

SUMMER PRAISE

Summer of Praise // Sermon 7

Worship Through Confession and Praise // Nehemiah 9:1-38

If you have your Bible, turn with me to the book of **Nehemiah**.

- We will be in **Nehemiah 9** today.

Throughout the summer, we've said it often: **Worship is more than a moment.**

- It's more than music and a message.
- It's more than stirring emotions or Sunday habits.

True worship isn't confined to a sanctuary. It's an entire life given over to God.

But what if real worship isn't always loud and joyful?

What if it includes weeping, repenting, and humbly confessing our sins to God and each other?

That's what happens in Nehemiah 9.

This is one of the most powerful worship gatherings in the entire Bible.

- The people of Israel had just heard God's Word read to them.
- And when they gathered, it wasn't for show.
- It wasn't to feel good or check a box.

It was honest worship – full of confession, humility, and praise.

Big Idea: *Worship thrives in the presence of praise and confession.*

True worship is when we lift our eyes to God in praise...while simultaneously bowing our hearts in humility.

- *Praise and confession* are not enemies – they're friends.

When they work together, they create the kind of worship that *transforms our hearts* and moves the heart of God.

There are four (4) things I want you to see in this text:

1. **Worship begins with brokenness.**

Nehemiah 9:1 shows us the posture of their hearts.¹

[1] Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with *fasting* and in *sackcloth*, and with *earth on their heads*.

Each detail matters:

- **Fasting:** This is a sign of their humility and dependence on God. It's a hunger not only for food, but for holiness.
- **Sackcloth:** This is a sign of mourning. They were grieving their sin.
- **Earth on their heads:** This is a sign of deep repentance, acknowledging the full weight of their sin.

The people of Israel weren't putting on a show.

- They were broken, honest, and humbled by the Word.

When the Word of God is read and received, two things become clearer: *The seriousness of our sin and the faithfulness of God.*

- This is where worship begins.

Look at verse 3:

[3] And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the LORD their God.

These dudes had a six (6) hour worship service.

- They spent 3 hours reading the Word.
- And they spent 3 hours confessing sin and worshipping God.

There was no agenda, no entertainment.

- Just the people of God broken before the Lord!

Can you imagine what this must've looked like? *This isn't dry religion - it's a picture of revival.*

- And it all begins with brokenness.

¹ <https://idcraleigh.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Nehemiah-9.1-38.pdf>

Worship begins with brokenness.

2. **Worship elevates the greatness of God.**

This is the longest prayer in the Bible.²

- It serves as a model for how worship and confession flow together.

It's not a prayer filled with requests.

- It's a prayer filled with remorse, humility, and hope all at the same time.

After hours of confessing their sins, they don't remain stuck in their sin – they lift their eyes to God.

This is the rhythm of true worship: *God breaks you, but you don't remain broken.*

- You fall to your knees in confession and rise to your feet in praise.

They praise God by remembering – they remember who God is and they remember what God has done.³

A. God as Creator:

[6] **"You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.**

God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things.

B. God as Covenant-Maker:

[7] **You are the LORD, the God who chose Abram** and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. [8] You found his heart faithful before you, and **made with him the covenant** to give to his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite. And you have kept your promise, for you **are righteous.**

God is not just powerful; He's personal. He initiates a relationship with His people, *and* He doesn't give up on them.

² 1,177 words in this prayer: <https://youtu.be/4HUVi5yM5qo>

³ Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, electronic ed., vol. 10, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 236.

C. God as Deliverer:

[9] “And **you saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt and heard their cry** at the Red Sea, [10] and performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants and all the people of his land, for you knew that they acted arrogantly against our fathers. And you made a name for yourself, as it is to this day. [11] And **you divided the sea before them**, so that they went through the midst of the sea on dry land, and you cast their pursuers into the depths, as a stone into mighty waters.

They remember the Exodus – God rescues His people and provides their every need.

D. God as Provider and Sustainer:

He led them by a cloud of fire (12).

He gave them bread from heaven (15).

He gave them water from the rock (15).

He didn't forsake them, even in the wilderness.

They are remembering that God has always been faithful, even when they were not.

- **And even in our wilderness, God is still good!**

This is the rhythm of worship.

- God breaks you – but you don't stay there.
- You confess your sin and turn back to Him.
- You fall on your face, and then you lift your eyes to heaven.

If we do not make it a common practice to remember the greatness of God, we will drift into cold, lifeless worship.

Let me ask you:

When is the last time you paused to remember how good God has been to you?

- When He brought you through a dark season of life, or gave mercy to you when you didn't deserve it?

