

## **NEHEMIAH 1:5-11 -- Nehemiah prays for his people - in humility; looking to God's promises; with a heart ready for action!**

5/16/15 Sat Morn Prayer

### **Biblical Background:**

- Nehemiah hears of Jerusalem's crisis condition. Some 1,000 years after the time of Moses and some 400 years before the birth of Jesus, the nation of Israel and the Jewish people were in a desperate state. When the Jews were deported to Babylon, they began to make homes for themselves there. They settled down, and many still followed the God of their Fathers, but they did it from Babylon, with no desire to return to the Promised Land. But after 70 years of captivity in Babylon, they were given the opportunity to return to their homeland. Out of the some two or three million Jews deported from the land, only 50,000 decided to return to the Promised Land, but they did return, and in the days of Ezra, they rebuilt the temple and laid a spiritual foundation for Israel once again.
- The Book of Nehemiah begins 15 years after the Book of Ezra ends; almost 100 years after the first captives came back to the Promised Land; and some 150 years after the city of Jerusalem was destroyed. After this long time, the walls of the city of Jerusalem were still in rubble.
- Nehemiah hears of Jerusalem's condition. He wanted to know from those returning how the people and the city were doing. The news he received was not encouraging. The people were called survivors; this was not a hopeful title. They were in great distress and reproach, and the walls of the city itself were broken down and the city gates are burned with fire. They had no defense, no protection at all.
- Nehemiah's reaction to the news about Jerusalem and its people was extreme. He began to weep and to mourn for many days: **God was going to use Nehemiah** to do something about this situation. But first, God did something in Nehemiah. **Any great work of God begins with God doing a great work in somebody.** We see that he had a heart that broke over their needy state. God saw the need in heaven, but little would be done until the right man also felt the need. God would do something great to meet that need through Nehemiah. But there is no way Nehemiah could do this alone. He had to be a leader - one who influences other people - to get this job done. Nehemiah is a book **all about leadership**, something we obviously need today. Since leadership is influence, leadership applies to everyone. Leaders must prepare themselves for difficult work because it won't be easy. Leaders must have a big vision, and Nehemiah had one. **Through me, God is going to correct a problem** that's been around a hundred and fifty years. **Through me, God is going to do something** that completely failed down before. **We must have a vision, a goal that is big enough.** **If it is from the Lord it will abide and grow and the burden will remain until the problem that prompted the burden is solved.** We should note as well what Nehemiah did not do: **he did not complain, whine, or see who could fix this problem.** He **immediately did what he knew he could do - pray, and intensely seek God in this situation.** The God of heaven: Nehemiah also had a clear understanding of Whom he fasted and prayed to. There are many gods people trust in **but only the God of heaven can really meet** our needs.

### **Nehemiah's prayer.**

**(5-7) Nehemiah comes to God in humility:**

**(8-10) Nehemiah comes to God looking to God's Promises**

**(11) Nehemiah prays with a heart ready to do something.**

- **Prayer is essential to leadership.** If your vision is **so big that only God can accomplish it, then you obviously must pray.** If prayer **isn't absolutely necessary** to accomplish your vision, **your goal isn't big enough.**
- It appears that Nehemiah **prayed for four months before** he did anything. Later, when the work of rebuilding the walls actually begins, it **only takes 52 days to finish the job.** But that 52-day project had **a four-month foundation of prayer.**
- Nehemiah **took his pain and stress to God in prayer** - and seemingly, **was able to leave it there.** Prayer will relieve your stress. You may be trying to relieve stress through entertainment, but all that does is divert your attention. Entertainment doesn't give any solutions to stress. **Prayer will give you strength; when you wait on the Lord in prayer, He will renew your strength (Isaiah 40:31).**

### **Nehemiah proceeded to pray this prayer: (5-7) He comes to God in humility:**

**Neh 1:5 And I said: "I pray, LORD God of heaven,**

- **Humility begins by simply understanding there is a God enthroned in the heavens, and I am not Him!**

