

The Prayer of Nehemiah

Text: Nehemiah 1

INTRODUCTION:

1. Prayer is an essential part of every Christian's life.
2. "My prayers are the one grace which my foe cannot refuse" (Trench).
3. Prayer is powerful.
4. May we learn how to pray for others by studying the example of Nehemiah...

I. PRAY EARNESTLY (1:4)

- A. Before Nehemiah prayed, he wept, mourned, and fasted.
 1. This indicates the earnestness of his prayer.
 2. He was not giving mere lip service (cf. Matthew 15:8).
 3. He was not uttering a "vain repetition" (cf. Matthew 6:7).
 4. He was not just going through the motions.
- B. He was pouring out his heart in his prayer (cf. Luke 22:41-44; James 5:16).

II. PRAY REVERENTLY (1:5)

- A. Nehemiah began his prayer by giving glory to God.
- B. Certainly, God is deserving of man's reverence.
- C. Yet, He can be approached by His children with assurance and boldness.

III. PRAY PERSISTENTLY (1:1, 4, 6; 2:1)

- A. Nehemiah did not offer a half-hearted prayer only once and then become discouraged.
- B. The text indicates that he prayed for days – for four months!
- C. God wants His children to pray with persistence (cf. Psalm 88:1-3; Genesis 18:23-33; Luke 18:1-8).

IV. PRAY HONESTLY (1:6-7)

- A. Nehemiah did not try to hide or deny his sins before God (cf. 1 John 1:7-10; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Isaiah 59:1-2; 1 Peter 3:12).
- B. Nehemiah did not try to ignore or cover up the sins of the nation of Judah.
- C. Nehemiah examined himself before he approached God (cf. 2 Corinthians 13:5).
- D. Only then did he pray for mercy (vs. 10-11).

V. PRAY SCRIPTURALLY (1:8-10)

- A. Nehemiah quoted Scripture in his prayer to God.
- B. Nehemiah's knowledge of Scripture was essential to his prayers.
 1. Scripture taught him to pray.
 2. Scripture taught him how to pray.
 3. Scripture taught him God's Will in prayer.
 4. Scripture taught him God's desire to answer prayer.
- C. Thus, Nehemiah's prayer was a prayer of faith (cf. Romans 10:17).

VI. PRAY DEVOTEDLY (1:11)

- A. Nehemiah was dedicated to humility.
- B. Nehemiah was dedicated to service.

Practical Prayer

- C. Nehemiah was dedicated to repentance.
- D. Nehemiah was dedicated to submission.
 - 1. His attitude was one of complete trust in and dependence on God.
 - 2. Even though he was the king's cupbearer, he asked God to prosper him.
 - a. We may have great jobs, but God is the one who prospers.
 - b. We are always dependent upon Him (cf. Matthew 6:11).
 - 3. His prayer was to find favor with the king in the performing of his duties.
 - a. Nehemiah understood that his job was a means of serving God.
 - b. He knew that it could present opportunities to be of service to God.
 - c. Why do we work? (Cf. Ephesians 4:28; Acts 20:34-35)

VII. PRAY FAITHFULLY (2:1-6)

- A. Nehemiah did not see prayer as an exercise in futility.
- B. Nor did he expect God to "do all the work" for him.
- C. Consider how God did not answer Nehemiah's prayer.
 - 1. He did not miraculously rebuild the walls around the city of Jerusalem.
 - 2. He did not send angels to drive away the enemies of His people.
 - 3. He did not miraculously take Nehemiah from Shushan to Jerusalem.
- D. Now, consider how God did answer Nehemiah's prayer.
 - 1. He allowed the king to show kindness to Nehemiah.
 - 2. He allowed Nehemiah to find favor in the king's sight.
 - 3. He allowed the king to grant Nehemiah's request.
 - 4. He allowed Nehemiah to travel to Jerusalem and begin leading the people in rebuilding the city and the walls.
- E. The answer to Nehemiah's prayer came through God's ability to use Nehemiah!
 - 1. "Pray as if it all depends upon God; work as if it all depends upon you."
 - 2. If we pray for something, we also must be willing to work for it!
 - a. We pray for the lost – Will we go and teach them?
 - b. We pray for the wayward – Will we go and seek them?
 - c. We pray for the sick – Will we go and visit them?
 - d. We pray for the church – Will we work for it?

CONCLUSION:

- 1. Much can be learned from the prayer of faithful Nehemiah.
- 2. Will we pray like he did?
- 3. Will we work and serve like he did?