

NEHEMIAH
PRAYER & PLANNING

Tuesday, October 6
Reading: Nehemiah 1-2

Nehemiah 2:4 *Then I prayed to the God of heaven, 5 and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it."*

Though the Temple had been rebuilt, the city of Jerusalem itself remained unprotected. Though several attempts had been made in the past to rebuild, they had all been prevented by Israel's enemies.

Nehemiah was in an important position. As cupbearer to the king, he had the responsibility of making sure none of the king's food and drink was poisoned. He would be one of the most trusted men in King Artaxerxes' court. But Nehemiah's heart was in Jerusalem. When he heard about the plight of his countrymen he went into mourning.

Nehemiah knew where to take his concerns. He turns to the Lord in serious prayer. He confesses the sins of both himself and his nation and pleads with God to remember the covenant promises He had made to Israel. He closes by asking for God to give him success as he approaches the king.

Nehemiah was taking his life in his hands by making a request to rebuild Jerusalem. Artaxerxes had already stopped this rebuilding once before (Ezra 4:7-23). Nehemiah waits patiently for the right time to approach the king. Four months later the door opened. The king noticed Nehemiah's sad face and asked him about it. Nehemiah's quick prayer reveals the tension of this situation. To be sad in the king's presence was a capital crime because it showed dissatisfaction with the king himself.

Nehemiah's answer to the king showed that he had done more than pray during his months of waiting. He had a plan and could tell the king exactly how long the rebuilding would take and what would be needed to complete it successfully. God's hand was with him and the king approved of Nehemiah's mission.

LESSON ONE: A leader's first thought should always be prayer! Nehemiah's prayer contained praise, confession, and a reminder of God's mercy and His promises. Does your prayer life contain serious times of praise, confession, and pleading with the Lord? Study Nehemiah's prayer and then look up some other prayers in the Bible to help you become a better prayer warrior (see below).

LESSON TWO: A leader thinks of others first! Though he had position at the royal palace, Nehemiah did not lay back and let someone else handle the problem. He used and left his "cozy" position in order to help his people. Have you given up anything to help others in need? What might God be calling you to lay aside to serve Him?

LESSON THREE: Though prayer is always a first priority, it must be followed by planning and organizing! Nehemiah knew exactly what was needed to do the job. What has God called you to do? Have you thought about what you need to do to fulfill God's call?

¹ Prayers: 1 Chronicles 17:16-27 - David after God promised him an eternal kingdom
2 Kings 19:14-19 - Hezekiah when Jerusalem is threatened by the Assyrian army
Daniel 9:1-19 - Daniel just before the 70-weeks prophecy is given to him
Ephesians 3:14-21 / Colossians 1:9-13 – Prayers of the Apostle Paul