

Nehemiah 1:1-11

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[0 : 00] Take out your copy of God's Word and turn to the Old Testament book of Nehemiah. Last week we began our new study as we've concluded our study of the book of Romans.

! A lot of history you presented last week and I don't know that everyone's going to remember all those details throughout our study together.

And I'll do my best to kind of pull back in the necessary parts of it as we go along. But I saw the benefit of that and as I sat down to write it, you must know that I'm not a fantastic writer.

And so I copied and pasted this. Gave credit where credit is due. This is an introduction by John MacArthur as well as his outline. And then I included in it the four objectives, the things that I want to see accomplished in our time together in Nehemiah.

So that's just there for you, for your resource. If you didn't get one, we'll have them out in the hallway on your way out. You can certainly pick one of those up. Let's begin this morning by reading, starting in verse 1 of chapter 1 of Nehemiah.

[1 : 18] The words of Nehemiah, the son of Hakaliah. Now it happened in the month of Kislev in the twentieth year as I was in Susa, the capital. That Hananiah, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah.

And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame.

The wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are destroyed by fire. As 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.

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. 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.

[2 : 27] 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. 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. Let's pray together. Father God, we thank you for the great blessing of your word. It is a tremendous grace to us.

And I pray that today, by your spirit, you will apply it to our hearts. That we won't just hear words, give some mental recognition to them, but that they will in fact change us.

That we will become more like your son as a result of hearing the preached word this day. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. And Nehemiah, you'll notice here at the beginning, the circumstance is being set up.

[3 : 41] He's cupbearer for the king Artaxerxes, the king of Persia. He's quite a ways. He's in the city of Susa, which is where the king was wintering at the time.

Many, many days journey from Judah. And his brother comes to visit him to say that the city is in calamity. It's shameful because the exiles have returned from captivity. Babylonia has flipped over to be a Persian rule. Persian king has allowed them to go back. And they've yet to build the wall. It's in shambles. They're a weak people. And therefore, the name of God has been made weak. And this is why he's distraught. Verse 4, this is why he sits down and he weeps and he mourns for days. It's very, very heavy on his heart, the circumstance here. And Nehemiah wants to see something reconciled in this way. He wants to see the wall built. He wants the glory of God to be proclaimed amongst his people.

[4 : 42] Remember that the visible outworking of God's glory at this time are his people, the state, the well-being of his people. And the fact that they've been returned from exile for so long and they're still in shambles is a great affront to God's glory.

And this so presses on Nehemiah as he has such a zeal for God's glory that he mourns the condition of Israel. Now, we get to clues later on.

We don't know at this point as we begin to read about his prayer. But we do find out later that the ambition that's laid upon him is to actually go back to Judah and to begin to build the wall, to lead the reconstruction.

But you need to understand the task that was ahead of him before we move on. He's serving as the cupbearer of King Artaxerxes. Artaxerxes, you can read in Ezra chapter 4, has put out an edict to stop the building of the wall.

The wall was being built some 20 years earlier. There was an effort being put forward to do it, but some people of the land, as they're called in Ezra, some people who were not Israelites, seeing that the glory of the Almighty God could supplant the glory of King Artaxerxes, write a letter to him.

[5 : 58] And in response, he issues an edict, forcing the building of the wall to stop. So here is Nehemiah serving under a king who has already made a command that the wall should not be built.

And in this day, for a king to reverse an edict would be to say that he's powerless, that he was unwise to begin with. And it did not happen often that this would take place.

Know also that the wall itself, we'll talk more about this in some of the coming weeks, was four and a half miles in circumference, 15 feet tall and 15 feet thick.

It was a huge, huge project that was ahead of him. And so what do we find Nehemiah doing? He prays.

And I have to tell you honestly, as I searched out what we ought to do next, moving beyond Romans, the impression on my mind for Nehemiah was that it was about a group of people building something to the glory of God.

[7 : 03] That's one of my desires, that we will see as a church, that that's what we're here to do together. That it's going to be a hard work, that we're going to have to press into it. I did not realize, having read Nehemiah numerous times, what an incredible book of prayer that it is.

