

August 5, 2018 - Nehemiah 1: 1-11 - Catch the Burden and Pray

Cautions, Counsels and Consequences lessons learned from Old Testament passages.

Introduction:

A missionary to Zaire told the following story about a mother who died after giving birth to a premature baby at their mission post. She said, "We tried to improvise an incubator to keep the infant alive, but the only hot water bottle we had was beyond repair." So during devotions that morning we asked the children to pray for the baby and for her little sister who was now an orphan. One of the girls, prayed, "Dear God, please send a hot water bottle today. Tomorrow will be too late because by then the baby will be dead. And dear Jesus, send a dolly for the sister so she won't feel so lonely." That afternoon a large parcel arrived from England. The children watched with eager anticipation as we opened it. Much to their surprise, under some clothing was a hot water bottle! Immediately the girl who had prayed so earnestly started to delve deeper, exclaiming, "If God sent that, I'm sure He also send at doll." And she was right! Our Heavenly Father knew in advance of the child's sincere request and five months before, He had led a Church ladies group to include both of those specific articles. Prayers changes things, prayer changes lives, prayer grants us the power and provisions of Almighty God. In this passage before us today we see the heart of prayer. Nehemiah allowed the anguish and misery of his people to pierce his heart

I Nehemiah Beseech God in Prayer vv.1-3

1. After seventy years of captivity in Babylon, the Jews were given the opportunity to return to their homeland. Only 50,000 decided to return to the Promised Land about 2% of the two or three million Jews deported from the land. But they did return, and in the days of Ezra, they rebuilt the temple and laid a spiritual foundation for Israel once again but the walls of the great city of Jerusalem lay in ruins and so by that day's standard it was less than great...

2. In the ancient world, a city without walls was a city completely open and vulnerable to its enemies. They had no defense, no protection at all. They were but a backwater town.

This information of Nehemiah's beloved homeland being improvised crushes him. This message came by means of some natives in Chisleu which is the 9th month of the Jewish calendar corresponding to our Nov-Dec. Their new month began on the full moon and is a lunar calendar. The normal path at this point is to be angry, place blame and be frantic.

NE 1:4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,

3. Nehemiah took his pain and stress to God in prayer - and seemingly, was able to leave it there. Nisan is four months later as we see in chapter 2:1 and his prayer begins to be answered. Nehemiah resists the temptation to jump right into the challenge and orchestrate the wall's repair himself. Instead, he goes to his knees. Folks, prayer will relieve your stress and anguish.

4. Nehemiah was called to build the walls, but first he had to weep over the ruins.” We note in verse four that he is deeply sadden, moved and burden. Folks, if we are to have any sort of revival we need the burden for souls and then to pray. Alan Redpath wrote: “Let us learn this lesson from Nehemiah: you never lighten the load unless you first have felt the pressure in your own soul. You are never used by God to bring blessing until God has opened your eyes and made you see things as they are. There is no other preparation for Christian work than that. Nehemiah allows compassion to well up inside of him and move him to many prayers.

II Nehemiah Prays in Conviction vv.1:5

1. Nehemiah called God "great." He recognized that not only was God's position above all others, but that his attributes and character were above all others. Nehemiah called God "awesome." He recognized that God deserved to be honored, revered and feared by all. Nehemiah described God as the one who keeps his promises. He recognized that God was truthful, faithful and could be trusted. He confessed sin that would be an obstacle. 1:6-7

Notice the words “we” and “I.” This further identified Nehemiah with this challenge. He could have brushed it off as a deficiency in the lives of “those” people in Jerusalem. Instead, he saw the whole problem and his place in the problem. What about you are you?

2. We have to go to God with an attitude of humility noting where we have sinned and asking God to point out our failings so that we might not have to carry them around with us any longer. If we are to get things done we must go to God first and get rid of any weight that is hindering us. **HEB 12:1**

Is. 59: [2] But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear.

Nehemiah is very open about the sins of his people. There's no use in trying to hide your sin from God.

Illustration:

*** There is the true story about some Boeing employees who decided to steal a life raft from one of the 747s. They were successful in getting it out of the plane and home. They forgot about one thing. The raft comes with an emergency locator that is automatically activated when the raft is inflated. So, when they took the raft out for a camping trip down the River, they were quite surprised by a Coast Guard helicopter homing in on the emergency locator that was activated the moment they inflated the raft. "They are no longer Boeing employees." Trying to hide your sin from God is impossible. He's knows about it even before you do it! Getting right with God is what revival is all about and then getting the burden for the lost and wayward.

3. Nehemiah not only confesses the sin of the Israelites, he includes himself as one of the guilty. Now, remember, Nehemiah had never been to Israel. He was born in captivity. He might be tempted to think that none of this trouble is my fault. But he is very careful to say, "I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against

you." As Nehemiah confesses his sin he is also aware that God is a God of grace. In verse 5 he mentioned that God keeps his promises with those who "obey his commands," and yet now he openly confesses that they have acted wickedly and have not obeyed God's commands. How can Nehemiah expect God to answer his prayer? He is aware of God's grace which has been expressed in the promises God has given to his people.

III Nehemiah Prays in Confidence vv. 8-11

1. So, the next part of the prayer is a prayer of confidence in what God has promised. The promise had two aspects; first in vv. 8-10: If Israel disobeyed, they would go into a foreign land. This had come to pass. The second part was that when that time of captivity was ended, God would bring the Jews back to Jerusalem and protect them. It appears that Nehemiah prayed for four months before he did anything. Later, when the work of rebuilding the walls actually begins, it only takes 52 days to finish the job. But that 52-day project had a four-month foundation of prayer. Folk's revival is the building of a get institution the church of Jesus Christ we need to bathe it in prayer.

2. Application:

Prayer activates my faith. After praying, I am more prone to trust God and with this trust come an attitude of hope and peace that replaces the petty and critical attitudes that come when we haven't prayed. As God's people we must learn to pray in the midst of problems, following God's Word. The devil is going to attack you, your family and your church, you can be sure of that. But praise God: "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. Believe in the power of prayer.

(For the weapons of our warfare [are] not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds- II Co.10:4

We often make our requests quietly and confidently, but there are times when we cannot help but cry out to God in heartbreak and anguish. When we ask, souls are saved. Look with me at Psalm 126:6. --- **The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer. —Psalm 6:9**

Mrs. Roberta Messner tells a story of praying in this month Guidepost entitles "What Prayer can do" on page 48 you should read it. The new nurse insisted on praying over the charts and by doing so she found a notation in a chart that had been missed and the patient needed to be isolating stat. The staff missed this but prayer did not, the new nurse had a great back up system. We do too.

Conclusion:

As Christians, we believe God hears us when we pray not because we deserve it but because Christ has opened the way for us to talk directly to the Father. That happened when Christ took our sins away and home heaven's gate. Nehemiah was asking for success to accomplish God's desires. God says we can have this kind of confidence. --- **Hebrews 10:19-22**

--- Communion