

Nehemiah 1:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.

Analysis

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This verse within Nehemiah 1 addresses themes of prayer, burden, intercession, confession. Nehemiah's prayer demonstrates model intercession rooted in covenant theology, confessing corporate sin while claiming covenant promises. The Hebrew palal (פָּלַל) for prayer indicates intercession and petition, emphasizing dependence on God. This passage demonstrates biblical principles applicable across both testaments—God's sovereignty combined with human responsibility, faith expressed through obedient action, and the necessity of both individual and corporate commitment to covenant faithfulness. Nehemiah models leadership that combines vision, prayer, courage, integrity, and perseverance amid sustained opposition.

Historical Context

Nehemiah's account occurs during Persian imperial dominance (539-331 BC), specifically 445-433 BC under Artaxerxes I. The post-exilic community had returned to Judah but remained politically subject to Persia, living under imperial administration while attempting to rebuild covenant identity. Archaeological evidence confirms Persian-period occupation of Jerusalem and the wall's route. The Persian period was crucial transitional time when Jewish identity shifted from monarchical nationalism to Torah-centered covenantal community. Without political independence, the people's cohesion depended on shared scripture, temple worship, and covenant obedience. This established patterns persisting through the Second Temple period into New Testament times. Understanding this context illuminates Jesus's ministry among a people shaped by these reforms and challenges.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does this passage teach about prayer's role in discerning and accomplishing God's will?
2. How can you develop more sustained, biblically-grounded prayer practices in your daily routine?
3. How can the principles demonstrated in this passage inform your response to current challenges in your life or church?

3

Psalms 34:15 (Parallel theme): The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

2 Chronicles 6:40 (Prayer): Now, my God, let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and let thine ears be attent unto the prayer that is made in this place.

2 Chronicles 29:6 (Parallel theme): For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs.

Isaiah 6:5 (Parallel theme): Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

1 John 1:9 (Sin): If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Luke 18:7 (Parallel theme): And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

Lamentations 5:7 (Sin): Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities.