

Concluding “Telegraph” Prayers

Nehemiah 13:14, 22, 29, & 31

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Introduction. The Book of Nehemiah closes with the Nehemiah’s emphasis upon prayer. He gives 4 prayers in chapter 13 (:14, 22, 29, & 31) like those in 2:4, 6:9, & 6:14. Wiersbe likens them to “telegraph” since that are short & to the point. Nehemiah’s prayer life illustrates his devotion to the Lord & his dependence upon the Lord. This sets a good example to us to follow. While speaking on Nehemiah’s prayer recorded in 2:4, Wisdom says, “But the months of prayer have crystalized his plans & when he hears the king’s question he is ready with a very specific - & bold – request.” Should not our “emergency prayers” be presented by frequent & fervent prayer in order to be ready for those “emergency prayers”? I want to summarize Nehemiah’s final “telegraph” prayers into 3 requests: his prayer for sanctifying of the Lord’s House, the sanctifying of the Lord’s Day, & the sanctifying of the Lord’s People.

I. Prayer for the sanctifying of the Lord’s House (:14)

A. The leaders failed to keep their promise of 10:39 (cf. 13:10-14) >

1. Nehemiah rebukes them for breaking their promise.
2. Nehemiah restores the place for the distribution of tithes & offerings.

B. The leader, Nehemiah, offers a “telegraph” prayer >

1. He prays that God will not forget his zeal for the Lord’s House (cf. Heb. 6:10).
2. “He reminded God of his faithfulness & prayed that what he had done would not be blotted out. Nehemiah was not pleading for blessings on the basis of personal merit, because he knew that God’s blessings come only because of God’s mercy” (Wiersbe).

II. Prayer for the sanctifying of the Lord’s Day (:22)

A. The Lord’s Day (Sabbath) was being violated >

1. The Jews were working & selling on the Sabbath (:15-22).
2. The Jews previous disobedience had led to their captivity (:17-18).

B. The Lord’s Day (Sabbath) is to be observed >

1. “He (Nehemiah) ordered the Levites to set a god example on the Sabbath & minister to the people” (Wiersbe). [Wiersbe points out that the Sabbath is not the “Christian Sabbath”?
2. Neal writes that though the Sabbath commandment is not repeated in the N.T., “The Church still observes the principle of one day in seven to be devoted to the worship & service of God. But exactly what is permissible on the Lord’s day & what is not to not specified. But the church, when it is in spiritual health, must so live that Sunday is kept for spiritual things. Nothing should be allowed to interfere with our religious duties on this day.”

Summary of Nehemiah’s prayer of verse 22 for mercy: “God’s mercy is what we must depend upon & not any merit of our own, when we appeal before God” (Henry).

III. Prayer for the sanctifying of the Lord’s people (:29, 31)

A. The disobedience of priests & defiling of the priesthood >

1. “The priests by careless, worldly conduct had ‘defiled the priesthood,’ the high office which God had committed to them” (Luck).

2. The priesthood needed to be “*cleansed*” (cf. Ezra 10:9-12).

B. The obedience of Nehemiah evidence once again >

1. In verses 29 & 31, Nehemiah again commits these situation to the Lord.

2. “The word ‘*remember*’ may be used in the sense of ‘help.’ But Nehemiah is not asking for present help to accomplish his work as much as he is asking to be remembered when he stands before God to give an account of his works” (Neal).

Conclusion: “This brief prayer (13:31) at the very end of the book is a characteristic termination of a book whereof one of the main features has been a constant carrying to God of all the author’s cares, troubles, & difficulties.” (Pulpit Commentary). “After a careful study of his book, we are left with a vivid impression of Nehemiah as a man of strong convictions & of forceful character. His ministry was not that of a teacher, but of a fearless, intrepid leader & hard worker” (Luck). Thus the Book of Nehemiah begins & ends with prayer. We have witnessed his “telegraph” prayers as he prayed for help. We see both his devotion to the Lord as a man of God as well as His dependence upon God. “We have Nehemiah’s brief, spontaneous prayers recorded in the book, but behind those prayers was a life of prayer. He certainly had a disciplined prayer life; for our ‘telegraph’ prayers accomplish little if our hearts are not in turn with God. Most Christians never realize the hours that leaders must spend in prayer in order to get the job done” (Wiersbe). Consider the end result of Nehemiah/s prayers as he asked the Lord to remember that what Nehemiah sought to accomplish for the Lord. It as if Nehemiah longed to hear the words, “*Well done, thy good & faithful servant...*”