

Confession, Scripture, and Remembering: Neh 9:1-37

Sunday, August 6, 2023
Covenant Church
Pastor Zack Phillips

Nehemiah 9:1-37

¹ Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads. ² Then those of Israelite descent separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their ancestors. ³ They stood up in their place and read from the book of the law of the LORD their God for a fourth part of the day, and for another fourth they made confession and worshiped the LORD their God. ⁴ Then Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani stood on the stairs of the Levites and cried out with a loud voice to the LORD their God. ⁵ Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, "Stand up and bless the LORD your God from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise."

⁶ And Ezra said: "You are the LORD, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. To all of them you give life, and the host of heaven worships you. ⁷ You are the LORD, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham; ⁸ and you found his heart faithful before you, and made with him a covenant to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite; and you have fulfilled your promise, for you are righteous.

⁹ "And you saw the distress of our ancestors in Egypt and heard their cry at the Red Sea. ¹⁰ You performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants and all the people of his land, for you knew that they acted insolently against our ancestors. You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day. ¹¹ And you divided the sea before them, so that they passed through the sea on dry land, but you threw their pursuers into the depths, like a stone into mighty waters. ¹² Moreover, you led them by day with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire, to give them light on the way in which they should go. ¹³ You came down also upon Mount Sinai, and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them right ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments, ¹⁴ and you made known your holy sabbath to them and gave them commandments and statutes and a law through your servant Moses. ¹⁵ For their hunger you gave them bread from heaven, and for their thirst you brought water for them out of the rock, and you told them to go in to possess the land that you swore to give them.

¹⁶ "But they and our ancestors acted presumptuously and stiffened their necks and did not obey your commandments; ¹⁷ they refused to obey, and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them; but they stiffened their necks and determined to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and you did not forsake them. ¹⁸ Even when they had cast an image of a calf for themselves and said, 'This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,' and had committed great blasphemies, ¹⁹ you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness; the pillar of cloud

that led them in the way did not leave them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night that gave them light on the way by which they should go. ²⁰ You gave your good spirit to instruct them, and did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and gave them water for their thirst. ²¹ Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness so that they lacked nothing; their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell. ²² And you gave them kingdoms and peoples, and allotted to them every corner, so they took possession of the land of King Sihon of Heshbon and the land of King Og of Bashan. ²³ You multiplied their descendants like the stars of heaven, and brought them into the land that you had told their ancestors to enter and possess. ²⁴ So the descendants went in and possessed the land, and you subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gave them into their hands, with their kings and the peoples of the land, to do with them as they pleased. ²⁵ And they captured fortress cities and a rich land, and took possession of houses filled with all sorts of goods, hewn cisterns, vineyards, olive orchards, and fruit trees in abundance; so they ate, and were filled and became fat, and delighted themselves in your great goodness.

²⁶ “Nevertheless they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their backs and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies. ²⁷ Therefore you gave them into the hands of their enemies, who made them suffer. Then in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, and according to your great mercies you gave them saviors who saved them from the hands of their enemies. ²⁸ But after they had rest, they again did evil before you, and you abandoned them to the hands of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them; yet when they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven, and many times you rescued them according to your mercies. ²⁹ And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your ordinances, by the observance of which a person shall live. They turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey. ³⁰ Many years you were patient with them, and warned them by your spirit through your prophets; yet they would not listen. Therefore you handed them over to the peoples of the lands. ³¹ Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

³² “Now therefore, our God—the great and mighty and awesome God, keeping covenant and steadfast love—do not treat lightly all the hardship that has come upon us, upon our kings, our officials, our priests, our prophets, our ancestors, and all your people, since the time of the kings of Assyria until today. ³³ You have been just in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly; ³⁴ our kings, our officials, our priests, and our ancestors have not kept your law or heeded the commandments and the warnings that you gave them. ³⁵ Even in their own kingdom, and in the great goodness you bestowed on them, and in the large and rich land that you set before them, they did not serve you and did not turn from their wicked works. ³⁶ Here we are, slaves to this day—slaves in the land that you gave to our ancestors to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts. ³⁷ Its rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins; they have power also over our bodies and over our livestock at their pleasure, and we are in great distress.”

A. Confession

B. Scripture

God creates the universe (v. 6)¹

6 ...“You are the LORD,

you alone;
you have made heaven,

the heaven of heavens, with all their host,
the earth and all that is on it,
the seas and all that is in them.
To all of them you give life,
and the host of heaven worships you.

