

Nehemiah's Prayer of Supplication (Part 1 of #2)

Nehemiah 1: 5-11

As we began our study in the book of Nehemiah we found him serving the Persian king Artaxerxes in the palace of Shushan. His brethren had been to Jerusalem and brought word to Nehemiah regarding the state of affairs within the city. The news from Jerusalem was less than desirable and Nehemiah was troubled and broken over the homeland.

Upon hearing the news of Jerusalem, Nehemiah immediately began to pray and seek the Lord on behalf of the city and its people. He longed to go to Jerusalem and he knew that it would take the Lord's help and guidance to make the trip. Our text this evening records the prayer of Nehemiah. As we will discover, this was a powerful and honest prayer. Nehemiah has humbled himself before the Lord and has spoken candidly about the condition and needs of the people. He has prayed openly and honestly unto the Lord.

I always love to read prayers that are recorded in Scripture. They serve as an encouragement and a great challenge to me regarding my prayer life. As I studied these verses I was reminded of the power of prayer and the need for earnest prayer in our day. Surely we would have to admit that our society is in much the same condition as was Jerusalem. We have many of the same needs among us today. I trust as we look at the prayer of Nehemiah that we will be convicted of the needs within our lives and compelled to pray about the situation in our land. We need those today who will be open and honest with the Lord regarding our needs!

There is far more here than we could possibly cover in one study. We would do an injustice to the text if we tried to hurry through this powerful passage in one evening. So, I want to begin the first portion of our study as we consider the [aspects](#) of: [Nehemiah's Prayer of Supplication](#). First of all we discover that his prayer was:

I. A Prayer of Recognition (5) – [And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:](#) As Nehemiah begins to offer his prayer of supplication, he begins in recognition of the nature of God. We would do well to begin our prayers with the same attitude of recognition. We too need to be reminded and aware of all that God is! He recognized:

A. The Supremacy of God – Nehemiah refers to God as the [LORD God of heaven](#). This speaks of and recognizes the supremacy and majesty of our Lord. Nehemiah had experienced those who prayed to idols and false gods. He knew that many were looking to gods who had no power, but he was confident in the ability of the God he served.

- He recognized Him as **LORD**. This is God's redemptive name, Jehovah, "*the self-existing One*." Of all the gods that men served, none possessed the power and might of Jehovah. In fact, besides Him there are no gods. He alone is the true and living God.
- As we survey the needs of our day and the disparity of our land, we can rejoice that we serve the true and living God. We serve One who exists by the very nature of who He is. He depends on no one or seeks the aid or assistance of others. He is Jehovah, **LORD** of all.

B. The Sufficiency of God – Nehemiah knew that he served the true and living God, **the God who inhabits the heavens**. While others looked to gods made of hands and the imaginations of men, Nehemiah was confident in the sufficiency and power of his God. Surely he had experienced those who worshipped and called upon idols made of man and images of man's imagination. He had never witnessed those gods move in any way to provide the needs of humanity.

- Nehemiah's God is different than those of this world. They simply exist in images made of stone, wood, or other materials, but our God lives and inhabits the heavens. He refers to Him as God, *Elohim*, the creative name of God. Surely the God who created the heavens and the earth has sufficient power to meet our needs! What could we possibly face that the Creator could not handle? Nehemiah also recognized:

C. The Sanctity of God – He refers to Him as the **great and terrible God**. That is an interesting attribute of God. It doesn't reveal what we would think as we consider one who is **terrible**. This in no way reveals any evil on the part of God. It speaks of "*One who is to be feared and offered complete reverence toward; it has the idea of standing in awe of.*" Our God is great and terrible; He is an awesome God!

- Isn't that comforting and humbling at the same time. Nehemiah was aware that he was taking his petition before the God of heaven, the only true God. As he came before Him, he did so in humility and awe. It would do us good to see God for who He really is. I firmly believe if we could possibly grasp the holiness and sanctity of our God, we would never be the same. We would live differently; we would pray differently; we would worship differently. I pray that as we seek the Lord for the needs of our day that we will do so recognizing His holiness!

D. The Security of God – **the God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments**. Nehemiah was secure in the Lord, confident that He would hear and answer his prayer.

He was relying on the faithfulness of God. He had made a covenant with His people and Nehemiah knew God would keep His Word.

- Of all the attributes of God, this one brings me as much comfort as any. He is a God of faithfulness. He has promised to never leave nor forsake us. He has promised eternal life to all who come in salvation through the Son. We are secure in the Lord. All that His blessed Word promises will be fulfilled. [Rom.3:4 – ...yea, let God be true, but every man a liar](#);

E. The Stipulations of God – [the God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments](#). Nehemiah knew there were conditions for receiving the favor of God. He would not bless those who refused to live for Him. He would judge those who ceased to love Him and obey His commandments.

- That is a great truth that we need to be mindful of today. We cannot live as we please, contrary to the Word and will of God and expect His continued blessing. Our nation, as a whole, has abandoned the truth of God for the ways of the world. Many of our elected officials no longer seek to govern according to the precepts of God's Word. We cannot expect His continued blessing if we refuse to live as He would have us to. We need to pray for revival in our land so that we can receive the goodness of God rather than His judgment.