Nehemiah begins with prayer. Charles Spurgeon once said, if any of you should ask me for an epitome, a perfect example of the Christian religion, I should say that it is one word, prayer.

I learned a new Latin phrase today. And I don't use Latin to just sound really intelligent. I think I know maybe ten Latin phrases now at this point.

But I want to kind of plant this one in your mind. And it is sine qua non. S-I-N-E-Q-U-A-N-O-N, if you're taking notes. Sine qua non.

Which means, without which, nothing. Prayer is not just a part of our Christian living. It's not a little thing we attach alongside our efforts.

[8 : 13] But it is the thing without which we can accomplish nothing. Sine qua non. Without which, nothing. Prayer is vital to any effort for the kingdom.

Now, we all, I'm sure, grew up and have heard phrases like, Prayer is just talking to God. Trying to make it approachable.

Something that even I could do. Prayer is just talking to God. And many of us have grown up with kind of a buddy Jesus mentality. You've seen the t-shirts, Jesus is my homeboy.

He's my pal. I come alongside and I just chit-chat with him. About my life and what's going on. And don't be mistaken, certainly Jesus instructed us to pray for our daily bread.

He's concerned about the details of our life. He cares about even the smallest of things. But we as Christians too often pray paltry prayers.

[9 : 11] Trite. Meaningless at times. Prayers. Think about many of the prayer meetings you've probably attended. And the vast majority of the requests have nothing to do with the kingdom of God or the souls of men.

But are typically about health. Again, not that that's a bad thing. Don't catch the wrong end of the stick, so to speak here. God cares about those things.

But how we speak to him matters. And praise God that there's room for maturation in our prayer. That we can grow up in our prayer process.

And it would be wise of us to take an example. Take a look at how it is we are instructed to pray. Recognize that the apostles, men who were Jews, who had spent their life praying, asked Jesus, Lord, teach us to pray.

Did Jesus respond to them? Prayer's just talking to God. Guys, do it. No, he gave them a very clear example of what prayer should look like in their lives.

[10 : 22] The men have been getting together on Friday morning and spending some time praying together. And I told them this last Friday that I'm so thankful to lead a group of men that pray God-honoring, biblically founded prayers.

What an absolute blessing that is. We should be maturing in the way that we pray. And here is a great example of this. I, since a very early age with Cademan, who's three now.

You guys, if you know me, I have another son named Judah. He's downstairs asleep right now. He's one. But I tell them that I love him with my hand. A little sign language. And I say, I love you with my hand.

I love you. And it lets me do that when I can't speak to him. Quiet times, I can do that. And Cade gets it. He absolutely knows what I'm trying to tell him. But he has a really difficult time forming that shape with his hand.

I've tried to show him how to do it. I've tried to show him how to hold his fingers down, hold his fingers up. He just can't quite pull it off. And so Cade's version of I love you is this. Right? Which I've just taken to mean I love you too.

[11 : 26] Right? He just gives it back. Recently, he's altered it to I love you with three fingers like this. Let's see what you can. Cade, man. I love you. There we go. There we go. Three fingers. Right?

That's great, buddy. Thanks. Right? Is God satisfied simply with the intention of our prayers? And I would say to you, no. Right?

If Cade, man, the rest of his life tells me that he loves me with words insufficient for that or a hand symbol that just doesn't quite mean that. Cade continues to do this. At some point, I'm going to go, Cade, man. That means peace, pal.

It doesn't mean I love you. Right? Like, it's time. It's time for you to shift the way you tell me that you love me. Right? We should be maturing in the same way. I want to show you four observations concerning Nehemiah's prayer.

And I have to tell you that probably the most important thing we can learn today, the most important thing we can learn today, is that Nehemiah had a holy ambition. He had a task ahead of him, which all of us have ahead of us as Christians.

[12 : 22] As ministers of the gospel, we all have tasks laid out before us. God has prepared good works for us in advance. The most important thing that we should learn today is that it should be preceded by prayer. Right?

