

"I Did It ... My Way?"

Scripture: Nehemiah 9
(01-11-26 Pastor Tony Hao)

In Nehemiah 9, the people fasted declaring that God is more important than their need to satisfy physical hunger. Wearing sackcloth or rags expressed a profound sense of mourning and grief because of their sin. By throwing dust on their heads, they symbolically identify with death. When the people draw close to God, they commit to remove anything that may lead them to sin. They earnestly confess their sins before God.

This is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible. It recalls Israel's history, reviews God's acts of compassion and kindness toward His people through the centuries. This prayer rehearses the history of Israel, revealing God's goodness to His people, and their repeated failure to obey His will. The word "give" is used in one way or another at least sixteen times in this chapter, for our God is indeed the "giving God," who delights in meeting the needs of His people.

Here we learn three lessons about prayer: Prayer starts with the GREATNESS of God. Prayer flows out of the GOODNESS of God. Prayer leads us to the GRACE of God.

GROWING DEEPER (Reflection & Application)

1. In your growing up years, what did 'confession' mean to you? What was required? How often? Who was involved? Why?
2. As we study Israel's confession in this passage, what's the relationship between these parts to their prayer: (a) instruction from the Word, (b) confession of sins, (c) praise of God?
3. How does a Christian today show sincerity in confession and repentance of sin? In it, what part would you assign to God's Word? To others? To public prayer? To private or silent prayer? How much time would you devote to each?