I. A Prayer of Recognition (5)

II. A Prayer of Resignation (6a) – [Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night](#). Let's consider the aspects of this prayer of resignation. First we see:

A. The Plea – [Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open](#). Nehemiah was troubled; he was burdened for Jerusalem and the people of God. He knew that they needed the Lord's help if they were to overcome and return to the state that God desired. He prays earnestly that the Lord would hear his plea and that His eyes would be open to their plight.

- We desperately need those who make their petitions known unto the Lord. I am well aware that He knows the condition of our lives and the troubles that we face, but we need those who are committed to seeking the Lord to heal our land and restore us unto Him. How long has it been since we had a real burden for the needs of our day?

B. The Passion – *that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant.* Nehemiah was committed to seeking the Lord on behalf of Jerusalem. He earnestly desired the Lord to hear and answer his prayer. As he heard of the conditions in Jerusalem he became deeply burdened and was compelled to intercede for them in prayer.

- Would you not agree that we need those who are passionate about prayer in our day? We need those who will seek the Lord in prayer with an earnest desire to touch heaven and achieve God's blessing. I fear that most of us have grown complacent and unconcerned with prayer. We need to make it a priority and earnestly seek the Lord in prayer!

C. The Persistence – *Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night.* This wasn't a simple prayer that Nehemiah prayed one time and moved on to something else. He was committed and he was concerned. He sought the Lord day and night for the needs of Jerusalem. Nehemiah was persistent; he was determined to pray until the Lord answered.

- Often our prayers are hurried and insincere. Many times we pray simply out of habit or because we feel as if we have to, but we need to pray with persistence, realizing the need and praying with a committed heart to see God move.
- We do pretty well for a short time, but if God doesn't answer in the time frame we desire, we often cease to pray. We need a genuine burden for our church, our community, and our world that will cause us to pray without ceasing.

D. The Perception – As I thought of this aspect of Nehemiah's prayer, I realized that he was totally dependent on God. Nehemiah knew that if Jerusalem was to be restored God would have to work in a miraculous way. He was admitting that they were helpless without Him.

- We need that same perception in our day. We need to come to the realization that we will never achieve what the Lord desires without His help. You would have to agree that we need God to move in a miraculous way in our midst as well. If our society is to turn toward God, He will have to equip us to reach them and move in their hearts to accept what He offers.

I. A Prayer of Recognition (5)

II. A Prayer of Resignation (6a)

III. A Prayer of Repentance (6b-7) – Here Nehemiah offers a prayer of repentance. This is essential if we are to see God move in our midst. We must get our hearts right with Him.

A. The Confession (6b) – *Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.* Nehemiah confesses before the Lord that the people have sinned. God was well aware of that, but I am sure He wanted Nehemiah to confess their sin. Nehemiah was honest before the Lord, repenting of sin and confessing their need before the Lord.

- We live in a time where few are willing to confess their sin before the Lord. Most are unwilling to acknowledge the sin in their lives. If we are to see God move among us again, we must be honest with the Lord about where we are and confess our sin.

B. The Admission (6b) – *and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.* Nehemiah is not pointing a finger of blame toward others. He is not rehearsing the sins of the people unto the Lord. He humbly admits that they all had sinned and come short of what God desired. He and his father's house had sinned as well, and Nehemiah admitted that to God.

- Most of us are pretty good at spotting and pointing out the failures of others, but we seldom admit the needs in our lives. If we are to experience revival and a restoration unto the Lord, we must be willing to examine our own lives and admit our needs! We all have sinned and failed the Lord. None of us could claim that we are living exactly as God desires. We must be willing to admit that before the Lord and forsake our sin.

C. The Corruption (7) – *We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.* Nehemiah gets down to business with the Lord. He doesn't pray the generic prayer, "Father forgive us if we have sinned." He gets to the source of the problem and confesses their corruption in detail. He admits they have lived corrupt lives, contrary to God's will.

- None of us live perfect lives. We all sin and come short of what God desires of us. Those who are saved are indwelt with the Spirit and He convicts us of sin. We know when we have sinned because the Spirit reveals that unto us.

- We need to be honest with God and confess those specific areas in our lives where we have failed. We need to specifically mention our sin to God and seek His forgiveness for those particular sins. As long as we are insincere about real repentance, we will never see a move of God among us!

We have come to a good place to conclude for this evening. We will pick up with [V.8](#) next week. As we close this evening, do you sense the need in our day? Are you burdened for the state our society and nation are in? Are there areas in your life that need attention? Has the Holy Spirit spoken to you about confession and repentance? He will not deal with you to repent for the sins of others, but for the sin in your life. Can we be honest with the Lord tonight and admit where we are? It's not my brother or sister, but it's me O Lord, standing in the need of prayer!

Maybe you have never trusted Christ as your personal Savior. If God has spoken to you, revealing your lost condition and need of Him, why not come and seek His forgiveness and salvation today?