

Nehemiah 1:11b-2:8

Having recently received troubling news regarding Jerusalem, Nehemiah responded with patient, persistent prayerful for some three to five months, beseeching “the God of heaven” to remember His covenant love of his people. One day, in God’s good time and sovereign providence the king noticed that Nehemiah looked sad and asked him why (**Neh. 2:1-2**). After Nehemiah gave the reason (**Neh 2:3**) and the king asked further what Nehemiah was requesting (**Neh 2:4**), Nehemiah made an instinctive, brief, emergency prayer (**Neh 2:4**).

Summary

Nehemiah 1:11b-2:8, shows how Nehemiah’s patient, persistent prayers and instinctive emergency prayer were answered, revealing several important lessons.

1. Lessons from this Urgent Prayer vv. 3-5

First, emergency short prayers are as effective as regular, lengthy ones (e.g. **Luke 23:42; Rev. 22:20**).

Secondly, Nehemiah’s prayer demonstrates the absolute necessity of prayer. When the moment arrived to make his request to the king, he still felt it appropriate to seek the Lord about it.

Thirdly, the prayer shows Nehemiah’s heart. Instant prayer of this nature arose only because Nehemiah had taught himself the value of prayer by a consistent life of prayer both regular and emergency prayer.

Fourthly, it is an example of a prayer that is immediately answered (**Isa. 65:24**).

2. Divine Good Hand vv. 6-8

Though the means to bring about a successful outcome to his desires was beyond his ability to achieve, Nehemiah could think about the way in which God might accomplish it and what the consequences might mean in terms of his own responsibilities.

For Nehemiah to secure safe passage to Jerusalem and to accomplish the work of rebuilding the walls of the city, he would need documents to prove what he was doing had the King’s approval (**Neh. 2:7-8**).

Nehemiah went to Jerusalem as an official of the king; a governor, occupying what was in effect the governor's house (**Neh 2:8; 5:14**).

Nehemiah's entire request involved a complete reversal of the king's policy with respect to the building of the city's defenses. It is not surprising, therefore, that Nehemiah attributes the entire outcome to the Lord's doing (**Neh. 2:8**).

There are three lessons here:

First, God is altogether sovereign and that the power of a Persian king is no match for the power of the God of heaven (**Prov. 21:1**).

If God can change the heart of Artaxerxes, he can change the heart of anyone.

Secondly, what happened that day in Susa was an example of the goodness of God; "the good hand of God" was upon Nehemiah (**Neh. 2:18**).

It is the necessary consequence of the perfection of the divine being.

The psalmist frequently testifies to his experience of God's goodness: every meal, every pleasure, every possession, every bit of sun, every night's sleep, every moment of health and safety, and everything else that sustains and enriches life is a divine gift from a good God (e.g. **Ps. 145:9, 15-16**).

There are also times of special goodness; the goodness of God's divine interruptions in the course of ordinary things, interruptions designed to bring us blessing and further God's kingdom.

Thirdly, it is a mark of Nehemiah's godly leadership that he attributes the entirety of his success to the Lord's hand. Nehemiah is careful that God receives all the glory. Looking back, Nehemiah is able to see with greater clarity how things could have gone wrong in so many ways, but did not. It all worked out perfectly.

The explanation was clear to him: it was all of God.

Is this the way you see the events that unfold in your life?

Are you this careful to acknowledge God's hand in your life?

Are you giving him the glory that is due to his holy name?

How was the good hand of God with Nehemiah?

How is the good hand of God with any of His people?

Only because of Christ?

Do believers deserve, earn or merit God's goodness? No

It is only because Christ knew the divine curse and wrath that believers can know the good hand of God.