

Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church

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Sermon manuscript

SERMON SERIES: Forward! Together!

(studies in Nehemiah)

About Face!

(Nehemiah 8:18--10:27)

Study #12

Introduction: Bad for the reputation, good for the soul ...

While it is true that confession is terrible for the reputation, it is very good for the soul,¹ as is illustrated in a fictional work by one of my favorite authors, C.S. Lewis.

The book in question is The Great Divorce.² The action in the book revolves around a bus trip some of the inhabitants of Hell take to Heaven, where they are invited to stay - if they wish.

Throughout this short book we are introduced to one after another of the citizens of Hell. They are each given an invitation to stay in Heaven on condition that they admit that they had sinned during their life on earth.

¹ One of many aphorisms, courtesy of my good friend and former member of Northwest, Konrad Kern.

² From Lewis' introduction to The Great Divorce, "[William] Blake wrote of the marriage of Heaven and Hell. If I have written of their divorce, this is not because I think myself a fit antagonist for so great a genius, nor even because I feel at all sure that I know what he meant. But in some sense or other the attempt to make that marriage is perennial. ... This belief I take to be a disastrous error. You cannot take all luggage with you on all journeys.... If we insist on keeping Hell (or even Earth) we shall not see Heaven: if we accept Heaven we shall not be able to retain even the smallest and most intimate souvenirs of Hell.

In this book, forgiveness and eternal life and Heaven were theirs for the taking, but only AFTER admitting that the direction of their lives on earth had been sinful. This - confess - they steadfastly refused to do!

Lewis lets us listen in conversation after conversation, as the saved try to convince the damned to join them in glory. But, the citizens of Hell adamantly refuse to confess their sin. Admitting that they are wrong is the one thing they will not do.

C.S. Lewis was not set on teaching doctrine from this book. And I am not suggesting that there is a post-mortem opportunity to gain Heaven, either!

The Bible is clear that our eternal fate is SET in concrete during this life, based solely on whether or not we place the treasure of our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 9:27 assures us that after this life comes judgment.³

I simply want to affirm, along with C.S. Lewis, that there are times when we need to say, "*God, I'm sorry*"; that saying "*God, I'm sorry*" is a giant step on the road to **maturity**; that saying, "*God, I'm sorry*" paves the way for **genuine change**; and that saying "*God, I'm sorry*" ushers us into a world of **freedom, joy, peace, and love**.

So, yes, it is true. Confession is terrible for the reputation. It is very, very good for the soul...

We catch up to the Jews in Jerusalem, late in the seventh month (the Jewish month, Tishri; approximately our September/October). It has been an exceptionally busy month! On the first two days of the month, reviving broke out among God's people on the heels of re-Bible-ing!⁴

Then, on the tenth day, they observed the Day of Atonement. A few days later, they moved into the portable shacks they had made, and lived in those tents from the fifteenth to the twenty-first to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

³ Hebrews 9:27 - *And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment*

⁴ This occurred during the festival of Rosh Hashanah, the civic New Year in the Jewish calendar.

As the chapter ends, the festival is winding down. But that doesn't mean that the action is over.

In fact, the crescendo leading to spiritual renewal and reform keeps on building. From the completion of the work on the wall to the attentive listening to the reading of God's Word to the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles, spirits keep trending positive.

Yet there is a transition from the festivities of Tabernacles on the last day of the celebration. You'll notice a somber tone in the last verse of Nehemiah 8.

[8:18] He read from the book of the law of God daily, from the first day to the last day. And they celebrated the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly according to the ordinance.

The people have come back together again (at the Water Gate? near the center of the city?) Now it is the twenty-fourth day of the month.

Coming Together to Seek God's Amazing Grace.... (vv. 1-4)

Approaching God with Humility (vv. 1-2a)

*[1] Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month⁵ the sons of Israel assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dirt upon them.
[2a] And the descendants of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners.*

After a week of **feasting** ("*The joy of the Lord is your strength*"), the people have now come together **fasting**.⁶

The sackcloth⁷ and dirt on their bodies⁸ indicates humility. They've separated themselves from idolatrous neighbors and from all false worship. They have prepared themselves for an important gathering.

The purpose of this gathering is to confess their sins. They are ready to do business with God, to tell God the truth.

A Day Set Aside for God (vv. 2b-3)

[2b]...and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.⁹ [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.

On this day, three to four hours of attentive listening to the Word of God is followed by three to four hours of sober confession of sin and heartfelt worship.

