

Nehemiah's Faith

Nehemiah 1:5-11

5 And I said: "I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, 6 please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned. 7 We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. 8 Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; 9 but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.' 10 Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand. 11 O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." For I was the king's cupbearer.

Years earlier, Artaxerxes had issued a decree to stop the construction work in Jerusalem (Ezra 4:21; ¹

So when Nehemiah wants to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, he has to know that it is asking for something that the king has already ruled upon.

But remember, Nehemiah has this great faith in God. He believes that God has made him aware of this so that he might change things.

He does not know how that will happen but he believes that God will. He has been praying for four months now.

Probably each day begins with a prayer that today might be the day that God will make a way for him to convince the king to change his mind and support Jerusalem.

God has given him a goal and he has been praying and planning how this might be accomplished but he must be careful how to approach the king. He is after all only a servant of the king and people have been put to death for lessor things than what he has in mind.

Wanting to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, against the will of the king might be seen as some sort of subversion.

Also each day he must keep a happy appearance before the king lest the king think he is involved in some sort of treacherous plan.

So he continues to pray, "and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." For I was the king's cupbearer. V-11

- I. The basis of Nehemiah's prayer was his faith in God.
 - A. Faith makes the man in God's eyes.
 1. Unknown to him, Nehemiah was about to join the glorious ranks of the "champions of faith"; and in the centuries to follow, his name would be included with heroes like Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Esther, Deborah, and David. One person can make a big difference in this world, if that person knows God and really trusts in Him. Because faith makes a difference, we can make a difference in our world to the glory of God.
 2. "Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace," said Martin Luther. "It is so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times." The promise is that "all things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23, NKJV). Jesus said living faith can move mountains! (Matt. 17:20) ²
 3. But faith most of all. Nehemiah had many good traits, and he was a leader even by worldly standards. But what made him really great was his faith in God and his assurance that the God who had given him the task of rebuilding the wall would stand by him until the job was done. ³
 4. His faith in God came from his reading of the book of the law as seen in the similarities between his prayer and the promises in the law and the law's characterization of God.
 5. This he quotes from Deu. 30:1-5, and begs leave to put God in mind of it (though the Eternal Mind needs no remembrancer) as that which he guided his desires by, and grounded his faith and hope upon, in praying this prayer: Henry, M. (1994).⁴
 - B. Nehemiah 1:5 5 And I said: "I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, you who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments,
 1. Deuteronomy 7:9 9 "Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;
 2. Deuteronomy 7:21 21 You shall not be terrified of them; for the LORD your God, the great and awesome God, is among you.
 3. Deuteronomy 10:17 17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe.
 4. Daniel 9:4 4 And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His

commandments,

- C. Nehemiah 1:6 6 please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned. 7 We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses.
1. Deuteronomy 6:1 "Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess,
- D. Nehemiah 1:8 8 Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations;
1. Deuteronomy 4:27 27 And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you.
 2. Deuteronomy 28:64 64 "Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known—wood and stone.
- E. Nehemiah 1:9 but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.'
1. Deuteronomy 30:1–4 "Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, 2 and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. 4 If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you.
 2. Leviticus 26:40-45 (NKJV) 40 'But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me, 41 and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the

land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt-- 42 then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land. 43 The land also shall be left empty by them, and will enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them; they will accept their guilt, because they despised My judgments and because their soul abhorred My statutes. 44 Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. 45 But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD.' "

3. Deuteronomy 12:5 5 "But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go.

F. Nehemiah 1:10 10 Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand.

1. Deuteronomy 9:29 29 Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm.'

2. Exodus 32:11 11 Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

II. The makeup of the prayer.

A. The prayer itself (vv. 5–11). There is an acrostic for prayer that you have probably heard: ACTS. In this acrostic,

1. A - stands for adoration

a. LORD God of heaven,

b. O great and awesome God

(1) Those that with an eye of faith see the church's God to be great and terrible will see the church's enemies to be mean and despicable. The reigning fear of God is the best antidote against the ensnaring fear of man. He that is afraid of a man that shall die forgets the Lord his Maker, Isa. 51:12, 13.

Henry, M. (1994).⁵

c. You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments

2. C for confession,
 - a. confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You.
 - b. Both my father's house and I have sinned.
 - c. 7 We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses
3. T - for thanksgiving
 - a. Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand.
4. S - for supplication. Each of these is present in Nehemiah's model prayer.⁶
 - a. Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; 9 but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.
 - b. O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.

