

Praying Time How Nehemiah Used Prayer

Last week, we studied the Parable about the Widow and the Unjust Judge from **Luke 18:1-8**. We learned from that study that we “ought always pray and not to faint.” The widow was persistent and consistent in her request to the unjust judge. She didn’t lose hope, courage, nor faith that she would be avenged of her adversary. Our heavenly Father will answer our prayers also. He will bring justice to His elect who cry to Him day and night.

Sunday’s message was about Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25) in prison, praying and singing praises to God at midnight. It wasn’t the “hour of prayer” nor “house of prayer”, but they prayed where they were and God sent an earthquake, and the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all of the doors were opened, and everyone’s chains were unfastened. What a mighty God we serve!

Now, we will take a look at Nehemiah, a common man in a unique position. He was secure and successful as cupbearer to the Persian king, Artaxerxes. He was a man of character, persistence, and prayer. God prepared and positioned Nehemiah to accomplish one of the Bible’s impossible tasks, rebuilding the wall that surrounded Jerusalem.

One of the themes of the book of Nehemiah is prayer. Both Nehemiah and Ezra responded to problems with prayer. When Nehemiah began his work, he recognized the problem, immediately prayed, and then acted on the problem. Prayer is still God’s mighty force in solving problems today. Prayer and action go hand in hand. Through prayer, God guides our preparation, teamwork, and diligent efforts to carry out His will.

Prayer was a key element to Nehemiah’s success. Let’s look at 1) some of the occasions he prayed, 2) a summary of each prayer, 3) what prayer accomplished, and 4) our prayers in certain situations and circumstances. These seven prayers are all from the book of Nehemiah.

1. After receiving the bad news about the state of Jerusalem’s walls (1:4-11).

- a. **Summary of his Prayer.** Recognized God’s holiness. Asked for a hearing. Confessed sin. Asked for specific help in approaching the king.
- b. **What prayer accomplished.** Included God in Nehemiah’s plan and concerns. Prepared Nehemiah’s heart and gave God room to work.
- c. **Our Prayers.** How often do we pour out our hearts to God? How often do we give him a specific request to answer?

2. During his conversation with the king (2:4).

- a. **Summary of his Prayer:** “Here’s where you can help, God!”

- b. **What prayer accomplished.** Put the expected results in God's hands.
- c. **Our Prayers.** Giving God credit for what happens before it happens keeps us from taking more credit than we should.

3. After being taunted and ridiculed by Tobiah and Sanballat (4:4-5).

- a. **Summary of his Prayer.** They're mocking you, God. You decide what to do with them."
- b. **What prayer accomplished.** Expressed anger to God, but Nehemiah did not take matters into his own hands.
- c. **Our Prayers.** We are prone to do exactly the opposite—take matters into our hands and not tell God how we feel.

4. After threats of attack by enemies (4:9).

- a. **Summary of his Prayer.** "We are in your hands, God. We'll keep our weapons handy in case you want us to use them."
- b. **What prayer accomplished.** Showed trust in God even while taking necessary precautions.
- c. **Our Prayers.** Trusting God does not mean we do nothing. Action does not mean we do not trust.

5. Responding to threats (6:9).

- a. **Summary of his Prayer.** "Oh Lord God, please strengthen me!
- b. **What prayer accomplished.** Showed Nehemiah's reliance on God for emotional and mental stability.
- c. **Our Prayers.** How often do you ask God for help when under pressure?

6. Reflecting on the actions of his enemies (13:29).

- a. **Summary of his Prayer.** Asked God to deal with the enemies and their evil plans.
- b. **What prayer accomplished.** Took away the compulsion to get revenge, and entrusted justice to God.
- c. **Our Prayers.** When did we last settle a desire for revenge by turning the matter over to God?

7. Reflecting on his own efforts to serve God (5:19; 13:14, 22, 31).

- a. **Summary of his Prayer.** "Remember me, God."
- b. **What prayer accomplished.** Kept clear in Nehemiah's mind his own motives for action.
- c. **Our Prayers.** How many of our actions today will be done with the purpose of pleasing God?

We see that Nehemiah spent a lot of time talking to God. He prayed on every occasion that came his way. We see he had, as we mentioned last week, an attitude of prayer. The three things mentioned to develop an attitude of prayer were:

- 1) Acknowledging one's dependance on God.
- 2) Realizing God's presence with us.
- 3) Determining to Obey Him Fully

As we close out this study, let's look at **Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)**: "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Lessons from Nehemiah's life:

- The first step in any venture is to pray.
- People under God's direction can accomplish impossible tasks.
- There are two parts to real service for God: talking with Him, and walking with Him.