

Nehemiah Sermon #3

Turn in your Bibles to Nehemiah 1

Two things—I am going to need you to concentrate
#2, limber up your Bibles and stay with me

If a difference is to be drawn between the two books we might say that in
Ezra the word of God is most prominent, whereas it is prayer in Nehemiah
Nehemiah was pre-eminently a man of prayer.

His book records that in a dozen instances

By its very nature prayer is such a spiritual exercise,
And the very first thing we do in prayer is address God
Speak to/talk to God
This will be our focus this morning

I've entitled today's sermon "Who Are We Talking To?"

Nehemiah 1:4

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

Nehemiah 1:4-7, 11

Let us pray

You may be seated

Who Are We Talking To?

Almost the entire chapter records Nehemiah's prayer

#1 – Why is Nehemiah praying?

He is deeply concerned—the prayer is the result of the news of the Jewish people and the Jewish city, Jerusalem

He is burdened enough to pray

Prayer then is a fair test of the depth of our concern. Are we concerned enough to resort to prayer?

2 – How long is it necessary for us to pray before God hears our prayer and responds?

Well, here is a Bible example—vs. 4—Nehemiah prayed for days

Vs. 6 says Nehemiah pledged to pray day and night

How long was it before God gave Nehemiah his opening? Does anyone remember?

Does anyone know how many months? Four months—around 120 days

Nehemiah stayed in prayer.

This obviously is not a norm, or a standard to tell us to pray 120 days, but this tells us it is necessary to stay in prayer—not to give up – but to pray over an extended period of time

There is a story told in the New Testament about a judge and the woman

Luke 18 – Jesus told the story/parable – men ought always to pray and not to faint

– demonstrates this persistence in prayer

3 – How did Nehemiah pray? What did he pray to God?

In vs. 5-7, we have Nehemiah's approach to God

We can see that he's approaching God (vs. 5), confessing sin to God (vs. 6-7), and then in vs. 8, he gets to the heart of the matter.

Vs. 5 contains the way he addresses/approaches God

We address people on a regular basis . . .

– “Curtis,” “C. Wayne,” “Mr. Johnson,” “Pastor Wayne”

When people address God or refer to God as “The Man Upstairs,” – borders on blasphemy – is not reverent enough – these are not proper addresses to God

Vs. 5 – “I beseech Thee” – Nehemiah starts a request, but then breaks it off, doesn’t complete until vs. 6

What we have between this is how Nehemiah addresses God!

Vs. 5

We are unaccustomed in hearing people address God this way.

Why does Nehemiah address God like this?

The things he says – all of them – magnify and heighten the testimony of the God he is speaking to

What is the point?

What are the reasons for this?

#1 – This type of approach is prompted by the Holy Spirit

The Spirit of God is the One who helps us as He works in us to formulate the proper approach to God

Romans 8:15, *“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’”*

One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to prompt certain address

Reverence/respect before God – when we come to Him

Very intimate expression – “Abba” – child’s term for Daddy

The first words of a child – simple syllables – we have the freedom and confidence to refer to God this way

Jesus taught us to pray – “Our Father”

The Holy Spirit urges us when we pray – to remember Whom we are addressing and be reverent and respectful

What happens is that we start to pray to God and we are urged by the Holy Spirit to exalt God

Why does the Holy Spirit do this?

The first reason, I believe, is the effect on man himself – what it does to us

Nehemiah is in the court of the supreme power of the world

He watches people approach the king

As a matter of fact, King Artaxerxes would be approached the same way as the king in the Book of Esther

Remember how fearful Esther was in coming into his presence without being summoned?

We are dealing in the same court, same palace, same city

We tend to be awed and overwhelmed by the splendor of man

We don't need to be impressed by man – certainly not by humanity

Notice what Nehemiah calls the supreme power of the then known world –

Nehemiah 1, verse 11 – just a man

For whom did Nehemiah work? The king.

Was this king great and mighty on earth? The mightiest!

But compared to God, King Artaxerxes was nothing.

So when Nehemiah had all of this burden on him, he did not go to the king first – he went to God

See, the Holy Spirit helps bring to our conscious certain things about our God in our prayers that give splendor and majesty to God

We should know what it is when we go to prayer and begin to address God and the Holy Spirit helps us to address God.

We need to be careful – we rush right past who we are talking to, to what we need or want

The Bible says to enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise

O loving, Heavenly Father

Gracious God, Lord God,

Creator – all things in the palm of His hand

The titles set the tone of the prayer

How does God think about His titles?

How does God think about how we approach Him? Does it matter to God? Absolutely!

When a man begins to pray, it gives God value

It gives honor – it acknowledges who God is

When we do this with people, it's flattery, respect

And to give man the title or glory of God is blasphemy

That's why I don't like to be called "Reverend"

The word "reverend" is found in Psalm 111:9, ". . . *holy and reverend is His name.*"

But we must use it of God – not to use it of God is wrong

We must think of Him and to refer to Him the way He is.

He is certain things!

It is giving God His proper place and value!

Nehemiah knows who he is talking to and gives God His proper place

Nehemiah had the ear of God.

