

Series: rebuild

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Title: Reset I

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Text: Nehemiah 9:1-8

Confession

Factory Reset:

Remember when your smartphone was brand new? It ran faster than you could ever imagine. The camera took amazing pictures and videos. You had tons more memory to work with: room for data, music, new apps, you name it.

Then over time the phone started acting more and more like your old phone. It slowed down. It froze up just when you needed it. You suspected that it might have been infected with some sort of virus. What to do?

Well, you could swap it out for another new phone and start over. But there is another option: a factory reset.

"A factory reset, also known as a master reset, is a software restore of an electronic device to its original system state by erasing all of the information stored on the device in an attempt to restore the device to its original manufacturer settings."

Sounds drastic? It is. In fact, a **factory reset** is a last resort tactic, because it erases all of your data, contacts, pictures, apps. It literally takes your phone back to the way it was when it came out of the box. But sometimes it's the only option.

Spiritual/Moral Reset:

Like smartphones, human beings can become infected with malware and viruses – diseases and corruptions of the soul. We can get to the point where we're overloaded with too many apps running at the same time. We can fill ourselves with the wrong kinds of information and tell ourselves the wrong kinds of stories. If this happens to our phones, you can be sure it happens to us as well.

Which means that we need a “factory reset.” In a world where everyone is running on empty, where the line between truth and falsehood is blurred, where shouting and rage take the place of courteous conversation, it would be easy to think that such a reset is impossible. There is no “original manufacturer setting.” In fact, many in our society proclaim boldly that there is **no original manufacturer!**

The good news is that the Original Manufacturer is still in business! And He has made a way for us to undergo a factory reset. He cares enough about you and the ones you love to make a way out of the brokenness and confusion of a world that has in many ways lost its way.

The Right Software

A society that lost its way:

In the Book of Nehemiah we encounter a society that had lost its way. It was like a smartphone that had become utterly overwhelmed with malware. It was cluttered with hundreds of years of spiritual and moral failures. Time and again a good king would try to cleanse the society of corrupt pagan practices, only to have all of his hard work wiped out by his successor. Ultimately, the entire society crashed and burned. The smartphone became a brick.

When Nehemiah came to rebuild Jerusalem, his biggest task wasn't to build walls and gates. His biggest task was to reset the spiritual and social software of his people. Would they simply repeat the cycles of failure and corruption, or would they be willing to let God wipe the slate clean and restore them to proper working order?

The Right Source:

Nehemiah tells us that the day came when Israel gathered to perform a factory reset on their entire society:

Nehemiah 9:1-2 NIV

On the 24th day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and putting dust on their heads. Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the sins of their ancestors.

Their confession – or reset – took the form of a long prayer, in which they effectively “downloaded” God’s software and erased their old defective software. God’s “software” came in the form of a Story.

It began at the very beginning with the LORD who created all Reality:

Nehemiah 9:6 NIV

"You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you."

These words say that the LORD and the LORD alone is the Original Manufacturer. He alone knows how the world is supposed to work. He alone defines what it means to be human. He alone is worthy of worship and honor.

No knock-off software here. No slick “quick fixes.” God alone is the Source for what we need to know about how to live in His world. He alone is trustworthy. Any other set of ideas or values will come with malware deeply embedded in them. Over time, they will crash the system.

The Right Software:

Having affirmed the LORD as the Original Manufacturer, the Israelites’ prayer next addresses Him as a safe and secure Online Partner:

Nehemiah 9:7-8 NIV

"You are the LORD God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham. You found his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Girgashites. You have kept your promise because you are righteous."

The LORD is not just the Creator of all Reality; He is equally a faithful Partner to human beings as they negotiate the journey of life in His world.

Every so often I get a notice from my phone manufacturer that they are going to perform a download to keep my phone working properly. They didn’t just build the phone and send it out the door. They agree to be there for me over the time that I use the phone. They are my smartphone partner.

They promise to never load malware onto my phone. I, in turn, choose to trust them to do the right thing.

The same is true with the LORD: He has promised to enter into a solemn, binding relationship with us – a covenant. This is what He did with a pagan living in the ancient city of Ur. He challenged a man named Abram to do a full-scale factory reset, to abandon the gods of his culture and family, and to set out on a journey to a new place and a whole new way of living. God, in turn, promised to give Abram a country and to make out of him a nation: a new expression of humanity living according to God’s Story.

Reset

Covenant Standing:

Abram made the choice to believe the LORD and to let God begin the factory reset. God changed his name to Abraham, and gave him a son as the first member of that whole new family. Paul describes God’s factory reset this way:

Romans 4:3 NIV

What does Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

To be declared “righteous” means that God affirmed Abraham as a faithful partner in the covenant between them. In other words, the factory reset worked. Abraham began living out God’s Story instead of the old corrupted stories of this world.

Paul explains that it takes radical trust in God to do the factory reset:

Romans 4:18-21 NIV

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead – since he was about a 100 years old – and that Sarah’s womb was also dead.

Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

Reset:

You and I face the same challenge: Will we dare to believe that God has the power to do what He has promised? Will we dare to let Him wipe out the old corrupted software and install His original software in our lives? Will we dare to let go of past hurts and bitterness? Will we dare to believe that God's Love is more powerful than the apps we're running now?

Or will we decide to just keep limping along with corrupted software?

It's your call.