

**I. Introduction:**

- A. With our last message, I was thinking that we'd move on to chapter 6.
1. But I couldn't get the last verse of this chapter out of my mind.
  2. I found it disturbing that Nehemiah would speak to God this way.
  3. And this isn't the only time he prays like this.
    - a. **Nehemiah 13:14** – *“Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.”*
    - b. **13:22** – *“And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.”*
    - c. **13:30** – *“Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business; And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.”*
  4. I was disturbed by these words because they seem unseemly – inappropriate, uncomely.
- B. But as I was thinking about them and our text in particular, it occurred to me that I was looking at them incorrectly.
1. First, I reminded myself that this was a godly man – in fact it wouldn't be incorrect to say that he was speaking as a prophet of God.
  2. While anyone could be speaking from the flesh, I don't think that Nehemiah was.
  3. Second, this is the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit gave these words to us for our instruction.
    - a. The question is: is this a negative lesson – is this what we are not supposed to do?
    - b. Or is this something we should study and emulate?
  4. Then third, **Rom. 8:26** says, *“The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”*
  5. There is a definite hint of groaning in these verses, but is it Nehemiah groaning or is it the Spirit?
- C. I think there are three different kinds of lessons when we look that this scripture from three points of view.

**II. First, there is the position of the lost person.**

- A. Of course, Nehemiah was not one of these; he was definitely a child of God.
1. But for the sake of argument, let's say that he was a secular Jew who merely longed to live in the new Jerusalem.
  2. Or in some sort of Jewish fashion, he longed for the Millennium.
  3. Do you suppose that any of these returning captives were picturing some sort of Jewish Millennium – with or without the Messiah?
  4. We might apply these words to some who *“wanted to go to heaven when he died.”*
- B. Have there ever been people who prayed Nehemiah's words when seeking salvation?
1. Even though this scripture has nothing to do with salvation, that is a possibility.
  2. They recognize God as *“Elohim”* – the Almighty God; the omniscient God.
  3. And they pray *“Lord, please get out your ‘scales of justice’”* – at least as they picture things with their sin-blinded eyes.
  4. *“Lord, I invite you to look back over my life and weigh my good deeds against my bad.”*
  5. *Yes, I have lied, but as you know I have told the truth at least ten times as often as I have lied.*
  6. *And yes, there were those things I stole just for the fun of it.*
  7. *I have often shop-lifted things, but haven't I given to the needy as well – even when I really didn't have to?*
  8. *I have built a fine house here in Jerusalem, but I also worked on the construction of the wall – for the good of the community – doesn't that count for something, Lord?*
  9. *I admit that I have charged my neighbors 12% usury on money they needed to buy food, but I gave a tenth of that to the support of the Temple ministry.”*

C. *“Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.”*

1. Isn't it true that the vast majority of people who think about salvation – in whatever form they imagine it –
2. Don't the majority of people seek salvation through human and selfish means?
3. Don't they overlook, or justify, their sins and plug their noses at the stench of their wretchedness?
4. It doesn't matter if we are talking about Hindus, Muslims, Catholics, Episcopalians, Mormons or Methodists deliverance from sin for most of these people comes through their god's balancing act.
5. And still, it's not so much as God's ability or willingness to balance their good and bad deeds.
6. It boils down to the sinner himself – his deeds, his religion, his good works, his good words.

D. *“Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.”*

1. That is not salvation; that is not the formula for salvation.
2. That grows out of one of the foremost lies of Satan.
3. But that is not what Nehemiah is praying.

### III. Sadly, even Christians, immature or backslidden Christians, think along these lines.

A. I don't think any preacher can refer to **Colossians 3:2** too often.

1. Come on brethren, *“set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”*
2. We **must** think more **vertically** than **horizontally** – more **Heavenly** than **earthly**.
3. But for someone recently born again, it is a hard thing to do.
  - a. It is not a part of his old fleshly nature. It is something he needs to learn and practice.
  - b. And thus the reason for quoting that scripture and others like it.
4. Christian, *“no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”*
  - a. *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*
  - b. *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, & his righteousness; & all these things shall be added unto you.”*
5. Our eyes, by design, are on the front of our faces – looking forward, horizontally.
6. Our eyes are not on the tops of our heads.
7. And thus we have the exhortation – *“look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”*
8. We need that exhortation, because it is not something we used to do before our salvation.

