

Nehemiah 9:31-38 – God is Faithful

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Gill, Armstrong, Geneva, Clarke, Handfuls, Gaebelein, Poole, Delitzsch, Barnes, Henry, Expositor, JFB, Trapp, INT
Brothers and Sisters in the Lord: This is a chapter of praise!

The Jews praised God because he rescued them from **the pit of rebellion and the pit of idolatry and established them as his bride and took care of them** as they traveled from Egypt to Canaan.

God then established them in Canaan, giving them protected cities, free houses, animals they did not raise, vineyards and orchards they did not plant, and wells they did not dig.

Yet **they jumped into the pit of provocation and the pit of pride** in Canaan! Among other things, they intermarried with non-believers and acted as if their accomplishments were of their own making.

This provoked God's anger and he sent them at various times into captivity.

And yet, **every time they ended in captivity and called on God, he forgave them and re-established them as his own**...so great was his love.

We conclude this chapter **seeing the Israelites praise God for his faithfulness in spite of their sins of pit-jumping.**

Our headings are:

God was faithful in the Past

God, be faithful in the Present

God, we will be faithful in the Future

Our goals are: **That you will be quick to ask for forgiveness** if you fall into a pit, and **you will then praise God for his faithfulness to forgive – a forgiveness that comes to you through Christ your Savior.**

God was faithful in the past

31 Nevertheless in **Your great mercy You did not utterly consume them nor forsake them;** For **You are God, gracious and merciful.** 32 "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.**

1. The Jews were rebellious, idolatrous, prideful, and provocative (their pits), but God graciously forgave them and established them as his children again and again.

God had even left some Jews behind when the remaining 1½ tribes were taken into captivity in 586BC by Babylon.

Jeremiah 30:11 For I am with you,' says the LORD, 'to save you; Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, **Yet I will not make a complete end of you.** But I will correct you in justice, And will not let you go altogether unpunished.'

God showed his fidelity – his faithfulness.

2. God had full grounds for destroying them in the past and he even asked Moses if he wanted him to destroy the Jews and start a new nation with Moses, but God, because of Moses' mediation, did not do that.

God remained faithful to them.

3. Ezra then appealed for help from God for the present time on 2 bases:

a. God showed mercy in the past when Israel and Judah sinned. (He was good.)

b God was great, mighty, and awesome. (He was God.)

Their nation was ravished by Assyria, Babylon and Medo-Persia in the past but God saved them. He recently saved them also.

4. Ezra confessed the consequences of those sins were evident in every area of society, from the kings, to the priests, to the prophets, and the fathers, and to the whole nation.

5. Assyria, who invaded Israel in 722 BC, was singled out for more details because that was the beginning of Israel's troubles.

Shalmaneser III defeated Ahab (not mentioned in the Bible).

Tiglath Pileser (Pul) about 750BC received tribute from Israel's king Mehaahem.

Tiglath Pileser ravaged Gilead, Galilee, Hazor, and Megiddo. (2Kings 15)

Shalmaneser V besieged Samaria and this was **completed by Sargon.**

Esarhaddon demanded tribute from Manasseh.

They had been guilty of sin for over 300 years and suffered for 300 years.

The Jews didn't want to serve God in their own land, so God sent them to serve their enemies in a foreign land! But God brought them out.

6. Lessons:

a. Read the accounts of the Scripture of God's faithfulness to his sinful bride so you will be encouraged in who your God is! Great is his faithfulness!

When you are encouraged in who your God is – his greatness and goodness, you will gain confidence in him (your faith will be stronger), and you will then be able to more passionately worship and serve him.

b. Don't go to God and plead for justice; plead for mercy. You are guilty before him and deserved to be punished. In his mercy he will count Christ's punishment as yours.

Plead Isaiah 40:1. Plead for comfort. God is always faithful.

c. Note how Ezra and Nehemiah were confessing God ruled everything! How? They did this by **describing Israel's punishment as the work of God!**

None of those nations could touch God people without his approval. Find comfort in that!

God, Be Faithful in the Present

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

1. Though it is never easy for a man to confess his sins, the Jews did so, acknowledging God's justice in punishing them. He did this because he was pleading for present forgiveness.

Psalms 51:4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight — **That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.**

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.

2. Even the leaders of Judah confessed breaking the whole gamut of God's laws, commandments, and testimonies.

Notice how now the prophets were not part of this confession as they had remained faithful to God. (Though they suffered.)

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.**

3. Judah's sins were worse because they received all God's blessings, and were rich, including having a large and "fat" land, but they turned from God and turned to works of wickedness.

"Rich" was from the original word "fat." Today "fat" is a bad word, but it wasn't before.

