

Pillar Passage – Nehemiah 1 pt 2  
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Welcome to another Pillar Passage. Today we look at the rest of Nehemiah chapter 1. If you have not yet, I encourage you to go back and watch the previous first video on Nehemiah 1.

Nehemiah is in Babylon and he has heard news that things are really bad back in Judah. People have returned after exile, but the city—the city of God—is in ruins. Nehemiah has been weeping, and mourning, and fasting, and pray to God. In the process of that. He has come to a realization, he has come to an initiative in his mind and he is placing the initiative before God as we see here.

What I want to do today is look at Nehemiah's praying. Let's listen in as Nehemiah prays.

He begins again by address God as the God of heaven. Though there is a great distance between Babylon and Judah, it makes no difference to this God. He's the God of heaven. He can do whatever He pleases. He is the great—He is *THE* awesome God—who does two things: keeps covenant and steadfast love.

What covenant and steadfast love is he talking about? He must be, at least, talking about the covenant God made with Abraham to bless him and make him the father of many nations. It might also be thinking about the covenant God made with David, that He would continue on David's line. There would never lack an offspring of David on David's throne.

God is a God who made these covenant unilaterally, especially if you look at the covenant that God made with Abraham in a vision. Normally, a bull would be cut and the two sides of the bull would be laid on either side and the two people would walk between the two pieces of the bull. But in God's covenant that He cut with Abraham, it was only God who walked between the two pieces of bull signifying that His love was completely by grace. Completely by grace, and it would be steadfast, and it would be a solid covenant that would last forever.

Nehemiah reminds himself, this is the God ... this is who I'm coming to. This is who I'm praying to. He is this way for all who love Him and keep His commandments. Perfect people? No. Because even in the commandments there are ways to come back when one sins. But those who keep His commandments those who love Him.

He asks, "Will you hear me?" This is a respectful, God-fearing way to say, 'Please hear me.' Nehemiah brings this prayer, and he has been praying it day and night once he's come to this resolution.

He's not praying for himself. He's praying, again, for his nation. This nations where are God's servants; God's slaves. God is the master.

The first thing that he does—and this is terribly important—is the confession of sins, of the people, and even himself. His father and his tribe, they have all sin. They have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. All have acted corruptly against Him.

You see several things here which echo David language in Psalm 51, where David begins the Psalm by stressing the steadfast love of God; His overflowing mercy, His grace. Then he says there that in all of his sinning (David) against you only, you and you only have I sinned, though he harmed everybody else.

When you are the God of heaven ... When you are God ... When you are holy, holy, holy ... that every sin is an infinite sin against your holiness.

They have asked corruptly against God and they have not kept every aspect of the law, the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that were clearly commanded to the people through Moses.

So, he begins by agreeing the God. Agreeing with God, yes what You have done in response to what we have done is just; was righteous. I agree. I will not grumble. I will not complain. Yes.

However. Nehemiah reminds God—not that God needs the remembrance, but this is a way of pleading with God—that this people whom You have disciplined, they are still Your servants and Your people—my Your grace. By Your grace; by Your steadfast love; by Your covenant. Because You cut this covenant You redeemed them by Your great powers—referring to the exodus, and wilderness, and many other moments in their history. By His great power and His strong hand, He has redeemed them. So, he says, don't waste Your past glory, oh God. Please come.

Here now, finally, we get to the ask. He asks God to be attentive and to hear his prayer. Here is the ask. He wants God to give success to him and to grant him mercy. To grant Nehemiah mercy. Because Nehemiah knows, I'm not going to do everything right here. There's two or three things here that I'm sure are imperfect about what I'm doing. I'm a sinner, and yet I want to act in love towards my country. So I pray for mercy now.

The last phrase gives us a little signal of what he's going to do next in the sight of *this* man. This man will be King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah is going to go into the king and make a request; a request for help; a request for materials and he asks God to give him success.

Nehemiah's approach is very similar to that of Paul and how Paul prays in 2 Thessalonians 1 for the Thessalonian church. Here in verse 10-12 he says, "In light of the day when Jesus comes and returns to be glorified among His saints, to *this* end, we always pray for you. We pray for you that our God may make you worthy of His calling." And here's the point. "and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by His power." Why? So that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in us, and us in Him on that day." On that day when He brings all of His grace to us on that day and He is glorified as King over all. When all the world sees that He is God of Heaven.

What Nehemiah here is doing is, in his fasting and in his praying he has come to a resolve—a resolve for good. Is it the right resolve? He will find out when he goes into Artaxerxes office and makes the ask. He prays, and then he moves. He does *not* wait for some fleece to know whether or not the forward movement is right or not. He knows the way he will find out the answer to pray is *by moving*.

Too many people sit back and wait for the answer before they move, when the only way God will give the answer is by the moving. The moving is the expression of faith. It is in the moving, when God produces a resolve in us, and we move out in that resolve in work—in some kind of work—that is a work of faith. A faith that is trusting in God in His power. Here, at this point, is when God brings the answers—the answers to our prayers. When we step out in faith; when we move looking for the answers. This is the Christian life. This is a life of adventure; it's a life of risk; it's a life of surprise; it is a life that is never boring. As the famous Christian song says, "It's a life that is never going back to okay. It is a life lived to God, and it is a life that sees His power work.

Do you want this life?

I sure do. I want it for myself. I want it for you. And I want it for our church.

I want it, most of all, for His glory.