Leaders LEADING in Worship (v. 4)

[4] 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.

The Levites listed in verse 4 lead by doing what priests do. They spoke to God (prayed) on behalf of the people.

Ezra (while not named, I expect that he was there) and the priests approach the podium. Ezra himself has the long priestly robe. Picture him wearing a long beard. The people are standing, expectant. The priests' first words magnify and praise God.

⁵ This is the month Tishri, the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, the first month of the civic year, and corresponds to our September/October time frame.

⁶ Fasting is a time-honored spiritual discipline, engaged in by God's people whenever they have been faced with a major life decision, have felt themselves to be under unusual pressure, or have sensed a need for a wholesale turning to God. Believers in Old and New Testaments have fasted. Jesus assumed His followers would fast and they did in the book of Acts. They have throughout the last twenty centuries. Christians around the world fast to this day.

⁷ Sackcloth was a strong, rough cloth woven from the long, dark hair of the Oriental goat or the camel. It served the purpose of an ordinary piece of clothing, but over time came to bear a primarily symbolic meaning, indicating repentance.

⁸ 1 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam. 1:2; Job 2:12; Jonah 3

⁹ To see the significance of this corporate confession of sin, we have to understand the sense of historical continuity and solidarity that existed among the Jews. To confess the fathers' sins was to confess their own.

Behold the Amazing Grace and Goodness of God! (vv. 5-15)

Bless the Lord! (vv. 5-6)

They called upon the assembly to rise. And, with all the fervor they could muster, they called upon the assembly to bless the Lord THEIR God!

[5] Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, ‘Arise, bless the Lord your God forever and ever!

*“O may Your glorious name¹⁰ be blessed
And exalted above all blessing and praise!*

[6] You alone are the Lord.

*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.*

In this snapshot from Heaven, all creation bows down to Him.¹¹

And then the prayer moves from a sweeping praise of God to a rehearsing of God’s special work in the history of Israel.

Grace to Abraham (vv. 7-8)

*[7] “You are the Lord God,
Who chose Abram
And brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees,
And gave him the name Abraham.*

*[8] You found his heart faithful before You,
and 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 -*

¹⁰ This is the blessing of the name of God. “*Yahweh*” was the covenant name of God. It stands for who He is. Exalting His Name meant exalting Him, personally.

¹¹ I wonder if the Israelites in Jerusalem bowed low when they heard about all of the heavenly host bowing down before God?

*To give it to his descendants.”
“And You have fulfilled Your promise,
For You are righteous.*

God’s choice of Abraham is the starting point for highlighting God’s great work.

God gave to Abraham a covenant with a series of promises - a land, a nation, and descendants.¹² And God kept His every promise to Abraham.¹³

But God’s dealings with Israel didn’t cease when Abraham and the patriarchs died. That was just the start of God’s blessings! The story line of Nehemiah 9 moves from Abraham to his descendants. Those descendants soon found themselves enslaved in Egypt.

Delivered from Egypt (vv. 9-11)

*[9] “You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt,
And heard their cry by the Red Sea.¹⁴*

*[10] Then You performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh,
Against all his servants and all the people of his land;¹⁵*

*For You knew that they acted arrogantly toward them,
And made a name for Yourself as it is this day.*

*[11] And 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.*

¹² The Abrahamic Covenant is found in several places in the book of Genesis, originally stated in chapter 12, and then restated in chapters 13, 15, 18, and 22.

¹³ In fact, throughout the bulk of the historical section of the Old Testament (Joshua - Esther), God’s people were living in the land of Canaan.

¹⁴ In Exodus 3:7, we read, “*I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings.*”

¹⁵ The Ten Plagues against Egypt were: (1). Nile River turns to blood; (2). Frogs overrun the land; (3). Gnats infest the land; (4). Insects infest the land; (5). Death to the livestock of Egypt; (6). Sore boils on man and beast; (7). Heavy hail on Egypt; (8). Locusts destroy the crops; (9). Thick darkness on Egypt; (10). Death of Egypt’s first-born.

Scripture says that God **noticed** what was happening to His people. He saw Israel's affliction in Egypt. He heard their cries for deliverance. He is the God who notices. But He did more than simply notice. He proved that He is the God who **rescues** His people!

He opposed Pharaoh through the Ten Plagues against Egypt, and through them, convinced Pharaoh to let His people go.

