

Standing in the Need of Prayer # 26

Nehemiah 9: 32-38

As I considered these verses I was reminded of a song that the children sing: It's not my brother, not sister, but it's me o' Lord, standing in the need of prayer. We are all pretty good at spotting and pointing out the needs in others' lives, but it is often difficult to take an earnest and honest look at our own. We see where others need prayer, but many times we fail to recognize our own needs, faults, and failures.

This 9th chapter of Nehemiah has recorded a long, sincere prayer the people had prayed unto the Lord. As they began to pray they recognized the many attributes of God and praised Him for all that He is. The people then began to remember and confess the sins and shortcomings of their fathers. It is good to recognize the failures of the past in an effort to prevent the same mistakes from happening again, but that alone isn't enough. The people realized that their fathers weren't the only ones who had missed the mark with God. In these closing verses, the people get honest with the Lord about the needs in their lives. The outward focus toward their fathers has now been turned inward to their own needs. Let's take a few moments to consider the [realizations](#) of their prayer as we think on: [Standing in the Need of Prayer](#).

I. The Confession of the People (32-35) – These verses reveal several realizations in their lives as they offer an earnest confession to the Lord. First of all we discover:

A. A Proper Recognition (32a) – [Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy](#). As the people begin to confess their sin and need before the Lord, they begin with a genuine recognition of Him. They realized that He was:

1. A Personal God – The people had endured the bondage in Babylon. They had returned to a land that was ravaged by the enemy. Theirs had been a difficult existence, but through it all they recognized that God had not forsaken them. He was still their God. They referred to Him as [our God](#). Life is difficult to bear at times; we all have seasons of storm and trial, and even times where we sin and come short. Even then our God is faithful. He is still our God!

2. A Powerful God – He is a [great and mighty God](#). They may have faced the burdens of bondage, but God had brought them out with a mighty, strong hand. As they considered the history of Israel, they were reminded of the power of almighty God. He was more than able to

meet whatever need they had. We face much that we cannot handle in this life. There may even be times when we feel as if we will never make it, but our God is able. He is a God of strength and power. He will never fail. We can rejoice in Him.

3. A Preeminent God – Ezra and the others also recognized God as the [terrible God](#). In our modern English, that may sound disrespectful and even fearful, but we must look at what the word literally means. It has the idea of possessing “*a godly fear and reverence; to be astonished; to stand in awe of.*” We cannot imagine what they had faced in their captivity, but they recognized the majesty and holiness of God. Through it all He had been faithful and He had not changed. As the people considered the Lord, they stood in a humble fear and admiration of Him. They were literally astonished and in awe of His glory!

- The modern church has lost that somewhere along the way. She has lost her fear of God and many no longer stand in awe of Him. We need to see God for all that He is. He is a God of love and mercy, but He is also a God of holiness and judgment. We need to humble ourselves before Him and stand in a reverent fear of God.

4. A Perpetual God – [who keepeth covenant and mercy](#). This really spoke to my heart as I studied this passage. Take a moment to consider all that God had done for Israel. Consider all that He had given them and the blessings they received. Then consider how they responded to His abundant blessing. God would have been just to have destroyed them or left them in bondage. But, God was faithful; He kept His covenant with them. He dealt with them in mercy.

- He is a perpetual God; He is consistent and never changes. He doesn't deal with humanity based on what we have earned or deserve. He deals with us according to His holy character. Were it not for His mercy and unchanging nature, we too would have been consumed in our sin.

B. A Pitiful Request (32b) – [let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day](#). The people acknowledged their iniquity and the iniquities of their fathers. They were not blaming God for their burdens. They knew God had been just in His dealings. There was no one to blame but themselves. They came before the Lord in repentance, seeking His forgiveness and healing. They pleaded with the Lord to cleanse them and bring an end to their suffering.

- Far too many want to blame God when they are confronted with their sin and forced to face the consequences that sin brings. God is always holy and just in His dealings with us. If we are

facing His chastisement, it is deserved. It does no good to grow angry or bitter with God. We must humble ourselves, repent of our sin, and seek His mercy and restoration in our lives.

