

...but God

Series with Skip Heitzig

SERIES:	...but God
MESSAGE:	We've Failed...<i>but God</i>
SPEAKER:	Skip Heitzig
SCRIPTURE:	Nehemiah 9

MESSAGE SUMMARY

Most all of us know that we are not what we should be or could be. Sin has scarred our lives. We are aware of personal failures. The really good news is that we may fail *but God* forgives. The whole reason for the atoning death of Christ was to provide clemency for transgressions and mercy for our offenses. Nehemiah knew the history of his people, and after gathering them back in the land after the captivity, he prays on their behalf. We learn four vital lessons in this prayer about the human condition and the divine solution.

DETAILED NOTES

- I. Introduction
 - A. Mourning is a sign of maturity
 1. Acknowledging failure demonstrates spiritual progress
 2. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn" (Matthew 5:4); blessed means happy
 3. Confession brings comfort (see Proverbs 28:13)
 - B. Nehemiah 9 is a worship service
 1. Very long, filled with confession: a record of fasting, repentance, and prayer followed by a covenant
 2. Several hours reading the Word, several hours confessing (see v. 2)
 3. Longest recorded prayer in the Bible
 4. Illustrates that "godly sorrow produces repentance" (2 Corinthians 7:10)
 - C. Failure doesn't need to be the end of your story
 1. You can have a bright future in spite of a dark failure
 2. God meets our failures with His forgiveness and faithfulness
- II. Failure Is Our Problem (vv. 16, 17a, 18, 26, 28, 33)
 - A. Ezra prayed historically from creation to captivity, recounting the Israelites' history of rebellion against God
 - B. Israelites' problem was sin and failure
 - C. Humanity's problem is sin and failure (see Romans 3:23)
 1. *Hamartia* is the Greek word for sin: to miss the mark
 2. Bible records history of sin, a journal of human failure (see Romans 5:12)
 3. *Sin* is mentioned 629 times in Scripture; sin is our nature (see Ephesians 2:3)
 4. Without accepting this basic truth, the world makes no sense (see Jeremiah 17:9)
- III. Forgiveness Is Our Provision (v. 17)
 - A. "But you are God" is the *but God* moment

- B. Our failure meets His forgiveness; our penchant for sin meets His pardon for sin
 - C. God is so much bigger than our failure
 - 1. He expected and anticipated our failure (see Deuteronomy 28-29; I Kings 8:27-52)
 - 2. Your sin and failure never surprise God
 - D. Jesus' first words on the cross were "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34)
 - 1. Forgiveness is our greatest need
 - 2. Even the secular world acknowledges the benefits of confession
 - E. To confess does not mean to admit; it means to say the same thing about my sin and failure as God says about it
 - 1. To confess means to agree with God and implies turning away from sin
 - 2. God is ready to pardon—are you ready to confess? (see I John 1:9)
 - F. Grace and mercy: two related but different attributes of God
 - 1. Grace is getting what you don't deserve; mercy is not getting what you deserve
 - 2. In grace, God adds the blessing you don't deserve; in mercy, God withholds the judgment you deserve
 - 3. The cross satisfies God's justice to enable the outpouring of His grace and mercy
- IV. Faithfulness Is Our Promise (vv. 18-21, 30-31)
- A. God's love is so different than any other love
 - B. God's love is unstoppable, unrelenting, unconditional (see I John 3:1)
 - 1. We keep running, God keeps chasing
 - 2. Hosea's ministry to his unfaithful wife demonstrated this kind of love
 - a. Hosea is like God; Gomer is like Israel
 - b. We are like Israel, continually going astray (see Isaiah 53:6)
 - C. You might worry you've exhausted God's patience
 - 1. God's patience does have a limit (see Genesis 6:3)
 - 2. Your concern shows there's hope
 - 3. There is no dam that sin can erect that God's grace cannot flow over and flood (see Romans 5:20)
 - D. God's nature is love (see John 3:16)
 - 1. Human love is object-oriented
 - 2. Divine love is subject-oriented and based on God's character
 - a. God loves you because He is God and God is love
 - b. His love pursues us, but we can move away from or hide from His love (see Jude 1:21)
- V. Following Is Our Priority (vv. 36, 38)
- A. Our response to our failure met by His forgiveness and His faithfulness is to follow
 - 1. Romans 12 has a similar format (see Romans 12:1)
 - 2. The Israelites didn't just feel bad about their past; they committed to follow Him into the future
 - B. The covenant indicates repentance
 - C. Don't confuse remorse with repentance
 - 1. Remorse is a feeling and sensation
 - 2. Repentance is a change and a decision
- VI. Closing

- A. Today might be the day you need to finally surrender your life completely to the lordship of Jesus Christ
- B. He knows your failures, but He pursues you anyway

Figures referenced: Malcolm Muggeridge, Leonard Ravenhill

Cross references: Genesis 6:3; Deuteronomy 28-29; I Kings 8:27-52; Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 53:6; Jeremiah 17:9; Hosea; Matthew 5:4; Luke 23:34; John 3:16; Romans 3:23; 5:12, 20; 12:1; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 2:3; I John 1:9; 3:1; Jude 1:21

Greek words: hamartia

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