

Nehemiah Sermon #2

Turn in your Bible to the Book of Nehemiah Chapter One.

The story opens in the winter time; it was the month of Chislou, our November or December.

Nehemiah lived in Sushan, the capital of the Media-Persian empire, **the Washington, D.C.**, of it's day. It was a hub of activity, the place of ultimate decision-making in the world at that time.

Nehemiah worked for the king. A group of Jews came from Jerusalem. Included in this entourage was Nehemiah's brother. Nehemiah of course wanted to know about the people: he wanted to know the condition of the beloved city of the Jew – Jerusalem. What he heard was not good.

Nehemiah became concerned / burdened. – Chapter 1 contains the marvelous prayer of a man that God so greatly used in the nation of Israel.

I've entitled today's sermon – The Prayer Life of Nehemiah

Neh. 1:2

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word

Neh. 1: 2-11

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

“The Prayer Life of Nehemiah”

So when Nehemiah heard that there had not been any progress on the reconstruction of the city – particularly the walls and gates – Nehemiah was moved. Their report had a distressing effect – a crushing effect upon Nehemiah

Nehemiah was touched by the need of his people.

Vs. 4a - “It came to pass when I heard these words.” (vs. 3)

Nehemiah was not preoccupied; he did not live in a dream world, opposed to reality.

He asked, “What’s the condition?” They replied, “It’s a miserable situation.”

He heard what they said.

You may think recognizing needs is an elementary concept, especially for leaders. But I have met many people in responsible positions who never seem to see the problems they ought to be solving.

Are we aware of needs? How about the needs in our own family; our church family?
Are we sensitive as a parent or as a mate?

Nehemiah went a step beyond recognition of the problem.

He not only heard these matters, but he also sat down and identified with them.

He was personally concerned.

He had strong feeling about the disaster of God’s people.

Vs. 4b

Often the missing element of Christianity – we are unmoved – untouched – we don't get personally involved.

We literally have to fight with ourselves to remain sensitive to God and His Word.

When dealing with Christianity in our culture as a whole – we have to say to ourselves:

This is not normal!

This is not right!

This is not Biblical!

It doesn't match up

It's a deviant form; it's empty Christianity

Our souls are vexed with lukewarm Christianity and also filthy deeds of unrighteous people

Folks, it is easy to slip into the same whirlpool of the culture.

We need to know what is normal, vital, healthy, and energetic Christianity.

Where does it come from? – the Bible – From watching God's people in the Bible.

But so many Christians are tuned in to T.V. religion, passing fads in the church, church growth gurus – mega churches.

So much lacks reality and depth.

Christianity seems to be a mile wide and an inch deep.

A news reporter asked me, "Besides Pastor, are there any other pastors in Reno County concerned about this alcohol issue?"

"I don't know."

"Why not?"

So many battles have been fought and lost – I'm not talking about the culture wars – I'm talking about in church.

We don't have much fight left in us.

We ought not to settle for a pacifist Christianity.

Someone has to care

Someone has to sound the alarm

Someone has to stand up

Someone has to speak up

That should be the preachers and pastors. I agree.

But most preachers have lost their bite and fight.

When these young interns come – can you see the edge on them?

Wake up the church to rally the troops

We will never have revival – we may have a crowd – anyone with money and business marketing can draw a crowd.

We will never have revival until people become burdened about it.

What we see in both Ezra and Nehemiah is God working a sorrow in the heart of His people.

A sorrow precedes the building of anything.

If people are not concerned, things will not get done;

If people are not concerned, things will not change.

What do we do with this burden, concern – we start with God – we start with prayer.

Just like Nehemiah.

Like Nehemiah, we must pray out of a heart of deep concern.

It is easier to pray about something when one feels deeply about it.

Like Nehemiah, we must pray persistently.

Nehemiah's heart was deeply moved with compassion for the suffering Jews in

Jerusalem, so much so that he persisted in his prayer day after day.

(Luke 18:1) – Men ought always to pray.

Neh. 1:4 – Nehemiah was involved with this for days (vs. 4)

Vs. 6

It is on his heart – he's burdened – he's concerned

He is taking it to God in prayer

From day 1 – Nehemiah has in mind to ask the king for help - vs. 11.

How long does this go on?