Ezra **felt compelled to confess his ancestors' sins to clear the record and receive God's blessings.**

Psalm 106:35 But **they mingled with the Gentiles And learned their works**; 36 They **served their idols**, Which became a snare to them. 37 They even **sacrificed their sons** And **their daughters to demons**, 38 And **shed innocent blood**, The blood of their sons and daughters, Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; And the land was polluted with blood. 39 Thus **they were defiled by their own works**, And **played the harlot by their own deeds.**

4. Lessons:

a. Take the time to reflect on the sins of Judah, their betrayal of a gracious and good God, and then reflect on the greatness of his forgiveness of his bride.

What amazing faithfulness you see in God! Ask for forgiveness now.

b. Leadership in our society has failed.

Men have cowered to the feminist movement.

Some are just lazy.

Fathers are too busy.

Pastors and elders function more like businessmen and community organizers than shepherds.

Our civil authorities act like autocrats with contempt for God's truth.

Some in society are willing to allow tyrant policemen, and politicians to stop them from their duty. (I'm only doing my duty is a cop out!))

Churches have ceded their authority to the state!

I plead with you to see the collapse that is taking place. Call for God's help.

c. Don't complain of the plight of the church today but acknowledge that it is the church that has left her first love and embraced the things of this world.

Spiritual poverty and spiritual suffering are often the fruits of sin. The church wanted to be more accommodating so they watered down doctrines. That has never worked; that can never work.

Ask God to remember his people and show mercy.

d. Remember, your help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth, and who loved you in his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the basis of help! There is no other way.

The church needs help. **Cry to God for that help today!**

Help WILL come.

God, We will Be Faithful in the Future

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! 37 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.

1. Ezra then (again) confessed that the Jews were guilty and they caused their present helplessness and suffering, so they had to look to God for help.

2. How guilty were the Jews of Nehemiah's day?

God gave them the bountiful land...with walled cities, well-built homes, flourishing fields, abundant wells, and fat animals...**but foreign occupying kings were reaping all the rich bounty** that were intended for the Jews.

They sinned and lost everything! They became slaves in their own land.

They didn't have autonomy over their own bodies or their animals.

Tributes had to be sent yearly to foreign kings.

Many were forced into the Medo-Persian army. And it is very likely they were used by Xerxes to help invade Greece.

Ezra made no attempt to excuse the sinful behavior of his ancestors, and that is stunning at a time when **people worked hard to honor their ancestors** and cover for them.

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

3. With their confession behind them, they then promised to fulfill the terms of the covenant, a covenant they abandoned for their own priorities.

Jeremiah 50:5 They shall ask the way to Zion, With their faces toward it, saying, 'Come and let us join ourselves to the LORD In a perpetual covenant That will not be forgotten.'

4. All the leaders, the representatives of the people, vowed to fulfill God's covenant with Yahweh.

The leaders were guilty, you saw that above, and so they had to participate in repentance.

They wrote their vow before and attached their seals to show their commitment to their promise.

5. Lessons:

a. Confess your sins and the sins of your family, church, and state. Don't make any excuses. Don't blame social media, public schools, evolution, Islam, or Prime Minister Trudeau for the state of the church.

If you are not sure who deserves the blame, look in a mirror.

b. Pray our leaders will have courage to confess their sins and promise to return to faithful obedience of God - leaders in the home, church, business, and state.

Pray they will have shame and blush!

c. Prepare to personally join with the leaders in covenant to return to God. Let revival come so the kingdom of Christ can be restored and even increase.

d. This prayer and praise of Ezra and Nehemiah was one of the most impactful ones in Jewish history and temple worship, so it is good to pay attention to it.

Conclusion:

God was faithful to the Jews in the past. He kept his covenant, even with a failing bride, and re-established his relationship with her when she repented. **So the Jews asked that he would be faithful to them at the present.** **The Jews then Promised God to be faithful to God** in the future.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord:

1. God forgives you because God is good. You, like the Jews, daily break your covenant with God. Every sin is a breaking of the covenant.

The more introspective you become, and the more you reflect on your past, the more you see your sins.

But also see greater breaking of the covenant by the church...and by the state.

2. Let this humble you. Let this humble the church. Let this humble businesses. Let this humble the state.

3. Let this make everyone work diligently to keep the covenant. Rebuke others who aren't keeping the covenant. Pray for them.

Finally, know Christians are restored to God when we repent, but as a non-Christian, you are looking down the barrel of eternal destruction.

See it before your eyes.

And then cry out to God to save you.

He will save you, if you cry in sincerity, asking him to count Jesus' punishment as yours.