

June 12th, 2022AM – Pastor Kevin Olivier
Nehemiah 2:1-10 – “The Good Hand of God”

- A. When things go our way, some of us may like to say like Nehemiah, **“the good hand of my God was on me” (v8)**.
1. God’s hand can be upon us for good or for loving discipline in the case of a Christian or for judgment for those who oppose God & His Kingdom.
 2. The hand of God was heavy upon the Philistines when they defeated the Israelites in battle & captured the ark after they
- B. Nehemiah identified himself at the end of the chapter 1 as **“the cupbearer to the king.”** As the cupbearer of King Artaxerxes, he was a highly trusted official.

God calls you to seek His good hand of favor.	I. NEHEMIAH’S PLEA BEFORE GOD & THE KING II. NEHEMIAH’S FAVOR BEFORE GOD & THE KING
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I. NEHEMIAH’S PLEA BEFORE GOD & THE KING

- A. Nehemiah’s plea for God’s favor did not begin in chapter 2. Chapter 1 records his Godly sorrow over the state of Jerusalem because its walls were broken down & its gates burned with fire (v3). Nehemiah confessed his sin & that of his family & the people of Israel that caused their captivity & exile in the 1st place.
1. Rather than being apathetic, he fasted & prayed before the Lord.
 2. → Look at **Neh 1:11** where he prays for God’s favor before making his plea before King Artaxerxes.
- B. It isn’t certain if Nehemiah could even approach the king to make a request of him. Even if allowed to approach the king, Nehemiah did not have opportunity to make a request because the king was able to look at his servant’s face & notice something was very wrong. → Look at **vv1-2**.
1. Nehemiah was afraid because the king had the power to throw him into prison, have him tortured, or even executed if that was the will of the king.¹
 2. His great fear was not without cause. His request— if not well-received by the king— could mean his great harm just as when Queen Esther had to go and make her request before her King & husband, Ahasuerus.
- C. When King Artaxerxes asked him about his sadness, notice how Nehemiah answered him in **v3**. → **v3**
1. Nehemiah’s sadness was not a “put-on” or exaggeration to get the king’s attention.
 2. **Neh 1:4** says this same news cause him to sit down wherein he **“wept & mourned for days.”**
 3. The king felt compassion for his servant. → **Neh 2:4** **“Then the king said to me, ‘What would you request?’”**
- D. What happens next is both an example of godliness but also instructive in a way for us to be much more prayerful. At the end of **v4**, notice Nehemiah 1st reacted to the king’s offer: **“So I prayed to the God of heaven.”**
1. Prayer does not have to be on one’s knees, with eyes closed, hands clasped or folded. You can pray to God in the middle of a conversation without others even taking note.
 2. A prayer can be brief & still very effective as it was in Nehemiah’s case.
- E. Nehemiah’s plea was marked by great respect to the king. → Look at **v5**.

¹ <https://historycollection.com/18-examples-of-crime-and-punishment-in-the-ancient-persian-empire/>

II. NEHEMIAH'S FAVOR BEFORE GOD & THE KING → vv6-9:

A. Notice the great extent of the king's favor upon Nehemiah:

1. In **v6**, the king allowed him to set a **"definite time"** to be away in Jerusalem. Some sources say he was away for about 12 years before returning to Persia serve the king.
2. He gave Nehemiah letters that ensured his protection & a degree of authority & support during his endeavor.
3. The text does not say he asked for this, but Nehemiah reported in **v9**: **"Now the king had sent with me officers of the army & horsemen."**

B. These amazing responses of favor before King Artaxerxes was because of God's favor upon Nehemiah.

At the end of **v8**, Nehemiah said the King granted all these things to him **"because the good hand of my God was on me."**

1. **Prov 3:1-6** gives us a bit commentary on how you can likewise obtain **"favor & good repute [reputation] in the sight of God & man."** → Turn to **Prov 3:1-6**.

- a. Keep God's commands.
- b. Be kind & truthful.
- c. Put God 1st – acknowledge Him rather than ignore Him.
- d. Trust G rather than **"lean on your own understanding."**

2. If you worship, obey, & trust God, you will delight in Him & He will delight in you.

- a. **"He will make your paths straight"** as he did with Nehemiah & the other saints of old.
- b. Seek God 1st that He would be **"your shield, your exceedingly great reward"** (**Gen 15:1**, NKJV). As Jesus put it, **"seek 1st His kingdom & His righteousness, & all these things will be added to you"** (**Mat 6:33**).

C. You can have favor before the Triune God & one of the most powerful kings in all of history yet still have wicked people who will oppose you & all that you seek to do on behalf of His kingdom.

→ Look at **v10**

D. On a day which He appointed, every man, woman, & child must stand before God's great white throne of judgment. The book of life will be opened & everyone will be judged by the things which are written in the books (**Rev 20:11-15**). On that day, will you have favor before God?

Review, further application, & conclusion: