



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

STANDING TALL AND STRONG THROUGH PRAYER

KEY PASSAGE: Nehemiah 1:1-11 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE: Nehemiah 2:4, 5-9; 4:1-5,18; 6:1-3 | Isaiah 6:1-6
Psalm 66:18; 103:19 | John 8:32 | Romans 2:4

► SUMMARY

Prayer is powerful.

It allows us to cast our burdens on God and receive guidance and provision from Him. All too often, however, we take this privilege for granted. Instead of turning to the Father in prayer, we try to solve our problems on our own. You and I can experience God's power for daily living when we are willing to bow before Him and seek Him earnestly. We stand tallest and strongest on our knees. Do we have to kneel every time we pray? No. In fact, some people are physically unable to do so. However, the attitude of our hearts should be reverent awe and submission to almighty God. If we approach prayer correctly, you and I can have confidence that He will respond to our requests.

► SERMON POINTS

Nehemiah knew how to stand tall and strong on his knees.

In his role as cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, he held an influential position and probably lived in luxury. But since he was a captive in a foreign country, Nehemiah was unable to go where he pleased. When he heard that Jerusalem's walls were in ruins—leaving the city vulnerable to attack—he turned to God in prayer to weep and mourn for his city (Neh. 1:4). The Lord granted him favor with King Artaxerxes. The ruler not only let Nehemiah take a leave of absence, he also supplied the exiles with building materials and military protection (Neh. 2:5-9). The king even gave him letters to the governors of the

provinces on the way so they would allow the Jews to pass through their lands.

Time and time again, Nehemiah sought the Lord whenever he faced a problem or threat. He turned to God for strength to keep going despite criticism and discouragement (Neh. 4:1-5). God gave him wisdom to know how to relate to his critics (Neh. 6:1-3) and to defend the city against military attack (Neh. 4:18). To the surprise of their enemies, the Jews rebuilt the wall in 52 days. More importantly, spiritual revival came to Jerusalem as a result of Nehemiah's faithfulness.

How should we pray?

■ Recognize that God is the Sovereign of the Universe.

Nehemiah addressed his prayer to "the great and awesome God" (Neh. 1:5). He knew the Lord was in absolute control of all things. Psalm 103:19 says, "The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all." Even when difficult circumstances come our way, our heavenly Father never ceases to be the Ruler and Master of the universe.

■ **Recognize that God is holy.** When Isaiah saw the Lord in His glory, he felt unclean—though he had lived a righteous life (Isa. 6:1-6). The picture we see of God in the book of Revelation is similar in its majesty. As humans, we all fall short of God's absolute holiness. While He is our heavenly Father, intimately concerned with each detail of our lives, He is also the Sovereign of the Universe. That means you and I should approach Him with reverence and awe. Those attitudes prompted Nehemiah to fast and pray for four months.

He looked to God, not himself, for the answer to Jerusalem's problems.

- **Confess sin.** Nehemiah included himself when he admitted the rebellion of his nation: "I and my father's house have sinned. We have ... not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses" (Neh. 1:6-7).

Scripture teaches that God will not hear our prayers if we are cherishing sin in our hearts (Ps. 66:18). He may be good to us; it's His kindness that leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). But our prayers won't be answered unless we confess our wrongdoing. Purity of heart and the power of God are connected.

- **Recognize your inadequacy.** Nehemiah's job had not trained him in how to build walls or gates, nor had he ever commanded an army. As an exile, he was unknown to the Jews who had remained in Jerusalem; humanly speaking, they had no reason to follow his lead. Yet Nehemiah trusted God and obeyed anyway.

When the Lord tells you to do something, He hasn't made a mistake. He will never call you to do something that you can't do through His power and strength. In fact, God will use your weaknesses to draw you closer to Himself and teach you how to rely on Him more completely.

- **Be available for God to use you.** Nehemiah was willing to obey whatever the Lord instructed him to do. He had confidence that God knew best how to handle the difficulties that the Jewish people faced.

We, too, have access to the divine Counselor. He knows every detail of our hardships. Are we willing to obey whatever He requires of us? Some prayers will never be answered unless we take an active role in their fulfillment. God will cover our mistakes and pick us up when we fail. Our job is to obey Him.

- **Experience the Holy Spirit's enabling power.**

Nehemiah's success was not a result of his education, personality, or political connections. He had developed a personal relationship with the Father. He learned to go to the Lord with his needs (Neh. 2:4).

Do you ever feel worthless or unimportant? God wants you to look at yourself as He does—as someone with potential. In the power of the Spirit, you have the ability to do whatever He asks of you. He will supply all the energy and strength you need.

- **Get God's vision and direction.** Nehemiah's heart was broken when his fellow Jews told him of Jerusalem's condition. As he sought the Lord in prayer, God revealed his role in the city's restoration.

What is on your heart? If you could do anything with the rest of your life, what would it be? Go before the Lord with that desire and allow Him to refine it. Seek His face for how to fulfill His will for your life. Surrender your dreams to the heavenly Father, and watch what He will do in and through you.

► RESPONSE

- As a child of God, you have the awesome privilege of falling on your knees and talking to the Ruler of the universe. Don't take this precious gift for granted. Humbly approach the throne of grace with your needs, confess your sin, and admit that life's challenges are too much to handle alone. The Father will reveal His plans and equip you with all you need to succeed.
- Are you willing to pray, "Lord, I don't feel adequate, but I'll obey whatever You command"? My friend, God will use you in amazing ways if you let Him.

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