

The People Confess Their Sin

by Joshua Harris

The sermon emphasizes the importance of confessing sins and restoring one's relationship with God, as demonstrated by the people of Israel in Nehemiah 9.

Duration: 49:30

Scripture: Nehemiah 9:3-33

Topics: "Confessing Sin"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the seriousness of sin and God's judgment towards it. He highlights how God gave His people into the hands of their enemies as a consequence of their wickedness. However, the speaker also emphasizes the mercy of God, stating that there is no contradiction between His judgment and mercy. The sermon focuses on the confession of sin and the humility displayed by the people of Israel in Nehemiah chapter 9. The speaker encourages the audience to be honest about their own history and acknowledge their unfaithfulness in light of God's righteousness.

Transcript

You remember from Nehemiah chapter 1, that when Nehemiah first heard that the walls of the holy city of Jerusalem were lying in ruins and the gates had been burned with fire, Nehemiah chapter 1 verse 4 tells us that he sat down and wept. He mourned for days. He went without food.

He fasted and he prayed in anguish before the Lord. Nehemiah responded with this kind of emotion, not just because of the condition of the physical walls of Jerusalem. He wept because he understood that the broken walls pointed to a broken relationship with God.

Underneath the obvious problem was a deeper problem. The spiritual condition of God's people was in ruins. And that's true of our lives so often, isn't it? Underneath the visible problems in your life, the greatest issue in your life is your relationship with God.

If your relationship with God is not right, there might be all kinds of visible problems that you're dealing with. You might be having challenges in your marriage. You might be having issues in your job.

You might be having problems with your children or whatever part of your life. And you might think of that as the primary issue in your life. I'm here to tell you something.

There's a deeper issue in your life. And that deeper issue is your relationship with God. That deeper issue is the sin that separates you from God.

All of the visible problems in your life are just symptoms of the greatest problem, the spiritual problem. Nehemiah understood that about the people of Israel. He knew that the greatest need of the people of Israel was a restored relationship with their Creator, with their God.

They needed to turn away from their sin, and they needed to turn back to God. They needed spiritual renewal. And that's why the book of Nehemiah doesn't end when the walls of Jerusalem are completed and rebuilt.

Because the most important construction, the spiritual reconstruction still needs to take place. And so two weeks ago we studied Nehemiah 8 together and we read how God began to do a new and mighty work in His people's hearts. We read how they gathered as one man and they came with this hunger and this zeal to hear the Word of God.

They wanted God's Word. They stood there out in the open for hours for the better part of a day listening to God's Word and God opened their eyes to understand. They understood the law of God and we read how they wept when they heard it because they realized how far they'd fallen from the righteousness that God had called them to and the holiness that God had called them to.

Their spiritual reformation began on that day as they submitted themselves to God's Word and this was all the doing of God. When people start wanting the Word of God, when they start realizing their sin, that's not their initiative that then goes and gets the attention of God. God is already at work in people when they begin to hunger and thirst for righteousness.

And so we see in Nehemiah this incredible reminder that God is faithful to His people and we see how God sanctifies His church and works in His church and transforms His church. What we're going to read today in Nehemiah chapter 9 is really an overflow of that moment when the people heard the Word of God. Three and a half weeks later, the people come together again for the specific purpose of confessing their sin to God.

And so let's read Nehemiah chapter 9. This is a lengthy passage. I want to encourage you to stay with me and to be affected by this. You know, as I was preparing, I was thinking, OK, should I break this down and should I just read a few parts of it? But the effect of this passage really comes when you read it in its entirety and you understand that the flow of thought and the history that's being recounted and even the repetition that's involved helps us understand God's kindness towards His people.

And so as we read this, here's my encouragement to you. Don't just read this as history of the people of Israel. Read this and consider what it reveals about God.

What it reveals about how God related to them and about how God relates to us and what it means for us to rightly respond to Him. And so we read God's word in Nehemiah chapter 9, verse 1. It says, now on the 24th day of this month, the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth and with earth on their heads. These were all ways to humble themselves before God, to go without food as a form of humiliation to take dirt and to place it on their heads, to dress in sackcloth.

All these physical symbols, a statement before the Lord, we're serious here, God. We're saddened by our sin before you. We're humbling ourselves before you.

