



### Time to Reflect

- How far do we really trust God? In what ways can we deepen our trust in Him?
- In what ways can we take God for granted and how should we respond to His incredible goodness?

Last week our attention was drawn to God – His love, His care and His devotion. We were reminded of His greatness and we were challenged to be a worshipping and prayerful people. This week, our focus on the ways of God continues as we look at His goodness. As we reflect on the richness and depth of the famous prayer that we find in Nehemiah 9, we learn much about the goodness of God.

**“This prayer rehearses the history of Israel, revealing God’s goodness to His people and their repeated failure to appreciate His gifts and obey His will.”**

(Warren Wiersbe, *Be Determined: Nehemiah*, p123)

### Specifics

- This passage certainly focuses on the goodness of God. It is notable how often we are reminded that God is the great provider and giver. The word ‘give’ is used one way or another at least sixteen times in Nehemiah 9.
- There are also numerous character traits of God outlined in our passage. All of them are reminders of His goodness.
- We are reminded in (v8) that He is the God who searches. This is revealed in reference to how God found Abraham’s heart to be faithful. In response, God made a covenant with Abraham. God does indeed search our hearts and Jeremiah makes this very clear.
- **“I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve.” (Jeremiah 17:10)**
- There is a challenge here for us to engage in robust self-reflection. Are our hearts faithful and acceptable to God?
- (v8) also teaches that God is righteous as He kept His promise to Abraham. We can and should trust God. King David was very aware of this as he wrote: **“The Lord is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does.” (Psalm 145:17)**
- The great D L Moody once said **“Trust in yourself, and you are doomed to disappointment; trust in your friends, and they will die and leave you; trust in money, and you may have it taken from you; trust in reputation, and some slanderous tongue may blast it; but trust in God, and you are never to be confounded in time or eternity.”**
- As our passage continues, we are shown how God watches, listens, moves and knows (v9-10). God is not distant and aloof. He is deeply interested in each of us and He watches and hears.
- The example of the Israelites also demonstrates that He moves in time and events. God is not bound by time or location. He is always active and involved. There may not always be an obvious pattern for us to discern but we can be assured that there is always a purposeful plan.

- J.I. Packer brilliantly reflects that history is His-Story. Romans 8:28 wonderfully teaches that events which seem to us like accidents are really appointments.
- Nehemiah 9:7-30 is a continual reminder of the greatness and goodness of God, as revealed through the experience of the Israelites. It is incredible to recognise and appreciate just how interested God is in us.
- Stan Evers, as he reflects on this passage, contends, **“The God whose heart was touched at the pain of the oppressed Hebrews in Egypt and who watched over them in the wasteland watches over us.”<sup>1</sup>**
- How does it make us feel to realise that God watches over us and listens to us? Beyond this, God also speaks into our lives and circumstances (v13-15).
- He offers guidance and direction (v13) and He provides for our daily needs (v15). These are lessons that the Israelites had to be reminded of over and over again. Throughout this passage the goodness of God is emphasised and the shortcomings of the Israelites are continually highlighted.
- (v16-18) reveal how the Israelites responded to God. Wiersbe writes, **“They refused to bow to His authority (‘hardened their necks’), listen to His Word (‘hearkened not’), or obey His will...How could these people turn their backs on God after all He has done for them? They did not truly love Him. Their obedience was only an outward form; it didn’t come from their hearts.”<sup>2</sup>**
- This attitude challenges us to think about how we respond to the goodness of God and the depth of our love towards Him.
- Regardless of how many times the Israelites let God down, He never abandoned them. There were occasions when instruction (v20) and even justice (v27) were required – and it is important to realise that God is just!
- Yet the passage makes it very clear that God had compassion on His people (v19). He is slow to anger and abounding in patience (v30).
- Wiersbe brilliantly reminds us, **“During the forty years of Israel’s discipline in the wilderness, the old generation died and a new generation was born, but God never forsook His people...God keeps His promises and fulfills His purposes.”<sup>3</sup>**
- (v17) is a wonderful revelation of some of the attributes of God: **“But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.”** This is the goodness of God.
- Nehemiah 9:7-30 is part of a wonderful prayer that focuses on God. There are over fifteen different character traits of God highlighted in this passage and they encourage us to draw close to God and experience the wonder of His presence.
- This passage challenges us to be faithful to God and to trust Him. In reference to these verses, Cyril Barber suggests, **“Obedience continues to be the passport to blessing.”<sup>4</sup>**
- In the light of this, we conclude by reflecting on our own faith. May the words of the modern worship song *The Goodness of God* become our prayer.

**I love You, Lord**  
**For Your mercy never fails me**  
**All my days, I've been held in Your hands**  
**From the moment that I wake up**  
**Until I lay my head**  
**Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God <sup>5</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Stan Evers, *Doing A Great Work: Ezra And Nehemiah Simply Explained* (EP Books, 2015), p189.

<sup>2</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Be Determined: Nehemiah* (David. C. Cook, 1992), p125.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p125.

<sup>4</sup> Cyril. J. Barber, *Nehemiah and the Dynamics of Effective Leadership* (Christian Focus Publications, 1976), p133.

<sup>5</sup> Jenn Johnston, *The Goodness of God* (released in January 2019). ©2018 Bethel Music Publishing.