

Praying For A Miracle **Nehemiah 1:4-11**

INTRO:

You may have heard the old adage. "Ask great things from God, expect great things from God." Nehemiah did exactly that in Nehemiah chapter one. We may not realize how big Nehemiah's prayer was. He prayed God would do something about the situation in Jerusalem and God did. He took Nehemiah from the palace of the most powerful king on planet earth to Jerusalem to build the walls. There are lessons we can learn from Nehemiah's prayer which we can employ in our own praying. In our praying we need to:

- I. Recognize The Nature Of Our God (v. 4b-6)***
- II. Confess Our Own Sinfulness (v. 6-7)***
- III. Learn the Art of Pleading With God (v. 8-11)***

I. Recognize The Nature Of Our God (v. 4b-6)

Nehemiah 1:4–6 *"For many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. And I said: 'I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and fear inspiring God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned.'"*

A. Perhaps the first thing we need to see to properly appreciate Nehemiah's prayer is the magnitude of Nehemiah's difficulty. If Nehemiah was so burdened, why didn't he just drop everything and go charging off to Jerusalem to do something about the situation? He couldn't do this because Nehemiah held a unique position.

1. He was cupbearer to the King. In a job like this a person didn't just give two weeks' notice and jump the next camel to Jerusalem. Cupbearers got their position because they were special to the king. A cupbearer was expected to keep his position for life. Nehemiah was locked in.

2. Therefore, if Nehemiah was to carry out the task that he believed the LORD called him to do, he had to convince a pagan king to send him to build the walls. The walls this same king probably had ordered destroyed. We are talking a major over haul of a man's heart.

B. The first thing Nehemiah did was to remind himself of The nature of our God. We cannot ask for miracles, if we do not believe God can do them.

1. Look at how Nehemiah prayed. He didn't begin his prayer as we are prone to do. *"God, you know how much I need this. Please give me this thing I need. I want it as soon as possible. In Jesus Name, Amen."*

2. No, Nehemiah began his prayer by centering his thoughts on the God to whom he was praying. He recited the character and attributes of God, to God. This is a forgotten discipline called "Praising God!"

C. The God to whom Nehemiah prayed is the LORD. He is Yahweh, the God Who keeps covenant. He has a special relationship with Nehemiah and to His people. He is more than just Yahweh. He is Yahweh, the God of heaven. In Nehemiah's day when most people believed in localized deities. These false gods were for everything. These gods were gods of mountains, gods of low places. You name it and they had a god for it. Nehemiah looked up to the true and living God and said. *"God, you are the GOD of everything."*

1. He is more than Yahweh, the God of everything. He is the great and terrible God. He is a God of AWE. Awe is the state between wonder and fear.

2. Do we comprehend God like this? Nehemiah's God is our God too!

D. He is the God Who also has a special relationship with us. He is our Father. We have a Father who owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He is our Father only if we have received His Son.

1. Our heavenly Father is still God over all. He is SOVEREIGN. He is big enough to control all things which push into our lives. He is big enough to hold the hearts of the rulers of the nations of the world in His hand and turn them whithersoever He wills. And He is big enough to reign on the thrones of our lives.

2. He is still the Great and Terrible God. Do you and I know anything of awe in your relationship to God? Have we come over a high place in your journey through the Scriptures and caught a glimpse of GOD as He really is in all His GREATNESS, MAJESTY, and GLORY and were overwhelmed and knew a little fear?

II. Confess Our Own Sinfulness (v. 6-7)

Nehemiah 1:6-7 "Please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses."

A. If we are going to learn to pray like Nehemiah did, we must confess our sinfulness. This goes hand in hand with seeing God's glory. No man ever caught a glimpse of God's glory without being struck with a sense of his own sinfulness. Remember how Isaiah responded when he saw the LORD. Peter also was overwhelmed in **Luke 5**. Nehemiah could not come and ask for blessing before he dealt with Israel's sin and his own. God is FRIEND, SOVEREIGN, and GREAT, but He is also HOLY.

B. Nehemiah was moved by his sense of sin. Why was Jerusalem in such a horrible state? Was it because God failed His people? No, God's people failed Him.

1. Nehemiah's confession is personal and clear. We have sinned. Both I and my father's house have sinned. Do we know anything of corporate confession? Maybe this is a lesson we need to learn. Many times, we need to pray, "God help us, we have failed you." We have sinned.

2. Do we know enough of personal confession? "Lord, I hate my sin, please take it from me."

C. We will not pray and expect to be heard, if we do not see the GREATNESS of our God. We also will not pray with expectation, if we do not see our own sinfulness and receive God's forgiveness.

III. Learn the Art of Pleading With God (v. 8-11)

Nehemiah 1:8-11 "Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.' Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand. O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.' For I was the king's cupbearer."

A. If we are going to pray and expect to be heard, we need to learn to plead with God. While our God is anxious to give us whatever we ask, there are within the pages of Scripture much written on this matter of pleading with God. Just think with me a moment of a few examples:

1. Abraham pleaded for Lot at Sodom.

2. Moses pleaded with the Almighty for the people after their grave sin with the Golden calf.

3. Jesus' parable of the unjust Judge, and the man with the late night traveler waking his neighbor for bread (importunity in prayer). The point of the stories is that persistence is a virtue in prayer.

B. God is pleased when we plead with Him. Notice how Nehemiah pleaded with God. He pleaded according to God's promises.

v.8,9 *“Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.’”*

He also pleaded based on their relationship with the LORD

v.10 *“Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand.”*

Finally, he implored the LORD with a commitment to God's will being done.

v.11 *“Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.’ For I was the king’s cupbearer.”*

Nehemiah did not command or demand. He asked. If you were to speak to the President and wanted something from him, you would not command or demand, you would ask. Let us not get impertinent with the King of Kings. He who demands of God has never seen Him as He really is.

So, let us pray that God's will is done in this place.

Let us do this by first recognizing the nature of our God.

Second, let us confess our sin. We are a sinful people. Once sin is out of the way, we can then and only then begin to plead with God for His will to be done.

Teach Me to Pray