

Neither Were Mindful – Nehemiah 9:17

I. Introduction:

- A. As the congregational prayer-leader was led by the Spirit of God that autumn day, he confessed many of Israel's sins.
1. Despite Jehovah's blessings on that nation, her citizens had rebelled against the Lord.
 2. And now these people in Nehemiah's day, their children, were suffering the consequences of those sins.
 3. Did this man see those sins of the past creeping into his own generation?
 4. Can we see those sins being repeated today by both heathen and professing "Christians" ?
- B. After recounting blessing after blessing on the people, **verse 17** begins with "but."
1. *"But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, 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..."*
 2. Then after speaking of the blessings of God in the Promised Land, **verse 26** begins with "nevertheless."
 3. *"Nevertheless they 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."*
 4. Later in **verse 28** – *"BUT after they had rest, they did evil again before thee."*
 5. Several more times in this prayer we read the words "but" and "nevertheless."
 6. I have no doubt that the Lord could teach us today a few lessons from Israel's example in all of these.
 7. But there is one statement in **verse 17** that I'd like to sit upon for a few minutes this evening, because the application can be a little more specifically applied.
 8. The man confessed to God that their forefathers refused to be *"mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them."*

II. Let's begin simply – what do those few words mean?

- A. It doesn't take 3 or 4 years in seminary before we can paraphrase this to say, *"they FORGOT the WONDERFUL things – the MIRACLES – God did for them."*
- B. Before we go on, think for a moment about that simple statement.
1. Do you ever think about the origin of the words we so often use in our day-to-day speech?
 2. Sometimes a little research or just a moment's thought can open some interesting doors.
 3. First Tyndale, and then our translators, used the English word "wonders" to translate "pala" (paw-law').
 4. And the basic root to "pala" (paw-law') is "to separate" – "to distinguish."
 5. Strong's Concordance defines the word as *"to be marvellous, to be wonderful, to be surpassing, to be extraordinary, to separate by distinguishing action."*
 6. Doesn't the English word "wonders" suggest something which causes us to wonder; it brings us to awe?
 7. Wonderful things cause thinking people to wonder about them – think about them – it is a part of the word itself.
- C. This statement refers to things which are not natural and normal – in other words, they are **miraculous**.
1. Fourteen verses in the Bible use the phrase *"signs and wonders"* in speaking about **miracles**.
 2. The first verse to use that phrase speaks of what God did in Egypt and so does the second here in **verse 10** – *"And showedest signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants."*
 3. The phrase was so common that it was picked up and used several times in the New Testament.
 4. **John 4:48** – *"Then said Jesus unto (the man who wanted his son to be healed), Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."*
 5. **Acts 14:3** – *"Long time therefore abode (Paul and Barnabas) speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."*
 6. Those three words boil down to wonderful miracles – things which should cause us to wonder – to marvel.

- D. And what about the word **“mindful?”**
1. The forefathers of these people in Nehemiah’s day *“refused to obey, neither were **MINDFUL** of (God’s) wonders that (He) did among them.”*
 2. What would you guess is the origin of the English word **“mindful”**? Isn’t it obvious?
 3. Didn’t it originally mean **“to have one’s mind FULL of something”**?
 4. This man is accusing his ancestors of not filling their minds with thoughts about God’s miracles.
 5. And because they didn’t fill their minds, they forgot about them and the God who gave them to them.
- E. What had the Lord done for Israel?
1. First, according to this prayer, He heard their cries and acknowledged their afflictions. **Grace.**
 2. He divided the Red Sea so they could walk across the sea bed on dry land, but he drowned Pharaoh and his men.
 3. The Lord **saved** them, and illustrated **our salvation** in the process.
 4. The Lord led them with the pillar of fire and cloud, then He gave them His law.
 5. The Lord fed them with miraculous manna & gave them water to drink throughout their desert wanderings.
 - a. *“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.”*
 - b. They didn’t even wear out their shoes.
 6. Then they entered the land to enjoy the fruit from other men’s the labors – in the **Promised Land.**
 7. Despite these and many other miracles, Israel chose to rebel against God’s grace.
 8. They didn’t remember God’s blessings because they permitted those wonderful thoughts to be bumped out of their heads by problems, temptations and the stress of their day-to-day lives.

III. Isn’t this one of the sins of God’s people yet today?

- A. The circumstances have changed, and the temptations are different, but the results are the same.
1. We are not filling our minds with God’s wonders and miraculous blessings.
- B. I quoted **Isaiah 51:1** a couple weeks ago and Bro. Austin reminded me of it last week.
1. *“Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.”*
 2. From there Isaiah and the Lord remind Israel of her humble beginnings and God’s grace upon her.
 3. Where was Israel – and where was she headed – when the Lord saved her?
 - a. She was a nation of slaves in Egypt with absolutely no future in front of her.
 - b. But then the Lord stepped in and delivered them – Saved them.
 4. And in what direction were **you** headed when the Lord called you out of your Egypt?
 5. Where were you pointed when the Lord called you out of darkness into His marvelous light?
 6. What might you be today, if the Spirit of God hadn’t altered the course of your life so many years ago?
 7. And do you remember what a miracle it was? Wasn’t it a Red Sea-like experience?
- C. Do you know anyone who made a profession of faith in much the same way as you, but today they aren’t serving the Lord?
1. I know of a few men who began serving the Lord in the ministry, but they have quit. Why?
 2. Why haven’t you quit?
 3. Hasn’t the Lord’s sustaining grace given you manna for 40 years and water out of the rock?
 4. Isn’t it true that with God’s blessings your feet have not swelled and your spiritual shoes and clothes have not waxed old?
 5. Hasn’t the Lord blessed, comforted and sustained you?
 6. Thanks be unto God that our salvation hasn’t been hinged to our personal faithfulness & dedicated service.
 7. **But** – are you as mindful of God’s wonders in your life, as you ought to be?

