

A Gracious & Merciful God (4/23/23)

Main Verses: Nehemiah 9:30-31

Key Verse: Nehemiah 9:31

'Takeaway': Though it regularly confirms our selfish & sinful hearts, the Old Testament is even more a story about God's incredible grace & mercy.

Getting Started: Have you ever had someone do the same thing over & over again, even though you told them it hurt your feelings?

READ the main verses: Nehemiah 9:30-31 (or have older kids help read)

Some **QUESTIONS** to consider:

Toddler/PreK:

- How long does it say God warned his people about their selfish & sinful behavior?
- What happened after they failed to listen & learn over & over again?
- What does it mean that he sent them into exile?
- What is the great mercy God showed to his people then?
- What does this teach us about God? How does it encourage us with our selfish & sinful hearts?
- How does this passage point us to Jesus?

Elementary:

- How long does it say God bore with & warned the people of Israel about their selfish & sinful behavior?
- What does it mean that he gave them "into the hands of the peoples of the lands"? (v30)
- What does "**nevertheless**" mean? Why is it such an encouraging word here?
- What do we learn about God & his heart in this passage?
- What was God's final incredible act of grace & mercy for sinners like us?
- How should we be encouraged to learn of God's incredible grace & mercy here in the OT?

Here are some **IMPORTANT IDEAS** we discover in these verses:

Toddler/PreK:

- The people of Israel failed over & over again to follow & obey God. They obey God for a while after "bad" stuff happens, but eventually, they return to their selfish & sinful ways.
- Because of God's incredible grace & mercy, he does not destroy the people of Israel. Instead, he sends them into exile.
- **Exile** means they were sent to a foreign land to be ruled over by that land's leaders rather than their own.
- Thru faith in Jesus, we too can return home to God. This is God's final incredible act of mercy & grace for sinners like us.
- We should read the OT looking for examples of God's grace & mercy, always considering how these point us to Jesus.

Elementary:

- God bore with the pattern of sin from his people for "many years." **He was patient with them, warning** them by his Spirit thru his prophets. The people would listen for a time & try to do better, but always returned to their sinful ways.
- Instead of destroying his people, God sent them into exile in a foreign land where they would have to live under the rule of its leaders, & would not be able to worship in the temple in Jerusalem, where the people believed God met with them.
- Even after returning from exile, the people were never able to break the cycle of sin. In his grace & mercy, God sent his Son, Jesus, to die for **our** sins, so that thru faith in Jesus, we can return home to God forever.
- We should read the OT looking for verses about God's grace & mercy, always considering how these point us to Jesus.

An **ENCOURAGEMENT** in light of God's word:

(Toddler/PreK) Thank God for his grace & mercy toward us; & for the OT which teaches about God's grace & mercy, & how it all points to Jesus. Thank God for sending his Son, Jesus, to die for **our** sins **so**, thru faith in him, we can return home to God forever. Ask God to help you learn more about him & his amazing grace & mercy as you grow.

Elementary) Thank God for his grace & mercy toward us; & for the OT which teaches about God's grace & mercy, & how it all points to Jesus. Thank him for sending his Son, Jesus, to die for **our** sins **so**, thru faith in Jesus, we can return home to God forever. Ask God to help you grow in knowledge of him as you study his word; & ask him to give you the wisdom to understand & obey him. **Admit** you are guilty of living a me-centered life instead of a God-centered one. **Believe** that Jesus is your only hope for forgiveness, freedom, & forever with God. With your whole heart, **commit** yourself to following Jesus' loving leadership. If you pray this, or have questions about what it means, talk to a trusted adult in your life about it.