*O great and awesome God,*

- Nehemiah **recognizes exactly who God is.**

*You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments,*

*Neh 1:6 please let Your ear be attentive*

- Humility **also understands my complete dependence on God.**

*and Your eyes open,*

- When Nehemiah desperately asked God to hear the prayer of Your servant, it **reflected his complete dependence on the LORD.**

*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,*

- **Only God could help, and if God would only hear, Nehemiah knew He would help.**
- **God will allow you to be fruitless to expose your need for total dependence.**

*and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You.*

- Humility **will also confess sin openly.** Nehemiah plainly and simply confessed sin, without any attempt at excusing the sin.

*Both my father's house and I have sinned.*

- We must **always avoid excusing ourselves in the confession of our sin.** May we never say, Lord, if I sinned or Lord, I'm sorry, but You know how hard it was or other such nonsense. We can find great **freedom in open, honest confession, without any attempt at excuse** or wondering if I sinned or not.

*Neh 1:7 We have acted very corruptly against You,*

- Humility identifies with the needy. Obviously, Nehemiah was a godly man; but he openly and passionately put himself with his fathers' house, and prayed by **using we instead of they.**

*and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses.*

- You never lighten the load **unless first you have felt the pressure in your own soul.** You **are never used of God to bring blessing until God has opened your eyes and made you see things** as they are. (Redpath).

#### **(8-10) Nehemiah comes to God looking to God's Promises**

*Neh 1:8 Remember,*

- This is a **powerful way** to come to God, **asking Him to remember His promises.** Nehemiah said, LORD, You made a promise to Moses and this nation, I ask you now to make good on it. Nehemiah quoted from both Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 30.

*I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations;*

- This, no doubt, is **the secret to great power in prayer: to plead the promises of God.** We may be a bit annoyed when one of our children comes to us saying Daddy, **you promised;** but **our Father in heaven delights in it - and often demands it before prayer** becomes effective.
- In *Psalms 81:10* God says to His people, *Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.* God **will not open His storehouse until we open our mouths in asking Him to perform His promises.**

*Neh 1:9 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.'*

*Neh 1:10 Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand.*

- Nehemiah **quoted a conditional promise.** The condition was returning to God, and keeping His commandments. He really couldn't know if the nation was keeping the commandments, but **he knew that he was keeping them,** and because **he had identified himself with the nation in their sin** the nation could also identify itself with Nehemiah in his godly fulfillment of these conditions.

**(11) Nehemiah prays with a heart ready to do something.**

*Neh 1:11 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;*

- Grant him mercy in the sight of this man: Nehemiah concluded by asking God to bless him when he would soon speak to the king of Persia about the matter. Nehemiah was going to do something about the sorry state of Jerusalem's walls and people, and he knows without God's intervention, he can do nothing.

*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.*

- This is a prayer of a man of action, not a sideline critic. Nehemiah does not pray "God, make it all better" or "God, get someone else moving on this problem." Instead, his prayer is God, **use me to make it better.**
- Recognition of need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do.
- Laying the matter to heart, he did not begin to speak with other people about what they would do, nor did he draw up a wonderful scheme about what might be done if so many thousand people joined in the enterprise; but it occurred to him that he would do something himself.

**SUMMARY:**

- When the Lord lays something significant on your heart, what do you do? Complain or pray for the Lord to give you His plan of action for you?
- Do you always approach the Lord in all humility?
- Do you always acknowledge and confess your sins as you go to the Lord in prayer?
- Do you usually stand on the promises of God in your prayers?
- Do you pray for an open heart of action to respond to the leading of the Lord in answering your prayer/s?

**BE THOU MY VISION HYMN**

*Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart; Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art;  
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night, Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.*

*Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word; I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;  
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son; Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.*

*Be Thou my battle Shield, Sword for the fight; Be Thou my Dignity, Thou my Delight;  
Thou my soul's Shelter, Thou my high Tower: Raise Thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.*

*Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise, Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:  
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart, High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.*

*High King of Heaven, my victory won, May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall, Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.*