

Nehemiah 9:1-5 – Prayer is the other part of revival

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Armstrong, Gaebelin, Handfuls, Clarke, Trapp, JFB, Poole, Henry, Geneva, Delitzsch, Barnes, Eclectic, Gill, Expositor Brothers and Sisters in the Lord: **If you want revival, you have to read the Word of God and know what needs to be done.** This has been proven every time there has been Christian revival. That's what the Jews did: They read the Word and they started to obey.

But what about their past sins? How would they deal with them? Their sins couldn't just disappear! They could not deal with them as false religions: **Give money to the poor...beat themselves** on the back...or as it common today...**bury the memory of their sins.** No! **None of these things was acceptable** to a just God. Rather, **they needed to confess their sins...** And after confession, with their relationship restored with God, **they had to then begin to praise him.** This is the other part of revival. This is what you will hear about.

Our headings are:

Preparation for their Prayer

Confession of their Prayer

Adoration of their Prayer

Our goals: **That you will be encouraged to pray acknowledging your sins, asking for help, and adoring your wonderful Savior.**

Preparation for their prayer

1 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were **assembled** with **fasting**, in **sackcloth**, and with **dust on their heads**. 2 Then those of **Israelite lineage** separated themselves from all foreigners;

1. On the same month of revival, the 7th month, after the Feast of Tabernacles was completed, the Israelites assembled to pray.

They knew they needed to pray so they could get help to do the work God called them to do – both the physical work to safeguard the city and the spiritual work like making sacrifices, keeping the 3 great feasts, and waiting for Messiah.

2. In their preparation to pray corporately they did 5 things:

a. They assembled together. There was always need to pray privately, but God had commanded corporate worship.

b. They fasted. Fasting was a **sacrificing of the body so the soul could focus on the praying.** The one fasting was saying: "I want to focus so much on prayer, I don't have time to feed my body." **Fasting showed an intensity in praying.** An example: **Isaiah 58:6 "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke?"**

c. They put on sackcloth. This was **camel's hair or goat's hair clothing** which was neither beautiful nor comfortable. God's people were so intent on prayer, they wanted no distraction. **Wearing sackcloth usually accompanied fasting.**

Joel 1:8 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth For the husband of her youth.

The young woman (whether just married or unmarried) wouldn't care for beauty or comfort if her new husband or fiancé died.

d. They put dust – dirty gray ashes- on their heads. This pictured being conquered or being buried! Other nations use similar pictures in their language to show they felt low or were mourning. In this case, they were putting dust on their heads for their sins. In the American south they would say, "I feel lower than a snake's belly." **Putting ashes on the head was usually done when there was intense fasting and the wearing of sackcloth.**

e. Those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners. "Israelite lineage" meant "those of **the seed of Israel.**" See Genesis 3. They separated themselves from foreign nationals who were not looking forward to the coming of the Savior. Some were living with unbelieving women and they separated themselves from them. (See parallel account of Ezra 10)

So this wasn't about race or excluding others who were different from the Jews in some insignificant thing. This was about those who trusted in the blood sacrifice of Jesus living separately.

Why is this separation from foreigners significant to mention? Well, the **seed of God, Israel, had broken away from their idolatry and the ways of the world and were returning to their 1st love.**

They knew they could not pray while having other gods before God's face.

3. Lessons - 6:

a. Long to pray and long to assemble with God's people to pray. This is where you get strength to do the things God expects of you. This is the way revival comes. Prayer is never separated from the Word.

b. Part of assembling together to pray is to separate from people and things that distract you. If your life is dominated by non-believers, you won't pray as you should. You would choose being with the things you idolize instead of being with the people of God

c. You don't have to put on sackcloth and you don't have to put ashes on your heads, but you must come with humility before the Lord when you pray.

d. Don't dismiss the need for fasting. Jesus said his disciples would fast after he left them.

e. Set aside time to pray in your personal life. Don't treat it as something you do *whenever you have time*.

f. Let people mock you when you pray; they don't know you are doing the right thing. Pray in the restaurant. Pray when you leave your driveway and when you return.

Confession of their prayer

2... and they stood and **confessed their sins** and the **iniquities of their fathers**. 3 And they stood up in their place and **read from the Book of the Law** of the LORD their God for **one-fourth of the day**; and for **another fourth they confessed and worshiped the LORD** their God.

