

Man's Response to God's Grace & Mercy

Lessons from Nehemiah

Lesson 2 of 5

“They refused to obey...”

Nehemiah 9:16-17a

By Russell Earl

Thesis: I want to show despite God's love and rest that He gives man, man sometimes returns to evil and often shrug their shoulders at God.

- Intro:
1. Has God done enough for us that we should be loyal to Him?
 2. Has He provided for those who are loyal to Him (we don't mean great riches but that He has met our needs to live in this life)?
 3. Today we want to see how these people reacted to God's mercy and care.

I. They refused to obey

A. But they and our fathers acted proudly (**Neh 9:16a**)

“But they and our fathers acted proudly...”

1. Their attitude and lifestyle was learned by those who went before them.
2. Many teach their children that submitting to God is a position for the weak. Some even teach their children that public repentance and petitions for prayers/aide is something that will bring shame on themselves and on others.

(Illustration: Given by BJ Clarke concerning a friend of his when he was younger. *“Don't ever go forward, you will embarrass this family.”*)

B. Hardened, refused, not mindful & returned to bondage (**Neh 9:16b-17a**).

Hardened their necks, And did not heed Your commandments. They refused to obey, And they were not mindful of Your wonders That You did among them. But they hardened their necks, And in their rebellion They appointed a leader To return to their bondage.”

1. Hardened their necks – sign of pride and arrogance. A refusal to bow their heads in submission to God.
2. Refused to obey – They refused to obey the; just ordinances, true laws, good statues, commandments, & precepts (**Neh 9:13-14**) that were given to them by God.
3. Not mindful of Your wonders – they forgot what God had already done for them.
4. They returned to their bondage – bondage of sin (**Gal 4:3-9**).

II. They were disobedient

A. Nevertheless.....

Nevertheless they were disobedient And rebelled against You, Cast Your law behind their backs (Neh 9:26a)

1. Despite what God has done for them they rebelled against Him. Parents can compare this behavior to a child who rebelled after being cared for.
2. They had no regard for God's law. They cast it behind their backs. We sometimes toss junk mail off to the side; these people were casting God's Law behind them as if it was something can be easily discarded-like junk mail.

B. Worked great provocations

And killed Your prophets, who testified against them To turn them to Yourself; And they worked great provocations. (Neh 9:26b)

1. Their rebellion was to the extreme—they killed anyone who tried to return them to God (**2 Chron 36:16**)
2. They did great evil (great provocations) instead of following the God who had cared and provided for them.

III. They again did evil & they acted proudly

A. They had rest and did evil (**Neh 9:28**)

“But after they had rest, They again did evil before You. Therefore You left them in the hand of their enemies, So that they had dominion over them; Yet when they returned and cried out to You, You heard from heaven; And many times You delivered them according to Your mercies,”

1. Even after they had rest thanks to God’s deliverance they again did evil. Their lack of faithfulness shows their lack of gratitude (Num 11:5-6,13,31-33).
2. Much like what we see today. They were given rest and they became comfortable, too comfortable. It’s possible their comfort and contentment was mistaken for the right to commit sin. Comfort and contentment doesn’t mean the Lord is no longer paying attention.

B. They acted proudly (**Neh 9:29**)

“And testified against them, That You might bring them back to Your law. Yet they acted proudly, And did not heed Your commandments, But sinned against Your judgments, ‘Which if a man does, he shall live by them.’ And they shrugged their shoulders, Stiffened their necks, And would not hear.”

1. They were filled with pride, this could be a result of their comfort/contentment that came as a result of the rest God had been giving them. Since they were proud and not heeding (obeying) God’s commands they sinned against them (God’s judgments).
2. Despite God’s warning they refused to turn back to him. Instead “***they shrugged their shoulders, Stiffened their necks, And would not hear.***” (v.29).
3. What does the motion of ***shrugging shoulders*** indicate? Usually one or two things 1) We do not know the answer to something or 2) it is used to show we do not care about something or do not have an opinion.
4. So how do these people feel about God’s law? They do not care about it and they are going to ignore it and keep doing what they are currently doing. Is that the response God deserves?

Conc:

1. As we look at these people today, do you sometimes have the same attitude as them? Do you behave or talk in such a way that would show that you simply do not care what God has done or is doing for you?
2. Are you going to be as these people and act as if God will be pleased with this type of dedication to Him?

3. Do you know what a “Panic button God” is? It’s a God that people think they can go to when things are going well. That’s what they were doing here. They were; living in sin, God punished them, they panicked and cried out to Him, He had mercy on them, and they again did evil after they were given rest by Him. Do you behave in the same way?
4. Full Invitation