When is the last time you were overwhelmed with God's faithfulness through answered prayer?

- He heard your cry and answered.

Worship thrives in the presence of praise and confession.

- And praise flows when we remember the greatness of God.

Worship elevates the greatness of God.

3. Worship acknowledges our continual need for God's mercy.

As we see God for who He is (good and great), we will inevitably see more clearly who we really are (sinful).

- But here is what real worship doesn't do: It does not pretend like the struggle with sin is over.

Real worship acknowledges that we are always a people in desperate need of the mercy of God.

If you trace the flow of Nehemiah 9, there's a clear pattern that repeats itself:

- God provides.
- The people rebel.
- God disciplines.
- The people cry for help.
- God gives mercy.

It's a cycle of rebellion and restoration – not just in Israel's story, but in ours too.

Look at verse 16:

[16] "But they and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments. [17] They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them..."

Even after experiencing God's supernatural work, they turned away.

- They stiffened their necks.
- They forgot His wonderful works.
- They even tried to return to slavery in Egypt.

But look at how verse 17 ends:

[17] ...**But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them.**

This is one of the most beautiful declarations in all of Scripture.

- God was ready to forgive.

- He was gracious, merciful, patient, and loving...

He never gave up on them.

- Even when they worshipped a golden calf – God didn't give up on them.
- When they blasphemed His name – He didn't give up on them.

The Bible says:

[18] Even when they had made for themselves a golden calf and said, 'This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,' and had committed great blasphemies, [19] **you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness.**

That phrase – “in your great mercies” – shows up again and again in this chapter.

- [27] Therefore you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. And in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, **and according to your great mercies you gave them saviors who saved them from the hand of their enemies.**
- [28] But after they had rest they did evil again before you, and you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them. **Yet when they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven, and many times you delivered them according to your mercies.**
- [31] **Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.**

This prayer is not just about receiving mercy in the past.

- It's about receiving mercy in the present.

Look at verse 32:

[32] “Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love, **let not all the hardship seem little to you that has come upon us**, upon our kings, our princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers, and all your people, since the time of the kings of Assyria until this day.

This is their way of saying: “Lord, You were merciful *then*, and we need your mercy *now*.”

This is what real worship looks like.

- Offering all of who we are – our past, our present, our weaknesses, and our wondering hearts – into the presence of God saying: **There is no hope apart from Your mercy!**

Worship is not about having it all together.

- It's not putting on a mask and playing the part.

It's about laying yourself bare before a holy and merciful God.

Let me ask you today:

Are you living in daily dependence on the mercy of God?

- Are you still aware (today) of how much you need His grace?

Do you realize that your greatest act of worship is not perfection – it's dependence?

Worship thrives not when we act like we are strong, but when we admit how weak we are – and how good God is.

Worship acknowledges our continual need for God's mercy.

4. Worship responds with surrender and leads to renewal.

The beauty of this chapter is not just that the people were *convicted* – but the people were *changed*.

- They had been brought low.
- They lifted their eyes to the mercy of God.

And now they respond by surrendering fully to Him.

Look at verse 33:

[33] Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly.

This is a surrendered heart: “**God, you're right...we're wrong...you're faithful...we're not.**”

Their confession continues:

[34] Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept your law or paid attention to your commandments and your warnings that you gave them. [35] **Even in their own kingdom**, and amid your great

goodness that you gave them, and in the large and rich land that you set before them, **they did not serve you or turn from their wicked works.**

Hear their confession: **We had everything – but we did not surrender our hearts to you.**

And this brings us to a powerful moment (honesty):

[36] Behold, we are slaves this day; in the land that you gave to our fathers to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts, behold, we are slaves.

The wall was rebuilt – but their freedom was incomplete.

- They were back home, but they're still under Persian rule.

They needed more than a new city – they needed new hearts.

So, what do they do?

[38] “Because of all this we make a firm covenant in writing; on the sealed document are the names of our princes, our Levites, and our priests.

They put their commitment to God in writing.⁴

- This was more than emotion; it's action.
- It's more than a moment; it's a movement.

Because worship always demands a response.

- It might begin with brokenness, but it ends with full surrender. It ends with obedience.

Listen: If you walk out of this room today and you are not fully surrendered and ready to obey whatever God has told you to do – then you didn't worship.

Because the goal of worship isn't just *confession*; it's *commitment*. It's surrender.

⁴ James M. Hamilton Jr. et al., *Exalting Jesus in Ezra-Nehemiah* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014), 183.

BULLPEN:

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/nehemiah-9/>

Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, electronic ed., vol. 10, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 236.

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