We're grieved over our disobedience. Verse 2, and the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners, that's all the non-Jewish people, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. So they're not only confessing their own sin, they're looking back on the history of their nation and they're acknowledging that their fathers and their grandfathers and their great grandfathers have all partaken in this process, this history of disobedience before the Lord.

And they're seeing how connected this family history is and how it's gotten them where they are today. Verse 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, that would have been three hours. For another quarter of it, they made confession and worshiped the Lord their God.

And then we read a list of names of the Levites who are leading in this time of worship. And look at the latter part of verse 5. As the Levites said, And so they began this time of confession with this wonderful expression of praise to God. Verse 6, You are the Lord, You alone.

You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts, 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. You are the Lord, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham.

Abraham, who is the father of the Jewish people and ultimately the father of all people of faith who trust in Jesus Christ, God's chosen people. Verse 8, You found his heart faithful before You and made with him the covenant to give his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite and the Gergeshite. That is the promised land.

And You have kept Your promise for You are righteous. And then fast forwarding in the history of the people of Israel. Verse 9, And You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt and heard their cry at the Red Sea 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. 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.

By a pillar of cloud You led them in the day and by a pillar of fire in the night to light for them the way in which they should go. You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven and gave them right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments. Isn't that how we should view the law of God? And You made known to them Your holy Sabbath and commanded them commandments and statutes and a law by Moses Your servant.

You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought water for them out of the rock for their thirst. And You told them to go in to possess the land that You had sworn to give them. God brought them to the promised land and commanded them to go and to conquer the people.

But listen, verse 16, to their response. But they and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey Your commandments. They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that You performed among them.

But they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. They didn't believe that they could conquer these people. They doubted God's power.

And so they wanted to appoint a different leader than the leader that God had given them, someone who would take them back to slavery. What a picture of human sin and rebellion in the face of God's grace. But listen to God's merciful response.

But You are a God ready to forgive. Gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and did not forsake them. Even when they had made for themselves a golden calf and said, this is our God who brought you up out of Egypt and had committed great blasphemies.

You in Your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness. Oh, what a God we serve. The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go.

You gave Your good spirit to instruct them and did not withhold Your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. Forty years You sustained them in the wilderness and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.

And You gave them kingdoms and peoples allotted to them and allotted to them every corner. This is a description of them eventually going into the promised land and being given this rich and fertile land. So they took possession of the land of Sihon, king of Heshbon and the land of Og, king of Bashan.

You multiplied their children as the stars of heaven and You brought them into the land that You had told their fathers to enter and possess. So the descendants went in and possessed the land and You subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and You gave them into their hand with their kings and the peoples of the land that they might do with them as they would. And they captured fortified cities and a rich land and took possession of houses full of all good things.

Cisterns already hewn, vineyards, olive orchards and fruit trees in abundance. Do you see how every victory and triumph we experience in our life is the grace of God? So they ate and were filled and became fat and delighted themselves in Your great goodness. Nevertheless, are you starting to see your own story in this yet? Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against You and cast Your law behind their back and killed Your prophets who had warned them in order to turn them back to You.

And they committed great blasphemies. 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. This is a description of the time of the judges when God provided saviors in the form of faithful leaders who would conquer the people's enemies. Verse 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.

And You warned them in order to turn them back to Your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey Your commandments but sinned against Your rules, which if a person does them, he shall live by them and turn a stubborn shoulder and stiffen their neck and would not obey. Many years You bore with them and warned them by Your spirit through Your prophets, yet they would not give ear.

Therefore, You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. Nevertheless, in Your great mercies, You did not make an end of them or forsake them. In other words, God, You should have decimated us.

We shouldn't even be in existence right now. For You are gracious, a gracious and merciful God. And now in verse 32, they come into the present time.

They've recounted the history of their people. And verse 32 says, 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. They're asking for God's mercy in the present.

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. In other words, they're talking about the exile. They're talking about how their continued pattern of sin caused God to drive them out of the promised land so that for generations they were exiled from the promised land.

Verse 33, Yet, this is the summary that is so powerful. Yet, You have been righteous in all that has come upon us. For You have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly.

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, even in their own kingdom, enjoying 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. Behold, we are slaves this day in the land that You gave to our fathers to enjoy its fruits and its good gifts.

