

January 6, 2008

Series: Transforming Our World for God

Message: #11 "Steps to Getting it Right with God"

Scripture: Nehemiah 9

Introduction

- Here we are already into a brand new year (2008).
- New beginnings/hopes/aspirations/dreams.
- Confessions is the key word on Nehemiah 9 as well as for our New Year.
- The Israelites had turned away from God for a long time. (There was a famine of the Word of God) (They had been unfaithful)
- God began to speak again (Nehemiah 8)
- Nehemiah 9 (An Assembly had been called)
- Mourning the death of themselves had begun. Cleansing was taking place.
- Two things were happening:
 1. Their exposure to God's Word revealed God and the seriousness about sin.
 2. Their exposure to God's Word unmasked themselves in Chapter 9.
 - What they read was a story of man's sin abounding and God's grace super-abounding.
 - They recognized an endless cycle described in verses 26-31. (Goodness, sin, judgment, confession)
 - History can be distilled into one statement: "History is the story of God's tenacious loyalty and man's persistent sin." -Rev. John Johnson
- So, they came in sackcloth.

I. Their story is also our story.

A. We experience this same cycle.

1. God remains present to us, but we are no longer present to Him.
2. No time in the Word
3. Prayer diminishes
4. Worship becomes sporadic
5. Hardness creeps in
6. Obsession with self moves in, so does temptation.
7. We end up like the Israelites in verse 37.

B. What's true individually can become true corporately.

- Churches tend to live out the same narrative.
 1. We seek hard after God
 2. We meet to pray over what God is doing.
 3. We move toward Christlikeness.
 4. We gather to share the gifts of the Spirit.
 5. We try to influence our culture.
 6. God blesses and we grow.
 7. Then we start to relax/turn inward, we have our friends so we don't need

others.

8. We have our building, budget, programs and rely on them more than on God.
9. We look more like our culture than God.
10. One day we wake up and discover we're one of the 85% that have plateaued, and no longer matter.

II. How do we get out of this?

1. It starts with confession.
 - That comes out of our exposure to God's Word.
 - Seeing sin as God sees sin.
 - We own up to our sin. (I John 1:9)
2. And confession moves to repentance.
 - Confession without repentance does not change much.
 - True repentance has everything to do with decisive action. (Here is what has to change if I am to live a life reflecting the stature of Christ.) (V.38)
 - Repentance is what moves us into the future and out of our past. (into real change)

Conclusion

- So, what are the stains that need God's removal?
- What must you confess?
- What must we as a church confess?
- Are we willing to move to repentance?