

## The Prayer of a Burdened Believer (part III)

### *Nehemiah 1:1-11*

Pastor Michael Lynn - West Hampden Baptist Church

January 31, 2024 p.m.

Introduction: We looked last week at the first of two aspects of Nehemiah's prayer here in chapter 1, verses 1-11. This "model" prayer has been described as "a declaration of divine faith" (Lockyer). In verses 5-7 we have considered the adoration in his prayer (:5) & the confession in his prayer (:6-7). We come tonight to see the affirmation (:8-10) & supplication (:11) in Nehemiah's prayer. Recall that Nehemiah's adoration of the Lord in verse 5 reveals the truths of "who God is; what God does; & who God sees." Then in verses 6 & 7 we read of Nehemiah's confession. In this part of his prayer, Nehemiah identifies himself with his people & does not blame others. But he says, "*We have sinned against Thee: both I & my father's house have sinned.*" Let's conclude our study of Nehemiah's prayer here in chapter one by looking first at his affirmation & then at his supplication.

### III. The affirmation in Nehemiah's prayer (:8-10)

#### A. The rehearsal of God's promises (:8-9)

1. The **warning** against disobedience (:8) >
  - a. Nehemiah is quoting from Deuteronomy 4:25-27.
  - b. Nehemiah acknowledges the sin of his people & the fact that they deserved God's punishment.
2. The **witness** of obedience (after confession & forgiveness) (:9) >
  - a. Nehemiah is now quoting from Deuteronomy 4:29-30 & 30:2-3.
  - b. The implication of 1:9 is that "Nehemiah asked God to forgive His people, regather them to their land, & restore them to His favor & blessing" (Wiersbe).

#### B. The reminder of God's presence (:10)

1. The people recognized themselves as God's **subjects** ("*servants*") >
  - a. They humbly surrendered to the Lord as their "Redeemer."
  - b. "To the Lord, Nehemiah said, '*now these are Thy servants.*' They had endured much hardship & sacrifice to return to the Holy Land & rebuild the temple. They were God's servants whom He had redeemed & brought back to their home country, even as He had once redeemed their ancestors from Egypt" (Luck).
2. The people recognized themselves as God's "**people**" >
  - a. They were redeemed (delivered) by God's "*power.*"
  - b. They were redeemed (delivered) by God's "*strong hand.*"

Summary: We see here that Nehemiah's prayer rests upon the promises of God. "If we pray for that which God has already promised, we can pray with confidence that we are 'in His will.' Far too often, our prayers are selfish or general, & we have no clear-cut expectancy of seeing God answer them. Prayer that has its origin in the promises of God can be made with the definite assurance that God will answer" (Stevenson).

### IV. The supplication in Nehemiah's prayer (:11)

#### A. Nehemiah asks for God's attention:

{compare Psalm 130:2, "*LORD, hear my voice: let Thine ear be attentive to the voice of my supplications.*"}

1. “He had confidence in the power of God. When the Bible speaks of the eyes, ears, & hands of the Lord, it is using only human language to describe divine activity...He is able to see His people’s needs, hear their prayers, & work on their behalf with His mighty hand” (Wiersbe).
2. Nehemiah had previously prayed: “*Let Thine ear now be attentive, & Thine eyes open, that Thou mayest hear the prayer of Thy servant, which I pray before Thee now, day & night...*” (1:6).

B. Nehemiah asks for God’s acceptance:

1. That God would “*prosper*” him >
  - a. “*Prosper*” – give him success. “True prosperity is success in accomplishing God’s will.”
  - b. Compare Joshua 1:8-9, “...*for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, & then thou shalt have good success...*”
2. That God would “*grant him mercy*” >
  - a. The word “*mercy*” in verse 5 is “hesed” meaning “covenant love & loyalty.” But the word for “*mercy*” here in verse 11 is “rakham” meaning “compassion or pity.”
  - b. Nehemiah is asking for a favorable reception from the king.

Question? What was Nehemiah’s request? What would it mean to be granted mercy from the King? Was Nehemiah asking for someone else to lead in the restoration of Jerusalem’s walls & gates? Is he asking for personal permission to take charge in this restoration? We tend to read into the context what we learn in chapter 2. But let’s leave it to what we learn in 1:11, “*For I was the king’s cupbearer.*” What is the significance of this detail? Luck writes: “Authorities state that in ancient times this official tasted food & wine & then passed it to the people at the king’s table. He was chosen for his handsome appearance & was a person of noble birth & rank. Usually he possessed considerable influence with the king, being often near him (cf. the cupbearer of Pharaoh in Gen. 40-41).”

Summary: Nehemiah’s prayer is no ordinary one, but rather a prayer of one who is absolutely convinced of God’s power to do right. He had an attitude of total dependence upon the Lord. God alone is the answer to his (& Israel’s) problem. Nehemiah takes God at His word. This kind of prayer God will bless!

Conclusion. How then should we pray? We have examined Nehemiah chapter 1 as a “model” prayer. What are the elements of this prayer? There is adoration – emphasizing the character of God. There is confession – the confession of man. There is also affirmation, which also includes thanksgiving because of its emphasis on claiming the promises of God. And there is supplication, expressing the concerns of God’s servant. Does our praying include adoration, confession, affirmation, & supplication (cf. “ACTS” – Adoration – Confession – Thanksgiving – Supplication)? Consider the promise found in II Chronicles 7:14, “*If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, & pray, & seek My face, & turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, & will forgive their sin, & will heal their land.*” Wiersbe closes his thoughts on Nehemiah 1 by saying: “God is still looking for people who care, people like Nehemiah, who cared enough to ask for the facts, weep over the needs, pray for God’s help, & then volunteer to get the job done.”

May we continue to ask, “*Lord, teach us to pray...*” & then continue to hear & respond. How about you & me this evening?