

HONEST PRAYERS

Praying for Favor, Nehemiah 1:5-11 and 2:1-9

Nehemiah's Situation and His Prayer

Nehemiah 1:11 (KJV) O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

- Nehemiah was *cupbearer* to king Artaxerxes
 - Nehemiah gets word from his brothers that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and the gates had been burned with fire
 - When Nehemiah heard this, he sat down and wept, prayed, and fasted
 - How did Nehemiah pray?
 - What makes Nehemiah's prayer effective?
 - How can Nehemiah's prayer instruct us?
1. ***Nehemiah started His prayer with praise Nehemiah 1:5 And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:***
 - Nehemiah praised God for *who* He is and what He has done
 - You are the God of heaven
 - Nehemiah praised God and a covenant keeping God
 - Nehemiah praise God as One who loves those who seek after Him
 2. ***Nehemiah repented of his sins and the sins of his people Nehemiah 1:6-7 Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. 7 We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.***
 - Nehemiah tells God we have sinned against Thee, not just the Israelites, Nehemiah includes himself
 - It is important to confess our sins because unconfessed sin creates a barrier us and God
 - In praying on behalf of the Israelites, Nehemiah become an *intercessor* for the people
 - Nehemiah acknowledged the *specific* sins of he and the Israelites; they wicked, corrupt, and disobeyed God's commandments
 3. ***Nehemiah prayed continually Nehemiah 1:6 "...that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night,..."***
 - Nehemiah did not just pray and quit, he literally prayed day and night
 - He did not stop praying until God gave him an answer ***Matthew 7:7 (KJV) 7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:***
 - Will you *continue* to pray *until* God answers?
 4. ***Nehemiah reminded God of His promises Nehemiah 1:8-10 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: 9 But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen***

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to set my name there. 10 Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

- Nehemiah asked God to remember the covenant He made with Moses
- If God's people sinned, God would judge them by scattering them among the nations, but if they repented and obeyed God; He would return them to the Promised Land
- What promises do you need to *remind* God of?

5. Nehemiah asked God for favor with the king *Nehemiah 1:11 O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.*

- Nehemiah petitioned God to please *be attentive* and hear his prayer
- What Nehemiah prayed for was *mercy*, which is *favor* in the sight of *this man*
- King Artaxerxes was an “unbeliever”, *but* he had the *power* to solve the problem
- The odds were against Nehemiah considering the size of the project, how long he would be away, and the king would be without his cupbearer
- That's why Nehemiah went to God *first*, Nehemiah needed God to touch the king's heart ***Proverbs 21:1 (KJV) 1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.***
- Nehemiah asked God to do this for him *today*
- Do not overlook or underestimate your employers, government leaders, teachers/professors, relatives or your spouse; God can use them *today* to bring your vision to pass

Tell Your Story

Nehemiah 2:1-3 (KJV) And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. [2] Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, [3] And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?

- Nehemiah has been praying for 4½ months about rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem
- It's all he's been thinking and praying about, it's beginning to show on his face
 - The king notices that Nehemiah is sad and it's not because of sickness
 - The king said you're sad because something is bothering you
 - At that moment Nehemiah began to get really scared
 - The moment of opportunity can be killed in a moment of fear
 - But Nehemiah honestly told the king *why* he was so sad
 - He said the city, the place of my ancestor's graves is in ruins and the gates have been consumed with fire
 - He said, who wouldn't be sad if you received news like this
 - Nehemiah was *honestly* telling the king what was going on
 - He was literally *casting vision* to the king

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- Nehemiah talked about Jerusalem until the king could sense the danger the people were in

Ask for Favor

[4] Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. [5] And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. [6] And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

- The king heard Nehemiah's concerns and asked Nehemiah, "What do you want?"
- The **opportunity** that Nehemiah had been praying for has arrived
- Nehemiah recognized it immediately
- But Nehemiah took a moment to pray again, ***Psalm 34:4 (KJV) I sought the Lord, and he heard me,***
- Nehemiah probably prayed, "God give me what to say to this man right now"
- He prayed at that moment, God word my mouth, let me say what you've been showing me for these past four months
- Nehemiah *saw and seized the moment* by asking for "time off" to *be sent* to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the city
- Many people say, all I need is an opportunity, all I need is an open door, all I need is favor and my vision for my life, marriage, family, career, business, ministry, would start taking shape
- When the opportunity *arrives*, will you be *ready* to seize the moment?
- Most people are either *not ready* for the opportunity or they *didn't recognize it* when it came along
- It is better to ready and nothing happens than not to be ready and miss your opportunity
- And it pleased the king to *send him*, meaning this was PTO "paid time off"

Ask for it All!

[7] Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah; [8] And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into.

- As soon as Nehemiah got a positive response from the king regarding his being away to rebuild the walls, Nehemiah said, *Moreover...*
- Nehemiah asked for *everything* necessary to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem
- Nehemiah asked for:
 - Letters that will give him safe passage (a passport) through other nations on the way to Jerusalem (1,000 miles from Persia)
 - Letter to the keeper of the royal forest to give him timber to rebuild the walls and the gates

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- By the time Nehemiah finished asking, the king had **sent him** to Jerusalem, **guaranteed his safety**, and **provided all the supplies** for the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem!
- Some believers are asking, why isn't this happening for me? **John 16:24 (KJV) 24 "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name:..."**
- What would you ask for if you knew the answer was already, "Yes"?
- We must be like Nehemiah and have faith and confidence in God and take advantage of the opportunities God gives us

Give God the Glory!

And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.

- Because of Nehemiah's prayer and request, the king gave Nehemiah everything he asked for
- None of this would have happened if God did not have a "hand" in it
- Nehemiah knew without the strength of God, his efforts would have been in vain
- Nehemiah takes no credit for himself, all the glory belongs to God
- Nehemiah recognized that the hand of God was all over this
- The first thing Nehemiah did was glorify and praise God for what He has already done
- When God gives you the open door you've been praying for, the first thing you do is give Him the praise!
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