Sine qua non. Without which nothing. Right? Prayer should precede all of that. So I want you to keep that in mind as we're moving quickly past that point to talk about Nehemiah's prayer itself.

Right? If I had to say one thing to you this morning, I have already said it. Right? Prayer must precede our work. Right? But I want to bring you four observations this morning.

Firstly, Nehemiah prayed persistently. Nehemiah prayed persistently. So notice in verse 4, he sits down, he weeps and he mourns for days, and he says, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

We see also later on that he prayed down in verse 6, day and night. So we see an example of his prayer here. Right? We see maybe a noted time, but this was the thrust of his praying and it happened consistently.

[13 : 29] It's important to know that this report of what was going on in Judah was brought to him in the month of Kislev, which is approximately November, December. When does he actually get to

speak to our exercises in chapter 2?

In the month of Nisan, which is approximately March or April. So catch that, roughly four months has passed in this time. He recognizes this great task that's ahead of him and he sets himself to prayer.

He says here, he continues, and he does it day and night. There's a fervency here in prayer because Nehemiah recognizes that the task ahead of him is not something he can accomplish on his own.

So he is persistent in his prayer. Believe that he understood what John 15, 5 says when Jesus says, apart from me, you can do nothing.

This is a lesson for us. So often we rush into things. We don't ask God to move and to act, to come along at all for the ride.

[14:36] I do this all the time. I use my business savvy to try to get things accomplished. And apart from prayer, I can accomplish nothing. I try in my sermon preparation to be incredibly prayerful before I ever even come to the text for the week, try to pray God's blessing on it that he'll open up my mind, help me to see, help me to study, find the right resources to pull it all together.

And I'll tell you this week, I did that well. I let this text run through me. And then yesterday morning when I sat down to take all those things that were running around in my head and in my heart and put them on a piece of paper so that I could make an organized presentation of what was going on here in this text, I just rushed right into it.

And I struggled. This is like the fourth outline I wrote of this. If you noticed that I double checked when I said I had four points, I wanted to make sure that I actually did have four points and I didn't change that at some point along the way.

And I recognized yesterday that just the conviction that I had prayerfully prepared my mind and my heart, but I didn't prayerfully prepare to even put the notes down. I had to stop and I had to repent and ask God's blessing on even just typing it out on a piece of paper.

We can do nothing apart from God. And there's a patience here. We've got Nehemiah. He's weeping and he's mourning for days.

[15:58] He is heartbroken over this. And yet for months he prays. He persists in prayer. Young people, I know your life just feels like it's passing by, that you've got to get in the mix so quick.

You have such a desire to do mighty things for God and I pat you on the back for that. But be patient in prayer. Seek to know God's will for your life in prayer.

So firstly, Nehemiah prayed persistently. Secondly, Nehemiah begins his prayer by proclaiming God's character.

He roots his very prayer in who God is. Look at verse 5. He says, 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 ties it all in to who God is. His plea with God to act is requisite on God's character. He says, O Lord, God of heaven, in the Hebrew, this was an expression of God's sovereignty.

[17:07] That if God is the God of heaven, he is therefore the God of all kingdoms, the whole universe, God reigns over. This was a phrase that became especially precious to the Jews as they went off into exile.

As they began to understand that God was not just the God of Israel reigning over them, providential in their lives, but also of the entire world.

They saw the predicted judgment come to pass through the Babylonians. They saw that God used even wicked men to bring judgment upon them. They came to know this O Lord, God of heaven, that he is in fact sovereign over all things.

Isn't it interesting in Matthew chapter 6, when the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, he begins, Our Father in heaven. This is the Greek version of this Hebrew phrase.

Our Father in heaven. Him who reigns over all. Certainly, Nehemiah, as he's versed in his scriptures, would have been familiar with Proverbs 21.1.

[18:12] As he's thinking about approaching King Artaxerxes, the king, and asking him to go back on an edict. Asking him to not be him is essentially what he's asking him to do. Proverbs 21.1 says, The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord.

He turns it wherever he will. He begins his prayer proclaiming that God is the great sovereign of all things. And he calls him the great and the awesome God.

