



Are You In A P.O.D? - June 7, 2020

OPEN

What happens when disaster, such as an earthquake, strikes? What can you do to stay safe? If you have a certain kind of bed, it will sense the seismic activity and will enclose you in a secure pod, stocked with survival supplies – see [survival bed](#). If you are hoping to survive a tsunami, there is a “pod” for that! This specially engineered [survival capsule](#) was developed in the Pacific Northwest.

What is a Christian to do? These detours in life are a wonderful opportunity to rediscover and recommit to a “P.O.D.” – a *posture of dependence*. We find a great example of “P.O.D” from the life Nehemiah.

The first verse of the book identifies Nehemiah as the author. His name means “Jehovah comforts” yet Nehemiah was born in captivity and lived in the aftermath of exile. Let’s look at a timeline to get a sense of the context.

- 587 BC** The final stage of the captivity Judah by Babylonians
- 539 BC** Babylonian Empire broken by the Persian Empire. King Cyrus decreed for Jews to resettle Jerusalem and rebuild Temple (Ezra 1:2-4)
- 536 - 35 BC** 50,000 return under Zerubbabel but only lay Temple foundation, rebuild alter (Ezra 2:1ff) Note that from 606 to 536 is 70 years (II Chron 36:20-21)
- 518 - 16 BC** The prophets Haggai (1:7-11) and Zechariah (1:6) inspire completion of the Temple – King Darius’ reign.
- 458 BC** Ezra the priest returns and leads a moral and spiritual revival and renewal – King Artaxerxes’ reign.
- 445 - 33 BC** Nehemiah hears God’s call and returns to restore the walls of Jerusalem.

DIG

Nehemiah lived in a time of great isolation – from Jerusalem. The city stood for the glory of God and the relationship He had with His covenant people but it suffered from “kingdom neglect”. The very fact that the Israel was first divided and then taken captive, showed how far they strayed from God.

There were glimmers of hope. The book of Ezra records a time of great revival. But only twelve years later, the situation in Jerusalem had deteriorated again as reported by Hanani to Nehemiah. Notice what this report did in the life of Nehemiah. **Read Nehemiah 1:1-4**

Against this backdrop, Nehemiah grieved deeply over the insult that a broken Jerusalem meant to God’s glory! Nehemiah was thrust into leadership to rebuild the walls. And he left us a great picture of a *posture of dependence*. **Read Nehemiah 1:5-11**

A person with a *posture of dependence* on God will display it in five ways.

[1] Compelled by God’s glory - vv. 3-4

The book of Nehemiah begins with a bad report about the situation of Jerusalem. This was a significant detour to God’s purposes. And this was unfulfilling to Nehemiah. Nehemiah’s sorrow only makes sense in view of his intense passion for God to be exalted. As a result, Nehemiah’s initial response was notable.

- Weeping* This sorrow was genuine because his hope for Jerusalem was genuine.
- Mourning* Jesus also grieved deeply over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-38).
- Fasting* This reveals sorrow and regret which accompanies confession and intercession.
- Prayer* His prayer had power because it was fueled by helplessness and dependence on God.

Alan Redpath writes, “...you never lighten the load unless first you have felt the pressure in your own soul.” (**Victorious Christian Service**, Fleming H. Revell, 1958, 19)

[2] Concentrated on God’s character - vv. 5-6a

The next thing that Nehemiah concerned himself with after weeping was the character of God. What did he call to mind about God?

Notice how Nehemiah “rests his plan upon the attributes of God.” (**All The Prayers Of The Bible**, Herbert Lockyer, Zondervan, 1982, 90)

- *God is great and awesome* – the same expression is in 4:14 and 9:32, with addition of “mighty”.
- *God is faithful to His covenant* – Deuteronomy 30:1-3 contains God’s promise of restoration to the land.
- *God shows lovingkindness* – Nehemiah appeals to God’s “covenant love” or God’s loyal and merciful love - in Hebrew it is *hesed*.

God acts in keeping with His character – which is both for His glory and for our good. In prayer, we should seek Him simply to act in ways that show all the glories of His nature. Nehemiah could pray such a robust request because he was praying to an awesome God. Let’s ask a robust request of God – to fulfill our mission! Cornerstone is called to impact our world by living and sharing the life of Jesus!

[3] Concerned for God’s standards - vv. 6b-7

After Nehemiah advocated to God for his people, he also offered confession on their behalf. In so doing, he was admitting to the sin of self-sufficiency. And what is the opposite? Dependence. Trust. Faith. We will not see success in our prayer life if we do not take seriously the standards of God. And one of the most fundamental standards God has set out for us is: “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.*” (see Proverbs 3:5)

An important ingredient in powerful praying is confession – which will be the focus in **chapter 9**. For now, notice in verse 7 that Nehemiah included himself when he confessed the sin of his people. Along with his nation Nehemiah strayed from the covenant – in contrast, God is the covenant-keeper (v. 5). Nehemiah recognized he could serve God without concerning himself with God’s standards.

[4] Confident of God’s promises - vv. 8-10

The fourth ingredient in correct communication with God is the expression of confidence in His promises. In verses 8-10 we observe Nehemiah claiming the promise of God, rooted in the covenant given to Moses at Mount Sinai – which we noted already from Deuteronomy 30:1-3.

Perhaps the most important spiritual claim made by Nehemiah is God’s work of redemption. In verse 10 he describes the miraculous escape from Egypt – see Exodus 32:11.

Further, we must remember what Philip Brooks stated, that “prayer is not conquering God’s reluctance but taking hold upon God’s willingness”. God has given many, many “*precious and magnificent promises*” (see II Peter 1:4).

[5] Centered on God’s answer - v. 11

The final aspect to Nehemiah’s prayer was its specificity. Nehemiah asked God for favor with King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah needed the king to grant his desire to return to Jerusalem and build up the walls of the city. This was no small thing. Nehemiah had a very distinguished task. He was the king’s cupbearer which gave him access. But he did not presume. He prayed!

Just like Nehemiah, we should be specific about our needs when we pray to God. Living with deep dependence upon God is not mumbling some mechanical prayer. It is pinpointing exactly what we need, which reveals our passion to serve Him. John Newton put it this way, “Thou art coming to a King, large petitions with thee bring, for His grace and power are such none can ever ask too much.”

REFLECT



Today is an important occasion for Cornerstone. Click on this picture to see prayer resources on our website for this special day of depending upon God.

Do you have good spiritual posture? Here is a self checklist...

- Do you have a posture of self-reliance or one of dependence upon God.*
- When you watch or hear the news – do you weep? Mourn? Fast? More than that, are you driven to pray?*
- When you pray do you claim and accept what God has promised to do?*
- Are you functionally literate with the promises of God?*