**Crying Out to God**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Nehemiah 1:1-11**

**Sunday Morning**

**February 6, 2022**

**Nehemiah 1:1-11**

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel, 2 that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

3 And they said to me, "The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire." 4 So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

5 And I said: "I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, 6 please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned.

7 We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. 8 Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations,

9 but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.' 10 "Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand.

11 O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." For I was the king's cupbearer.

**Prayer is powerful**

Saints, it allows us to cast our burdens on God and receive guidance and provision from Him. All too often, however, we take this privilege for granted. Instead of turning to the Father in prayer, we try to solve our problems on our own.

**1 Peter 5:5-7**

5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

Saints, you and I can experience God’s power for daily living when we are willing to bow before Him and seek Him earnestly. We stand tallest and strongest on our knees. Do we have to kneel every time we pray? No.

In fact, some people are physically unable to do so. However, the attitude of our hearts should be reverent awe and submission to almighty God. If we approach prayer correctly, you and I can have confidence that He will respond to our requests.

**Nehemiah knew how to stand tall and strong on his knees**

Saints, in his role as cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, he held an influential position and probably lived in luxury. But since he was a captive in a foreign country, Nehemiah was unable to go where he pleased.

When he heard that Jerusalem’s walls were in ruins—leaving the city vulnerable to attack—he turned to God in prayer to weep and mourn for his city (Neh. 1:4).

**Nehemiah 1:4**

“So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven”

The Lord granted him favor with King Artaxerxes. The ruler not only let Nehemiah take a leave of absence, he also supplied the exiles with building materials and military protection (Neh. 2:5-9).

**Nehemiah 2:5-9**

 5 And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it." 6 Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), "How long will your journey be? And when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

7 Furthermore I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, 8 and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy." And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me.

9 Then I went to the governors in the region beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me. 10 When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of it, they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.

Saints, the king even gave him letters to the governors’ of the provinces on the way so they would allow the Jews to pass through their lands. Time and time again, Nehemiah sought the Lord whenever he faced a problem or threat.

He turned to God for strength to keep going despite criticism and discouragement (Neh. 4:1-5).

**Nehemiah 4:1-5**

1 But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. 2 And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish--stones that are burned?"

3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, "Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall." 4 Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their reproach on their own heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity! 5 Do not cover their iniquity, and do not let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have provoked You to anger before the builders.

Saints, God gave him wisdom to know how to relate to his critics (Neh. 6:1-3)

**Nehemiah 6:1-3**

1 Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates),

2 that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come, let us meet together among the villages in the plain of Ono." But they thought to do me harm. 3 So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?"

and to defend the city against military attack (Neh. 4:18).

**Nehemiah 4:18**

“Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me”

Saints, too the surprise of their enemies, the Jews rebuilt the wall in 52 days. More importantly, spiritual revival came to Jerusalem as a result of Nehemiah’s faithfulness.

**How should we pray?**

**1. Recognize that God is the Sovereign of the Universe**

Nehemiah addressed his prayer to “the great and awesome God”

**Nehemiah 1:5**

And I said: "I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments…

Saints, he knew the Lord was in absolute control of all things.

**Psalm 103:19**

“The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all.”

Saints, even when difficult circumstances come our way, our heavenly Father never ceases to be the Ruler and Master of the universe.

**2. Recognize that God is Holy**

When Isaiah saw the Lord in His glory, he felt unclean— though he had lived a righteous life (Isa. 6:1-6).

**Isaiah 6:1-6**

1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one cried to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" 4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;

For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts."

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar.

Saints, the picture we see of God in the book of Revelation is similar in its majesty. As humans, we all fall short of God’s absolute holiness. While He is our heavenly Father, intimately concerned with each detail of our lives, He is also the Sovereign of the Universe.

That means you and I should approach Him with reverence and awe. Those attitudes prompted Nehemiah to fast and pray for four months. He looked to God, not himself, for the answer to Jerusalem’s problems.

**3. Confess Sin**

Nehemiah included himself when he admitted the rebellion of his nation:

**Nehemiah 1:6-7**

6 please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned.

7 We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses.

Saints, scripture teaches that God will not hear our prayers if we are cherishing sin in our hearts (Ps. 66:18).

**Psalm 66:18**

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear”

He may be good to us; it’s His kindness that leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

**Romans 2:4**

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

Saints, but our prayers won’t be answered unless we confess our wrongdoing. Purity of heart and the power of God are connected.

**1 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”

**4. Recognize Your Inadequacy**

Nehemiah’s job had not trained him in how to build walls or gates, nor had he ever commanded an army. As an exile, he was unknown to the Jews who had remained in Jerusalem; humanly speaking, they had no reason to follow his lead. Yet Nehemiah trusted God and obeyed anyway.

When the Lord tells you to do something, He hasn’t made a mistake. He will never call you to do something that you can’t do through His power and strength. In fact, God will use your weaknesses to draw you closer to Himself and teach you how to rely on Him more completely.

**5. Be available for God to use you**

Nehemiah was willing to obey whatever the Lord instructed him to do. He had confidence that God knew best how to handle the difficulties that the Jewish people faced. We, too, have access to the divine Counselor.

He knows every detail of our hardships. Are we willing to obey whatever He requires of us? Some prayers will never be answered unless we take an active role in their fulfillment. God will cover our mistakes and pick us up when we fail. Our job is to obey Him.

**6. Experience the Holy Spirit’s enabling Power**

Nehemiah’s success was not a result of his education, personality, or political connections. He had developed a personal relationship with the Father. He learned to go to the Lord with his needs (Neh. 2:4).

**Do you ever feel worthless or unimportant?**

God wants you to look at yourself as He does—as someone with potential. In the power of the Spirit, you have the ability to do whatever He asks of you. He will supply all the energy and strength you need.

**7. Get God’s Vision and Direction**

Nehemiah’s heart was broken when his fellow Jews told him of Jerusalem’s condition. As he sought the Lord in prayer, God revealed his role in the city’s restoration.

**In Closing:**

1. What is on your heart?

2. If you could do anything with the rest of your life, what would it be?

3. Go before the Lord with that desire and allow Him to refine it.

4. Seek His face for how to fulfill His will for your life.

5. Surrender your dreams to the heavenly Father, and watch what He will do in and through you.

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**