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Series: The Prayers of a Cupbearer

Part 1: Tugging on God’s Ear

Text: Nehemiah 1:4-11

Not all news we get is good news. Nehemiah receives news of what is happening back at home, he being in exile. The news of the wall in Jerusalem being broken down and the gates of the wall being destroyed by fire made him weep (v.4). The news made Nehemiah mournful...and prayerful. Joseph Medlicott Scriven, in his 19th century classic hymn, asks some question and gives a suggestion:

*Have we trials and temptations?*

*Is there trouble anywhere?*

*We should never be discouraged*

*Take it to the Lord in prayer.*

Nehemiah does just that. He takes his grief about his beloved Jerusalem, to God in prayer. Let’s take a close look at the prayer.

**In this prayer,**

1. Nehemiah tells *God* about *God* (5)

 a. Lord God of heaven

 b. Great and awesome

 c. Covenant-keeper

 d. Merciful

 e. The One who honors those who honor Him

For Nehemiah, getting the attention of The Eternal is critical. Nehemiah is making an assumption about God: The way God has *been* is the way God will *be*. Nehemiah assumes that the God who has historically been attentive to the prayers of His people will hear and be attentive to Nehemiah.

Psalm 34:15

*The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,*

*And His ears are open their cry.*

Nehemiah is counting on that!!

Psalm 116:1-2

*I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications*

*Because he has inclined His ear to me,*

*Therefore, I will call upon Him as long as I live.*

Nehemiah is counting on that!!

**In this prayer,**

2. Nehemiah is corporately confessional, repenting of sin for all his people. He acknowledges that his ancestors have sinned (6-10). A maturing prayer life considers not only our individual transgression but that of those closest to us. Cf. Job in Job 1:4-5

**In this prayer,**

3. Nehemiah reminds God of God’s own word.

Nehemiah almost sounds inappropriate, as he says to God, “Remember what you said? Are you going to keep your promise?”

Based on several examples in scripture, two of which I will cite, I want to suggest that we have a right, in prayer, to remind God of what God said.

Psalm 119:49-50

*Remember the word to Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, For Your word has given me life.*

**Illus*.***

In his book, *The Circle Maker*, Pastor Mark Batterson of Washington, D.C. writes,

“*our most powerful prayers are hyperlinked to the promises of God. When you know you are praying the promises of God, you can pray with holy confidence...You don’t have to second-guess yourself because you know that God wants you to double-click on His promises.”*

Here in Nehemiah 1, Nehemiah is double clicking on God’s promises. He is opening the promises up, activating them.

Isaiah 43:25-26

***25*** *"I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.* ***26*** *Put Me in remembrance; Let us contend together; State your case, that you may be acquitted.*

Here, God is saying, “Remind me of what I said to you”.

This first prayer we are examining, has a “here am I, send me” component in it. Here is a man who will not study a matter to death. Nehemiah prays and then acts. God has laid concerns on Nehemiah’s heart (2:12; 7:5)

Let us, in our day, tug on God’s ear. Let us

1. Articulate the character and attributes of God
2. Be appropriately confessional
3. Remind God of what God said
4. Act!

Amen