

Confession and Worship

It is amazing how technology has changed in such a short period of time! One area in which this is especially noticeable is in the realm of photography. With the advent of digital photography, the power to take and retake, edit and re-edit, post and share photos has been placed in the hands of every smartphone carrying individual. However, there is much more to taking good photos than a quick trigger finger, a high-resolution camera/phone, and a fancy app that applies a variety of filters. Oftentimes it has to do with composition, dimensions, and angles. In other words, it takes a proper perspective.

Perspective is also essential in your spiritual walk, firstly in your appreciation for God's mercy and grace. Consider this question for a moment: what makes mercy so marvelous and grace so amazing? Our songs are saturated with their themes while our sermons and prayers are speckled with their jargon. But do we truly grasp the expanse of His patience? Do we truly fathom the depths of His favor? Secondly, a proper perspective includes an understanding of ourselves. It is uncomfortable to admit that the "old nature" still entices us. Do we truly comprehend how corrupt and sinful we are if left to our own devices?

In Nehemiah 9, God's people take care of unfinished business. A few weeks earlier the people of Israel were convicted of sin and rejoiced in the reminder of God's presence. Now they responded by confessing their habitual rebellion and celebrating God's everlasting mercy and grace. These two reactions are described as "confession and worship":

Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month **the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads.** And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. 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; for another quarter of it **they made confession and worshiped the Lord their God.** (Nehemiah 9:1-3)

True worship springs forth from an understanding of God's attributes and actions. The text describes these as mercy and grace - patience to those who deserve punishment and favor to the unworthy. Beholding this kindness makes our sinful rebellion seem even more egregious and "is meant to lead you to repentance" (Rom 2:4). On the flip side, when we see our true mutinous selves in the mirror of

God's Word, God's mercy and grace shine even more brightly into the darkness of our heart. Recognizing our guilt and unworthiness makes God's kindness even more dazzling and brings praise to our lips (Ps 63:3).

Without placing God's mercy and grace alongside of our sinful nature, our perspective is skewed and the composition is unimpressive. It will neither lead us to lift our hands in worship nor fall on our faces in confession. Practice confession and worship side by side every day. You will be blessed when you do!

Psalm 106:43-46 (NIV) - *"Many times he delivered them, but they were rebellious in their purposes and were brought low through their iniquity. Nevertheless, he looked upon their distress, when he heard their cry. **For their sake he remembered his covenant, and relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love.** He caused them to be pitied by all those who held them captive."*