

Nehemiah's Prayer

By Kent Heaton

Not everyone has a mind to work as diligently as the man Nehemiah, cupbearer of King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah was driven by his devotion to God and his earnest desire to help his people. While serving in the king's court, Nehemiah was overwhelmed with the plight of his people in Jerusalem as he explained, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire" (Neh. 2:3)? The king allowed Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem and under the oversight of this man of faith the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt in fifty-two days (Neh. 6:15).

Throughout the book of Nehemiah the ridicule, fear, guile, corruption and vicious attacks did not hinder his goal of rebuilding the walls of the city. His work did not end with the building of the wall as he went on to help Ezra reestablish the Law and to exhort the people to confess their sins. The key to Nehemiah's success was rooted in his deep love of prayer. Before approaching the king with the request to go to Jerusalem and before undertaking the enormous task that lay before him – Nehemiah went to God.

"O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man" (Neh. 1:11). There are four things that Nehemiah prayed for that will help you and I come to a fuller understanding of the nature of prayer.

First, he begins by asking God to hear his prayer. This is where faith opens the door of prayer. "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:6-8). Faith had declared in Nehemiah's prayer the "awesome" (Neh. 1:5) God and repentance representative of the nation of Israel and plea for forgiveness (Neh. 1:5-7). He pleads the promises of God (Neh. 1:8-10) and asked for mercy in his prayer. Our prayers should begin in faith and the recognition of the sovereignty of Him who is "awesome" and "Our Father which is in heaven (Matthew 6:9). There is none like Him (Isa. 40:18).

Second, Nehemiah recognizes the importance of fear before the Lord. Those who do not fear the name of the Lord will not prosper (Prov. 1:28-33). "If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD" (Deut. 28:58). Prayer is coupled with the fear of the Lord. Nehemiah will need this courage later in the story (Neh. 4:14) and the people will proclaim it in Nehemiah 9:32.

The third part of his prayer is asking for the Lord to allow him to prosper and to do the work he wanted to do. The request was tempered by the fourth element of prayer – the mercy of God. Nehemiah only wanted to serve the Lord and his prayer was to seek prosperity not of himself but the cause of his God. How often do we pray that God's will be done (Matt. 6:10) and not our own and to accept the answer given by God – even if it is not the answer we desired. Prayer is the expression of our faith in the wisdom of God to carry out His will through us. Nehemiah guided the people to the

incredible task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in 52 days. What can we accomplish with prayer?

And God Said No

I asked God to take away my pride, and God said, "No." He said it was not for Him to take away, but for me to give up.

I asked God to make my handicapped child whole, and God said, "No." He said his spirit is whole, his body is only temporary.

I asked God to grant me patience, and God said "No." He said that patience is a by-product of tribulation, it is not granted, it is earned.

I asked God to spare me pain, and God said, "No." He said, "Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares, and brings you closer to me."

I asked God to make my spirit grow, and God said, "No." He said I must grow on my own, but He will prune me to make me fruitful.

I asked God if He loved me, and God said, "Yes." He gave His only Son who died for me, and I will be in heaven someday, because I believe and obey.

I asked God to help me love others, as much as He loves me, and God said, "Ah, finally, you have the idea."

Turtle on a Post

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3).

Alex Haley, the author of "Roots" and other books, had a picture in his office which showed a turtle sitting atop a fence post. The picture was there to remind him: "If you see a turtle on a fence post, you know he had some help." Mr. Haley said, "Anytime I start thinking, 'Isn't this marvelous what I've done!,' I look at that picture and remember how the turtle - me - got up on that post."

1Peter 5:5 says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

In, To, or For

"Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.' But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.' Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.' Having said this, He breathed His last" (Luke 23:39-46).

We have before us a scene which displays three crosses. One cross pictures a thief dying IN sin, and the other a thief dying TO sin. The center cross portrays the

Redeemer dying FOR sin. The center cross divides all humanity into one of two categories. Those who reject Christ and die IN sin, and those who receive Christ and die TO sin. Which category are you in?

A Moments Wisdom

Some people are hard boiled because they stay in hot water most of the time.
Voluntary slavery to sin is some people's idea of personal liberty.
Courage is not the absence of fear, but the conquest of it.
You don't have to institute a lawsuit in order to collect the wages of sin.
Do not give from the top of your purse, but from the bottom of your heart.