B. Now, picture a newly saved man; his faith is in Christ; his soul is secure.

1. He begins to long for Heaven; he yearns to see his Saviour.
2. Then he hears messages on the Judgment Seat of Christ – the Bema judgment.
3. **II Corinthians 5:10** – *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”*
4. He hears messages on eternal rewards.
5. **Matthew 16:27** – *“The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”*
6. He thinks to himself – *“Hey, I want some of those rewards.”*
  - a. *I want my mansion to be better than so-&-so's mansion.*
  - b. *I want a crown a least as magnificent as her's.”*
7. In his mind he begins to weigh his service for Christ against his selfishness, his laziness, his sinfulness.
8. And then in his foolishness, he thinks, *“I am worthy, Lord, of **great** reward – or at least of **good** reward.”*

C. Isn't it possible – if we take this interpretation – to detect the stench of pride in this verse?

1. *“Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that **(I)** have done for this people.”*
2. *“Look what I have done for this people – to be seen of this people.”*
3. *And you know, Lord, they just haven't been looking at me the way I wish they would.*
4. *Lately, no one has spoken about the job I left in the king's palace to come to build this wall.*

5. *No one has patted me on the back for standing up against Sanballat and Tobiah.*
6. *I feel a little hurt that I'm not getting the honor I deserve, so I'm turning to you."*
7. *"Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people."*
8. This verse could be read as a revelation of the heart of self-centered servant – an immature Christian – perhaps as one who has lost the joy of his salvation because he has slidden away from the Lord's throne.
9. This Christian has become as self-centered as a lost man.

#### IV. On the other hand, we could look at this as the words of someone mature in Christ.

- A. And this is Nehemiah. First, he addresses the Lord as *"his God."*
  1. The blasphemer often speaks of God without ever considering the One to whose name he refers.
    - a. To him, the Lord is not *"his God,"* in fact, he doesn't want him to be God at all.
  2. The religious lost man may think of God as some austere, judgmental, omnipotence who must be placated with blood sacrifices or sacrifices of money and good works.
  3. But Nehemiah thinks of Elohim as the God whom he rejoices to serve.
  4. He didn't serve the people, and he didn't expect their praise or reward.
  5. He was not surprised to find himself unappreciated or under-appreciated by the people of Jerusalem.
  6. That is the general fate of most servants of God.
  7. No, Nehemiah served the Lord, *"his God."*
- B. Have you overlooked what might be the key word in the verse – *"good?"*
  1. *"Think upon me, my God, for GOOD, according to all that I have done for this people."*
  2. Notice that Nehemiah didn't use the word *"reward;"* he didn't speak of *"plenty"* or something like that.
  3. It wasn't, *"think upon me, my God, for MY REWARD, according to all that I have done for this people."*
- C. You can call me a dreamer if you like; you can accuse me of wearing rose colored glasses.
  1. But after reading this verse over and over again, I hear the words of a man resting in God's grace.
  2. *"Lord, I have done what I have done, and I've done it for you."*
  3. *"I leave to you the results of my labors and whether or not my labors deserve your blessing."*
  4. Nehemiah wasn't demanding anything of the Lord.
  5. I read of no specific remuneration, because he considered himself only a servant saved by grace.
  6. After sitting in the lower seat, there is great honor when the Master says, *"Come up to the head table and sit beside me."*
  7. By not saying, *"My expenses have been such and such,"* the love offering may be much larger than the need.
  8. Do David's words in **Psalm 25** have any relationship to Nehemiah's case?
    - a. *"Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old.*
    - b. *Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD."*
  9. When Nehemiah said *"Think upon me,"* it was the same Hebrew word David used when he said *"remember."*
- D. I can't accuse Nehemiah of forgetting **Hebrews 6:10** because he hadn't yet had the opportunity of reading it.
  1. But would he have prayed like this if he had known – *"God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."*
  2. Nehemiah, **Matthew 10:42** says, *"Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."*
  3. That reward will not be granted because that cup of cold water, or our work and labour of love, deserves or demands it.
  4. By grace are we saved.
  5. And by grace will we be blessed in the day of judgment when our lives of service are *"remembered"* by the omniscient God.