

Eternally Secure

Nehemiah 9:17



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FOCAL Read Responsively Nehemiah 9:17 {Israel} refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: **but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.**

Our God is a merciful and longsuffering God. No where is this more evident in the life of His nation Israel. God saved Israel with a mighty hand. As we begin reading in Nehemiah chapter nine we see seven Levites leading the Israelites in honest prayer before God. In the course of this prayer the people recognize how God in His Grace was merciful to Israel. He called Israel - first out of a land called Ur - then later out of a land called Egypt. God loved His people, even though His people often did not love Him. God stays with those that are His.

I was asked once why our loving God so often seems to let trials and tribulation come into our lives. I think that **Warren Wiersbe** said it best when he said,

"A faith that can't be tested can't be trusted".

God allows trials to come our way to test us. God allowed the Egyptians to pursue the Israelites so that they could see the power of God. Moses even told Israel:

Exodus 14:13-14 ... Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. {14} The

LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

Trials are a time to see the hand of God at work. When Israel passed through the Red Sea whereas the Egyptians were drowned in the same water, God's people were being given an example. God is mighty, and mighty to save. He did not bring Israel to the edge of the Red Sea to abandon them. **Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.**

God saves those who trust in Him. He saves the person who understands that He is **ready to pardon**. God pardoned Abraham, an ancient Chaldean who trusted Him.

Abraham wasn't a perfect man, but he was a man who believed in the Perfect God. God promised to pardon Abraham, and Abraham took God at His Word!

The Bible tells us that Abraham "**believed God, and God counted that belief as righteousness (Romans 4:3)**". The Scripture tells us that God "**found Abraham's heart faithful (Nehemiah 9:8)**" - not PERFECT but FAITHFUL. The Scripture says ...

Galatians 3:6 Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

God is ready to pardon, and Abraham believed what God said and was thus pardoned! Abraham was saved by God. He was blessed by God. He trusted God. Israel

should have learned from his example.

God brings trials in our lives to grow us, but He also brings trials *in response to our way of life*. Abraham's children, Israel, found themselves enslaved to Egypt. God released them from Egypt with a mighty hand. Yet once they crossed the Red Sea they

FOCAL Nehemiah 9:17 ... refused to obey {God}, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage ...

Israel rejected God's Law, ignored God's miracles, and refused God's Moses.

Yet **God is always ready to pardon**. The Lord blessed His people, though they

CONTEXT Nehemiah 9:26 ... were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations.

What happened when Israel - God's people - refused to follow their Lord? Trials and tribulations came on them. God raised up nations to chastise His Israel, but never did He utterly forsake her. God stood ready to pardon.

CONTEXT Nehemiah 9:28 But after they had rest,

they did evil again before thee: therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies;

How longsuffering is our God! Israel suffered terribly because she refused to repent. When she did repent - confessing her sin before God - the Lord **heard from Heaven, and delivered them according to His mercy.** Because of His Grace God

CONTEXT Nehemiah 9:31 ... **didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God.**

Churches all across America bemoan the state of our nation - and it does seem to be in a scary predicament. Will Wall Street fall? Will we have another *Great Depression*? I don't know. I do know this, though. God is calling His people to stand with Him, and to carry His Gospel throughout this land. We have an opportunity to go out and work for Jesus, sharing His Gospel to a lost and dying world.

Christians were pardoned from our sin by a loving Creator God. This same God expects those He has pardoned to *rely on His pardoning love - while telling others of His great love - every single day.* God stands ready to pardon any who will call upon the Name of Jesus. He is **gracious and merciful**, and wants to save all who will come unto Him through Christ.

1. You Cannot Be Pardoned If You Do Not Admit The Obvious

FOCAL Nehemiah 9:17 ... **Thou art a God ready to pardon**, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.

As humans we have a tendency to miss the obvious.

ILLUSTRATE Missing The Obvious The townspeople had been warned that there was going to be an Indian attack, so the people left their homes and moved inside of the walls of the nearby Fort. Once everyone was inside the Commander of the Fort called for his Indian tracker. He asked the tracker "can you find out how badly the Fort is going to be attacked?" The tracker replied, "Let me see if I can", and he knelt down on the ground and put his right ear flat to the ground. He told the Commander, "I'm afraid we're in for a bad attack. There are at least four Chiefs leading four different tribes against us. Many have horses, and all, I'm afraid, have guns. On top of all that they have several Medicine Men to help them if they get injured. We're in for a bad day". The Commander looked at the tracker and said, "Good grief, you can tell all that just by listening to the ground?" The tracker said, "Of course not! I can see them when I look under the gate."

The text tells us that "**God is ready to pardon**". Think about that word "**pardon**"¹. The Hebrew word can be

1 סליחה, s'lychâh, sel-ee-khaw', From H5545; pardon: - forgiveness,

translated either **forgive** or **pardon**, and most translations render it "**forgive**". However I really like the King James translation better. **Pardon**. What does it mean when someone is "**pardoned**"? It means that someone is *guilty* beyond a shadow of a doubt. They have been convicted of their transgression of the Law, and are perhaps already serving time in a barred cell. When a person is "**pardoned**" they are guilty, but are set free because of the kindness of the judge.

