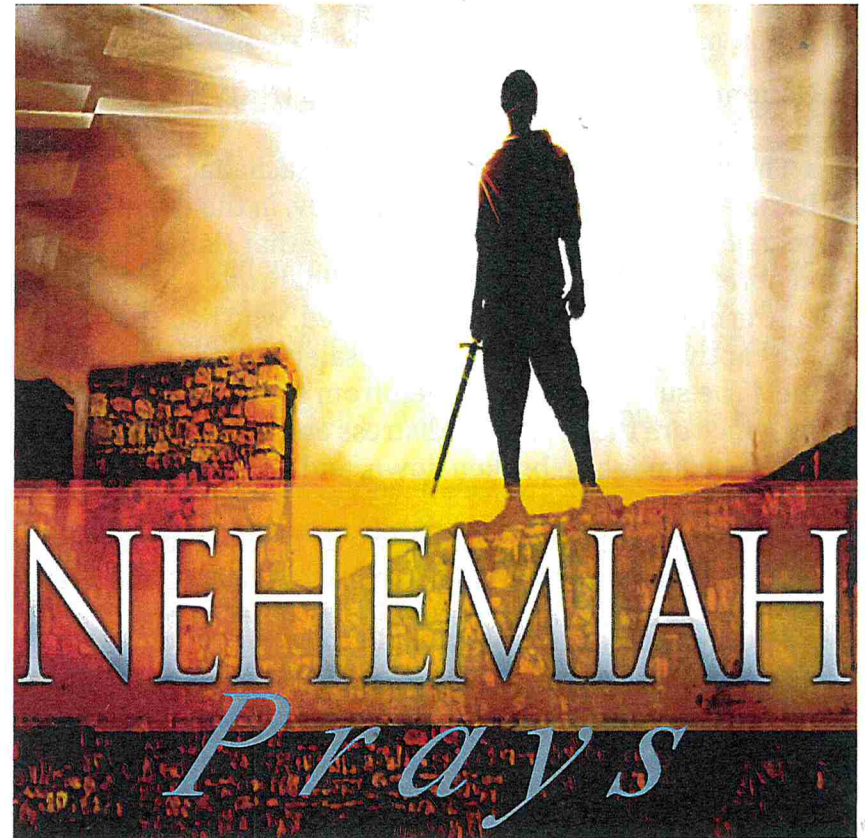
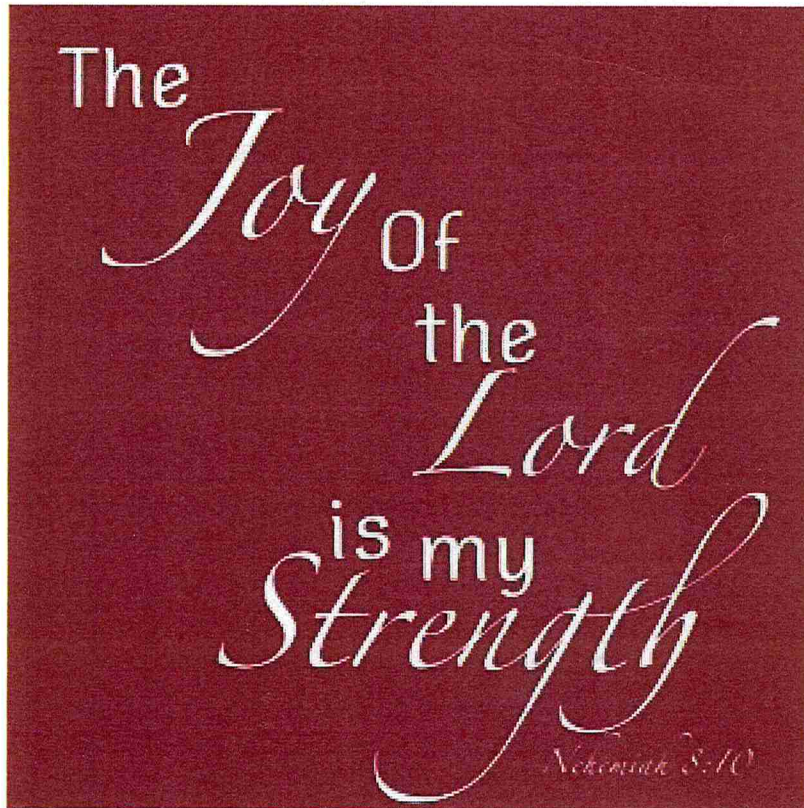