2 Kings 19:15 ...“O LORD... you are God,
you alone,
...you have made heaven and earth

Deut 10:14

Although heaven
and the heaven of heavens
belong to the LORD your God, the earth with all that is in it,

God chooses Abraham and makes a covenant (vv. 7-8)

7 You are the LORD,
the God who chose Abram
and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans

and gave him the name Abraham;
8 and you found his heart faithful before you,
and made with him a covenant
to give to his descendants
the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the
Jebusite, and the Girgashite;
and you have fulfilled your promise,
for you are righteous.

Gen 15:7 ...“I am the LORD

who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans,
to give you this land to possess.”

Gen 17:5 No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be
Abraham...

Ps 119:137 You are righteous, O LORD... (see also Lam 1:18; Ezra 9:15)

God delivers Israel from Egypt (vv. 9-)

9 “And you saw the distress
of our ancestors in Egypt
and heard their cry at the Red Sea.

10 You performed signs and wonders
against Pharaoh and all his servants and all the people of his land,
for you knew that they acted insolently against our ancestors.
You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day.

11 And you divided the sea before them,
so that they passed through the sea on dry land,
but you threw their pursuers into the depths,
like a stone into mighty waters.

12 Moreover, you led them
by day with a pillar of cloud,

and by night with a pillar of fire,
to give them light on the way in which they should go.

13 You came down also upon Mount Sinai,
and spoke with them from heaven,

Exod 3:7 ...“I have observed the misery

of my people who are in Egypt;
I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters... (see also Exod
4:31)

Jer 32:20 20 You showed signs and wonders
in the land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel and among all humankind,

and have made yourself a name that continues to this very day
Isa 63:12 who caused his glorious arm to march at the right hand of
Moses,
who divided the waters before them
to make for himself an everlasting name.

Exod 15:5 The floods covered them;
they went down into the depths like a stone.

Exod 13:21 The LORD went in front of them
in a pillar of cloud by day,
to lead them along the way,
and in a pillar of fire by night,
to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night.

Exod 19:20 When the LORD descended upon Mount Sinai...

¹ Parallels in this chart are from Jacob M. Myers, *Ezra-Nehemiah: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, Anchor Yale Bible 14 (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008). Note: I have not included all the possible parallels that Myers proposes.

and gave them right ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments,
14 and you made known your holy sabbath to them and gave them commandments and statutes and a law through your servant Moses.
15 For their hunger you gave them bread from heaven, and for their thirst you brought water for them out of the rock, and you told them to go in to possess the land

that you swore to give them.

God is faithful despite their sin (vv. 16-23)

16 "But they and our ancestors acted presumptuously and stiffened their necks

and did not obey your commandments;
17 they refused to obey, and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them; but they stiffened their necks

and determined to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and you did not forsake them.
18 Even when they had cast an image of a calf for themselves and said, 'This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,'

and had committed great blasphemies,

19 you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness; the pillar of cloud that led them in the way did not leave them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night that gave them light on the way by which they should go.

20 You gave your good spirit to instruct them, and did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and gave them water for their thirst.

21 Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness so that they lacked nothing; their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.

22 And you gave them kingdoms and peoples, and allotted to them every corner, so they took possession of the land of King Sihon of Heshbon and the land of King Og of Bashan.

23 You multiplied their descendants like the stars of heaven,

and brought them into the land that you had told their ancestors to enter and possess.

God grants Israel possession of the land (vv. 24-25)

24 So the descendants went in and possessed the land, and you subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites,

the LORD summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

Exod 16:4 ..."I am going to rain bread from heaven for you...
Num 20:8 ...Thus you shall bring water out of the rock for them...
Josh 1:11 ..."in three days you are to cross over the Jordan, to go in to take possession of the land that the LORD your God gives you to possess."
Exod 6:8 I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...

Jer 7:26 yet they did not listen to me, or pay attention, but they stiffened their necks. They did worse than their ancestors did.
Deut 11:28 and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God...

Ps 105:5 Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles...

Num 14:4 So they said to one another, "Let us choose a captain, and go back to Egypt."

Ps 130:4 But there is forgiveness with you,...

Ps 145:8 The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Ezra 9:9 ...yet our God has not forsaken us in our slavery...

Exod 32:8 ...they have cast for themselves an image of a calf... and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'

Dan 9:18 ...We do not present our supplication before you on the ground of our righteousness, but on the ground of your great mercies.

Ps 143:10 ...Let Your good spirit lead me on a level path.