"Pardoned" means that you cannot earn your way out of the sentence. The Judge must free you. **God is ready to pardon** for all are sinners, convicted and condemned in His holy eyes.

Every person on the face of this earth is a sinner, and as sinners we hate to consider ourselves to be so. People look for excuses for sin. For instance, many people look at the *sins of others* and, pointing them out, in order to make them feel better about *themselves*. "Look at Jo Blo over there. He comes to Church and sings with the Choir, but I've heard him gossip at work. Isn't that a sin?" Well, yes it is. **But the fact that you're judging someone else without knowing their heart is also a sin.**

We are all sinners. The Bible tells us that:

Psalms 14:2-3 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. {3} They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is

pardon.

none that doeth good, no, not one.

What an indictment! The world will *condemn society* for the sins of man. **"If that boy had been raised in a better home, he would have never committed that heinous crime"**. Or, **"if that girl had been better loved by her parents she would not have run away to a life of prostitution"**. Or, **"if I had been born rich, then I would never have abused drugs, destroying my life"**.

The world will tell you "It is always someone else's fault when we sin". God, on the other hand, says **"This is not true. You are all sinners, and need My Pardon"**.

Psalms 53:2-3 God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. {3} Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Man - and woman - is always looking for someone else to blame. The blame, however, lies not on anyone else. As **C.H. Spurgeon** once aptly said:

"... you are putting the saddle on the wrong horse, you are laying the burden on the wrong back; the blame is in your hearts, no where else. If your hearts were renewed you would be better; but until that is done, if society were modeled to perfection, if ministers were angels, if professors of religion were seraphs (lesser angels), you would be none the better;

but having less excuse for your sin, you would be doubly guilty, and perish with more terrible destruction"²

Look to Israel to see the inherent, built in sinfulness of man. Israel was in a bad environment (Egypt), and God rescued them out of it. Our context states:

CONTEXT Nehemiah 9:9-11 And {God} didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea; {10} And showedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day. {11} And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters.

God heard their cry by the Red Sea. Israel was led out of Egypt and through the Red Sea as if on dry land. God acted as if He were a GPS device, leading Israel by day and by night:

CONTEXT Nehemiah 9:12 Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go.

God gave His people Israel both *spiritual* as well as *physical* sustenance. None went hungry in Israel. Though

² from his sermon *A Preacher From The Dead*, July 26, 1857.

some were less rich than others, none were in poverty. We are told that God:

CONTEXT Nehemiah 9:15 And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them.

They were all given food, water, and God's Promise that they would inherit the land of Canaan. How did Israel react? They became proud:

FOCAL Nehemiah 9:16-17 But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, {17} And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.

God's people stood against God.

Rather than praise the Lord and follow His guidance the Israelites rebelled, they refused, and they rejected God.

And yet, **God stood ready to pardon them.** The first generation of Israel refused to do so, and so lost the Promised Land.

2. Until You Surrender To God's Pardon You Cannot Receive The Deeper Promises of God

FOCAL Nehemiah 9:17 ... **Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.**

ILLUSTRATE A captive was once brought before King James II of England. The King chided the prisoner: "You know that it is in my power to pardon you?" The scared, shaking prisoner replied, "Yes, I know it is in your power to pardon me, but it is not in your nature." ³

Unlike King James II, it is in God's nature to pardon from sin. God is **gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness**. The first generation of Israel rejected the Promise of God, and *refused God's pardon*. Israel listened to the evil report of ten men who would not obey the Lord. Though faithful **Joshua and Caleb** told Israel:

Numbers 14:7-9 ... The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. {8} If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. {9} Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.

Israel rejected this good word, and in so doing rejected God. The Lord told Moses:

Numbers 14:11-12 ... How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them? {12} I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

But Moses prayed to the Lord. He asked the Lord to **pardon** Israel, lest the **Egyptians** hear of their destruction and mock the Almighty God. Moses prayed for Israel, saying:

Numbers 14:18-19 The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. {19} Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

God replied to that great believer:

Numbers 14:20 I have pardoned according to thy word:

Numbers 14:22-23 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

³ Dynamic Preaching Disk, Spring 1992 "A", Do You Have A Forgiving Spirit?, Eric Ritz, Apr 7 92

{23} Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

God **pardoned Israel for Moses sake**. But because the first generation of Israel would not repent, God caused them to die in the desert.

Our God does not overlook sin, but He does pardon sin - but we must ask for His pardon!

The Israel that would not recognize their own sin was *not* the Israel that could inhabit the Promised Land of God. It is in God's nature to forgive us. We need to ask forgiveness when we sin against Him. We need to do as the Scripture says:

1 John 1:8-9 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. {9} If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If Israel had sought the pardon of God it is very likely that they could still have entered the Promised Land. God wants to pardon. He stands ready to pardon. He gave everything on Calvary for His people. Will He, Who knows all and sees all, save a people then damn them?

