

The Graciousness of God

“Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God” (Nehemiah 9:31).

In Nehemiah 8, we read about how Ezra the priest read aloud the Law in the presence of the people of God. The very next chapter follows with a prayer of repentance and covenant renewal from the community of faith. This spiritual pattern is one that our own hearts should follow: The Word of God is read, and in response to the holiness of God’s truth, as sinners, we repent and confess our wrongdoing. I encourage you to read Nehemiah chapter 9 for yourself, because you will be both educated about the history of God’s people and enlightened on how continually sinful we, as humans, can become...

Here are some of the confessions that were made by the people of Israel: “But they and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments. They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them...” (9:16-17). “Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies” (9:26). “Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly” (9:33). In response to the hearing of God’s Word there was no doubt about it, the people realized that they had missed the mark in their law keeping and attempt to be righteous before God. They had sinned, their parents had sinned, and the generation before them were inherently sinful too...

But you see, soaked within this prayer of repentance is not only a list of humanity’s failures... Yes, we see plenty of that! But also, we have a pinpoint reminder that our God is so very gracious and merciful. Yes, we have acted wickedly, but the faithful, covenant-keeping God has acted faithfully, and He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13). For the goodness of God’s Gospel is that the stubbornness and rebellion of humanity is redeemed by the utter graciousness of God. Now, what makes God’s gracious character so beautiful and worthy of our praise is that God, as the ultimate source of power and authority in the universe, doesn’t have to be gracious and merciful... God could easily flick us like a fly off His back porch. He could stomp us like ants until we are no more... But instead, He picks us up with His blood-stained hands through the finished work of Christ and says: “Your sins, they are many... But My mercy is more!”

What are your sins? Where have you missed the mark? Learn a lesson from God’s people in Nehemiah’s day... Receive the Word of Truth in faith. Repent of your sins through hearty confession. And be renewed and refreshed under the graciousness of our Great God!

Respect the Blood,
Dalton Mathis