

## **NEHEMIAH 4:4-5 -- Nehemiah prays against their enemies!**

5/23/15 Sat Morn Prayer

***Neh 4:4 Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their reproach on their own heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity!***

***Neh 4:5 Do not cover their iniquity, and do not let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have provoked You to anger before the builders.***

### **Biblical Background:**

- 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.
- Nehemiah 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 meet our needs. - Cf. *Neh. 1:5:11*
- So Nehemiah goes to Judah. He views the City of Jerusalem, it's broken down walls and all the rubble. He rallied the people to go to work and rebuild the wall. Enemies, consisting of the Samaritans, the Ammonites and Arabs (led by Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem) became a huge resistance to the re-building. They taunted and threatened Nehemiah and the working people.
- Today we have **the second of Nehemiah's prayers to turn the reproach of their enemies on their own heads.**
- This prayer is **a great example of what to do and how to pray when facing a huge obstacle** to something that you know is of the will of God.
- Note what Nehemiah did -he prayed and also set a watch against the enemies (v. 9)! He did not depend on prayer alone; he also set a watch.

**(Vs. 4-5) Nehemiah comes against the discouraging attack with prayer-this time a group prayer.**

- **Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their reproach on their own heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity! Do not cover their iniquity, and do not let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have provoked You to anger before the builders.**

### **Hear, O our God:**

- Nehemiah's response was a great example. He didn't debate, he didn't form a committee, he didn't even **deal with the two enemies directly. Instead, he took it to God in prayer.**
- For Nehemiah, prayer was **a first resource, not a last resort.** When **times of opposition come, God wants us to rely on Him** - and the purest way of expressing our reliance on God is through prayer.

### **Hear, O our God, for we are despised:**

- In his prayer, Nehemiah **first asked for God's attention and mercy.** God did care about Nehemiah and the work of rebuilding, but Nehemiah **needed God to display it** and he **also needed to sense God's presence and care.**

### **Turn their reproach on their own heads . . . give them as plunder . . . do not cover their iniquity:**

- Nehemiah **then asked God to battle their enemies for them.** He depended on God to fight the battle. God gave him a work to do, and he would not be distracted from it.
- This prayer seems pretty tough, but prayers in the Psalms are even tougher: *Breath their teeth in their mouth, O God! (Psalm 58:6) Let their dwelling place be desolate; let no one live in their tents (Psalm 69:25).* **It is**

proper for a child of God to pray such a prayer, because they are giving their violent inclinations over to God, and letting *Him* deal with them.

- If we are angry at someone or have a real enemy, then we can go at them in prayer. **Never in the sense of praying evil upon them, but in turning them over to a good and just God, because He knows exactly what to do with them.**

### **They have provoked You to anger:**

- Finally, Nehemiah's prayer gave God a reason to show mercy and to come against his enemies. Nehemiah recognized that this was *God's* cause, not his own.

### **(v. 6) The result after the attack and Nehemiah's defense in prayer: the work continues on with greater and greater strength.**

- **So we built the wall:** God answered the prayer by giving them all a **mind to work**. A **mind to work** is a gift from God, and no significant job will ever be accomplished until people come together with a **mind to work**.
- This is exactly what Satan wants to destroy with his attacks - the **mind to work**. He wants to **make us feel defeated, or passive, or self-focused, or discouraged**.
- 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).**

### **SUMMARY:**

- When the enemies of the Lord come strongly against you, what do you do? **Complain or pray?**
- Never allow ridicule to stop your ministry; **"take it to the Lord in prayer"** and keep on working.
- Note Nehemiah's humble and devout address to God when he heard of these reflections.
- He did not upbraid them with their weakness, but looked up to God in prayer.
- He begs of God to take notice of the indignities that were done them (**Neh 4:4**), and we, too, are to do this: ***Hear, O our God! for we are despised.***
- He begs of God to avenge their cause and turn the reproach upon the enemies themselves.
- We should be not be **praying evil upon them, but in turning them over to a good and just God, because He knows exactly what to do with them.**
- The reproaches of enemies **should quicken us to our duty rather than to drive us away from it.**

### **HAVE THINE OWN WAY**

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!*

*Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.*

*Mold me and make me after Thy will,*

*While I am waiting, yielded and still.*

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!*

*Search me and try me, Master, today!*

*Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me just now,*

*As in Thy presence humbly I bow.*

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!*

*Wounded and weary, help me, I pray!*

*Power, all power, surely is Thine!*

*Touch me and heal me, Savior divine.*

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!*

*Hold o'er my being absolute sway!*

*Fill with Thy Spirit till all shall see*

*Christ only, always, living in me.*