

your posture before God one of living in humility, faith, love, and devotion before God and having a heart for His church and kingdom?

Let me end this message showing you yet from the text how encouraged Nehemiah surely was in praying to God. How praying and looking to the Lord so helped him in seeing things rightly and moving forward for God and good. It is easy to miss this, but notice with me something Nehemiah says in verse 11 that so brings out his being strengthened in faith through prayer. *“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.”* Now who does Nehemiah mean with “this man”? He means none other than the King of Persia, the great king Artaxerxes. Nehemiah was the king’s cupbearer and he had in mind to talk to him soon.

But how now at the end of his prayer does Nehemiah view the mighty king of Persia, a man who had world power and life and death power in his hands? It is not for nothing that Nehemiah here labels the king as simply “this man”. It is not a label of disrespect but a label for a man who is but another creature in the hands of the almighty, supreme Lord God! Referring to King Artaxerxes here as “this man” is like a crescendo to Nehemiah’s prayer showing his trust and confidence in the Lord was not in vain. As one commentator put it, “In the eyes of Nehemiah, with his religious approach [in the way of prayer to God] [now] Artaxerxes was just a man like any other man. The Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes.” Nehemiah knew what Proverbs 21:1 also states, *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will.”* Comparing how Nehemiah viewed the Lord God as expressed in verse 5, as *“the LORD God of heaven the great and terrible [most holy and awesome] God”* and how Nehemiah speaks here in verse 11 of the greatest ruler on earth at that time as just “this man”, do you see how encouraged and strengthened in the faith he became also in the way of prayer to God?

Shall we learn from the God-honouring prayer[s] of Nehemiah the way we should go and how to pray in our day? Will you learn from Nehemiah’s persistence in prayer, his pattern in prayer, and his posture in prayer and will you live by it, also in this week before us and all your life long? Amen.

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BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST

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Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



NEHEMIAH’S GOD HONOURING PRAYER [2]

We are studying the book of Nehemiah and are in the part of chapter 1 where Nehemiah, following the sad report of the state of Jerusalem with her broken down walls, is led in the way of earnest prayer to God. Let me again read his prayer as given in Nehemiah 1:4-11. Listen to the Word of the Lord. *“And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, 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: 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. 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. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: 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 to set my name there. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. 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.”*

We are observing four facts about Nehemiah’s prayers, namely, his persistence in prayer, his pattern in prayer, his petition in prayer, and his posture in prayer. Last time we noted how Nehemiah did nothing apart from prayer and humble reliance on God; he was indeed a man persistent in prayer, which explains also his fruitful life to God’s praise. We also began studying his pattern in prayer noting how Nehemiah started with praise to God and then came in humble confession of sin before God, which led him then into pleading the promises of God for His mercy and grace for His own Name’s sake. As we continue now, it is interesting to notice when Nehemiah

moves from confession of sin to pleading God's promises for His mercy and help even when so undeserving of that in themselves, how his prayer is full of Scripture. True prayer is taking God's Word and bringing it back to Him in request and petition for His help. Verse 8 states, "*Remember, I beseech Thee, the word that Thou commandedst Thy servant Moses, saying...*" The LORD had promised and still does, that all who return to Him in repentance and faith and devotion to Him and His commandments will not be put to shame. God is faithful to His promises, Nehemiah knew, and so he pleaded with the LORD. Nehemiah speaks of how God had redeemed His people by His strong hand in the past which referred no doubt both to the exodus from Egypt and also to the return of many Jewish exiles back to the city of Jerusalem after so many years of banishment and Babylonian captivity.

In coming to the Lord in confession of sin and pleading and standing on the promises of God, we today may, even in a more clear way than Nehemiah in his day, bring before God His greatest deed of redeeming work by His great power and strong hand, and that is, of course, the work of Jesus Christ and Him crucified and risen again as almighty, gracious, glorious Saviour of sinners. As one prayer put it once, "O Lord of grace....To enrich me will not diminish Thy fullness; all Thy lovingkindness is in Thy Son, I bring Him to Thee in the arms of faith...." Indeed, "*For all the promises of God in Him [says Paul in II Corinthians 1:20] are yea, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*" You see, there is forgiveness and restoration and renewal found always in and through the Saviour, trusting in Jesus Christ and His precious blood shed on sinner's behalf. This is the great gospel, and no matter how corruptly and treacherously and repeatedly and horribly you have sinned against the LORD and all His commandments, the truth is "*the blood of Jesus Christ his [God's] Son cleanseth us from all sin*", and "*If we confess our sins He [God] is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" (I John 1:7b&9) That is God's own holy Word and promise. Nehemiah took that seriously, and it is striking in this regard how his prayer is filled with Scripture.

Do you in your prayers bring before God His own Word and His countless gospel promises? Are not God's true people those who live by the whole Word of God, ever looking to Jesus for the fulfillment also of His gospel promises, acknowledging if it were not for God's grace and mercy in Christ Jesus, what would become of us? Is that what marks your life and testimony too? Nehemiah clung to the LORD, the great covenant keeping God as He had so far revealed Himself in the Old Testament. Do you cling to the Lord and put all your trust in Him as revealed in the Bible, especially and ultimately in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Saviour of sinners?

In verse 11 Nehemiah moves into personal petition for his present situation to live for God and good. True prayer reflects also hearty

devotedness to God. We see that in verse 11 in Nehemiah again referring to himself as God's servant. Nehemiah shows his devotedness to God in demonstrating his readiness to act for the cause and people of the LORD, God helping him. His prayer then also becomes a personal petition as he was about to approach the Persian king regarding the bad and sad situation in Jerusalem. After months of prayer, Nehemiah felt himself compelled to ask the king of Persia to release him to work in Jerusalem for the rebuilding of the walls there. Chapter 2 will tell that story further about Nehemiah's interview with the king, but for now do you see with me his posture in prayer?

By posture I mean not so much now his physical posture but his frame of mind, his attitude in prayer. Does not Nehemiah in prayer reflect not only a humble attitude but one of great expectation and hearty devotion to God and His service? By the end of the prayer you know Nehemiah is prepared to give up himself in service to God in Jerusalem, God helping him. Not only does Nehemiah in his prayer reflect humble and hearty devotion to God but his life expresses that as well. In other words he is not praying with personal reservations before God, but with a desire wholly to give himself over to God and to live for His glory and honour as God sees best. His posture in this first chapter even, as comes out certainly in the remainder of the book too, is, as the hymn writer expresses,

"Take my life, and let it be, consecrated, Lord to Thee;

Take my moments and my days,

[and] let them flow in endless praise, let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands and let them move, at the impulse of Thy love;

Take my feet and let them be,

swift and beautiful for Thee, swift and beautiful for Thee."

Do you see this holy posture too in and with Nehemiah in his prayer here? Isn't this the gracious posture of all God's true people actually, and something they want to have so much reflected in their lives? Are not true Christians sorry whenever this is not what is the heartbeat of our lives, living all out for God and good? Nehemiah became the re-builder of the broken down walls of Jerusalem literally but can we not say for every Christian there are rebuilding projects for God and good in His church and kingdom that we can be involved in? Are there not countless reasons, considering God's wondrous redemption in Christ Jesus to be wholly devoted to Him and considering all the needs, to be active in His church and kingdom in endless devotion to Him? Isn't this what the Lord God impresses on His people, as many as trust and follow after Him? If you will live only and even mainly just for self and sin, and you care not for God's church and kingdom, that is not a sign of spiritual health in the way of the Lord. What is your posture in life? Are you in the gracious way of the Lord or still in the way of sin and unbelief? Is