

## Nehemiah Sermon #4

Turn in your Bibles to Nehemiah 1

We find a prayer that God saw fit to answer

Nehemiah chapter 1 begins with the Jewish people and the Jewish city

Deep distress – just like Norleans – bad shape.

Now this caused Nehemiah to pray.

Most of Chapter 1 is the Prayer of Nehemiah

Last time we looked at Nehemiah's prayer – we saw how he approached God (**vs. 5**).

#1 – the Name of God

#2 – the Title of God

#3 – Description of God

#4 – God's character as seen through His faithfulness to man.

We are going to pick up now in the middle of Nehemiah's prayer

I have entitled today's message "Having the Ear of God"

Nehemiah 1:3

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

Nehemiah 1:3-9

Let us pray

You may be seated

## Having the Ear of God

You know what moved Nehemiah to pray? A conversation with his brother and that conversation lead to a conversation with God.

Let us not overlook our conversations with people

We need to talk to each other—express our hearts for God.

When was the last time we talked about God with somebody else?

When was the last time someone asked you where you were reading in the Bible?

Prayed with another believer? (in church, in a store, on the phone)

Has anyone told you about what God is doing in their life? Have you told anyone?

When was the last time we gave testimony?

This kind of talk should permeate the atmosphere of the local church

It should build desire, expectation in people's hearts—such a pull and tug for the things of God.

Let me jump ahead—twenty years later in Malachi—the prophet of Nehemiah's day—

Malachi

The Temple was built—the walls and gates are up

Ezra had been teaching and preaching—revival had come.

There was a full return to God

Then we see a slide of deterioration, backsliding as we call it, of the believing people

Malachi 3:14

Fruitless, worthless—I don't' see any profit in it.

I don't see any profit in prayer meeting; going to church; having my kids in church, or reading my Bible.

Unfortunately, this kind of talk dominates the church scene – along with gossip, slander, complaining, backbiting

Vs. 15 – Contrast themselves with the unbelievers

This is one way to talk –

It starts in our head, then in our mouth, then in our actions—what’s the use?

Malachi 3:16 – God talk in this church, in our home, from our lips - Different attitude

The people who feared the Lord

They did not allow themselves to think certain things – much less say them.

Instead they reminded themselves of one thing in particular –

Thinking upon God’s name because it reveals who He is – LORD, Jesus Christ,

Jehovah Jireh – how many of us can testify of how the Lord provided?

The names of God are self-revelations of God’s character

3:17-18

When was the last time we really communed with another believer on spiritual things?

Nehemiah and his brother had such communication – this lead to Nehemiah’s prayer

Turn back to Nehemiah 1:6 – Nehemiah’s first request is to be heard – vs. 6a

He wanted to have the ear of God

Nehemiah 1:11

Not only conversation with God’s people, but conversation with God – do we have it?

Now, if God’s people, God’s servants, want to be heard by God, God’s people must be in right relationship with Him

When we go to God in prayer and approach such a great God, awesome God – we are in the presence/holiness and it causes us to respond like Isaiah, “Woe unto me; I am a man of unclean lips”

What happens when we honestly come before God in prayer?

We are short of the glory of God – unworthiness, unholiness

So what does Nehemiah do?

Well, he begins to confess sin – vs. 6

How did Nehemiah learn to pray like this?

Same way you and I will learn – from the Bible.

Turn to II Chronicles 6

Nehemiah had Scriptural precedent

Vs. 36-40

What kind of prayer does Solomon say that God will hear? A confessional prayer

How many sins does the average believer confess a day?

In fact, John reminds us of this after giving us God’s promise of cleansing and forgiving us

“If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us.”

There will come no time in this life when we will not have the need to confess sin

Confession in prayer

The Scriptures urge us to this:

We have commands and promises in the Bible referring to this:

Proverbs 28:13, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”

I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

What if we don't confess our sins?

Can it be in this Age of Grace that cleansing and forgiveness are automatic?  
That the grace of God just kicks in and automatically cleanses us from all sin?

The Scripture indicates there is the condition of confession  
Jesus' teaching reinforces this when the Prodigal comes to himself and says, "I will arise and go to my father and say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned.'" It is then that he is restored.

The Publican receives forgiveness when he smites his chest and says, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

The thief on the cross acknowledges to the other thief, "We indeed justly are receiving these things. We received the due reward of our deeds."

That's confession.

What does it really mean to confess sin?

Let us define confession first.

The word translated "confess" in the Old Testament is also translated "to praise" and "give thanks"

You say that's odd – No it is not.

When we confess our sins to God – we praise Him. This is what He wants from us.

When our children come to us – confessing their sin, you are so thankful they have come to their senses – You kill the fatted calf.

