THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

"Nehemiah--Man of Prayer" (2)
Nehemiah 1:4-11

Introduction

1. No one can come to this Book of Nehemiah without going away with a new sense of responsibility and urgency for the work of the Lord. Here is Nehemiah who was a leader called of God for a moment of crisis in Israel! You must study the character and life of Nehemiah!

2. When Nehemiah saw the walls and gates of the city of Jerusalem (v.3), something touched the man. He went aside and prayed (v.4). But more than that--He gave himself a review of the character and person of God (vv. 3, 5, 10). Having established that in his mind, his next moves are outlined. Look at them:-

1. CONFESSION.

a. To God. v. 6.

In clear and bold type, the Word records the facts. Nehemiah bent to pray. He called upon God to respond. Two words are used of God's person: His ears and eyes. These words are antipomorphic expressions of God Who is Spirit! The verb "attentive" is a call to God to listen. The verb actually means to sharpen, hence is used of "pointing the ears like animals." To open eyes means for God to give attention. The word "prayer" is from the same root as the verb earlier (v.4) and means to "intercede." Note that the prayer is "before" or "in the face of" God. This was done all the day and night. No let up in prayer! That's real prayer. God give us more of it today.

b. For failure. vv. 6,7.

1) Sins. This word is the one which means to miss the mark. It is used three times in the verses here.

2) Corruption. The verb means to tighten the cord or twist, hence to act perversely. The infinitive and the indicative forms of the verb are used to give emphasis. Note such activity was "against Thee."

3) Not kept. Three areas of disobedience are listed as relating to the Torah (Law.) "Commandments" is the generic term for the law. "Statutes" have been suggested as the "decrees" of God such as not eating swine.

The "ordinances" may have been those parts of the "Law" which would have been valid truth even if not included in the Torah. In any case, these three words include the entire Word of God to Israel thru Moses (v. 7).

NOTE: It was all of these items which Nehemiah confessed. The verb "confessed" means "to show with an extended hand." Here it is hithpael and therefore reflexive in form. How we need this kind of praying today!

c. About Israel vv. 6,7.

It is very touching to read the text. Nehemiah prays in behalf of the "children of Israel" who are "Thy servants" and he includes both himself and the people of his father's house. Note that the term "servant" is used of persons (Isa. 37:35), of Israel the nation (Isa.41:8-16), and of the Messiah (Isa. 42:1-12).

2. SOLICITATION vv. 8, 9, 11.

a. To remember--the Word of God. vv. 8, 9

Nehemiah calls to the attention of God the entire compass of the Palestinian Covenant (Deut.28-30). In essence the Covenant notes that the land of Palestine belongs to Israel as a nation, but its occupation depends upon obedience to God. The entire future of Israel is named before God by Nehemiah (cf. Rom.9-11). How well Nehemiah was a dispensationalist! God forbid that we should erase the future of Israel from the memory of God. Frankly it is glorious that with the walls down and the gates burned the voice of Nehemiah is raised for the future of Israel!

b. To attend--to Prayer before God. v. 11.

There is a subtle suggestion that there is more than one single burdened heart here. The singular "servant" may speak of Nehemiah and the plural "servants" of others in Israel similarly broken before God. In any case, they are persons who "delight" to "fear" God. The former verb has a root which means to "bend" or curve" hence to "incline." Of such persons, God is not unmindful else Nehemiah would not have called God's attention to them!

c. To prosper-- in the Will of God. v.11.

Here is the final chord. Nehemiah wanted "success". The verb "prosper" comes from a root which means to "break thru." He had a spiritual goal in view. He knew just where to go for help--the king. Since he was the cupbearer it is obvious that he felt the right moment had been provided for him. God had worked to make this possible.

Conclusion We stand today with open doors for evangelism and growth for the church of Christ. Never has there been a wider opportunity. But we need men of vision and character like Nehemiah. Are there some who hear this message today?