Great speaking of his power. His ability to do anything that he wishes to do. To set his mind to do it and he will, in fact, accomplish it. And he calls him the awesome God.

Here's a misused phrase in our language, is it not? It's kind of entered into our vernacular as something maybe just a bit cooler than cool. I misuse awesome all the time.

The word awesome simply means to inspire awe, but it also carries with it the idea of dread. A fear of something. Something that's so mighty and so big.

[19 : 14] In the case of God, because of his majesty and his glory, that you shrivel at it. That you shrink at the awesomeness of God. I was trying to think of a practical example of a day-to-day thing, and I don't experience things that really could properly be called awesome, although I think I call things awesome all the time.

But I thought about when I was a child, I grew up in Arizona and my dad took me to fish below Hoover Dam at a place called Lee's Ferry. Hoover Dam, 700 plus feet tall.

And we got to take a motorboat, I got to drive it, I was like eight, which is the coolest thing I've ever done, probably, in this cliff face, avoiding the sandbar. It was really fun. But we went up to the bottom of Hoover Dam and we began to fish down the river from that point.

And I would say in human terms that was pretty awesome, being at the base of that 700 foot dam and the cliffs around it are the same. Awesome. But a better picture of that is what if that dam was beginning to crumble before me, right, and we're in the speedboat at the bottom and I know that at any moment the water's gonna burst forth and come rushing down that canyon.

That maybe is the feeling that you might have, right, of the word awesome, the way in which we should think of our God. Right? That he inspires that kind of awe.

[20 : 31] This is how Nehemiah begins his prayer. Recognize that in verse 11, as you think about that, you think, wait a minute, are we supposed to dread God? Is that the way we're supposed to react to him?

In verse 11, Nehemiah says, talks of his servants who delight to fear his name. They delight in the fear of God's name. He is this awesome God, sovereign, all-powerful, able to accomplish whatever it is that he sets himself to.

Right? That's the type of dread that we're talking about here. And then he goes on to talk about his covenant and his steadfast love. He proclaims that God is immutable, meaning unchanging.

Right? That if God has said he will do something, he keeps a covenant with his people, he makes a promise to them, that he will, in fact, carry it out. There's no changing our God. He is immutable.

So Nehemiah begins his prayer by proclaiming God's character. And Nehemiah's prayer, thirdly, is motivated by God's promises. It's a nice connection there, right?

[21 : 39] We see that he praises God for his covenant and steadfast love, proclaims that, and then reminds him of his promises. We're doing a bit of a skip down here, but verses 8 through 10, and we'll come back up to verses 6 and 7.

Right? Let's read that together. 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. Nehemiah's prayer is motivated by God's promises. Why would Nehemiah have any reason to think that God would bring him before King Artaxerxes and change the heart of this king to send him back to build an encampment, a fortress, against himself and write the bill for it? Why would Nehemiah ever think that could ever even be possible? It's because he knew God's promises. Verse 8 starts out, Remember. Now, he is praying.

This is a record of a prayer, but don't think that he's being irreverent at this point. This language is a plea with God to enact his word. Right? Please do the things you said you would do.

[23 : 08] Right? And we see there this promise that was made. He's loosely quoting from Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 4. He makes a covenant with his people that is conditional on their obedience.

When they're disobedient, he judges them, sends them off at the hands of the Babylonians. But at that time, he says, if they will repent and turn back to me, I will restore them in their land.

And this is the promise that Nehemiah is calling on God to fulfill. Arturo Zerdia, a pastor that I particularly appreciate, said, our Heavenly Father takes delight when we stake our confidence in

Him.

When we are so confident in His eternal character that we claim the promises He has made to us, God is pleased. Certainly, Nehemiah was familiar with Isaiah, the prophet.

Chapter 43, verses 6 and 7, God says, I will say to the north, give up. And to the south, do not withhold. Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name.

[24 : 14] Now, this is pre-return, right? So we're quite a few years, some 90 years beyond that. But then certainly, Nehemiah understood that it goes on to say, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and who I made.

You see that as he begins to call on God in verse 10, they are your servants and your people whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand.