Chapter 2:1 – Nisan – March to April in our calendar

His prayer started in Chislou – November – December

That's four months – Has there ever been anything in our life that we have prayed days and nights and with fasting for over four months?

We look back at all the great people of God and what do they have in common?

Prayer life

It was said of Hudson Taylor, the great missionary to China, that the sun didn't rise for forty years that it did not find Taylor in prayer on his knees before God.

That is sustained prayer.

We cannot minimize Nehemiah and his prayer life.

We should not be surprised that the living God took up this man and wrought mightily through him.

This prayer is the first of twelve instances of prayer recorded in this book.

The Book of Nehemiah opens and closes with prayer.

It is sustained prayer – it's not rushing into His court and rattling off and rushing out

How sporadic are we in our prayer life?

How deep is our prayer life?

How easily discouraged have we become in our spiritual walk?

How easily distracted from the cause of Christ?

All of this tells us the degree of concern that we have.

Look at the extent of Nehemiah's sustained prayer

Nehemiah had stayed before the Lord four months

And after this time Artaxerxes asked Nehemiah – "Why are you so sad?" (2:2)

Folks, I'm not encouraging long faces –

What I'm saying is, "Let us not be weary in well doing."

William Carey, the "Father of Modern Missions," had a leather globe –

researched these countries – talked to people about this – talked to

preachers about this

Preached on it –

Yonder there is a mine and I'll descend into the mine if you will hold the rope.

What is the burden on our heart today?

It should be the same as God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Apostle Paul –

Nehemiah

God's testimony – the work and will of God – the salvation of souls

Don't faint – stay consistent

Nehemiah's grief manifested itself in the intensity of his prayer life.

Like Nehemiah, we must make prayer a priority over other needs.

Notice, in verse 4, that Nehemiah was "fasting and praying."

Fasting demonstrates to God that we are willing to spend time talking to Him rather than meeting our physical needs. (1 Cor. 7:5).

What does it mean to fast?

The Scriptures teach us that there are times when we should abstain from meeting our physical and emotional needs in order to spend time communicating with God about concerns and needs that are more important.

Nehemiah illustrates all of this in a powerful way.

Because he had access to the best food in the kingdom, he refrained from eating so that he could devote his time to prayer.

Nehemiah had access to the king's kitchen and the most exquisite food and drink in the land.

Rather than fasting, he could have "eaten away" his anxiety and "drowned his sorrows" with food and drink.

But he didn't! He couldn't—or wouldn't—allow himself to escape the emotional pain.

Nehemiah could say, "The reproaches of those that reproached Thee are fallen upon me." (Psalm 69:9)

Vs. 4 – Nehemiah is crying –

When God puts a burden on our heart, let us not try to escape it; for if we do, we will miss the blessing He has planned for us.

The Book of Nehemiah begins with "great affliction", but before it closes, there is great joy.

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

A serious leader goes first to God with the problem.

Prayer, I repeat, is absolutely essential in the life of a believer.

Romans 4:20-21 – “He [Abraham] staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.”

There is an intensity about prayer that demands time and patient waiting upon Him in the secret place.

Let me tell you what prayer does –

Prayer makes us wait. Prayer forces us to leave the situation with God.
Prayer makes us wait.

Prayer clears our vision.

Prayer quiets our spirit. We cannot worry and pray at the same time.
Prayer calms us down.

Prayer makes us quiet. It replaces anxiety with a calm spirit.
Knees don't knock when we kneel with Him.

Prayer activates our faith. After praying, we are more prone to trust God.
God gives us encouragement.

The prayer life of Nehemiah

How is our prayer life?

Let us stand for closing invitation

Let us stand for closing prayer – every eye closed

Do we recognize needs? Are we concerned?

Do we pray about it? Persistently?

Have we lost our feelings for the things of God?

Have we lost our fight?

Will we place prayer above eating, sleeping, physical intimacy?

Do we instantly pray or do we try to handle things with our own strength?

When Jesus looked out over Jerusalem, Jesus wept

Jesus prayed

Jesus was burdened

Jesus gave His life

Do we know Jesus? Do we really?

Have His concerns/burdens become ours?

Are you saved today?

Can you remember a time that you called on Him to save your soul?

Jesus came to seek and save lost people.

We are in sin – we're sinners

Jesus died for us – shed His blood as payment for sin – was buried and rose again

And if you will come to Him, He will

Call on Him – believe His Word