

The Restoring of God's People

Nehemiah 1&2 – The Mystery and the Power of Prayer

Sermon Outline Notes

All scriptures are quoted from the New International Version (NIV)

The last time we looked at chapter 1 we considered the source of Nehemiah's distress and how he shared God's passion for the city of Jerusalem. We likened this to us sharing God's passion for the Church.

Today we will look more closely at the role prayer played in Nehemiah's life resulting in him being God's instrument of restoration.

1. Possible responses to bad news regarding the honour of God:

- a) Can't afford to get involved.
- b) Rush to put things right with all our energy.
- c) Take the problem to God.

2. Nehemiah cared enough to get involved and prayer was his response. (There are 12 instances of prayer recorded in this book)

3. He had faith to wait 4 months (Kislev to Nissan)

What was happening during this time?

- a) He was catching more of God's heart for Jerusalem.
- b) He was receiving a vision of a restored city.
- c) Detailed plans were forming in his mind as to how this vision was to be realised.
- d) God was preparing him to be a willing and effective instrument.

Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Philippians 2:12-13

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. Ephesians 3:20

It has been said that prayer is not getting man's will done in heaven, but getting God's will done on earth.

4. Trusting in God's faithfulness, he identifies with the sins of his nation. This is a mark of true intercession. (Repentance must be personal)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

Confession clears the ground for works of faith, otherwise Nehemiah might have acted out of a sense of guilt, (Dead works) rather than faith.

5. Having counted the cost, he makes himself available to God.
He was to leave comfort and security for a ruined city, ridicule, slander and danger. He would also spend his own money looking after the needs of others. (5:17)

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.
Philippians 3:7-8

6. The test of faith; how would Nehemiah approach the king?

What mood would the king be in? To anger the king could mean death. He did not force the issue, but rather trusted that God would open the door. In response to the king's question, Nehemiah asks a question to arouse the king's sympathy and interest.

The door opens wide, "What do you want?"

What a contrast when we approach the throne of God.

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:16

7. He not only *prayed* for an opportunity, but he also *planned* for it and had his answer ready.

Note that his "emergency prayers" (2:4, 4:4, 5:19, 6:9,14, 13:14,22,29,31) were part of a life of prayer.

Nehemiah is now very bold, "Send me" and "Give me"

He could not leave his post without the king's approval and he could not work in Jerusalem without the king's authority.

His requests:

- a) Make me governor so I can organise the work.
- b) Give me letters of introduction for safe conduct during travel to Jerusalem.
- c) Give me letters of authority to obtain the necessary materials.
(As governor, he was given military escort.)

8. God's gracious hand was on Nehemiah to make the king co-operative (2:18)

9. He had faith to challenge others. (2:20)

In spite of opposition, in just 52 days (Just over 7 weeks), the walls were rebuilt and the gates restored.

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