They are a picture of your glory here on this earth. Act, restore, help us build the wall. Now, just out of curiosity, I got on the internet this week and I typed in how many promises does God make in the Bible?

I found a lot of answers. My favorite one was from like a wiki answers or answers.com or something like that. And a person simply said, I have no idea but my father once counted them and said 7,487. I don't know. I don't know if that's a real number or not. I would presume it's probably getting close. I have no idea who this father is that counted these promises. But the scripture is riddled with them.

[25 : 25] They saturate this book. How many promises of God do you know? Fifty? Ten maybe?

Can you think of a few? Five? One? Could it be that our prayers are paltry because we don't know what God has promised He will do?

So we are not saturated in the scriptures the way we ought to be? The word of God and prayer are mutually dependent on one another. You cannot rightly understand the word of God apart from prayer and you cannot pray as you should without the promises of God's word.

The two walk together hand in hand. So Nehemiah's prayer is motivated by God's promises.

Fourthly, Nehemiah's prayer is humble and intercessory in nature.

We're looking back up at verses 6 and 7. He says, 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.

[26 : 43] 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.

Notice that following Nehemiah's vision of God's character, immediately following it, he becomes very humble in his prayer. A vision of God's character will always make us painfully aware of our own shortcomings.

When God shows up in all of His majesty, we become very, very aware of who we are. This is why all good praying begins with God's character. When we go to God, we need to recognize who He is and who we are.

We're not going to talk to buddy Jesus. We're not chumming up next to Him to see what He may pull off on our behalf. He is God and we are not.

But Isaiah, when he sees Jesus in all His glory, what does he say? Woe is me. Peter, when he finally, fully realizes that Jesus is the Messiah, says, depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.

[27 : 58] John, when he has this vision of the resurrected Christ in chapter 1 of Revelation, he falls down on the ground like a dead man. This is the natural response to a proper view of God's character and it ought to be the way our prayers proceed along.

Notice here Nehemiah's first person language. He says, I confess. We have sinned. I and my Father's house have sinned.

We have acted very corruptly. It would have been easy, I think, at this point for Nehemiah to pray that those other Jews for the sins that they committed in the years past that caused them to come into Babylonian exile would be really easy to push off, to press it onto the others.

But yet, here he takes it upon himself. You remember at the fall after Adam and Eve ate of the fruit and God comes to them and asks them what they've done.

He asks this of Adam and we see the very first communication of fallen man and what does he do? He blames it on Eve. He says, the woman who you gave me.

[29 : 13] Not only does he blame it on Eve, but he blames it on God, his own sin. And then Eve turns and blames it on the serpent. It is part of our fallen nature to press blame on others.

But here we see Nehemiah takes credit for it. He says, I and my Father's house have sinned. We are in the continual process of sinning against you and not keeping your law. This has been going on for all of these generations since the exile.

You sent us into exile because of it and yet here we are still. But he's repenting now on behalf of the people. So he's humble as he approaches God.

And his prayer is also intercessory in nature. He's also praying on the behalf of the nation of Israel. Is it possible here for him to speak and repent to change the hearts of the Israelites?

No. But he prays on their behalf anyway. God, for your name's sake, for your glory, we have been evil in your sight. Restore us.

[30 : 15] Send us back. Roots it back in his character in this way. And Nehemiah in this way is a type of Jesus Christ. Now, I want to introduce you to typology if you're not familiar with this.

So, I've said I recognize through the past years, various people throughout the scriptures are types of Christ. And I don't mean that in the way that a Granny Smith apple is a type of apple.

Right? I don't really like Granny Smiths. I think they should be excluded from the apple category. but I don't mean it in that way. Right? We're not saying that, I'm not saying that Nehemiah is a type of Jesus Christ and that he's a different version of him.

Right? But typology references a person who supersedes the antitype or the fulfillment of it. It's a shadow, a presupposition of something that's later to come.

For example, in that way, David is a type of Christ when he takes on Goliath. Right? And the picture being shown here is that one day a greater king will come and defeat death on our behalf.