Behold, we are slaves and its rich yield goes to the kings whom You have set over us because of our sins. They rule over our bodies and over our livestock as they please and we are in great distress. 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.

In two weeks from now, Robin is going to teach on the covenant that they make, the covenant renewal as they recommit themselves to the Lord. But I want us to focus now on the content of the people's confession of their sin. It's not easy to be honest about yourself or your own history, is it? And when you remember that, you realize what an incredible thing is taking place here.

Have you ever noticed the tendency we all have to spin our own story so that we end up looking good? You know, so when things go well, we present ourselves as the hero who deserved the blessing, right? And then when things go wrong, we cast ourselves as victims and we ask this question, why do bad things happen to good people, right? But when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes so that we see ourselves in the light of who God is in his righteousness, we stop all the spinning and the revisionist history and we acknowledge that while God has been faithful, we have acted unfaithfully. That is the basic pattern of all of our lives. That is the basic pattern of the people of Israel.

That is the basic pattern of God's people down through the ages. If we come to God with honesty, we come to God with a confession of our guilt. And that's really what a confession before the Lord is all about.

It's not just negativity. It's not just seeing the world from this dark, kind of depressed perspective. That's not what a confession before God is.

It's not beating yourself up. It's not self-hatred. It's simple honesty before the Lord.

That's what the people of God are doing right now. They're not trying to find something or make something up so that they can feel guilty. They're just honestly recounting their own story.

It's honesty about who God is. It's honesty about who we are. It's honesty about what we truly deserve from God in light of our sin.

It's telling your story without any spin. And that's what we see a whole nation doing in this passage. They're looking back on their shared history, on their ancestors.

And instead of complaining and accusing God of being unjust, or instead of demanding blessing because of how good they have been, they engage in this beautiful, pure moment of national honesty. And they confess their sins before the Lord. And verse 33 sums it up.

Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us. You have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly. And this is an amazing moment in the history of God's people.

God is keeping His promise in this moment. He is turning the hearts of His people back to Himself. And they've already humbled themselves before His word.

And now they're responding appropriately by confessing their sin, repenting of their sin, and turning back to God. Before they can recommit themselves to obedience, they need to deal with the reality of their sin and their guilt before the Lord. God is reconstituting His people.

This is a very important part of the unfolding story of redemption in the Bible. And it's preparation for the ultimate restoration that comes when Jesus is born, 445 years after the story of Nehemiah. But what is it that we can learn from their example and from the work that God does in their hearts? What does it tell us about what God wants to see in His church today? When God revives His people, when God's word is our authority and our guide, how should we rightly respond to that? How should we respond when we recognize our own sin and our own guilt? I want to look at this passage and consider three important aspects of their confession that I think we can learn from.

Number one, they remember who God is. They remember who God is. That's the beginning point of this confession.

It's a confession of His greatness, a confession of His goodness. Friends, sin is insignificant to people who view God as insignificant. Confession and humiliation before the Lord that we see modeled in this passage doesn't make any sense unless you understand the greatness and the glory and the holiness of the one who's being wronged by the sin.

Do you understand? Like, we can read this and think, what's the big deal? They already had a big Bible meeting. They already cried a little bit. Why do they all need to come together and do this? Why can't they just move on? Why would they fast? Aren't they being overly dramatic, putting dirt on their heads? Why would they do this? It doesn't make any sense if your starting point is merely humanity.

Because when you start with just yourself and other humans, you think, hey, you know, we're all doing okay. Sin is not a big deal if you're just looking horizontally at other people. Because it's what everybody's doing.

And we're only human, right? Sin only becomes a big deal when you lift your eyes and you see the God whose law you're breaking. Look at verse 6. What do we learn about the character of this God as they recount this? We see that He is Lord alone. In other words, no one else has His place of authority and power.

Think about the different authorities in your life. Think about the people who have power over you. It's nothing to the power that God has over your life.

God has absolute power. He is the Lord alone. He is the creator who made heaven and earth, the sea and everything in it.

In other words, He owns the world. That is such a sobering thing to meditate on. God made you and everything else.

You see all this stuff? It's God's. He spoke it into existence. He spoke you into existence.

And every minute of every day, every living thing is being sustained by His power. And that is why we are accountable to God. He made us and He gives us every breath that we breathe.

