. And what comes out of God's sovereignty? **God chose Abram.** Election. What event? The Call of Abraham. Who chose who? Did Abram choose God or did God choose Abram? God chose Abram. Anyone have a problem with that? He could have chosen anybody He wanted but He chose Abram. Why did He choose Abram? Because He wanted to. It's His right as sovereign. Then what did God do? He **brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees.** What was Abram doing in Ur of the Chaldees? He was worshipping idols. Abram was a pagan idolater. What was God doing? Separating him from paganism. Abram didn't separate himself from paganism, God brought him out! Then what did God do? He **gave him the name Abraham.** He changed his name. Why did He do that? Because of what He was going to do with his life. He was going to make him the father of many nations. So he changed his name from Abram, which means "exalted father" to Abraham which means "father of multitudes." Did **Abram** have this plan for his life? No, God planned this for his life. It's God's plan for Abraham deriving from His sovereignty. If God didn't sovereignly do this there never would have been an Abraham, only an Abram, and that means there would be no salvation. The only reason there is salvation is because God is sovereign and in His plan He chose Abram and brought him out of paganism and gave Him a new name.

Verse 8, "**You found his heart faithful before You,** who found faith in Abram's heart? God found it. Only God could find it because only God is sovereign and can see in his heart. And then what did God do? He **made a covenant with him To give him the land of the Canaanite, Of the Hittite and the Amorite, Of the Perizzite, the Jebusite and the Girgashite— To give it to his descendants. And You have fulfilled Your promise, For You are righteous.** God chose Abram and how did Abram respond? By faith, the result of which was he was justified. Then God made a covenant. We're to know that God made a covenant with Abram when he was a believer. Did Abram make a covenant with God? No. Abram did nothing. God did everything. What did the covenant promise? **The land. To give him the land and to give the land to his descendants.** Who's responsible to give them the land? God is. Does Abram have to do anything? No. God is the one who will give him the land. The land is central to the covenant God made with Abraham; He promised to give it to him as an eternal possession. Did Abraham ever possess it eternally? No. And yet it says, **And You have fulfilled Your promise, For you are righteous.**

Who fulfilled it? God fulfilled it. How did He fulfill it? Temporally. Abram and his descendants did enter into and possess the land but later they were kicked out. So it was fulfilled in a temporary kind of way and that's what's being referred to at this time. It was sufficient to show that God was **righteous**. The ultimate eternal fulfillment is yet future. So God has created, God has called Abraham. These are all grace works of God, the one we're supposed to keep our eyes on.

Now verse 9 and what great event do we see here? The Exodus. **You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, And heard their cry by the Red Sea.** Who saw and who heard? God saw and God heard. If He'd covered His eyes and plugged His ears He never would have done anything for them. But He's a God of compassion. He chose these people and so He did see and He did hear. And what did He do about it? His people were hurting. Verse 10, **Then You performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh, Against all his servants and all the people of his land; For You knew that they acted arrogantly toward them, And made a name for Yourself as it is this day.** Who delivered them from Egypt? Moses? No, God! Who made a name for Himself? Moses? No, God! It was God's mighty power on their behalf that delivered them from Egypt. He was being gracious to them. Verse 11, **You divided the sea before them, So they passed through the midst of the sea on dry ground; And their pursuers You hurled into the depths, Like a stone into raging waters.** We're at the Red Sea and who did this? Who judged and saved? God did! It's all out of His grace. He's the great King! He's a mighty conquering King! Verse 12, **“And with a pillar of cloud You led them by day, And with a pillar of fire by night To light for them the way In which they were to go.** Who showed them the way? Who lit the way? God did all these things. He's the Lord of history. That's the great event of the Exodus and His judgment/salvation for Israel. He's being good to them.

Verse 13, another event, what is it? Mt Sinai. **Then You came down on Mount Sinai, And spoke with them from heaven; You gave them just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments.** Who came down? Who spoke? Who gave commandments? God did. God actually revealed Himself to the nation Israel in human language. He condescended to speak in Hebrew and if we'd been there we would have heard the Ten Commandments in Hebrew. And with this we have the Law. What's the Law?

It's what God wants them to do for Him. He's the great King and He has set them free from Egypt, now shouldn't they obey Him. And all the people said, all that the Lord has said we will do. They were obligated to do it. Verse 14, **So You made known to them Your holy sabbath, And laid down for them commandments, statutes and law, Through Your servant Moses.** So God gave them His law and if they obeyed they would be blessed but if they disobeyed they would be cursed. Also verse 15, **You provided bread from heaven for them for their hunger, You brought forth water from a rock for them for their thirst, And You told them to enter in order to possess The land which You swore to give them.** Who did all these things? God did all these things. He provided food and water and He commandeered the nation, telling them to enter the land He had promised to give them and to follow the law and they would have success.