At the tenth and final plague, Pharaoh said, "*Good riddance!*" and allowed the Jews to leave his land. But he quickly changed his mind and followed them as far as the western shore of the Red Sea. It was there that God performed the benchmark miracle of the Old Testament.

With Israel caught between a rock and a hard place (the sea and the Egyptian army), God divided the Red Sea for Israel to cross over on dry ground. This was the miracle to end all miracles! Did God love His people? Yes! Was God for His people? Yes!!

The prayer continues and the scene shifts from the Red Sea to the wilderness.

Provision in the Wilderness (vv. 12-15)

God guided (v. 12)

**[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 there were to go.**

God wanted His people to know the right way to travel. So He led them by cloud and fire. AND, He wanted His people to know the right way to live. So, He gave them the Ten Commandments, and the Mosaic Law!

God gave the Law (vv. 13-14)

**[13] "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.**

**[14] So You made known to them Your holy Sabbath,
And laid down for them commandments, statutes, and law,
Through Your servant Moses.**

God met with Moses on Mount Sinai and gave a direct revelation of His moral will to His people. THAT had never been done before! He gave a written, objective, list of do's and don'ts so that they would know how to walk and please Him.

And that is not all.

God provided food and drink (v. 15a)

**[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.**

He gave them manna for their hunger. He gave them water for their thirst. Here is not only a God who notices and who rescues. He is a God who provides.

And, it was not as if God wanted His people to spend the rest of their national life in the wilderness, chasing a pillar of cloud and fire! No, He provided a land for them to possess - the promised land of Canaan (i.e. - Palestine. And, He graciously invited them to enter and take that good land.

So, there you are in the square in Jerusalem listening to the priests recount your national story in prayer to God. Has the Lord been good to the nation? Has He provided, protected, guided, and delivered? You betcha!

Then our eyes are drawn to verse 16 where we see that the first word is, "**BUT.**" That word puts us on the alert.

There is a shift in the works as the prayers now focus on the **response** of God's people to His goodness.

An UGLY Response to the BEAUTY of Grace (vv. 16-31)

God was Gracious in the Wilderness (vv. 16-25)

BUT Israel immediately rebelled! (vv. 16-18)

*[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.
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*

The first line summarizes the nation’s behavior from the days of Abraham forward: **“Our fathers acted arrogantly.”**

Pride-filled and presumptuous, they rebelled against God. They were called to trusting dependence and chose arrogant independence.

That arrogance was seen in their stubbornness. And, their stubbornness was seen in their **refusal to listen**.

Like a child who can hear the sound of his favorite TV show coming on from a mile away, but can’t seem to hear, *“Come in for dinner! Clean up your room! Do your chores!”* Israel selective chose to not hear the commands of God.

Then, alongside their *“closed ear policy,”* they instituted a *“memory-loss program.”* They refused to remember God’s grace to them in the past. Theirs was a studied, purposeful forgetfulness. And God held them guilty for not remembering His grace.

And what did God do in the face of Israel’s rebellion? Had you been God, after all the goodness you had shown Israel, what would you have done?

Throw Israel out and start over? Give them up and choose another people? That’s what I might have done. Not God. He dealt with them GRACIOUSLY.

That is the kind of God our God is: forgiving, gracious, compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.

God continued to forgive them - even when they made the golden calf. WOW!

We find that story in Exodus 32, and it is almost hard to believe. While Moses was up on Mount Sinai receiving the Law from God, the people gathered around the base of that very mountain, followed Aaron’s lead in worshipping a golden calf, and called it “god.”

This has been called by many Israel’s gravest sin, occurring as it did, so shortly after their greatest deliverance. But, even after THIS sin, God did not leave them or forsake them. In fact, He continued to bless them throughout their wilderness wanderings.

AND God blessed them beyond measure! (vv. 19-25)

*[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.¹⁶
[20] You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them,
Your manna¹⁷ You did not withhold from their mouth,
And You gave them water for their thirst.*

¹⁶ Ex. 13:21-22

¹⁷ Manna was provided for the nation for forty years by God. It came down like rain and looked like coriander seed. The word manna means *“what’s that?”* (Exodus 16)

[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.

[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.”¹⁸

[23] You made their sons numerous as the stars of heaven,

And You brought them into the land

Which You had told their fathers to enter and possess.

[24] So their sons entered and possessed the land.

And 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.

They took possession of houses full of every good thing,

Hewn cisterns, vineyards, olive groves,

Fruit trees in abundance.