- D. Do you believe God still works miracles?
1. Of course you do, because you believe the Bible – intellectually.
 2. But do you really believe that God works miracles today?
 3. Have you seen any miracles lately? Are you expecting any miracles?
 4. When you see or hear of something unusual, are you sufficiently mindful of God to consider it a wonder – a miracle?
- E. Sunday, down in Nampa, I picked up a missionary prayer letter written by Daniel Matsuda, a pastor in Peru.
1. Daniel was one of the men who worked with Rodney Spears, and Bro. Spears was visiting Bro. Matsuda and others when he was trapped in Peru by the Covid-19 virus earlier this year.
 2. The letter begins by talking about the work Matsuda is doing and how the virus is affecting everything.
 3. He says that he and his family contracted the virus, but they are now doing quite well.
 4. This blessing is heard often enough that most people don't consider it miraculous any more.
 5. But this letter goes on to two other things, both of which are wonderful, if we are mindful of such things.
- F. "The biggest news for us is that our 6th child, Arthur Paul, was born nearly 4 weeks early, on September 12 at 12:25 a.m.
1. It was a very difficult and frightening experience.
 2. Because of all the restrictions in our country, my wife had only had one ultrasound throughout the entire pregnancy.
 3. We had another ultrasound scheduled for September 15, at which point our baby would have been 37 weeks along.
 4. Friday night, on September 11 (4 days before the scheduled ultrasound), my wife started having very intense contractions at about 10 p.m.
 5. A few minutes before 11, we called our doctor to come to the house.
 6. Once again, because of all the covid-19 restrictions, we had planned on having a home birth – but we had not planned on it being so soon.
- G. 3 obstetricians arrived to our house at 11:30 p.m., and my wife was already fully dilated.
1. She began pushing and her water broke, but the baby was not coming down.
 2. After examining her, they realized the baby was breech – feet first.
 3. They told us we needed to get her to a hospital right away, but as soon as my wife stood up, my son's foot was already out, so the delivery had to be carried out at home.
 4. The delivery was extremely hard for both my wife and son.
 5. When he was finally born almost an hour later, at 12:25 a.m., he was not breathing or responding in any way. We all thought he was dead.
 6. For several minutes, the doctors were doing CPR and trying to resuscitate him.
 7. He finally responded and began to faintly breathe and whimper.
 8. As quick as we could, 2 of the doctors and I rushed him to the nearest hospital – which happened to be the designated covid-19 hospital for (the city of) Arequipa.
 9. As it turns out, this hospital was the most highly equipped hospital in our city, and they were able to hook him up to machines to help with his breathing.
- H. I had to return home around 4 a.m. without my son, not really knowing what was going to happen.
1. All we could do was pray and beg God for His mercy and grace.
 2. Over the next 3 days, I went to the hospital, taking his mother's milk for him.
 3. Then the doctors discharged him on Monday afternoon, which was absolutely amazing!
 4. Arthur Paul had recovered so well and so quickly, without any complications – after such a traumatic birth and not receiving oxygen, this was nothing short of a miracle!
 5. Praise God, we were finally able to bring our little one home!

6. Needless to say, those were some of the hardest days my wife and I have ever gone through, not knowing what was going to happen to our little Arthur.
 7. God has been so good to us and we are so infinitely grateful to our Lord!"
- I. If you were asked to describe the birth of Arthur Paul, what sort of words would you use?
1. Would *"miraculous"* be among them?
 2. Is the current health of Arthur Paul a result of the miraculous hand of God?
 3. Most people, even many Christians, would say that it is not.
 4. It is just the result of modern medicine.
- J. Actually, that is not the end of the story.
1. Brother Matsuda went on... "Another miracle happened when it was time to pay the hospital bill.
 2. Based on what we had been told, we were expecting a **very** high bill, but in the end, there was nothing to pay!
 3. Normally, (this) hospital would not have received him as a patient, because he was not a covid patient, but because of the emergency, they admitted (and treated) him.
 4. Right now, the government is covering all the bills for covid patients at this hospital, and since he was a patient at this (particular) hospital, everything was covered by the government!"
- K. Bro. Matsuda was expecting a bill for thousands of dollars, but due to the circumstances there was no cost to the family.
1. Is that miraculous or just a collision of fortuitous circumstances?
 2. Isn't there a parallel to God's manna and Israel's long-wearing shoes?
 3. Are we prone to explain away God's blessings as less than miraculous because we can logically explain certain events?
 4. Do we lose other blessings by doing so?
 5. Does our faith suffer because we not *"mindful of (God's) wonders that (He does) among us"*?
 6. Nehemiah's prayer leader said that one of the sins of Israel was not keeping in mind God's miraculous blessings.
 7. Aren't modern Christians just as guilty of that sort of sin?