Now how did the people respond to God's grace in the choosing Abraham, setting them free at the Exodus and revealing His will at Mt Sinai? Not so good. They rebelled! Verse 16, **But they, our fathers, acted arrogantly; They became stubborn and would not listen to Your commandments.** ¹⁷**They refused to listen, And did not remember Your wondrous deeds which You had performed among them; So they became stubborn and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt.** Now why did they act arrogantly and not listen to the commandments? Because they were fallen, sinful human beings. Why did they not remember God's miraculous works? Because they are fallen, sinful human beings. Fallen, sinful human beings don't want to obey God, they want to be God. So they appointed a leader to take them back to Egypt, undo what God had done. They'd rather be slaves than free. Always sinners want to be slaves! Sin is slavery. But how did God respond to them? Verse 17, **But You are a God of forgiveness, Gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness; And You did not forsake them.** ¹⁸**Even when they made for themselves A calf of molten metal And said, 'This is your God Who brought you up from Egypt,' And committed great blasphemies,** ¹⁹**You, in Your great compassion, Did not forsake them in the wilderness; The pillar of cloud did not leave them by day, To guide them on their way, Nor the pillar of fire by night, to light for them the way in which they were to go. "You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, Your manna You did not withhold from their**

mouth, **And You gave them water for their thirst.** ²¹**“Indeed, forty years You provided for them in the wilderness *and* they were not in want; Their clothes did not wear out, nor did their feet swell.** This is the period of the Wilderness Wanderings and God forgave them, was gracious to them and compassionate. Even after they rejected Him and credited His work to another He continued to lead them and feed them and clothe them and teach them. Verse 22, **“You also gave them kingdoms and peoples, And allotted *them* to them as a boundary. They took possession of the land of Sihon the king of Heshbon And the land of Og the king of Bashan.** These are all lands beyond the Jordan and who gave them military victory? God did. He fought for them. Verse 23, **“You made their sons numerous as the stars of heaven,** Who gave them population increase? God did. He made their wombs fertile and their births successful.

Verse 23, another great event, the Conquest and Settlement. **And You brought them into the land Which You had told their fathers to enter and possess.** Who brought them into the land? God brought them into the land. Verse 24, **“So their sons entered and possessed the land. And You subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, And You gave them into their hand, with their kings and the peoples of the land, To do with them as they desired.** ²⁵**“They captured fortified cities and a fertile land.** Who gave them conquest? God gave them conquest. As they trusted Him and obeyed He gave them victory. **They took possession of houses full of every good thing, Hewn cisterns, vineyards, olive groves, Fruit trees in abundance.** Who took the possessions? Israel enjoyed the possessions. They didn’t work for them but they enjoyed them. All they had to do was trust and obey and then walk in and take over years of agricultural development, years of economic development, tremendous assets. God gave it all to them. That’s the Conquest and Settlement.

Now we see in verse 26 and following the generations that followed the Conquest including the Judges period, the Monarchy and the Kingdoms in Decline. The three periods are all lumped together but they span many centuries. After the Conquest **they ate, were filled and grew fat, And reveled in Your great goodness.** See their response to God’s goodness? They forgot about it. They acted as if God wasn’t there. They didn’t give thanks. They just basked in their wealth and forgot about God. That’s easy to

do. That's why you've got to discipline yourselves not to forget all that God has done in your life and be reminded that every good thing and perfect thing comes down from Him. But they did forget and here they start going into the stages of divine discipline. Middle of verse 26, **they became disobedient and rebelled against You, And cast Your law behind their backs And killed Your prophets who had admonished them So that they might return to You, And they committed great blasphemies.** So their response to God's goodness was rebellion. Again, the heart of man is desperately wicked, who can know it? If you don't take anything else away from this take the idea that God is good and man is evil. There is none good but God. Man is totally depraved. They had the word of God but they didn't learn loyalty to Him, they rejected Him, killed His prophets of God. Therefore, verse 17, divine discipline; **You delivered them into the hand of their oppressors who oppressed them,** this was discipline to get them to confess. **But when they cried to You in the time of their distress, You heard from heaven, and according to Your great compassion You gave them deliverers who delivered them from the hand of their oppressors.** God gave them judges and they'd come in and deliver them. Verse 28, **But as soon as they had rest, they did evil again before You;** People are wishy-washy. **Therefore You abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they ruled over them. When they cried again to You, You heard from heaven, And many times You rescued them according to Your compassion, And admonished them in order to turn them back to Your law.** Notice how many times these people repeat the same idiot mistakes and God rescues them. Why did God continue to rescue them? Because of who He is. Because He is compassionate. **Yet they acted arrogantly and did not listen to Your commandments but sinned against Your ordinances, By which if a man observes them he shall live. And they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck, and would not listen.** The nation kept rebelling and falling deeper and deeper into rebellion. And note how God treated them in verse 30a, **"However, You bore with them for many years, And admonished them by Your Spirit through Your prophets, Yet they would not give ear.** God continued to send them prophets to prosecute them so that they would turn and live; He put up with them for **many years** yet they would not listen to Him so the kingdoms went into decline.

