

A Leader's Far-reaching Vision begins with humility

Nehemiah 1:5-8



Fasting is a pretty hot topic in contemporary culture these days and for good reasons. It is said that it can benefit weight loss, improve metabolic function, repair cells, reduce inflammation and insulin resistance, and improve anti-aging effects. Wow, who knew?! Yet, if there are all these benefits then this is a startling statistic which relates to Nehemiah's fasting and prayer: *between 1861 and 1954, no book about fasting was written in the English language!* Why has fasting and prayer been so hard to make part of our religious life and practice? Perhaps it's because we have in American conscience and culture what Nehemiah didn't have: pride and arrogance. God did something great in Israel because its leader in charge was humble. It ought to drive us to our knees for ourselves and for our Leader in Charge! Here's the full record of Nehemiah's humble prayer to God.

"let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples...'" Neh. 1:5-8

Nehemiah's prayer as we said last week, began with exalting praise to the LORD, restoring to him a fresh vision and acknowledgement of God's greatness to be and do as He pleases. As a legislator said so well recently, "Seeing God in His place puts humanity in its place." And in this case, it brought about deep humility and confession by Nehemiah, not only of his own sin, but that of his people and his own family.

Have you heard the call for owning the sins of the past? In issues such as racism, cultural appropriation, sins against the Jews by the church over the last two thousand years, abortion and more, the question arises, "how much do I have to take responsibility for, after all, I wasn't there?" These are days in which we hear of many people who are looking to be victim's rather than agents in personal fault and failures. We struggle to understand emerging generations who can't seem to persevere in difficulty and are constantly looking for someone else to blame or for a scapegoat. People like to blame their past, their ancestry, or history for what ails them, rather than looking inside for the possible source, and being an active participant in solving or healing

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Wednesday Devotions Speaker
Schedule for February:

12 – Dr. Daryl Crouch, Founder
of Everyone's Wilson
HHR 4

19 – Evangelist Bobby Stewart,
Founder of faith for America
HHR 4

26 – Dave Ramsey, Founder of
Ramsey Solutions and author of
Financial Peace University
HHR 1

Next Bible Study will be
February 25, 2025
Topic: A Higher Power



their own problems. Maybe that's why it's so hard to separate the personal fault from the collective fault for so many ills and problems facing America. On either side of the cultural viewpoint, one side isn't all right or all wrong. These issues are real, complex, and painful at times, but we must face them together if we want to work through them and move beyond them!

Nehemiah cut across all of that in the *way* he prayed and *what* he prayed. **"I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you."** He wasn't even alive when much of the sin he confessed was committed! Here's the point: If you don't *join* the collective, you can't ask for deliverance *for* the collective, because either directly or indirectly, there are always trickle down benefits and losses from previous generations choices and sins! *"But he is confessing it as a participant in it, because he has benefitted from and possibly walked in the sins of his forefathers. He is not blaming anyone else. He goes ahead and confesses all of that sin himself."* (Mason, p22) He identified with it because he was a Jew and it was a Jewish problem. We confess what we are a part of as a group.

Nehemiah didn't confess simply as a collective voice, he owned his part in it, **"Even I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses."** Think of this: Nehemiah gained benefit from the exile when he was elevated to the King's butler or cupbearer! It's the same word used for Joseph in the service of Potiphar. It represents a role of significant trust and closeness, a truly beneficial place in the Kings cabinet. Never forget that there are temporal benefits of sin that drive us to engage in them. Collective greed and lust in America has brought you and me benefit, and none of us is immune to allowing a lot of things to get by because to change it is just too costly or inconvenient. What things are you letting slide because you find benefit from it, personally, politically, or collectively? What should you do about it?

As Pastor Mason says, "This has an obvious application in the US for our current culture of racial unrest. We must understand the impact of multigenerational sin and the systemic nature of its impact. With any multigenerational sin, there can be a legacy that reaches and affects future generations. From sexual sin to family idolatry, we must be willing to own our connection to any sin that is overtly present in our generation, and the ways we may have benefitted from its consequence." (p22)

When we are truly repentant for sin personally and collectively, then we have the humility and empathy to work towards solutions to correct them. But more than all of that, we must remember that restoration and favor was not for the glory of Nehemiah or even Israel as a whole, but for the glory of God and that through them, God was glorified! This is possible because of Jesus sacrifice of Himself for us! **"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit! (1 Peter 3:18)** God always acts according to his character, promising a future and a hope to those who trust in Him, and by them He is glorified!