

Community of Confession

Key Verse: “The seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.”
—***Nehemiah 9:2***

Selected Scriptures:
Nehemiah
9:2,6,7,9,10,30-36

AFTER CELEBRATING THE

Feast of Tabernacles, the children of Israel assembled together in humble repentance to acknowledge the sins they had committed. (Neh. 9:1) Our Key Verse indicates that the people confessed not only their own sins but also the transgressions of their ancestors who had been disobedient to God’s instructions.

The leaders and Levites then led the Israelites in worship, prayer and praise, extolling the majesty and goodness of God, who chose Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants. (vss. 4-8) It was evident that a genuine spirit of revival was experienced by the people. They recounted how God had heard the afflictions of their ancestors while in Egyptian bondage and delivered them to safety through the Red Sea. They recalled how God had guided them throughout their wilderness journey and established a covenant with them through Moses.—vss. 9-15

The Israelites also acknowledged both the obstinacy of their forebears as well as God’s mercy to them. “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: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.”—vss. 16,17

The cyclical nature of Israel’s relationship with God in terms of their frequent rebellions, as contrasted with repeated manifestations of divine mercy, is recorded in a lengthy prayer by the people, recorded in verses 18-37. In this prayer the people acknowledged the fact, as well as the consequences, of their waywardness.

Perhaps the most significant part of this prayer is found at the very end. “Because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.” (vs. 38) The Israelites were determined to do something regarding all their transgressions against God by resolving to be obedient to him from thenceforth.

Footstep followers of Christ, those who have received the Holy Spirit, realize it is possible to be overtaken by sin with the potential for the direst of consequences. When we commit acts of disobedience, they need to be acknowledged and repented of if we are to be restored to God’s merciful favor. The use of prayer, as well as filling our minds with holy thoughts, can be effective tools towards preventing or reducing the incidence of sin in our lives. The Apostle Paul had to overcome much in his previous behavior when, as Saul of Tarsus, he persecuted believers prior to becoming a member of the body of Christ. His admonition to brethren in the Early Church is as applicable today for us as when it was penned long ago. “Finally, brethren, . . . whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”—Phil. 4:8 ■