

Pillar Passage – Neh. 2 pt 1 (v.1-4)  
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Well hello, and welcome to another Pillar Passage. Today we are looking at Nehemiah chapter 2. I invite you to go back and look at the two previous videos on Nehemiah 1.

Today we see what Nehemiah ends up doing after praying. He goes in to see the king, King Artaxerxes. He is the cupbearer to the king.

The cupbearer maybe seem like a small inconsequential job, but it was incredibly important in those days. The cupbearer was in charge of making sure that the wine and the food that reach the king was pure, tasted good, was of high quality, and was also safe. He was in charge to ensure that there was no poison. It was a job that was very close to the king and it was very, very important to the king.

We can see Nehemiah's acumen as he comes before the king here. He does nothing that is dishonest. He simply allows his countenance to be true to his heart. The king sees this. Surely he knows him well enough to know this is just sadness of heart.

Then Nehemiah was very much afraid. He then says what he's concerned about and he begins it with, 'I mean nothing about what I'm about to say as disrespect to you, oh king, but it is very reasonable that I should be sad. Do not punish me for this. The place of my fathers' graves...' This must have been something very meaningful to Artaxerxes. The place of Nehemiah's heritage. '... it lies in ruins and its gates have been destroyed by fire.' Very understandable. He is not bringing up something that is out of the ordinary. This is a very human concern that Nehemiah has that he expresses to Artaxerxes. It is the king—he allows the king to come to the conclusion that there is a request here (v. 4).

What I want to see here, now, is what Nehemiah does next. The king asks him, "What do you want? What are you requesting?" The king knows this because when you're king, that's what everyone does. Everyone close to you is wanting something in your entourage. Everyone wants a handout. Nehemiah must have been someone who was not given to handouts, but was given to excellence and service. That's why he would reach such a high place to be cupbearer to the king. But the king knows that he is requesting something. In that moment, Nehemiah silently prays.

I want to make note here that so much of the Christian life—so much—is typified in the one moment. So much of the true praying of an authentic disciple is essentially, "God help me. God help us. Geronimo. Amen." And then we jump.

We must remember that this pray is really just the tip of the iceberg—the outgrowth of days and days of praying that we saw in chapter 1. In chapter 1 we saw that when Nehemiah heard the news of the state of Jerusalem and the state of its walls, he mourned for days. He fasted and he prayed before the God of heaven. He has been praying and fasting for days and days and finally he came to this resolution of a good action. He wanted to take action as we saw in 2 Thessalonians when Paul prayed for the Thessalonians. 'May God fulfill every resolve for good.'

Paul prayed for the Thessalonians this way and this is exactly what Nehemiah does for himself here. He's praying for God's hand to be upon him; for God's fulfillment of his good resolve.

Really, this is just the tip of the iceberg of what he's already been doing. Again, this pictures so much of the Christian life.

We do not sit back and wait for God to tell us whether or not we are praying the right way. We come to resolves that God gives us, as we pray, as we fast. Then we take steps of action. On the other side of those steps of action we see whether or not God is in it or not.

This is the normal manner and method of praying in the Christian's life.