B. He was persistent in prayer

1. Luke 11:5–10 (NKJV) 5 And He said to them, “Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; 7 and he will answer from within and say, ‘Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you’? 8 I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.
2. 9 “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

III. The Exercise of Faith

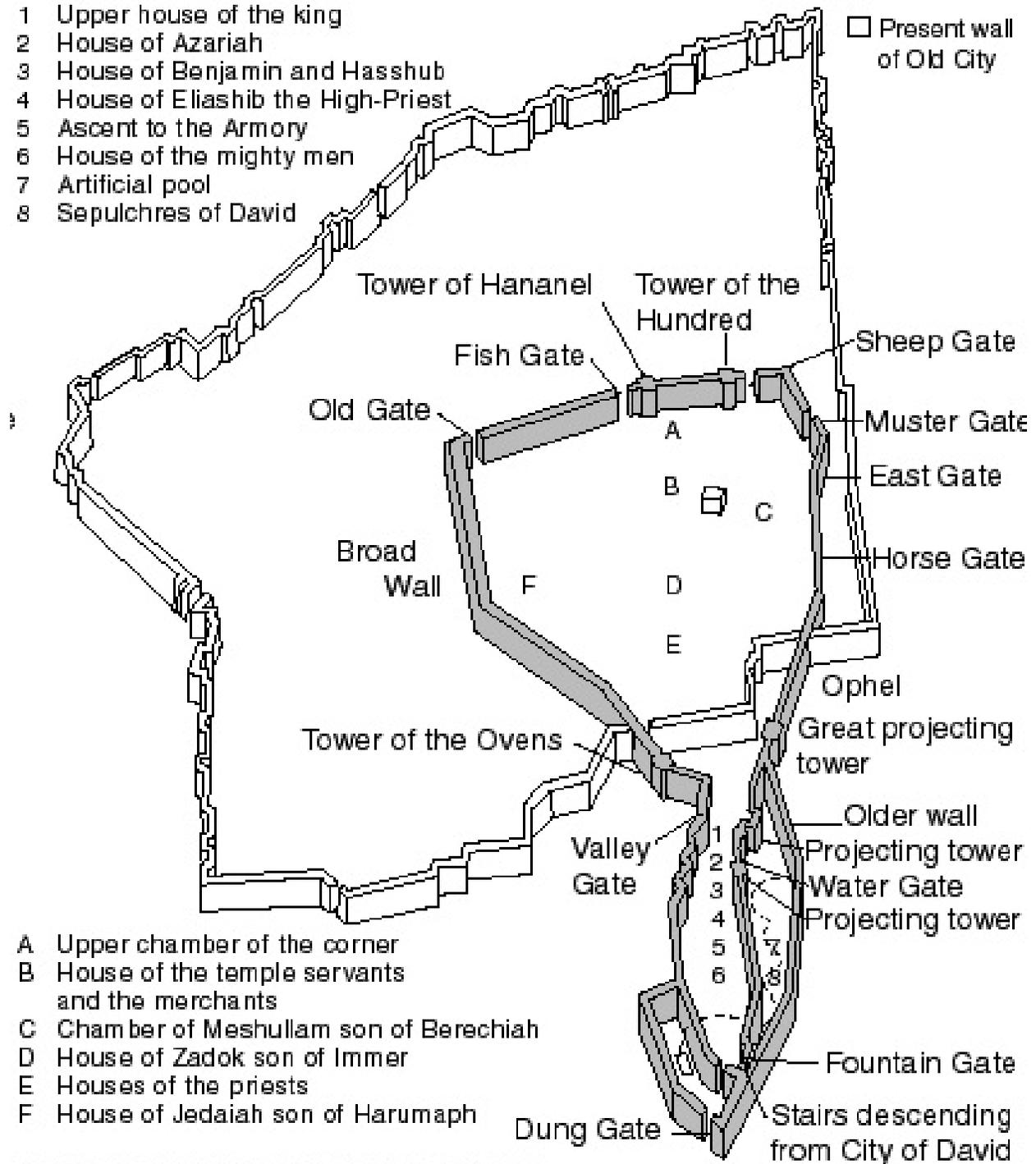
A. He had faith to wait

1. He waited for four months for the right moment.

2. Since the Jewish month of Nisan would be our mid-March to mid-April, it would indicate that four months have passed since Nehemiah received the bad news about the plight of Jerusalem.
- B. He had faith to ask
1. When the time came, he spoke up and did not faint.
 2. That is what prayer does for us it gives us strength and confidence.
- C. He had faith to challenge others.⁷

Were it not for the dedication and determination that came from his faith in a great God, Nehemiah would never have accepted the challenge or finished the work. He had never seen the verse, but what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:58 was what kept him going: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (NKJV).⁸

- 1 Upper house of the king
- 2 House of Azariah
- 3 House of Benjamin and Hasshub
- 4 House of Eliashib the High-Priest
- 5 Ascent to the Armory
- 6 House of the mighty men
- 7 Artificial pool
- 8 Sepulchres of David



- A Upper chamber of the corner
- B House of the temple servants and the merchants
- C Chamber of Meshullam son of Berechiah
- D House of Zadok son of Immer
- E Houses of the priests
- F House of Jedaiah son of Harumaph

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