

Everything Starts with Prayer Nehemiah 1

Introduction:

1. Have you ever gotten bad news and all you could do was just sit down and cry? This is how the book of Nehemiah opens.
2. Nehemiah was a Jew that was in captivity, but had a dream job working in the palace as the king's cupbearer. Although he was physically miles away from the once glorious capital city, Jerusalem, his heart was still there.
3. A group of Jews had been allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild it, but it wasn't going well at all. vs. 2-3
4. Nehemiah was heartbroken. Jerusalem was designed by God to be the glory of the whole earth and be a testimony to the true and living God, but instead it was in shambles and was a reproach.
5. At first, Nehemiah just sat and wept, but then he made the best decision he could have ever made. He prayed before the God of heaven. vs. 4
 - There is nothing wrong with sitting down and having a good cry - it's human. But it doesn't change one thing. Nehemiah decided to get proactive and he went to prayer.
6. God ended up doing some incredible things through Nehemiah, but here's what we need to understand - **it all started with prayer.**
7. From Genesis to Revelation, there are two common threads when it comes to prayer. First, God longs to have His people pray to Him. Second, God answers prayer.
8. In fact, if God is to do His work through us and through Crossroads, it will all begin with prayer.
9. This morning I want us to examine Nehemiah's prayer (vs. 5-11), make application to our lives, and allow God's Word to encourage us in our prayer lives.

Every time we pray, there are three vital truths we must remember.

God is faithful. vs. 5

1. God had a covenant with the nation of Israel called the Law of Moses (vs. 7). The word "covenant" carries the idea of a contractual agreement between two parties.
2. God had promised blessings to Israel based on their obedience to His commands within the covenant. "Keepeth" and "observe" are the exact same words.
3. God would keep His covenant promises **if** they kept His commandments. Nehemiah knew that God was faithful to keep His covenant agreement.
4. We are not under that old covenant today. God gave us all spiritual blessings **up front**, the moment we trusted Christ (**Ephesians 1:3**). It is not a situation where you have to perform to a certain level and then God may hear and answer your prayer.
Romans 7:6
5. But as we pray, like Nehemiah, we can also rest secure in the fact that God is faithful. All the spiritual blessings and privileges we have in Christ are ours forever. Romans 8 affirms that **nothing** can separate us from His love.
6. Over and over again, Paul reminds the church that God is faithful.
1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:24; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 2 Timothy 2:13

God is attentive. vs. 6a

1. Nehemiah's request in this verse is a typical Old Testament request. He was beseeching God to be attentive and hear his prayer.
2. In the Old Testament, God's eyes were continually fastened upon the Promised Land that He gave to His people, Israel. **Deuteronomy 11:12**
3. As long as they kept God's covenant agreement and obeyed God's law, God would listen, hear, and answer their prayers. **Deuteronomy 13:18; cf. Psalm 34:15**
 - When Israel was disobedient before His eyes, God said, "...I will not hear."
Isaiah 1:15-16, 59:1-2
4. Christian, you need to understand that God is not operating today with His children on the basis of a performance system (the law), but on the basis of His grace. **Romans 6:14**
5. You will **never** find in any of Paul's epistles to the church a request for God to open His eyes or His ears to believers. You will never find God's eyes or ears being shut to His children. Why is this?
6. Here is why: if you are saved, you have actually been given a position of **oneness** with Jesus Christ (**Galatians 3:26-27; Ephesians 5:30-32**). Your identity is **in Christ**. You have been brought into a spiritual union with Jesus Christ.
7. For God to deny **you** access to Himself, He would have to deny His very Son, Jesus Christ. Christ is said to be our intercessor (**Romans 8:34**) and our mediator (**1 Timothy 2:5**). For God to shut His ears to you, He would have to shut them to His Son.
8. Our unique position of being in Christ insures us total, unhindered access into God's presence. **Ephesians 2:18, 3:12**
 - Christ has forever made us at peace with God, and we stand sure in this grace.
Romans 5:1-2
9. Christian, you never have to worry that God is mad at you and has turned His eyes and ears away from you. God had to do this to His Son when Christ was made sin for us on the cross. Because of His great sacrifice, we have been made the righteousness of God in Him, and God will never turn from His Son again.
10. God's eyes and ears actually live within you because God's very Spirit lives within you, if you are saved. **Romans 8:9-10**

God is forgiving. vs. 6b

1. Nehemiah knew God's law program. He knew that sin had caused a separation between God and His people and that God's eyes and ears had been shut towards Israel.
 - This was why Israel had been taken captive by the Gentile nations and Jerusalem was lying in shambles.
2. So what did Nehemiah do? He did exactly what the law had instructed Israel to do. He began to repent and confess the sins of Israel. He did it in a three-fold way:
 - He confessed the national sins of Israel.
 - He confessed the sins of his family.
 - He confessed his own personal sins.

3. Do we see this kind of thing in Paul's epistles to the saints in this church age? It is nowhere to be found. You can confess the sins of America, your mom and dad, your husband, your children, etc. until you are blue in the face and it won't make one iota of a difference. Why is this?
4. Because God is not dealing with the world through a nation or nations today. He is dealing with every person on an **individual** basis.
5. You will stand before God based on your individual acceptance or rejection of Jesus Christ. If you are saved, you will stand before God individually for how you chose to live your Christian life. **Romans 14:12**
6. But there is an application we can make from this text. Just as Nehemiah knew that God was a forgiving God, I've got good news. He still is a forgiving God!
7. In fact, if you have accepted Christ as your personal Savior and have been made righteous in Him, you have total and complete forgiveness in Christ. **Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 2:13**
8. Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins on the cross and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.
9. The sin issue was dealt with on the cross. If you will place your faith and trust in Jesus' sacrifice for sin, on the basis of what Christ did, God will give you complete and total forgiveness today.
10. You do not have to detail all your sins to God. You couldn't remember them all any way. Nothing you have done will keep God from forgiving you. You must simply turn to Jesus Christ and place your full and total faith in what He has done for you.