

Disobedient Nation – Faithful God

Nehemiah 9:16-31

Intro:

Last week we considered 14 reasons given in this passage why the people should have worshipped God.

{See notes from last week}

Yet, as we will see from these following verses, instead of praising him and thanking him they became wicked in their hearts and actions.

But even in this God remained faithful.

As we begin our study we will first look at verse 16 and 17a

Neh 9:16 But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments,

Neh 9:17 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:

Note, the symmetry we have in this portion.

This is no accident. This is the way much of the OT is written.

There is 7 distinct clauses here.

They are:

1. *But they and our fathers dealt proudly,*
2. *and hardened their necks,*
3. *and hearkened not to thy commandments,*
4. *And refused to obey,*
5. *neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them;*
6. *but hardened their necks,*
7. *and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage:*

Consider:

The central one #4

“And refused to obey”

This one is the hinge on which all the others turn.

{1 corresponds to 7; 2 to 6; 3 to 5 and 4 in the middle}

It is often called, Hebrew parallelism.

Consider:

How 1 and 7 complement each other.

1. *But they and our fathers dealt proudly,*
7. *and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage:*

Because of their pride they rebel and turn to a man to lead them rather than God or God's man.

2 and 6 are identical with the exception of the preceding word.

3. *and hearkened not to thy commandments,*
5. *neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them;*

3. Was the ignoring of God's word.

5. The ignoring of God's works.

4. *And refused to obey,*

This one, the foundational one.

They just did not want to obey God.

What a horrible condition to be in. rebels by desire,
Choice and Action.

Contrast:

The hardness of heart of the people with the dealings
of God with them

{five qualities of the character of God}

*“but thou art a God **ready to pardon, gracious
and merciful, slow to anger, and of great
kindness, and forsookest them not.**”*

Compare:

{after the giving of the second set of ten
commandments}

*Exo 34:5 And the LORD descended in the cloud, and
stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of
the LORD.*

*Exo 34:6 And the LORD passed by before him, and
proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful
and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in
goodness and truth,*

In verses 16-17a

We see a refusal to obey.

Now in verse 18 we have:

Overt Idolatry

Neh 9:18 Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations;

Consider:

It is not that they were saying “this is a different God”.
No, they were saying, “this is the God!”.

Compare:

Exodus 32: 1-8

In verses 19-25

We have recounted the wonderful dealings of God
with this Idolatrous people.

1. God did not forsake them but led them in the wilderness.

Neh 9:19 Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go.

2. He Instructed them and Fed them

Neh 9:20 Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst.

3. He sustained them in all things in the Wilderness.

Neh 9:21 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.

Remember:

The wilderness is not a picture of the world but a picture of the place of disobedience of God's people.

4. **He gave them Nations.**

Neh 9:22 Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan.

5. **He multiplied them and fulfilled his covenant promises regarding the Land of Canaan.**

Neh 9:23 Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it.

6. **He gave them dominion over the Canannites.**

Neh 9:24 So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would.

7. He gave them every good thing the Land of Canaan had to offer.

Neh 9:25 And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness.

Now, for a third time in this passage we see the unbelievable wickedness of the people.

Neh 9:26 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.

Once again the Lord is patient and kind towards them.

Neh 9:27 Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to

*thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours,
who saved them out of the hand of their enemies.*

Consider 1;

In verse 27 we have fatherly discipline.

This was a mercy to them.

Compare:

Hebrews 12: 5-11

2nd;

In verse 27 we have:

God's response to their cries for help.

*“and in the time of their trouble, when they cried
unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and
according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest
them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of
their enemies.”*

This is a summary of the Book of Judges.

One example is:

*Jdg 3:9 And when the children of Israel cried unto
the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the*

children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

Also compare:

Judges 2:11-23

Note;

The dependence of Israel on the Lord tended to last not much longer than the various trials they were under.

Neh 9:28a But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee:

App:

Q. Is not this true of us as the people of God?

Do we not often get to comfortable in Zion?

Compare:

*Amo 6:1 **Woe to them that are at ease in Zion,** and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!*

Or as the Septuagint says:

“Woe to them who despise Zion”

So the rest of verse 28 shows the purpose of God in his dealings with his people

“therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies;”

Note;

God became their adversary for their good.

Neh 9:29 And testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law:

But;

Their pride prevented them from hearing God’s word.

yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments,

And;

Subsequently, missed out on the many blessings which flow from obedience.

but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them;)

Compare:

Lev 18:5 Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.

Which;

Led to a 3-fold rejection of God.

and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear.

Thus:

They suffered from a disease which started in:

The Shoulder {which they withdrew} = which speaks of a refusal to work or bear a burden.

The Neck {which they hardened} = which speaks of not being willing to turn.

The Ear {which they closed} = which speaks of a refusal to listen to God's word.

Consider:

The progressive nature of their disobedience.

1. Starts with not working
2. Then not turning
3. Then not listening

Q. Are you anywhere on the list?

Maybe you are just at stage 1?

Be careful, for it will lead to total apostasy.

Note;

The ultimate consequence of Apostasy.

*Neh 9:30 Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: **therefore***

gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands.

Finally;

The faithfulness of God will never be thwarted by the frailty of his people.

Neh 9:31 Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God.

Compare:

2Ti 2:11 It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:

2Ti 2:12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

2Ti 2:13 If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

May the Lord grant that we will never be guilty of the Sin of Romans 2:4

Rom 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

The Lord help us by his grace. Amen.