

Rebuilding with God: Repentance and Renewal

Nehemiah 9:6-38 || Pastor Paul Hahn || 14 November 2021

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: Do you have any favorite Thanksgiving traditions?

Worship: [Psalm 130](#) (Remain a few moments in worship with this passage. What is God's invitation?)

Sermon Summary for [Nehemiah 9:6-38](#) (Read the passage aloud before reading the sermon summary.)

Nehemiah concludes focusing on our ongoing need for repentance – turning away from sin and turning toward God. Our Father knows we are broken, sinful, imperfect. But His love for us overflows; He longs to forgive, sending His Son to forever secure it. And we are called to respond with faith and repentance: as the prodigal son turned from foolishly wasting his father's good gifts, to return home to his father's love. Repentance doesn't demand anything; it just wants to come home to God in humility. Why then, is it so hard for us? We don't seem to get repentance – either believing it earns us something, or that salvation is by grace alone through faith which makes repentance unnecessary. But Kingdom renewal always passes through our repentance ([Hosea 6:1-2,4](#)).

Repentance and Our Difficult Problem of Sin (v16-17) // Our sin is a stain on our humanity that only Christ is able to make clean. Even so, the patterns of sin in our lives remain, which can go as deep as the stains used to. Though we are not enslaved to them, it can feel like we are. Meaning our problem with sin goes beyond forgiveness. True repentance must therefore be aware that our sin is ingrained into the fabric of our desires. *“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us”* ([1 John 1:8-10](#)).

Repentance and Our Difficult Challenge of Change // Faith embraces the grace of God in forgiving our sins and the removal of guilt in Jesus. Repentance embraces the hope of renewal: of sin-patterns being broken and reworked in Christ. This can be really tough, though. Shame is a burdensome weight and our levels of change can feel so small. As Heidelberg Catechism states: *“Even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of [keeping God's law].”* True repentance understands this but refuses to give itself over to despair. It celebrates the small beginnings of obedience in this life – both in ourselves and in others – and it looks to God in hope, despite our complete lack of deserving it.

Repentance and Our Difficult Remedy of Mercy (v17-19, 27-29, 31-33) // The Israelites keep praying about God's mercies despite their failures across the centuries – pledging to keep God's covenant anew in full dependence on His mercy (His undeserved power and love that lift us out of our miserable condition). *“We live alone by mercy!”* says the psalmist. Acknowledging this is perhaps the hardest thing about repentance. God's mercies change who we are; they rename and reorient us. By continued mercies, we give up the vain and empty ways of life we inherited from our fathers to put on a new life in Jesus.

Sermon Series Conclusion // Nehemiah is all about renewal. Jesus came to make things new ([Rev 21:5](#)) – to give sight to the blind, to make the lame walk and the deaf hear, to lift up the lowly and release the captive, to forgive the sinner and welcome the outcast, to comfort the mourning and to raise the dead. This is what He wants us to be about as His people, becoming agents of His renewal movement through the Gospel. And our ongoing repentance – by grace alone through the mercies of God – is central to this.

Discussion Questions (You will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like. Some are personal perspective and application questions for life-transforming discussions.)

Repentance and the Problem of Sin

- Other than [Psalm 119](#), Nehemiah 9:5-38 contains the longest prayer in all of Scripture.
 - Identify the “You are” statements in [Neh 9:6-8](#) of the prayer. What do we learn about God?
 - Why is praising God so important to prayer and repentance?
- As the people continue to pray in [Neh 9:9-21](#), why do they remind God (and themselves) of His great delivery of their ancestors in the desert?
 - Name some of the things God did for their ancestors. Which one stands out to you and why?
- In what ways can you relate to being like Israel in their sin and disobedience (v26-31)?
 - Despite your brokenness, how have you seen God’s faithfulness show up like this?
 - What do we do with the problem of sin in our lives – try harder, or something else?

Repentance and the Challenge of Change

- Why is confession and repentance necessary to a life in Christ? (See: [1 John 1:8-10](#))
 - What theories of change does the world offer that lead us away from Christ and His mercy?
 - How is guilt and self-loathing counterintuitive to receiving God’s mercy?
- How does God use the community of the church to help change and conform us into the image of Christ?
 - Tell us about a relationship that helps you see your sin and helps you change and grow.

Repentance and the Remedy of Mercy

- How does a deep knowledge of God as our Creator, Redeemer, Forgiver who is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in loving-kindness” impact our repentance before Him?
 - How can we be more intentional about taking our grace-filled, merciful Father for granted?
- What are your thoughts on God’s call to a lifestyle of repentance?
 - How does repentance help us appreciate and understand the work of Christ on our behalf?
 - What is God inviting you to today? Carve out some time for repentance this week.

Prayer

Spend time in prayer together walking through the [10 Commandments](#) together as repentant saints who are also sinners. For this week’s prayer guide click [HERE](#).

Engage & Experience: Generous Service

Pray for Stephen and Charity Jones

Stephen and Charity are our global outreach partners in London. Stephen and Charity are licensed therapists who work to equip counselors on a global scale and have huge hearts for reaching the South Asian population in London. As mental health professionals, the pandemic has placed significant demands on their time, energy and resources. Their counseling centers have been overrun by the demand for mental health services.

In September of 2021, through the generosity of the Easter Give, PCC was able to sponsor a highly specialized training for the counselors connected with Serge. Here’s what Stephen said following the training: *“It was such a blessing. We are reminded again and again that God is bringing His kingdom through us as a global church. He used this training to not only train us to be better, but also to bind us more and more together as a group. Thank you for making such a helpful session possible.”*

If you would like more information about Stephen and Charity Jones, or would like to brainstorm what a partnership with them could look like, please email Alex McKee (alexmckee@pacificcrossroads.org).