So they ate, were filled, and grew fat,

And reveled in Your great goodness.

- He blessed them providing the pillars of cloud and fire for guidance.
- He blessed them with the Holy Spirit’s instruction.
- He blessed them with often miraculous provision of manna and water.
- He blessed them with clothing that didn’t wear out.
- He blessed them with military victories over vicious, hostile enemies.¹⁹
- He blessed them with increasing population growth.²⁰
- He blessed them by bringing them in to a fully furnished land.

¹⁸ The two kingdoms mentioned are outside of Canaan. Sihon (Heshbon, another term for the Amorites), was east of Judah to the south. Og (Bashan) was located east of Judah to the north.

¹⁹ Remember Jericho? It was a great victory for the Israelites. But how did they win? By blowing trumpets and watching the walls fall down flat! It was God’s work.

²⁰ This would be a direct fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Their entrance into Canaan would be akin to someone telling you that they wanted to help you and your family get into some decent, affordable housing. They offer to drive you to your new home.

You’re expecting Habitat for Humanity or Section 8 housing, but they drive west on IH-10, take the Camp Bullis Road exit and show you to your new home in The Dominion!

And God continued to deal graciously with Israel in the next historical period - the period of the Judges. He treated them FAR BETTER than they treated Him!

God was Gracious in the Time of the Judges (vv. 26-27)

[26] But 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.

[27] Therefore You delivered them into the hand of their oppressors who oppressed them

But when they cried to You in the time of their distress,

Your heard from heaven, and according to Your great compassion

You gave them deliverers who delivered them from the hand of their oppressors.

Did you notice that little word **“But”** again?

God did all kinds of favors for Israel BUT the people were completely rebellious. For the years that the Judges ruled, Israel stuck its collective tongue out at God.

And when they rebelled, God didn’t sit passively on the sidelines. He actively intervened to turn them back to the right way. He did this by way of disciplining them, often in some pretty severe ways. In their suffering they would yelp for help. Then, He would deliver them yet again.

And while Israel obeyed God no better during the period of the kings than she did during the period of the judges, God continued to deal with His people in grace’s through the period of the Kings.

God was Gracious in the Time of the Kings.... (vv. 28-31)

[28] “But as soon as they had rest, they did evil again before You; 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, [29] And admonished them in order to turn them back to Your law. 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.

[30] However, You bore with them for many years, And admonished them by Your Spirit through Your prophets, Yet they would not give ear.

Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.

[31] Nevertheless, in Your great compassion You did not make an end of them or forsake them,

For You are a gracious and compassionate God.

These verses reveal quite a picture. The people did evil, were punished, cried out for help, and then were rescued by God. Then, THEY RESTED UP so that they could do more evil!

Like a fighter who catches his breath between rounds so that he can go on fighting for another three minutes, Israel would use the time right after her deliverance to prepare for another round of rebellion against God!

And, while their evil was directed against God, yet He kept on rescuing them, time after time after time after time!

The final section of this prayer of confession (verse 29) finds the Israelites again standing toe-to-toe with God. They simply refuse to submit to His Lordship. They flaunt their disobedience.

This recounting of the nation’s failings includes a fascinating word picture. We are told that *“they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck.”*

When I was in college, I spent some time on the wrestling team, most of it on my back. No claims to fame, but I enjoyed the sport. During our warm-up exercises our coach would bark out, *“On your necks!”*

Then, we would roll over on our backs and bridge up so that the only parts of our bodies touching the mat were our feet and our head.

The point of this awful exercise was to strengthen our necks so that if we were about to be pinned by an opponent, we could raise ourselves and our opponent off the mat with our neck muscles alone. A good wrestler is often able to avoid defeat by the strength of his neck muscles.

In wrestling, a stiff neck is a good thing. It's hard to pin a wrestler with a strong neck. To be a stiff-necked believer is to be someone who never gives in to God - and that is disastrous.

For hundreds of years, God’s people had been bridging up on their necks, refusing to allow Him full rein in their lives, never fully giving in to Him, letting Him have His way, submitting to Him, obeying Him.

So finally, after eight hundred solid years of rebellion, God let His people suffer the natural results of their disobedience! He *“gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.”*

That’s right. The blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant notwithstanding, God moved Israel out of the Promised Land. The northern kingdom (Israel) was defeated by the Assyrians in 722 BC. The southern kingdom (Judah) was defeated and deported to Babylon in 586 BC.