1. The Jews stood up and confessed their sins to the Father through their faith in the coming Savior.

There is no other way to confess sins! Though Jesus hadn't come yet, his work was clearly taught in God's interaction with Adam after the fall, through the Patriarchs, the prophets, the feasts, and the sacrifices.

2. The Jews even confessed the sins of their fathers, not just their own sins.

Could they really confess the sins of their fathers?

They could not earn forgiveness for their dead fathers but they could **acknowledge that their fathers did wrong by loving money and ignoring worship and taking advantage of the poor.**

And by their confession they were acknowledging they were suffering the consequences of the sins of their fathers and wanted the curse removed!

3. They then worshipped God again, reading from his law and confessing their sins for 6 hours, 3 hours each.

Note again how closely the Word and prayer are linked.

4. Lessons - 3:

a. Understand why you confess your sins at the beginning of worship. When sins are removed, it clears the way for a good conscience and pure worship. It clears the way to praise God. It clears the way for you to get the things you need to do the work God has called you to do.

b. We too surely have the curse of our fathers and we need to acknowledge their guilt and pray that God would remove the curse we are under today! The last two generations fell away badly from God after WW2. Licentiousness has dominated the west. Sexual promiscuity, destroying of babies who stood in the way of our indulgent lifestyle, drug abuse, and lust for wealth has dominated our culture.

c. You would never know how to confess your sins (through Christ) and what the sins are, unless you go to the Word of God.

Adoration of their prayer

4 Then Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, **Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah**, Bani, and **Chenani** stood on the stairs of the Levites and **cried out with a loud voice** to the **LORD their God**. 5 And the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah,

and Pethahiah, said: "**Stand up and bless the LORD** your God **Forever and ever!**
"Blessed be **Your glorious name**, which is exalted above all blessing and praise!

1. The Jews wanted others to hear the reading of the Word of God and hear their prayers too so they stood on a platform.

And they spoke loud enough so others could hear it. Their faith was apparent.

2. The Jews adored Yahweh, the covenant God, who was not like the gods of their neighbors.

3. The Jews had some notable men of the Levites join whose names reflected their circumstances.

Shebaniah – **Turn, pray, O Yahweh.** Bunni (Bunniah) – **Yahweh has built.** Sherebiah – **Yahweh has scorched.** Chenani (Chenaniah) – **Yahweh strengthens.**

4. They wanted this to be a continuous principle – to continue to praise God forever and ever.

But note that the phrase “stand up and bless” was not a command to stand. They were already standing. This phrase meant to get ready, like when you would **tie your robe so you could start walking.**

5. The words of adoration:

a. Blessed be God’s glorious name. This was a common way to start prayers. “God’s name” was not just referring to his name, **but his whole person.** (If we say “Canada wants something,” we mean “all the people want something.” Geographic Canada has no desires.)

b. God’s name is exalted above all blessing and praise. “Think of who God is and what he has done. God is self-existing and dependent on no one. He holds all things together and governs them by the power of his providence. Think what God did in the past. Think what he was doing at present. Think of what he will do in the future.” Psalm 136. Psalm 150.

Psalms 145:3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable.

6. Lessons:

a. Public praising of God should be part of your life. Never be ashamed of speaking Christ’s name. Bow your head to pray wherever you are. Hum the hymns when you are in public!

b. Ask for things from your heavenly Father, but also praise him for all his goodness to you.

c. How can you develop proper praise of God so you don’t end up saying the same things over and over again? You have to get to other aspects of God’s greatness and goodness. Keep sermons about God. Write down a description of God’s greatness and goodness. Make a chart of God’s attributes and tape it on your wall. Read the Psalms and use them to praise God.

Conclusion:

Come humbly before God when you pray! Don’t come making demands, but come making requests, starting with the request for forgiveness. And when that sin matter is resolved, come with petitions and praises!

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Acknowledge your sins every day before your heavenly Father through his eternal Son and teach your children to do the same.

2. Learn to praise God. It is easier to pray for things for yourself than to praise God. So learn!

3. You have no right of access to God but through the blood of Christ.

Finally: If you are not a Christian, consider all Christians have: We are able to please God because our sins are washed away by Jesus. You, on the other hand, have a burden that will crush you. But you can be free of that crushing burden of sin if you ask God. He will do it for free because Jesus paid the price.