Verse 30b takes us to the event after the Kingdoms in Decline. What is it? The Exile. The fifth degree of divine discipline. **Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.** They didn't want to learn the lesson so the harshest punishment came. The northern kingdom was given into the hand of the Assyrians; the southern kingdom was given into the hand of the Babylonians; exile.

And yet, verse 31 another event, what is it? The Partial Restoration. **“Nevertheless, in Your great compassion You did not make an end of them or forsake them, For You are a gracious and compassionate God.** Legally God could have made an end of them but because of His grace and compassion He did not. He spared a portion and Partially Restored them to the land. Nehemiah, Ezra and this generation were some of those who had returned in the partial restoration.

Now after reciting this great sequence of historical events, where God had proven faithful and gracious and compassionate even though Israel had proven worthless, in verse 32 they begin their requests, **Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and lovingkindness, Do not let all the hardship seem insignificant before You, Which has come upon us, our kings, our princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers and on all Your people, From the days of the kings of Assyria to this day.** In other words, don't turn a blind eye to the difficulties we've faced even though they were justly deserved, verse 33, **However, You are just in all that has come upon us; For You have dealt faithfully, but we have acted wickedly.** In other words, you did what You said you would do and we got what we deserved. Verse 34, **For our kings, our leaders, our priests and our fathers have not kept Your law Or paid attention to Your commandments and Your admonitions with which You have admonished them.** ³⁵**“But they, in their own kingdom, With Your great goodness which You gave them, With the broad and rich land which You set before them, Did not serve You or turn from their evil deeds.** ³⁶**“Behold, we are slaves today,** even though they'd been partially restored they were slaves to the Persian Kingdom. They paid taxes to Persia. **And as to the land which You gave to our fathers to eat of its fruit and its bounty, Behold, we are slaves in it.** They lived in the land but it did not belong to them. Verse 37, **“Its abundant produce is for the kings**

Whom You have set over us because of our sins; They also rule over our bodies And over our cattle as they please, So we are in great distress. It was the times of the Gentiles and so the produce of the land went to Persia causing great distress. The final note is one of distress and a desire to be relieved of that stress. That's what they want; they want God to give them rest. So they say in verse 38, **Now because of all this**, that is, because of all your grace and compassion to us over our history, now show us grace and compassion again. And of course to receive God's grace and compassion they need to renew the covenant and so they say, **We are making an agreement in writing; And on the sealed document are the names of our leaders, our Levites and our priests.** That is, we are going to follow the Law, we're going to recommit ourselves to Your Law and here's a formal document that we have drawn up with our names on it committing us to the Law. And then in chapter 10 you see all the names of the leaders who signed the document; Nehemiah's name at the head of the list.

In summary, the people had heard extensive readings and explanations of the word of God. This informed their conscience with a standard that convicted them of sin. They confessed with fasting their sins and the sins of their fathers which they were repeating and worshipped the Lord. The leadership decided a covenant renewal was appropriate so they began with the preamble praising their great king, they continued with the historical prologue reciting the Creation event, the call of Abraham, the Exodus, Mt Sinai, the Judges period, the Monarchy, the Kingdoms in Decline, the Exile and the Partial Restoration. God had been faithful while they had been faithless. Finally they requested that God revive them once more and swore solemnly to keep the covenant, signing and sealing a document citing the obligations they would keep.

What can we learn? First, confession requires being informed of the Scriptures we have violated. They didn't even know the word of God. And no one can confess what they do not know from the word of God. So we need to learn and know the word of God. Otherwise we could be way out of it. Second, training in the historical framework. The historical framework is an excellent tool to learn to think through the word of God. We have to train and drill and repeat until we can recite with understanding these historical events and the doctrines associated with these events.

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