We need to remember who God is if we want to understand the significance, the danger, the ugliness of sin. And then in verse 7, they remember that it was God who graciously initiated a relationship with them. It says, He chose Abram.

He called Abram out of Ur. Abram was a pagan. He was a worshiper of false gods.

And yet God had mercy on him. And He chose Abram. And He called him out of that spiritual darkness.

And He made a covenant with him. He formed a relationship with him. And He made and chose His special people, the people of God.

And so what we see here is that God wasn't discovered by His people. He made His people. He chose His people.

He called them. And then He mercifully kept His promises to them because He is righteous. Do you see how the case is building as they recount the character of God? God doesn't owe them anything.

It's not like they all got together and said, You know what? There's this neglected God that nobody's noticed. Let's discover Him and let's make a big deal of Him. No, God is the one that came looking for them.

God is the one who chose Abram. And then in verses 9 through 15, we see that when they were enslaved in Egypt, God was the one who came down and made a name for Himself. The people of Israel didn't make a name for God.

God made a name for Himself as He rescued them out of their slavery. What a powerful God we serve. And then we see Him providing for them and guiding them and giving them laws that are a blessing, laws of righteousness that protect them and allow them to live in fellowship with Him.

So what do we understand when we look into God's Word and we remember who He is? We see that He is the creator. He is the covenant maker. He is the redeemer.

He is the provider. Brothers and sisters, the reformation that the church needs today, the reformation that you and I need today begins with seeing God for who He is. Not our ideas about Him, not what our culture wants to be true about Him, but to see Him for who He is in His Word as He reveals Himself through Holy Scripture.

And when we see this, we realize that He is holy, that He doesn't owe us anything, that He created us, that He chose us, that He redeemed us, and He shows us kindness over and over again. And it's only when we understand this that the ugliness of sin truly emerges. And that leads us to point number two.

Remember the wickedness of sin. And we see in this confession they make that transition as they, in verse 16, begin to talk about how the people acted presumptuously and turned against God when He had shown them nothing but goodness and nothing but mercy. We live in a day and age where a genuine confession of guilt is so very rare.

Isn't that true? It's so rare to hear somebody actually really acknowledge their guilt. I mean, the apologies that you hear thrown around today, you know, when some public person does something really stupid or says something completely offensive or they tweet something that's just like, what were they thinking when they wrote that? The kind of apologies that people come back with are usually along the lines of, if anyone took this wrong, if anyone was offended by this, and it's really the other person's fault that they were offended. But if you were offended, I'm so sorry that you took it this way.

The people of God gathered before the Lord, humbling themselves before God. That's not how they're confessing here. They're not coming and saying, God, we're sorry if you took our rebellion that way.

Instead, they own their guilt. They take responsibility. They don't try to sugarcoat this.

There's no blame shifting. There are no excuses here. And even as they describe their sin, I realize I do this so often.

When I describe my sin, I use these phrases that kind of remove the moral responsibility from me. You know, I slipped into sin the other day. I slid.

It's like there's something dragging me along, right? I fell. It's not my fault. It's just gravity.

It's all these other forces that are at work. Did you note in their confession how physical and descriptive their words were when they're talking about their rebellion? Verse 16, they stiffened their neck. It's so purposeful.

It's this, I'm not going to bow before you, God. I'm not going to do things your way. Stiffening their necks.

Verse 26, they cast their law behind their back. It wasn't this, they missed a few quiet times, God. Give them a break.

No, there was an active rejection of the law of God. And then they turned a stubborn shoulder. It's so physical.

You know, we want to believe that our spiritual rebellion and disobedience, it's kind of innocent. It's so natural. And yet this wording that we see here is putting into words what's actually taking place.

When you and I reject the law of God and disobey and do the things that we know dishonor the Lord, we are stiffening our neck. We are throwing the word of God behind us. We are turning our shoulder.

And then verse 30, they would not give you ear, would not listen. What powerful descriptions of what takes place in our hearts when we disobey. Sin is a refusal to bow and humble ourselves before God.

It's a rejection of his law. And when you consider that response compared to the compassion and the grace and the provision that God has given to us, don't you see the wickedness of our sin? We're sinning against the glorious one, the one who is the Lord alone, the one who owns us, the one who spoke this world into existence, the one who is sustaining us. Isn't that so wrong that this God is sustaining us? And with that life that he gives us, we're turning our shoulder to him, rejecting his word and turning our ears away from his loving voice and his warnings.

