

PRAYING In The Bible

Prayer in the Bible: Nehemiah prayer

In Nehemiah 1:4-11 we find a man praying to God. We also find a man who has a troubled heart. Nehemiah has been in captivity. He was given the job as cup bearer to the King. This was an extremely dangerous job. Poisoning the King was hard to do if you poison the cup bearer first. God will sometimes appear to put his faithful people in harms way. Yet, Nehemiah was placed extremely close to the King. This man had received news that his home town of Jerusalem was in shambles. This pricked his heart. The King noticed that Nehemiah was not poisoned but grieved.

This is where we find Nehemiah. Weeping, distressed, and fasting before the King and his God. Sometimes we get ourselves in a jam. Unfortunately, that is the time when we usually turn back to God. We don't know the heart of Nehemiah. Where was he with God to this point? Yet, in his time of trouble he turned back to the Lord. I took a course on Prayer. The Professor said that fasting and solitude will help bring clarity. That is exactly what Nehemiah did. He fasted, wept, and cried out in despair to the Lord.

With that said, Nehemiah uses the template of prayer. He honors God by putting Him in His rightful place. The Lord is in Heaven above us. He is good and consistent with His word. It's not about buttering God up. Instead, we are to remind ourselves where God sits in our lives. Nehemiah asks God (not demands) if He will lean His ear to this servant. Nehemiah is not praying for himself although he is in despair about Jerusalem. Instead, he is interceding for his country and the people in it. I love it that he begins by confessing the sins of Israel. To throw

them under the bus? Heavens no, Nehemiah says “we” have all sinned. “we” have “all” acted very corruptly.

To remind God of His word is not to force Gods hand. I know it looks that way. Someone said that God was forced to kill Jesus. God was subservient to sacrifice for sin. It’s a yes and no answer. God must keep Himself holy. To be a God who is holy, righteous, and sinless, He must remain pure holiness. If God became less than holy, we are all in trouble. So, yes God is subservient to holiness because it keeps His kingdom from falling into corruption. We remind God of His word. The prayer is saying we agree with Gods word and that we are subservient to it as God is. To Keep the Lord holy. So, Nehemiah reminds God that He is holy and we are not.

Yet, there is more. This prayer is so good because it also reminds God of His promises. God said that if His people would follow the commands and ways of the Lord that God would restore and protect them. This is not about a demand; rather, it’s about saying we want to return to the Lord. So that the righteous God will honor His promises. It is more about us returning to God than God fulfilling His promise. This is a humble prayer. God, could you listen to us even though we have all sinned? Confession, repentance, and prayer is a good thing.

Nehemiah 1:8-9 *“Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.’*

What a great set of verses. Nehemiah mentions that if we don’t follow God the Lord will scatter them. That is exactly what had happened to them. Yet, this man also reminds God that if

we return to the Lord that God will restore the kingdom. I like it that Nehemiah says not only have the people sinned but even those in the house of God. All have sinned and all have fallen short. I love verse 10 saying they are your servants and people. We can only be redeemed by God's power and might. Nehemiah adds himself as a servant who delights in fearing God's name. What a humble prayer.

I like it that Nehemiah does not say "if" we are granted success. Instead he boldly says he fears the Lord and please give us success. That is bold. Grant your servant mercy in the sight of the King as he petitions to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah knows that asking of the King is dangerous. It's bold and gutsy. The only way he could be granted the request is by the mighty hand of God upon the King. See how this man is believing in himself because he believes in God. This is the way we should pray.