

Series: rebuild

August 19, 2018

Title: Reset II

[Slide 1]

Text: Nehemiah 9:9-36

Your Software is Your Story

New software/New story:

When our smartphone or other electronic device becomes corrupted with bad software sometimes the only cure is a "factory reset." A factory reset means scrubbing the memory and operating system of the device, then restoring the device to its original factory settings.

Simple enough – if a bit drastic – when you're talking about a phone or a personal computer. But what about a factory reset for a person made in God's image? You can't scrub a person's memory or erase years of bad choices. But you can choose to download the Original Manufacturer's software. And that software comes in the form of a Story.

In a sense, we *are* our stories. The person we know ourselves to be – our *Self* – is someone who has lived and continues to live a particular story. Our story is how we see ourselves and know ourselves. We do not exist without it. Our software *is* our story.

Old software/old story. New software/*new story*.

Israel's reset:

When Nehemiah and his people had finished the rebuilding of Jerusalem, they came before God for a national reset. Having affirmed the LORD as the Original Manufacturer and faithful Online Partner, now it was time for the actual download of the new "software." And the software came in the form of a Story – God's Story as revealed in His Word and lived by His people.

It would only be by embracing this long lost story that they would discover their true identity. By making God's Story their own story, they would find that God was right there with them – within them – each step of the way.

And in the tough times they were facing, it was this one true Story that would light the way, keeping them from panic or deception.

Your software is Your Story:

What was true for Nehemiah and Israel is just as true for you and me today. Each morning we wake up to the continuation of our story. It's a story so familiar that we simply take it for granted. This story, after all, defines us for who we are. *We are our story. It tells us who we are and what we do.*

If it's the one this old world has written for us, then it will hold us down and keep us from ever discovering what it means to be made in the image of God. But if we choose to download God's Story, we will discover a whole new identity – the one that God Himself envisioned when He created us.

Choosing God's Story

God's Story for Israel:

So what did this story look like? What did it say about Israel that no other story could say? And what identity did it give to this particular group of people?

- First of all, it was a story of *rescue*:

Nehemiah 9:9-10 NIV

"You saw the suffering of our ancestors in Egypt; you heard their cry at the Red Sea. You sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his officials and all the people of his land, for you knew how arrogantly the Egyptians treated them. You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day."

Israel was reborn by an act of rescue. The Israelites were on the verge of extinction as a people. They were enslaved and facing a sustained campaign of genocide. When they set out on their freedom journey, they became trapped between Pharaoh's army and the Reed Sea. And it was there that God rescued them, driving the waters back by a strong east wind and making a path on dry ground. When the Egyptian army tried to follow them, the wind abated and the waters returned and overwhelmed them.

- Second, it was a story of *divine guidance*:

Nehemiah 9:12 NIV

"By day you led them with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire to give them light on the way they were to take."

This new Story was not a story of wandering aimlessly through the desert. It was a story in which God Himself was present to show the way.

- Third, it was a story of *revelation*:

Nehemiah 9:13 NIV

"You came down on Mount Sinai; you spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good."

God not only rescued them; He became their Faithful Partner. He redefined them as His royal people. He showed them how to live with each other and how to live in His Presence.

- Fourth, it was a story of *provision for their needs*:

Nehemiah 9:15, 21 NIV

"In their hunger you have them bread from heaven and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock....For 40 years you sustained them in the wilderness; they lacked nothing, their clothes did not wear out nor did their feet become swollen."

Their story took them into a vast desert. But God was present to provide for them every step of the way.

- Fifth, it was a story of *forgiveness*:

Nehemiah 9:17 NIV

"They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them..."

Then as now, the old stories were very strong. Time and time again, the Israelites fell back into the old story and its old failed identity. But each time God patiently helped them work their way back to His true Story.

It is this epic story that Nehemiah and his people downloaded on that day when they stood before God for a factory reset.

Reset

Your New Story:

And now it's our turn. Each and every day we face challenges that remind us that our journey is in many ways a desert journey like the Exodus. Will we keep recycling our old stories to try and meet new challenges? Will we try to define ourselves in uncertain times? Or will we choose the factory reset from the Original Manufacturer and the brand new identity that comes with it?

In God's Story we will find

- Rescue
- Guidance
- Revelation
- Provision
- Forgiveness

Sort of sounds like the prayer that Jesus gave us:

- A prayer for a New King
- A prayer for our Heavenly Father to guide and provide
- A prayer for forgiveness when we fail

Remember: your story is *you*. So when you make God's Story *your story*, you become a new person – the person God made you to be.

So make the choice to trade in your old story and put your trust in the God who created you and offers to walk with you every step of the way. You'll never be the same.