Nehemiah 8:10b: "Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."



January Concert of Prayer

Pastor Mark vonEhrenkrook

Jovita Baptist Church

Edgewood, WA

January 2015



Nehemiah Prays

Nehemiah 1 New King James Version (NKJV)

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chisleu, *in* the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel, ² that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. ³ And they said to me, "The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province *are* there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem *is* also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire."

⁴ So it was, when I heard these words that I sat down and wept, and mourned *for many* days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah was moved to tears, he had to sit down when he heard the news and his sorrow turned into mourning. In this, his journal, it says he "mourned for many days." He began to fast and pray and sometime during this period of intense prayer, God revealed a plan that would begin with Nehemiah's passion and ultimately use him to be the solution to the problem. Nehemiah records the theme of his prayer in the first chapter:

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,

Nehemiah was praying to the One True God, the God of the covenant and the Law. This is Jehovah the creator of the universe and of all things. Nehemiah addressed his prayer to the

only God who could hear and answer. Those around him prayed to statues or kings, but Nehemiah prayed to the living God and addresses God with respect and great honor.

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,

Nehemiah understood that Jehovah God has ears to hear and eyes to see, God is not a dumb and mute statue. As such, Nehemiah approaches God humbly, as His servant.

day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants,

After his adoration of God, Nehemiah begins his intercession, or pleading with God on behalf of the nation of Israel. He does this incessantly, "day and night."

...and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned.

At this point in his prayer, Nehemiah confesses not only his own sin, but the sins of the nation. Even though Nehemiah was a servant and alien in a foreign country he knew that when one comes to God it is important to open our hearts and ask for forgiveness and cleansing. Nehemiah knew the words of King David in Psalm 66:18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear." Confession of sins is always a prerequisite of prevailing prayer.

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.

Nehemiah is specific and lists the sins of the people, even as he identifies himself with them.

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.'

Nehemiah asks God to keep His promise to bring the children of Israel back to the Land of Abraham. He is intimately acquainted with the judgment on Israel through the Babylonian and now Persian captivity. The Jews were scattered all over the known world yet a remnant had returned and there was tremendous hope that they would indeed be a great nation once again.

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.

Nehemiah reminds God (and himself) that he is praying for the chosen people of God, whom God alone rescued from Egypt and from other threats, including the one by Haman that would have effectively wiped out the Jewish people forever. He pleads to God and adds his prayer to the prayers of others who are praying. He boldly asks, like King David did, for favor and that the plan God put into his heart would prosper. He asks God for a miracle, that God would move the heart of the pagan king.

From the time Nehemiah started to pray until he talked to the king, it was a period of roughly four months. He began in Chislev (Kislev) (The month that Hanukkah is celebrated, although this came later than Nehemiah's time.) ^{9th} month of the year (Roughly December.) Page 5

We are told in his journal that he came before the king in the same year but in the month of Nisan (The month that the Passover is celebrated.) 1st month of year (April) From December to April is approximately four months.

(At some point during the Babylonian captivity which started in 597 BC, Babylonian Jews began to use the Babylonian names for the months of the year and this continues in some manner today.)