Do we know who we are talking to?

Do we pray in such a way that God recognizes Himself as being addressed?

Do we know God? As He is – who He has revealed Himself to be?

When we pray, are we talking to the real God?

This is a deep question.

It is a serious question – we ought to have real access into His presence

There are three ways Nehemiah addresses God

God tells us about Himself three ways:

The first way is through His name or His titles

The second way is through descriptions of Himself in the Word

The third way is through His responses to certain circumstances

Nehemiah draws on all of these.

Look at it

Vs. 5 – name, title

“O Lord God” – there’s a name

“The God of Heaven” – that’s a title

“The great and terrible God” – there’s a description. God uses this of Himself in
Scripture

Vs. 5b,c – that is God’s response to certain situations. It is proper address to God in all
of these ways in vs. 5.

Now, two things Nehemiah says of God:

The first thing is

#1 – the name of God – Nehemiah addresses God as Lord

This is not just a title – it’s His name!

The Bible refers to God by this name.

In Isaiah 42, 43, 44, 45 – God challenges false gods, idols, to answer prayer or foresee
the future.

In Isaiah 42:8, God wants people to know what His name is: *“I am the LORD: that is
My name: and My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven
images.”*

God identifies Himself – I am the Lord

Isaiah 43:11, 44:24, 45:5-6

We have the same thing in Psalm 83:18 – turn to Psalm 83

The Psalmist asked God to deal with the Gentile nations in vs. 6-8

Notice vs. 15-16 – know who you are

What God wants them to know

Vs. 18 – Jehovah (Yahweh) – the same word – LORD

Now why did God choose “Lord” to be His proper name?

In our Bibles when we see the word “LORD” – all capital letters – that’s the word we are talking about – that’s the word Nehemiah uses

Lord – capital “L” with little letters with lower case – that’s not it

The word LORD is from the verb “to be”

He is.

This is the term God used with Moses. Remember Moses was in great crisis.

God called on him to bring the people out of Egypt.

And Moses said to God – What am I going to say to these people?

They are going to ask me who sent me.

God said – You tell them “I AM THAT I AM”

“I AM WHO I AM”

“I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE”

What if someone asked you your name and you said, “I am”

What have we told them?

As soon as we begin to qualify, we limit ourselves

I am a man, redheaded man – every designation we have – limits us further and further and makes us smaller and smaller

Isn’t it interesting that out of all possible names, God chose one with no limitations?

As soon as we begin to qualify God, we limit God

God chose a name that has no limitation

God chose a name – “I AM” – infinite and personal God – who is behind everything and
to whom everything must finally be traced – inexpressible, infinity
– I AM THAT I AM

Tell them that I AM sent you

He is beyond human dimension – it’s an unchallenged name – it’s an unrivaled name
It’s the name Nehemiah used – LORD

Then throughout the Scripture, God does add designations.

If anyone can, He can!

Nobody else defines who God is but God Himself

Look back – Nehemiah 1:5

Look at the description he used of God in vs. 5

The great and the terrible – that description has a long history

There are three passages I want you to see

This is the way that God describes Himself just before they went into the land of Israel

God said in Deuteronomy 7:21, *“Thou shalt not be affrighted of them: [remember what they said, “We are grasshoppers”] for the LORD thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible.”*

The word “terrible” means “one to be feared.”

Stand in awe – awesome – quite frankly, I think the word “awesome” should be reserved only for God

He is wonderful, astonishing; He inspires awe.

Don’t be afraid of anyone – we have on our side the One to be feared.

Turn to II Samuel 7 where the Davidic Covenant is recorded.

God promises to David.

Vs. 22

God likes to hear that

He likes for people on earth to acknowledge that truth

Vs. 23 – does actions in keeping with His character

Great actions to be feared

Turn to Psalm 76

Vs. 1

There were no other people on earth where God was known.

God chose to reveal Himself through these people.

Psalm 76 tells us how God has overcome His enemies

Look at vs. 12 – Nehemiah understands his God and his King of the earth

Nehemiah 1:5 – Nehemiah starts to pray – it affects your thinking, heart, spirit

Daniel 9:2 – Daniel read Jeremiah and understands the 70-year captivity that is coming

Vs. 3 – who does that sound like many decades before Nehemiah?

Vs. 4 – this is no accident that both these men in pagan courts are describing God this way

How does God's name affect Nehemiah when he prays?

When we go to God in prayer, let's remember Who we are talking to

Let us use names and titles and descriptions that God has given Himself

Nehemiah 4:14

9:5-6 – Who are we talking to?

Invitation

Nehemiah knew that God would hear.

How great is God that He can pay attention to each of our prayers, millions of them
around the world, individually and simultaneously!

Our minds cannot comprehend it, but God is beyond our comprehension.

Nehemiah's greatness came from asking great things of a great God and attempting
great things in reliance on Him.

How do we approach God?

Do we realize Who we are talking to? – LORD

What He can do? – great and awesome

By the way, Christian, God cannot hear our prayers if we regard iniquity in our heart

Have you become a child of God? How does that happen?

Jesus made the way . . .