They recount how the people of Israel, when God redeemed them out of slavery, they wanted to go back to the slavery. Isn't that just a perfect picture of the insanity of sin? And how many times do we do the same or worse when we return to the very sin that Jesus died to free us from? He brings us out of slavery and then we turn back and we start longing for the chains. And we bow down before the false gods and the false comforts of lust and substance abuse and money and all these things that they never made us happy in the past.

And yet our hearts are drawn to them again and we reject the good laws of God. It says they acted presumptuously and they acted presumptuously. Friends, don't believe the lie that God's grace means that sin is no big deal.

Don't believe the lie that God's grace means sin is a small thing. That is such a perversion of the truth. The truth is that grace is a big deal because sin is so serious.

You understand that? Grace is an awesome thing because sin is such a treachery against such an awesome, pure and holy God. Grace is amazing because God is holy and he's just and he will punish all sin. You see, there's, oh, ah, help me, Lord, to understand and to teach this.

You could read this passage wrongly. You could read this passage and you could miss all the mercy. And you could just be condemned and feel like there's no hope.

And that would be to misread the reality that God is a merciful God. But you could also read this passage and you could miss all the judgment that God has towards sin and the hatred that God has towards sin. And you could miss the fact that God shows mercy.

But he also disciplines those who turn against him. And he is a righteous God. And there is judgment.

There was a generation that died in the wilderness because they would not obey. Do you understand that? If we truly know God's grace, we will be a people who who run from our sin and run to God. I love the way that Titus chapter two, verse 11 puts us.

It says the grace of God has appeared, training us. Training us to renounce ungodliness. That's how grace works, if you truly understand it.

It doesn't say the grace of God has appeared. So relax. Don't worry so much about sin.

No, if you know grace, if you know the mercy that God has shown, that grace, that mercy, that gospel forgiveness, what does it do? It begins to transform you and train you to renounce ungodliness and unrighteousness. And yet the people of God, verse 19 here in Nehemiah nine, acted presumptuously. In other words, they presumed upon God's patience.

They thought they could disobey and there would be no consequence. And so God disciplined them. And we see that God will not allow sin to go unchecked in his people.

Verse 27, we read that God gave his people into the hands of their enemies who made them suffer. God takes sin seriously. God takes the wickedness of sin seriously.

And ultimately, he drove them out of the promised land completely. Friends, there's a warning here for us. Don't miss the lesson of God's judgment towards sin.

God is holy. God hates sin. And yet don't miss the reality of his mercy.

And that's point number three. Remember, God is merciful. And there's no contradiction here.

There's no contradiction here. I think it's so beautiful that this chapter that's that's a confession of history's worth of sin is just bursting with reminders of the mercy of God. Verse 17, you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and did not forsake them.

Verse 19, in your great mercies, you did not forsake them in the wilderness. Verse 28, yet when they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven and many times you deliver them according to your mercies. Verse 31, in your great mercies, you did not make an end of them or forsake them for you are a gracious and merciful God.

This is who God is. This is the reason that we can have a confidence to approach God and to approach him. The people retell their national history, not just to recount and confess their sin.

It's also to remember God's mercy. They're not only saying they're not only saying we got into this mess because of our disobedience. They are declaring we have the hope that you will get us out of this mess because we have seen your mercy over and over and over again.

And they recognize that the basis of their relationship with God has never been about what they deserve. Aren't you thankful for that? These people are able to come and confess the ugliness of their sin and be honest before the Lord because they understand something. Their standing before God from the very beginning of their national history has never been about their performance or their earning.

It's always been saturated from beginning to end with the mercy of God. That is the only basis that they can come by and make this request that God will save them in the present. It's not because they've done so well.

It's not because they deserve it. They're coming and they're saying, God, once again, we acknowledge that all that we can ask for from you, from your hand is mercy, giving us what we don't deserve, saving us when we are the guilty party. And this is what gives us as Christians the confidence to come before God and to confess our sins.

It's not because our sins aren't so bad. It's not because our confession is so eloquent. We can confess honestly and freely because God is a God of mercy towards those who call and cry out to Him.

And this is where we have such an advantage that the people of Nehemiah's day did not have. We can learn so much from them. And yet, isn't it true that we know so much more of the mercy of God than they do? Because we have the revelation of Jesus Christ.