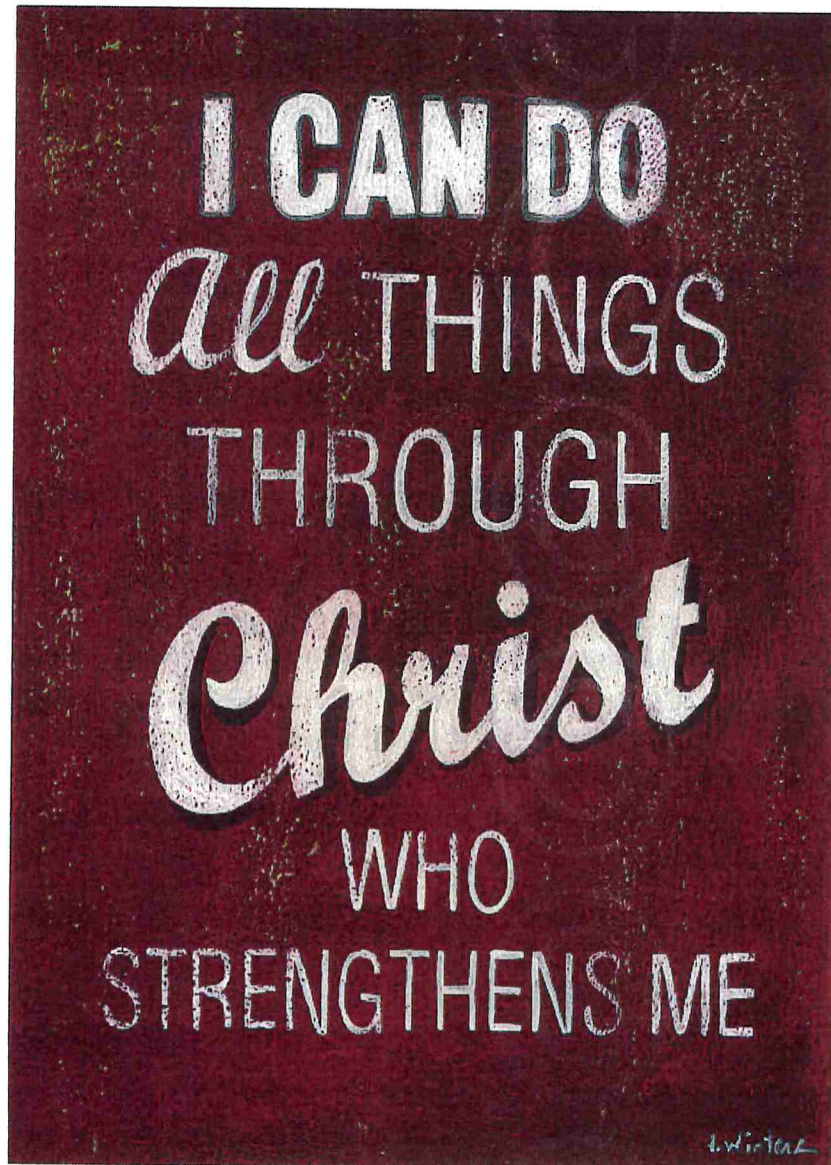
Finally, Nehemiah prays a very simple prayer and it is recorded four times in his journal:

"Remember me, Oh my God." (5:19; 13:14; 13:22; 13:31)

This man of God was a servant first. He was willing to give his life in service to God on behalf of his people. The Persian king was known as "the king of kings" however, Nehemiah served the true King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He put himself into the hands of the living God. Like Esther, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, everyone of them put their lives on the line for the worship of the true and living God.

Today we know how the story of this great man and the godly people around him worked out. We don't know how our story will finish. Will you and I be men and women of God, willing to pour out our hearts, souls and very lives to God on behalf of those who do not know Him? Will we join our hearts in prayer for the mighty work God wants to ac-

comply in our midst? May God grant us favor and success in the work and battles to come. – pastor mark



"Enter His gates with Thanksgiving and into His courts with praise." Psalm 100:4

"Be anxious for nothing, but in EVERYTHING with prayer and supplication with THANKSGIVING, let your requests be made known to God."

Philippians 4:6

