

## The Right Response : Prayer

1.31.10

*“4As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. 5 And I said, “O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, 6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father’s house have sinned. 7 We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. 8 Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, 9 but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.’ 10 They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. 11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. Now I was cupbearer to the king.” Nehemiah 1:4-11*

*“As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days...”*

Tremendous

response for news that was 140 years old.

*“and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.”* Going without physical food

for the purpose of being more focused in prayer. Sustained response as well underscoring the deep affect that this had upon him.

### **P: God’s people should be broken by the brokenness of their city.**

*Is your heart broken for our city? If not, what needs to change?*

### **P: When the bad news hits, we should PRAY!**

What this does:

1. Enters God into the equation—better yet, it reminds you that He is already in the equation and already at work.
2. Gives you the spiritual resources you need to navigate this difficulty.
3. Puts things in perspective. Allows you to assess how *big* of a deal this is.

*What is typically my response when I hear bad news? What needs to change?*

*“And I said, “O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast*

*love with those who love him and keep his commandments...”* He begins with adoration and a reminder of Who God is and highlights the ‘covenant keeping’ aspect of His nature (Deut. 7:9). This is his ‘hesed,’ a central theme of God’s faithfulness in the OT.

### **P: We should begin our prayers with worship.**

What this does:

1. Makes sure that we are approaching God the right way.

- a. Too often, we approach God as if He was a vending machine as opposed to the matchless King and Creator that He is.

*“let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father’s house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.”* Note the appropriate thoroughness. “commandments” are directives like the Ten Commandments, “statutes” something prescribed in the Law like keeping the Passover, “rules” are legal decisions or judgments. He includes himself in the confession.

### **P: Confession should be a regular part of our prayers.**

*Is confession of my sin a regular part of my prayer life?*

Practically Speaking:

1. Confess your sins immediately.
2. Be as specific as possible.

*“Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.’ They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand.”* This is a restatement of the covenant promises of God. This was common in the OT. For us, this would be a modern equivalent of praying the Scriptures back to God. In his own “Old Testament” way, applying the Gospel.

### **P: The Scriptures should be a regular part of our prayer life.**

Practically Speaking:

1. Allow the Text to guide your prayers. Simply pray through a passage.

*Are the Scriptures a regular part of my prayer life? If not, what needs to change?*

*“O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.”* A prayer of supplication. Foreshadowing for what is to come in the book.

### **P: Don’t be afraid to ask for what you need.**

*Am I in the habit of asking God for what I need?*

*“Now I was cupbearer to the king.”* Nehemiah’s statement about his job.

### **P: God strategically places us where He wants us to make a unique impact.**

*Do I recognize that I am where I am by the sovereign providence of God?*

**The Gospel is our hope for praying and serving rightly.**