

Community Builders

Nehemiah 9

Our Words to God



Sunday 12 June 2005

Our words to God – Nehemiah 9

Taking God Seriously 9:1-2

Wow! The Feast of Tabernacles had been great. What incredible joy (8.10). Now the tone changes, there is a solemn assembly, a day of fasting. A day very much focused upon God and their relationship to Him.

There is a fast (9:1), the wearing of sackcloth, which was a visible expression of sorrow.

This was a special day for God's people, others were excluded (9:2)

Confessing sin 9:3

God's word was read and with it there was conviction of Israel's sin – their sin. They are moved to confession.

This was no casual matter; these were not just words, but expressions from their hearts.

Sin is as serious today as it was in the days of Nehemiah, it still causes us to fall short of God's purposes for our lives, and it continues to wreck our relationship with God and with one another (Roms 3.23)

John encourages us to confess our sins and with it gives the assurance of forgiveness.

If we say that we have not sinned, we are fooling ourselves, and the truth isn't in our hearts.

But if we confess our sins to God, he can always be trusted to forgive us and take our sins away. (1 John 1:8-9)

Worshipping God 9:3

This was some occasion, not only was their heartfelt confession but also heartfelt praise. God was acknowledged for his goodness and mercy

But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God. (9:31)

True worship springs from the discovering the true nature of God and how he has loved us.

Telling the story 9:7-37

For the people of Nehemiah's day it was the story of God's dealing with them so far, our story takes us a lot further. For them Nehemiah was the closest thing to a Messiah. In Jesus we have the real person who comes to bring true freedom, who comes to make a new community made up of those who become members of God's family, his sons and daughters.

God's Spirit doesn't make us slaves who are afraid of him. Instead, we become his children and call him our Father. (Romans 8:15)

The People look Forward 9:38

For the people of Nehemiah's time and for us today the story continues. As well as looking back and where appropriate confessing our sins; we are to look forward with hope. For God continues to lead us as his people.

Small Group Study – Nehemiah 9

1. There is so much in this chapter of the Bible; allow time to read through these words.
2. The Israelites fasted v1. Is this a practice for us as Christians today? See Mat 4.2, Jesus fasts – clearly a God given call, however Matt 5.15 assumes that followers of Jesus will fast.

Share your own experiences of this, and consider whether it would be good for us as Church.

3. Holiness means to be separate; God calls us to be his holy people, 1 Peter 1.15. How are we to live as God's people today?

Consider Jesus, he was a friend of sinners Matthew 4.10. What can we learn from his example?

4. It was as God's people heard God's word being read to them that they were moved to confession v3. Living in our world today, what place does God's word have for us? Confessing sins may be personal but there are also sins that are part of being together in society, in the UK, etc.

Create time for confession in your small group. This could be personal. It may be that it would be good to share those sins that rise from the society in which we live.

5. Not only did the people confess their sins they worshipped God v3-37. Identify from these verses the things for which we want to worship God and then express your praise and worship to Him.
6. The story of God and his people was retold. How far back do you consider your story goes? Is there a danger that we go back as far as Jesus and then forget all that has gone on before this?

Think of our story as individuals and as a Church too. It is good to reflect upon God's leading of us.

7. Looking forward v38 – if time allows, wait upon God and consider how he wants to continue to lead us.