

Heavenly help—Waiting for God’s blessing  
(Nehemiah 2:1-10)

**Intro:** When we read the story of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the walls we are given an object lesson in providence. Think about what we have considered so far. It all begins with a man who loved enough to care, cared enough to cry, cried enough to pray, and prayed enough to act. But right here is where we see the hand of God at work. Here’s where God and His people meet in partnership. When God’s people act, God starts to work and provides His helping hand.

Through the ages various terms have come to describe the phenomenon of God’s helping hand.

*Some prefer to use the word “providence” derived from the Latin “providentia” meaning “to foresee”. The term providence is derived from God’s ability to foresee the end from the beginning and to so construct the world by laws that would work for the success of His cause. I have no quarrel with those who see all divine action in terms of the laws, both physical and spiritual, that God created and upholds in the world. Hence prayers are answered in keeping with laws God has already set into motion. But for me, I would go further and say that God has done more than wind the world up like a clock and then watches it tick on the basis of a set of principles that work their way out in life. I am more inclined to see God’s work in more than the creation of the laws themselves, but in the use of them behind the scenes to bring about His purposes. I believe that there is a causality between prayers spoken and prayers answered that rests upon the will and action of God, not only in the past, but now in the present. Nehemiah expressed this divine intervention in this way, “The king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was upon me” (Neh. 2:8).*

Nehemiah described God’s providence this way, “The good hand of God was upon me”.

*Nehemiah perceived God’s present intervention in answer to His prayers for help.*

*The Hand of God*

This anthropomorphic expression stands for God’s exertion of His will in the world. The hand of God is the means by which God’s will and purposes are carried out in this world.

*The Good Hand of God*

God actions toward His people are for good because God is good; thus His hand is good.

This expression reminds us of Paul’s faithful affirmation: God causes all things to work together for good to them who love God and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).

*The Good Hand of God was upon me!*

God's power can be brought to bear in the life of an individual. And I would say to you that we might even say that God's power is brought to bear in the life of certain individuals. That is to say, there are certain people that God can use to accomplish His work. Mordecai raises this issue with Esther who God used to bring deliverance to the Jews a few years before.

"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. But who knows whether you have not obtained royalty for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).

God's hand is upon those who love Him, who fear Him, who pray to Him, who believe in Him, who are willing to sacrifice for Him, who are willing to change for Him. Nehemiah was such a man and we need to be too!

See in this account the power of God's hand and learn important lessons about heavenly help.

*God's help is not a substitute for human faith and action.*

Is there any doubt that God could have sent an angel to miraculously resurrect Jerusalem's broken walls? But God's people needed the blessing of believing, working, and building. No faithful effort; no heavenly help.

*God's help makes possible what may be seen as humanly impossible.*

There were certain things Nehemiah couldn't do. I take it he could not leave the city on his own initiative, he could not personally finance the trip to Jerusalem, He could not single-handedly build the broken walls. He needed permission to go. He needed conveyance to travel; he needed people and lumber to build. God provided all of these!

*God's help can shape the most powerful people and forces in this world.*

In order to supply Nehemiah's need God influenced in some way the most powerful man on the earth!

I talked earlier in this series about God-sized problems. But then we ought to ask, "What size is or how big is our God?" You sense when you read the book of Isaiah that a part of his call as a prophet is restore the greatness of God in the eyes of the people. They think that because they are in captivity, subject to a man who worships a pagan god, that it is hopeless for them. Isaiah keeps saying, "Look at how great God is!"

Is. 40:12, 21-26 This God works for His people!

*We need not know God's modus operandi in order to believe that He can answer our prayers.*

We could venture many guesses as to how the answer to Nehemiah's prayer came about:

We could speculate that the influences of God's word in Nehemiah's life or the changes that came through praying had made him secure the king's favor.

**We could speculate that God had influenced the natural order in such a way that the king was happy with the prosperity of His kingdom and more favorable to requests for help.**

***We have to learn to pray and wait for God's answer!***

**Nehemiah knew God's will in a general way but not in a specific way. He knew that God had purposed the restoration of the city. Cf. Is. 44:28 But Nehemiah did not know how and when God intended to accomplish this?**

**In a similar way we often struggle with these same questions. How do we know that we are the person God is going to use? How do we know that this is the time for a particular work?**

**I don't know any easy answer; we must do like Nehemiah did.**

**Really care, pray hard, accept responsibility, take risks, and wait for God's answer and when you get it, act upon it!**

**Who could read this account without seeing from the beginning the blessing of God upon Nehemiah? Are we willing to wait for His answer and His help?**

**Here is the comfort of the church in the daunting task of saving souls: "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Mt. 28:20).**

**When Paul faced personal fears in Corinth God said to him, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent. For I am with you..." (Ac. 18:9-10).**