We have the revelation of Jesus Christ. And we see in Jesus the culmination, the high point, the fulfillment of all of God's mercy and grace toward the human race. God comes to us in the form of His Son.

And He comes not to condemn. Think about all the rebellion. Think about all the disobedience.

And He doesn't come to condemn. Instead, what does Jesus do? Jesus takes our sin upon Himself. He enters into our misery and our suffering.

And He so identifies with us that He takes the form of a servant, even to the point of suffering on the cross in our place, as if He were the guilty one. Do you understand that every mercy that God has extended towards any human being in the entire history of the world is paid for and made possible at the cross of Jesus Christ? On this day when the people of God stood before the Lord and said, God, have mercy on us. We want to be Your people again.

We want to recommit ourselves to You. Why didn't God send fire from heaven? Because the Son of God would one day hang suspended on a cross, paying for all their sins and all the sins of their forefathers. That is the only basis by which we can come and be reconciled to God.

That is the good news of the Bible, that God is a God who does not treat us as our sins deserve, but all who turn from their unrighteousness and who trust in His Son. The Lamb, the sacrifice that He has provided, will be forgiven and reconciled and welcomed into relationship with Him. Praise the Lord.

That's our hope. That is the gospel hope that we have. In Jesus, we find the answer to the question, how can sin be so serious and yet God show mercy? How can God be a God of justice who punishes sin and yet over and over again show grace and kindness to those who fail? The answer is the cross.

That sin is punished, but it's punished in the person of Jesus. His body bearing God's wrath and judgment so that we can be forgiven and made new. When you read Nehemiah chapter 9, don't you see your own story? God giving you life.

God showing kindness to you and over and over again, you throwing His word behind your back and turning your shoulder. You might be here and think, you might be thinking, well, I'm not even, I'm not a Christian. God hasn't shown any kindness to me.

Friend, God has shown so much grace to you. He gave you life. Do you understand that? You don't even comprehend all the moments that He has protected and preserved you when you paid Him no attention.

Every breath that you've ever breathed, every moment of health, every good gift that you've ever experienced, an expression of His kindness toward you, His enemy. And now you're sitting here, I don't know how you got here, but you're having to listen to me for 45 minutes. And I know this might be hard to believe, but that's God's grace to you.

Because God is speaking to you a message. He's speaking to you a message. And this is the message.

God has mercy on those that don't deserve mercy. And He's calling you to Himself today. He's calling you to forsake your sin and to forsake the death that your sin leads to and to turn to Him and gain life.

There is life in Jesus. You were made for Him. You were made to know Him.

And there is a joy and there is a freedom you will never comprehend until you find your meaning and the meaning for your life and your existence in Jesus Christ. And so I just want to call you. I want you to hear God calling you.

Turn from your sin. Turn from living your life for yourself. Stop thinking that you can manage things well on your own and live your life for the One who created you and by His Son can redeem you.

And for those of us who are believers in Jesus Christ, isn't it awesome to consider that our sin has been removed from us as far as the East is from the West. And yet that reality doesn't make confession a thing of the past, does it? It makes confession an activity of every day because we continue to fall short. We continue to sin.

We continue to grieve God. We continue to turn a deaf ear to Him over and over again. And yet the mercy of God in the gospel, what does it do? It convinces us that God's grace is real for us right now.

And so I just want to urge you, my brothers and sisters, in light of God's mercy, turn away from your sin. Where have you been hardening your heart? Where has God's Word been warning you and you've been treating sin lightly as if it were no big deal? Where have you taken your eyes off of God and His glory and His holiness? Shouldn't we be, as people who have been forgiven, a people who love to obey the Lord? Shouldn't we love to run in the pathway of His commandments? Let's pray that the Lord will do in our midst what He did on this day so long ago among His people, that He would open our eyes to see Him in all His greatness. That He would give us hearts that are pierced with conviction over our sin.

When's the last time you prayed for God to break your heart over the sin and compromise in your life? Let's pray that the Lord would make us a people who are enamored with the gospel of Jesus Christ, people who are quick to confess our sins and turn from them because we know that we have a Savior who has paid for it all. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/22/SID22297.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/joshua-harris/the-people-confess-their-sin/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net