Deut 2:7 ...These forty years the LORD your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing."

Deut 8:4 The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet did not swell these forty years.

Num 32:33 Moses gave to them... the kingdom of King Sihon of the Amorites and the kingdom of King Og of Bashan, the land and its towns...

Gen 22:17 ...I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven...

Judg 2:1 I ...brought you into the land that I had promised to your ancestors.

Josh 21:43 Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to their ancestors that he would give them; and having taken possession of it, they settled there.

and gave them into their hands,
with their kings and the peoples of the land,
to do with them as they pleased.

25 And they captured fortress cities and a rich land,
and took possession of houses filled with all sorts of goods,
hewn cisterns,
vineyards,
olive orchards, and fruit trees in abundance;
so they ate, and were filled and became fat,
and delighted themselves in your great goodness.

God is faithful despite their sin (vv. 26-31)

26 “Nevertheless they were disobedient
and rebelled against you
and cast your law behind their backs
and killed your prophets,
who had warned them in order to turn them back to you,
and they committed great blasphemies.

27 Therefore you gave them into the hands of their enemies,
who made them suffer.
Then in the time of their suffering they cried out to you
and you heard them from heaven,
and according to your great mercies
you gave them saviors
who saved them from the hands of their enemies.

28 But after they had rest, they again did evil before you,
and you abandoned them to the hands of their enemies,
so that they had dominion over them;
yet when they turned and cried to you,
you heard from heaven,
and many times you rescued them according to your mercies.

29 And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law.
Yet they acted presumptuously
and did not obey your commandments,
but sinned against your ordinances,
by the observance of which a person shall live.
They turned a stubborn shoulder
and stiffened their neck
and would not obey.

30 Many years you were patient with them,
and warned them by your spirit through your prophets;

yet they would not listen.
Therefore you handed them over to the peoples of the lands.

31 Nevertheless, in your great mercies
you did not make an end of them or forsake them,
for you are a gracious and merciful God.

Israel’s confession and prayer (vv. 32-37)

32 “Now therefore, our God—
the great and mighty and awesome God,
keeping covenant and steadfast love—

do not treat lightly all the hardship that has come upon us,
upon our kings, our officials, our priests, our prophets, our ancestors,
and all your people,
since the time of the kings of Assyria until today.

33 You have been just in all that has come upon us,

Judg 4:23 So on that day God subdued King Jabin of Canaan before the Israelites.

Judg 1:4 ...the LORD gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand...

Deut 3:5 All these were fortress towns with high walls...

Deut 6:11 houses filled with all sorts of goods that you did not fill,
hewn cisterns that you did not hew,
vineyards
and olive groves that you did not plant—
and when you have eaten your fill,

Ezek 23:35 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
Because you have forgotten me
and cast me behind your back...

1 Kgs 19:10 [Elijah] answered, “...for the Israelites have... killed your prophets with the sword...”

Ezek 39:23 ...So I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries...

Judg 4:3 Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help...

2 Chron 6:25 may you hear from heaven...

1 Sam 9:16 ...[Saul] shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have seen the suffering of my people...

2 Kgs 17:13 Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer,

1 Sam 8:19 But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel...

Judg 13:1 ...the LORD gave [Israel] into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

Jer 46:28 ...I will not make an end of you!

Deut 10:17 For the LORD

...the great God, mighty and awesome...

1 Kgs 8:23 “O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love

Dan 9:14 ...the LORD our God is right in all that he has done...

for you have dealt faithfully
and we have acted wickedly;
34 our kings, our officials, our priests, and our ancestors have not kept
your law
or heeded the commandments
and the warnings that you gave them.
35 Even in their own kingdom,
and in the great goodness you bestowed on them,
and in the large and rich land that you set before them,
they did not serve you
and did not turn from their wicked works.
36 Here we are, slaves to this day—
slaves in the land that you gave to our ancestors

to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts.

37 Its rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us
because of our sins;
they have power also over our bodies
and over our livestock at their pleasure,
and we are in great distress.”

Ps 106:6 ...we have committed iniquity, have done wickedly.
2 Kgs 17:15 They

despised his statutes...
and the warnings that he gave them...

Ps 145:7 They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness...

Jer 44:22 The LORD could no longer bear the sight of your evil doings...

Deut 19:8

...he will give you all the land that he promised your ancestors to give
you,

Jer 2:7 I brought you into a plentiful land to eat its fruits and its good
things.

C. Remembering

Question: What is one thing that God may have said to you through this sermon?