The Lord knew your constitution, your weaknesses, your failures, your tendencies - your very heart -

before He saved you. He knew Israel's tendencies when He brought her out of Egypt. He stood ready to pardon, but *would not*, if His people would not seek pardon.

When you or I sin we do not need to *make excuses*. Unpardoned sin weighs a person down.

ILLUSTRATE The Weight of Sin Imagine, if you will, that each and every one of you has an expandable backpack across your shoulders. Each time you sin you add a brick to that backpack. The unbeliever who *never* confesses sin in time becomes weighed down by the weight of his sins. The Christian, however, knows that:

1 John 1:7 ... the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Rather than carry our sins around God reminds us that **He stands ready to pardon**. We are to *recognize our sin* (if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us). Once we *recognize* sin we are to *confess it* - that means to **say the same thing about it that God does**. We do not justify sin. We do not blame others, as Adam blamed Eve ("**the woman You, Lord gave to me, she gave me the fruit, and I ate it**". see **Genesis 3:12**). We do not *try and hide our sin*, as **King David tried to hide his illicit affair with Bathsheba**.

We will not be blessed, nor can we inherit the

promises of God, while we have active sin in our lives. Adam was thrown from Eden, King David lost an heir to the Throne by Bathsheba, and the first generation of Israel lost the Promised Land.

3. The Only Thing That Keeps You From God's Pardon Is YOU

FOCAL Nehemiah 9:17 ... Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.

God will punish sin. He always punishes sin. The Bible says:

Malachi 4:1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

But our God does not want to have to do this. He is patient, and kind, and loving, and seeks to pardon all who will call upon Him. God goes the extra mile in pardoning. The Children of Israel were given great Grace by God. Though they were denied the Promised Land because they would not seek pardon, we read:

CONTEXT Nehemiah 9:21 Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not.

God blessed Israel so that **they lacked nothing**. He kept their clothes intact, kept legs and feet in good shape. God said:

Isaiah 30:18-20 And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.

that He waits to be gracious. He is the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10). Though Israel often turned away from God the Lord was gracious to her. Though He chastised Israel many times the Lord never rejected her. God punished Israel for rejecting His pardon, but He never cast her off. He never forsook the people that He so loved -

and neither will He forsake you.

If you are under a cloud of trial or tribulation today ask yourself if you, perhaps, have fallen into sin. Do you have unconfessed and unpardoned sin in your lives? If you do, realize that **God is ready to pardon**. Turn from your sin. Commit your way unto Him. When you sin, *confess that sin* and ask that God cover it with His pardon.

Keep short accounts with God! Do not allow sin to reign in your life, lest it wholly possess you!

ILLUSTRATE How Sin Spreads In the 1884 New Orleans Cotton Exposition one display caught everyone's attention. It was the Water Hyacinth. Thousands of visitors took little pieces of the fragrant Hyacinths home with them, hoping that sneaked little slips of the plant into their handbags and took them home, praying they would take root in some spot of their own damp Louisiana yards. Before long it became evident that the Water Hyacinth was not only going to survive -- it might even take over every water channel in the South! Soon rivers and canals were solid water hyacinths from bank to bank. A little too late, horticulturists found that each plant produces a thousand little water hyacinths every two months! Because pieces break off and float down the river, they can even transplant themselves with no help at all.⁴

In the same way sin can take over - and destroy - your lives. We as sinners are commanded by God to recognize our sins and confess them before Him. God does not say to the sinner, "Endure this hardship and I will pardon you", nor does He say "clean up your act *then* come to Me". God says "Give Me your life - all of it - and I will bless you. **I am ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness.** I proved this with Israel, and I proved this at Calvary.

May God touch your hearts with His Word.

⁴ Suzanne Hilton, HOW DO THEY COPE WITH IT? (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press)



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Exodus 14:13-14; Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6;
Nehemiah 9:17; Nehemiah 9:26; Nehemiah 9:28;
Nehemiah 9:31 _____

1. You Cannot Be Pardoned If You Do Not Admit The Obvious

Nehemiah 9:17 ; Psalms 14:2-3; Psalms 53:2-3;
Nehemiah 9:9-11; Nehemiah 9:12 ; Nehemiah 9:15;
Nehemiah 9:16-17 _____

2. Until You Surrender To God's Pardon You Cannot Receive The Deeper Promises of God

Nehemiah 9:17 ; Numbers 14:7-9; Numbers 14:11-12; Numbers 14:18-19; Numbers 14:20; Numbers

14:22-23; 1 John 1:8-9; 1 John 1:7 _____

3. The Only Thing That Keeps You From God's Pardon Is YOU

Nehemiah 9:17 ; Malachi 4:1; Nehemiah 9:21 ;
Isaiah 30:18-20; 1 Peter 5:10 _____