So, finally, God gave up on Israel, right? That is the end of them, as the chosen people of God, right? No!

God **STILL** didn’t forsake Israel. He **STILL** didn’t make an end of them. In fact, the reason He allowed their destruction and deportation was so that they would, in their misery, cry out to Him again. And cry out to Him they did.

They cried out to Him in the days of Zerubbabel when the initial group of refugees came back to rebuild the Temple seventy years after its destruction. And God graciously gave them success.

Then, they cried out to God in the days of Ezra, when he led a group of five thousand Jews back to re-establish right worship. And He granted them success.

At each step, when in repentance and humility, God's people had returned to Him, He blessed, forgave, and restored - just as He had done countless time throughout Israel's history.

Realizing that God still seemed willing to restore, we now know why the Jews have gathered together in Nehemiah, chapter 9. They are returning to Him again, with humility, with brokenness, with promises.

As a small child might bring a wrecked bike to a parent to fix, they hold out their ruined lives to God.

God, Let Us Behold Your Amazing Grace AGAIN! (vv. 32-37)

“Our Gracious and Faithful God, Life is TOUGH!” (v. 32)

[32] “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.

They have been suffering for some time - centuries, actually! All the way back to the time of the Assyrians, they have been fodder for heathen marauders. Life hasn't been easy for God's chosen people!

Now, according to the pattern set in the period of the Judges, the Jews are calling on God for deliverance.

But, in their crying out to Him, we shouldn't miss a painful realism. They realize that they have presumed upon grace. So, far from demanding restoration as if it were their right, they now accept the fact that they are simply reaping what they have sown.

“And We Know We're Getting What We Deserve....” (vv. 33-35)

[33] “However, You are just in all that has come upon us; For You have dealt faithfully, but we have acted wickedly.

[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.

In verse 32 they affirmed God's covenant keeping lovingkindness.

Here, they admit that God is also a God of justice. And they lament, *“We have deserved every bit of hardship that has come upon us. We shot ourselves in the foot. We did it to ourselves.”*

They are echoing the thought of Lamentations 3:39, which says, *“Why should any living mortal, or any man, offer complaint in view of his sins?”*

God has dealt faithfully with them, (i.e. He kept the Abrahamic Covenant), but they have acted wickedly by not keeping covenant (the Mosaic Covenant) with God!

Everybody who might have been looked to for leadership dropped the ball - David, Solomon, the priests, the prophets. Everybody blew it.

And as a result of what they have done, what has happened to them? Listen.

“Lord, We are Slaves in Our Own Land!” (v. 36-37)

[36] “Behold, we are slaves today, And as to the land which You gave to our fathers to eat of its fruit and its bounty, Behold, we are slaves on it.

*[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.”*

God’s people thought that a pursuit of independence from God would bring liberty. They discovered that sin’s parties are BYOC - Bring Your Own Chains.

The Jews had become slaves on the very land God had promised to give them! He had intended that Israel should eat of the bounty of the land, but the bounty was going to their oppressors. Foreign Kings rule over the Jews and their cattle and their land.

The bottom line is that they are in a world of hurt. They recognize that they have violated God’s just laws. They have spit in His gracious face.

And what did they do when they realized all of this? Showing that they understood the kind of God with whom they were dealing, they threw themselves on His mercy and asked Him to ONCE AGAIN show them His grace.

The question now is, *“What will God do this time?”*

Dozens of times, He has taken the Israelites back after their sin. Dozens of times, they have cried out for mercy, and He has said “YES!” Dozens of times God restored them after their punishment had taught them a lesson.

Will He do it, yet again?

Conclusion:

Yes.

That is the kind of God our God is: forgiving, gracious, compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. When His people turn to Him by way of serious and humble confession, He forgives, cleanses and restores. That is His policy.

In both the Old and New Testaments, we have God’s promise of grace for those who confess.

And so, at the end of their long rebellion, Israel has at last realized that they had leaned their ladder against the wrong wall. By this confession (Nehemiah 9!), they have climbed down THAT ladder to begin climbing the ladder of obedience to God.

Are you ready, today, to confess? While perched on the top rung of YOUR ladder, are you ready to climb down and begin to climb the ladder of **obedience to God?** (OBEY HIS MORAL COMMANDS) and to **rush to the wall?** (SERVE JESUS)

Today can be the day that you do exactly that! And as you do, you will find God’s grace, forgiveness and cleansing.

[1 John 1:9] If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Praise God for His amazing grace!