

2. THE FOUNDATION OF THE WALL

All of building structure require good solid foundation to stand on. Without a foundation, it is nothing more than an assembly of concrete slabs, steel beams and decoration. As soon as somebody sneeze, the whole thing can give away.

In Christian life, two things should be the foundation of our daily lives: Prayer and the Word of God. Nehemiah is the man of prayer. It is important to make a note of his prayer throughout the Book of Nehemiah. This book is not about building the wall of Jerusalem, it is not about governing the nation, but it is about casting our burden to the Lord and seeking His will and following Him as He leads us.

The beginning of the true service for God starts with burden in a person's heart. God is the One who put the burden in the man's heart to pray, so that the man asks God's to intervene the situation. Then God moves in to do His miracle or give the man the ability and knowledge to do what is needed to be done.

Let's remember the principle I told you:
"Without God, we cannot. Without us, God will not."

Nehemiah, like Ezra, was a child of the captivity. He was born into the home of parents who had known the horrors of exile. He had lived with the reality of being a Jewish stranger in a strange Gentile land. In these opening chapter, we meet a man who had risen to a place of prominence in a foreign land, but his heart still yearned for Jerusalem - the City of God. Even though he was living in the capital city, Susa, the heart of Persia, the capital of his heart was Jerusalem. We should be like Nehemiah. The world is not our home, we are just passing through.

Nehemiah held a position of great honor and respectability. His place was one of royal stature as cupbearer. At the same time, he was a man of prayer and was deeply committed to his God. In reading these opening chapters, we quickly begin to see the hand of God at work, placing the right person in the right place at the right time. Isn't that just like our God!

If we look at the sequences of the books of the Bible, we can notice that they are out of the sequences. For an example, we have Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Scripture is never concerned simply with chronology. It is concerned with the teaching of each book. In these three books we have the story of the way out of captivity, back to God. The book of Ezra begins with the building of the temple. The restoration of the house of God is always the first thing in the way back to God. Then comes the building of the walls, as we will see in the book of Nehemiah. filling the need for security and strength. Finally, the book of Esther comes as the revelation of the purpose of all this in the life of any individual. That gives you a quick survey of these three books.

A. SETTING

Neh. 1:1-2 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, 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.

Time: Kislev which means December, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes who was a step son of Queen Esther. It was 444 B.C.

Place: Susa, the capital of Persia, literally the capital of the ancient world.

Neh. 1:3 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."

This report from Jerusalem totally changed Nehemiah's daily routine.

B. THE ASSIGNMENT FROM GOD

Neh. 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.

When we hear some disastrous news or report about someone, what do we do? Do we cluck our tongues and go on with our daily lives? Or do we get down on our knees and pray for them? Let's have a sensitive heart for others who are suffering, because Jesus did for you and me.

Fasting is used of voluntary abstinence from food as an action of mourning from sorrow for the situation. Its Greek word is "nesteia". Grief and sorrow can take us away from God or bring us close to God. However the choice is ours.

C. INTERCESSION

Neh. 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,

From this prayer, we can find the genuine heart of Nehemiah. He was not seeking his own comfort nor promotion. But he was interceding for others. Whenever we intercede others with our prayers, we are like Jesus. Because at this very moment, Jesus is interceding to God the Father on behalf of us.

As the start of his prayer, Nehemiah acknowledges who God is. He is keeping his perspective correctly for his own benefit, not for God. When we know how great God is, we can see how small this situation is.

Jesus was asked to show His disciples how to pray in that famous Lord's Prayer which should be called "The Disciples' Prayer." It has the same format as this one. Acknowledging who God is, admitting what we are, and asking for His guidance and help. That is how we should pray every day.

Neh. 1:6-7 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. We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses.

Nehemiah is not leaving himself out of wickedness of Israelites. "I" is included in this "We."

Neh. 1:8-10 Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, "If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; 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.’ Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand.

Acknowledging the destruction of the wall is acknowledging of the faithfulness of His Word. Using the stored-up Scriptures in his heart, Nehemiah reminds God of the promise He made to Israel in the days of Moses.

Neh. 1:11 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.

Now here comes Nehemiah’s petition. The ground swell of praise, confession, and claiming God’s promises have been building up to this pointed request:

To do what? You see, this man has a plan forming in his mind, even while he has been in prayer, of how to go about rebuilding the walls. He has something definite he wants to ask.

Possibly the most penetrating of all the New Testament books is the letter from James, an apostle who was otherwise known in the first century as “Camel Knees”. He received this nickname because he constantly knelt in prayer. What would our nickname be when it comes to prayer? “Prayer Warrior” or “Prayerless worrier”.

D. APPLICATIONS

Let’s find why pray is the important foundation in our Christianity:

1) It makes us WAIT.

We cannot earnestly pray and, at the same time, rush out ahead of God.

2) It clears OUR VISION.

It enables us to see situations through God’s eyes and not our own.

3) It quiets OUR HEARTS.

We cannot continue to worry and pray at the same time. They are mutually exclusive. One will weed out the other, depending on which one we choose.

4) It activates OUR FAITH.

With that faith comes an attitude of hope and peace which replaces the petty and critical attitude that comes when we haven’t prayed.