C. A Penitent Resolve (33-35) – The people had come to a realization concerning their situation. They were penitent and sorrowful before the Lord. They recognized:

1. The Righteousness of the Lord (33) – *Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly:* They recognized that God had been just in His dealings with them. They had not endured the horrors of invasion and the difficulties of bondage because God had forsaken them. He had been merciful, sending prophet after prophet preaching repentance in the face of judgment. The people had rejected the call of God and were forced to suffer the consequences of their sinful ways. There was no blame to be laid at the feet of God. Mercy was extended for years and when it was ultimately rejected, deserved judgment came.

- We will have to admit that God has been righteous in His dealings with us as well. He has been patient and merciful. We were all born in sin and deserved judgment, but God offered mercy. Even in America, we are experiencing the mercies of God. If we don't change our course and return to Him, judgment will surely come, and when it does, we will have to say as Judah did that God was righteous and just in His dealings with us.

2. The Rebellion of the People (34-35) – *Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them. [35] For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works.* The people acknowledged their rebellion and transgression before the Lord. All were guilty as charged. The kings, the princes, and even their fathers, as well as themselves, had turned away from the Lord for the pleasures of the flesh. They had rejected His Word, abandoned His worship for the gods of this world, and refused to serve and follow the Lord. God had been faithful with His blessing and they had shunned His blessings to please the flesh.

- I cannot emphasize the importance of this resolve enough. We will never experience spiritual restoration and renewal unless we are willing to acknowledge our transgressions. We will have to admit that our society mirrors that of Judah. Most have rejected and even denied God's Word. The church has lost her desire for worship. Many are more concerned with the pleasures of the flesh than serving the Lord and living for Him. We want God to send the blessings our way, and yet many are unwilling to offer thanksgiving for those blessings. We must get honest with the Lord, repent of our sin, and seek Him with a humble heart.

I. The Confession of the People (32-35)

II. The Constraint of the People (36-38) – These verses reveal their admission concerning the restraint they endured. Notice:

A. Their Bondage (36) – *Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it:* They acknowledged the bondage that sin had brought. They were once again dwelling in the Land of Promise, but they were captives in their own land. Their return to Canaan was tempered by the fact that they remained servants to the Gentiles. They were home, where their fathers enjoyed the abundance of the Lord, but they were not free.

- There is a profound application that we need to grasp. We all understand the bondage that sin brings, but there is a great parallel for the believer in this passage. Sin and rebellion will result in spiritual bondage. The believer can be born again, adopted into God's family with all the benefits that sonship affords, and yet suffer bondage. When we allow the desires of the flesh to dictate our lives, hindering us from what God desires for us, we allow ourselves to become servants to the flesh. Many attend church regularly, but they don't enjoy the abundance of the Lord because they are serving the flesh instead of seeking to serve the Lord. Just because you dwell in a spiritual Canaan is no guarantee that you receive all that is available!

B. Their Burden (37) – *And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress.* Canaan was still Canaan; it continued to yield its abundance, but the people were forced to give of their abundance to please their captors. The people were forced to pay a heavy tax to the kings of Persia. They were forced to share the abundance of the Lord with those who had taken them captive.

- Isn't that tragic? We continue to see that today as well. Many receive the abundance that God gives, but due to their sin and rebellion, it is not enjoyed as it should be. God offers great blessing and many times those blessings are squandered, given to the world and its lusts. Sin always comes at a price. It is always more than we want to pay. I don't want to be guilty of neglecting the blessings of the Lord for the lure of this world.

C. Their Benediction (38) – *And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.* The people were ready for a new yoke. They had suffered in the bondage of sin and were now ready to repent and return unto the Lord. They were committing themselves anew unto God. They were weary of sin and the awful price it brings.

- We need that type of renewal in our day. We need those who will open their eyes to the needs of our day and throw off the yoke of sin. We need those who will forsake the ways of the flesh and seek the ways of God. Many today are trying to have it both ways and that will never work. We cannot serve the Lord and honor Him and be yoked up with the world at the same time. [Matthew 11:28-30](#) – Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. [30] For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Would you not agree that the song the children sing is a great illustration of this passage? It is easy to spot the needs in the lives of others and yet many times we cannot see our own needs. I know that none of us are perfect. We constantly face a battle with the flesh. Just as much as any other, we need the strength and help of the Lord. We must ensure that our lives are lived in light of God's holiness and that our sin is confessed before Him. He will forgive if we will confess and seek that forgiveness. [1 John 1:9](#) – If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.