The word “confession” basically means to acknowledge something or admit it

Confession of sin – it is to acknowledge facts against myself

I say that I’m guilty

It puts me in an unfavorable light

The New Testament Greek word – *hamilegeo* – saying words

*hama* – saying the same words

The significance is that the man who is confessing is saying the same things as God

says – as God says about the way I’m living, the way I’m thinking, about my relationships

God has said that certain things are wrong, are right and ought to be done

Confession is coming before God and acknowledging these unfavorable things about myself

I want to show you something:

Turn to Leviticus 26

I want to show you a confession that is real

Leviticus 26:40-41

This is the test of the thoroughness and the sincerity of a man’s confession

Are we willing to humble ourselves and acknowledge that everything that has come our way is because of sin and we deserve it?

That doesn’t mean we like it

God’s chastening is grievous – nobody likes it – Hebrews 12

Confession acknowledges to God that He is in the right and I am in the wrong.

God is righteous

God’s righteousness is part of His character that He will never give up or allow to be tarnished – God must deal with sin

Go back to Nehemiah 1:6

**Vs. 6**

Confessing sins – as a nation as a whole – then he adds himself.

But, you say, “Nehemiah hasn’t done anything.” That’s true. But he is a part of Israel.

Folks, it is our Supreme Court, our President, our Congress – this is our country  
We must identify ourselves with institutions – whether it be good or bad

We are citizens of this country and we too have sinned – not maybe to the extent of  
abortion, adultery, pornography, drunkenness – but every sin that we have  
sinned just adds to the pile – Does it not?

Is there anyone who is innocent? Who has no sin?

Nehemiah cries out -

Lord, hear my prayer

I am quick to acknowledge what You said about us

See there is no issue at all between Nehemiah and God

He really practiced confession

**Like Nehemiah, we must acknowledge our own unworthiness and sinfulness, our  
human weaknesses and failings.**

**Nehemiah then reminds God of His promises.**

Nehemiah 1:8 – Nehemiah believed God’s Word

When we verbalize to God what He has promises us, we are demonstrating to Him that  
we actually know what He has said and we believe it.

Verse 8 reads, “Remember the word which Thou didst command Thy servant Moses.”

What was Nehemiah doing? He was quoting a verse of scripture to God.  
 He quoted not only from Leviticus 26 but also from Deuteronomy 4 and 30.  
 He knew the Book. He was a Bible student.

It pleases the Lord to hear His children reiterate His promises when they're talking with  
 Him.

Vs. 8b, c

If you transgress, I will react to that  
 There are no exceptions to this  
 We cannot sin with impunity  
 God said, I will what? Scatter you.

Notice God's graciousness - Vs. 9

Some of God's promises have conditions that first must be met and Nehemiah is willing  
 to meet those conditions.

Vs. 9 – if ye turn – if ye keep – if ye do them  
 God has never changed on us – He always demands obedience

New Testament Christians are not allowed to disregard the commandments of God and  
 sin with impunity and claim grace

That has never been the case

Galatians 6:7 – “Be not deceived, God is not mocked, For whatever a man soweth, that  
 shall he also reap.”

God honors obedience and disciplines disobedience

Let me show you several New Testament passages that God gives  
 promises with conditions

Matthew 5:23

If, in your brother's mind, you have wronged him

Vs. 24 – we will have to be reconciled

How many Christian churches are there that do not experience God's blessings  
because the people who sit in the churches have ought against one another?

There is power in unity

Matthew 6:12

Vs. 14 and 15 explain

Tremendous responsibilities that we have

Does this mean if there are any of us harboring in our hearts resentment, hatred,  
bitterness, anger – does this mean God is not forgiving us? Yes, exactly.

How can Jesus say it any more clearly?

We can serve the Lord; we can read our Bibles, but if we don't forgive, what does Jesus  
say? Forgive.

Do we have liberty with our brothers and sisters in Christ?

II Corinthians 6:17c-18 – that's what we want

7:1

We ought to be proper children – this is not legalism – this is family talk

Good terms with God

Is there any issue between God and us?

Are we on good terms with God?

Is there any reason why God shouldn't answer our prayer?

When we pray, approach God correctly

confess our faults

repeat God's Word

Prayers should come from obedient hearts

This is how Nehemiah had the ear of God

Do we have the ear of God when we pray?

Let us stand for closing invitation – every eye closed

Is there any God-talk from our lips?

Are we people who regularly confess sin?

Do we pray to God His own Word?

Salvation – have we come to God for the cleansing power?

Are you right with God? Are you saved?

Have you received the forgiveness of your sins?

Humble yourself – confess that you are a sinner.

Jesus Christ is the Savior who paid the price for our sins with His blood on the Cross

Next week, we will see Nehemiah as the king's cupbearer