[31 : 24] Right? That we're not going to have to fight that war but he's going to come and fight it for us. The one man, that man being Jesus Christ. And the Old Testament is just full of typology pointing us to Jesus Christ.

We're meant to look at a Nehemiah and expect something greater. Pressing us too. And as Nehemiah intercedes for the people of God in the same way Jesus intercedes for us.

He is the greater Nehemiah, the antitype to the type that is Nehemiah. Romans 8 33 and 34 reads, Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?

It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised. Who is at the right hand of God who is indeed interceding for us.

Notice here that the tie-in here is that no one can bring a charge against God's elect. No one can convict us of anything because it is Jesus Christ himself who intercedes for us. Who leans over to God and says, Not that one.

[32 : 30] Pass over him. My sacrifice was enough for him. I took on his punishment and her punishment. He intercedes on our behalf.

So he is the greater Nehemiah. Turn with me from Nehemiah. In closing, we're going to look at John chapter 13. I just want to show you something here.

This is Jesus the great interceder. I miss this until this week.

We see the Last Supper beginning in chapter 13. See Jesus washing the disciples' feet. And throughout this process, he's teaching them things along the way.

And at the end of chapter 14, I just totally read over this so many times, he says, Rise. Let us go from here. So in my mind, I always pictured Jesus talking through chapter 15 and 16 and even 17 with the high priestly prayer of him sitting in this upper room around a table.

[33 : 34] But they weren't. They were actually walking along. At the beginning of chapter 17, this is kind of where this caught my attention. The record is when Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, and here's where we have the high priestly prayer.

Him pouring out his desire for the apostles and those who would precede them. But notice at the beginning of chapter 18, when Jesus had spoken these words, when he had completed this prayer, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley where there was a garden which he and his disciples entered.

This is the garden of Gethsemane. He pauses somewhere before they go through this. Now this is pure conjecture on my part, but I just want to paint a little bit of a picture for you.

And this Kidron Valley was the brook of Kidron, and it was used as a drain from the temple. Recall that we're in the Passover week. There was an estimated six million Jews in Jerusalem at this time.

And there's sacrifice happening that week on and on and on and on, non-stop. You could even think of it, the priest must have been knee deep in blood. And where did it all go?

[34 : 49] It drained through the Valley of Kidron, down the brook of Kidron. And this is the brook that they pass over as they're going in to the Garden of Gethsemane. And I just imagine, we don't know, I mean, please hear me say, I do not know that this is the case, but I imagine that this may have been what caused Jesus to pause, to lift his eyes to heaven, and to pray.

Why? He knew that his blood was about to be spilt, right? He knew that he was about to make the full and final atonement. All this blood that was pouring through there, that was necessary for the remission of sins, was just meant to show our need of a Savior.

And he was that Savior, about to make the ultimate and final sacrifice. If you read through the high priestly prayer, I think also he has in mind the suffering that's going to come to his disciples as a result.

The blood that they will spill, that they will share in his suffering in that way. And I believe that he's moved to pray at that point. So look back at chapter 17, just a portion.

It's really hard for me to decide what part of this we would read together. But look at verse 13.

Jesus here praying to God, but now I am coming to you and these things I speak in the world that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

[36 : 07] I have given them your word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in your truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world, and for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

He's praying for the apostles here. Then verse 30 he says, I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word. All of us. He expands this prayer to all of us who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ, the word of God.

You see here this picture to draw you a connection. We have been sanctified. We have been set aside from the world for the glory of God. The way the Old Testament Israelites had been.

To be built up into a spiritual house, not a physical one. We're not set to the task of building grandiose buildings to the glory of God. We're building up a spiritual house, the church.

[37 : 19] church. This is what has been set before us and it is an immense task. It's not something we ought to think we can accomplish on our own.

And as such, we ought to set ourselves to prayer. We have Jesus as our great example, teaching us to pray in Matthew 6. And we'll address that some more in the coming weeks.

Let me close with a quote from Hudson Taylor, an English Protestant missionary to China. He says, All God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they believed that God would be with them.

Let's pray together.