

Transforming Daily
“ . . . praying before the God of heaven . . . ”
Nehemiah 1:4-11

There are few prayers in Scripture as stirring as the prayer of Nehemiah. Upon hearing of the demoralized condition of the Jews and the destruction of the wall of Jerusalem, Nehemiah burst into lamentation. Though the outcome of the wayward acts of the children of Israel were prophesied to end in defeat, disgrace, and destruction the actual turn of events was too much for Nehemiah to bear. The first thing he resorted to is usually the last thing most believers turn to – prayer.

Nehemiah was serious about his prayer. He not only broke down in tears he wept for many days. For some Christians it's next to impossible for them to sit before God in prayer for a few minutes, let alone many days. In addition, Nehemiah fasted. (Fasting has become a controversial practice among some Christians today. If you choose to fast, study up on it first, and make sure that your physical health can sustain fasting for the period of time you fast.) The point of fasting is not to beg or barter with God. Also, it is not a means by way of magic or mystery to force God to do what you want Him to do. Oversimplified, fasting is a personal expression of your sincerity, devotion and dedication to the Word, work and will of God.

There is an outline to Nehemiah's prayer. It fits an acrostic that has been around for a long time. The acrostic is ACTS – adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. In verses 5-6a., Nehemiah expresses adoration and praise to God for who He is. In verses 6b.-7 Nehemiah confesses his sin as well as that of the children of Israel. In verses 8-9, Nehemiah implies thanksgiving for the command of God to Moses that not only informed Israel of what would happen if they were unfaithful to God, but also what would happen to those of Israel that returned to Him. In verses 10-11, Nehemiah offers words of supplication on behalf of himself and those who fear God.

Nehemiah's prayer is powerful. Are your prayers powerful? How long has it been since you sat before the Lord and wept over the adverse conditions or destruction that sin has left in your life or that of others? If you're like me the answer is too long. It isn't necessarily specific sin only that we need to pray about, but for the corporate sins of the church as well. Based on the condition of this world and the lateness of the hour eschatologically, wouldn't it be wise for the believer to be found praying before the God of heaven?