

Food and Air to the Christian Life Nehemiah 9

Introduction:

1. There are two things you cannot live without - food and air. Just try it!
 2. Likewise, there are two life-giving essentials in the Christian life: they are the Word of God and prayer.
 - The Word of God is the spiritual food that nourishes and sustains your soul.
 - Prayer is what provides spiritual air capacity for you to function in Satan's world system. It should be as natural as breathing to the believer.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:17**
3. When a Christian emphasizes one of these to the neglect of the other, it is not good.
 - Neglect prayer - you become brainy, contentious, arrogant, and quarrelsome.
 - Neglect the Word - you become introspective, mystical, and emotion-driven, and experience-based in your Christian walk.
 4. Here in our text, this group of believers had been experiencing spiritual revival. In chapter 8 we saw that they were hungry for the Word and longed for it. But now in Chapter 9 we see them praying and it's the longest prayer recorded in the Bible.
 5. When the Word of God and prayer are equally active in a believer's life, what happens?

First, sin is exposed and forsaken. vs. 1-3

1. Verse 3 is very interesting.
 - They would read the Word of God for one fourth part of the day.
 - Then they would stand and confess their sins for a fourth part.
2. What do you think led them to confess their sins? Their exposure to the Word. The Word of God is a light that exposes sin. These people were reading the portion of God's Word known as the law. It contained over 600 righteous commands for the children of Israel.
3. Paul told us that the purpose of the law is to expose our sinfulness and show us our guilt before God. **Romans 3:19-20**
4. God does this so that we may turn in faith to God's provision for sin - the Lord Jesus Christ. **Romans 3:21-22**
5. After we place our faith in Christ, the Word of God is to be an active part of our life. It corrects wrong thinking and wrong actions and instructs us in the right way.
2 Timothy 3:16-17
6. But it is prayer that makes what we learn personal. It is through prayer that we find the strength to abstain from evil and follow righteousness (as revealed in the Word).

Second, God is put in His rightful place. vs. 4-6

1. The Levites begin to lead the people in prayer to God. Notice the discernment they have about who God is.
 - God's name is exalted above all blessing and praise. vs. 5
 - Whatever you can find that is worthy of blessing and praise, God is far above it.
 - God is Lord **alone**. vs. 6a

- He stands outside of time, space, and creation. He stands alone as Lord.
 - God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. vs. 6b
 - As you study God's Word and pray, you soon understand that any attempt to explain the origin of the earth, universe, and mankind other than an eternal, omniscient God is an exercise in foolish, man-centered, humanistic idolatry.
- Hebrews 11:3; Romans 1:20**
- God alone is worthy of worship. vs. 6c; **Romans 1:25**
2. Without a proper understanding of who God is, a person will never be able to understand how to relate to this awesome God. The Bible and prayer give us that understanding.

Third, God's goodness is recognized. vs. 7-15

1. In prayer, these people recognize the goodness and grace that God had bestowed on their nation. Of course they learned about this from God's Word.
2. As they recognized God's goodness in His Word, they praised Him for it in prayer.
 - They praise Him for His promises and His faithfulness in keeping those promises. vs. 8
 - They praise Him for being a personal God that cares. vs. 9
 - They praise for His deliverance and the light He gave. vs. 10-12
 - They praise Him for the revelation of His Word. vs. 13-14
 - They praise Him for His daily provision. vs. 15
3. Christian, as you read God's Word and pray, you find yourself recognizing God's goodness (you are keenly aware of it), and then praising Him for it.
4. **Colossians 3:16-17** becomes your pattern in life.

Fourth, you gain a proper perspective on life. vs. 16-38

1. As you read through this passage, you find a recurring theme. God gave to Israel His Word and His blessings. Every time, Israel would take the blessings for granted and disobey and disregard God's Word. vs. 25-27
2. When things fell apart, they would pray and return to His Word, but verse 28 sums it up, *"But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee."*
3. Every time they forsook God's Word and no longer esteemed it highly, they ended up in trouble. They had no discernment whatsoever and they fell prey to every sin and idolatrous system that came down the pike. vs. 29-30
4. It is no different today. Our only hope to keep the events of life in proper perspective is to read the Word of God and pray to the God of the Word.
5. This illuminates our thinking and actions and allows us to see life clearly, through the lens of God's Word. **Psalm 119:1-12** is a key passage. cf. **Colossians 2:7-8**
6. These believers in Nehemiah's day had gained a proper perspective about life. They were servants to the king of Persia. They were servants in the land God had given to their ancestors. But they knew why (vs. 33-37). It wasn't God's fault.
7. So what were they to do? Verse 38 - they dedicated themselves right then and there to God and His Word.

In Conclusion:

1. Christian: the Word of God and prayer are the food and air you need to live out the life God has given you in Christ.
2. Do you have life in Christ? Have you ever trusted Christ and obeyed the gospel of Christ as revealed in His Word?