

“If Thy Servant Have Found Favor”

Nehemiah 2:1-10

The text for this message comes from the middle of verse five.

This message was originally titled “The Christian Worker,” or it could have been considered, “The True Saint of God in the Work Place,” for that is the focus of this portion – Nehemiah was demonstrating he knew his position, his job, if you would, and he did that job the best he could with the knowledge he had. The question we need to ask ourselves is, “Do we find favor from those around us, those in authority over us in particular?”

The word for “have found favor” in verse five – **יָטַב** – is in the Hebrew Qal stem and the imperfect conjugation. The imperfect is used to denote incomplete action. Most often, this form of the verb is seen as in the future tense in English, but that doesn’t give a complete picture. In its use here, as it is translated in the English, it carries an incomplete action from the past that carries through to the future. Nehemiah had been a faithful servant to the king, and he is asking the king for this tremendous favor based on this faithful service, and the result of that faithful service was yet to be determined. The lesson for us from that singular use of this word is that we need to be a faithful servant of the Lord, as well as a faithful worker to those around us, and in authority over us, in order to have both their blessing on our lives, as well as the Lord’s blessing on our lives.

If we look at this text through the scope of the New Testament and apply it to our lives today, we can see that principle of the faithful Christian worker

come to light.

I. A CHRISTIAN WORKER DOES THEIR JOB THE BEST THEY CAN – VS. 1A-B

A. *Whatever that job is – whether it is in the workplace, or in the home, or in the church, or in the community – whatever we have been tasked to do, we are to do it the best we can.*

Ecclesiastes 9:10

¹⁰ Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

B. *We are not expected to do more than we have been equipped to do, but we are expected to do what we can do, what we are capable of doing, and we are to do that to the best of our ability. We are not going to be judged on our success, but we are going to be judged on our faithfulness to what we have been given to do.*

Matthew 25:21

²¹ His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

C. *Nehemiah received the report of the condition of Jerusalem sometime in the month "Chisleu" – November into December in our year – and it is now the month "Nisan" – March into April in our year (the first month of the Old*

Testament year). Three to four months have passed since he received the news, and he was now ready to present his proposal to the king. During that time, he had been faithfully discharging his duties – a lesson from which we can all learn.

D. "And I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king" – he simply did his job.

Too often today, in our work culture, and even in the church, too many Christians don't do their job for the right reason. They seem to have the idea that it's up to them what they do, rather than up to the one who is charge of what they do. The idea is far too prevalent in our culture of, "I don't want to do THAT part of my job"; or "That's not my job." Nehemiah was not that way – he not only did his job because there would be consequences if he didn't, he did it because it was the right thing to do.

II.A CHRISTIAN WORKER IS CHEERFUL – VS. 1C-2

A. Although there is a cultural background to this verse, it demonstrates a good principle to follow – we ought to be as cheerful as possible with those around us. There will be times when sorrow will be evident (as it was with Nehemiah), but the overall view is that we are to be known as cheerful, nice people – not the one that is always grumpy, always bad-mouthing other people, always complaining about our plight in life, always picking apart what others do, etc.

- B. Vs. 1 ends with the sentence, "Now I had not been (beforetime) sad in his presence." This is said, it seems, because, to this point, Nehemiah had done his duty faithfully and part of that duty entailed him to be cheerful (happy) as he presented the wine to the king. Could have been a job requirement in order to keep the king's spirits up in times of trouble.**
- C. In verse two we find the king taking notice of Nehemiah's sadness and asked him about it, and pointed out that it was obvious there was something heavy on his heart – "this is nothing else but sorrow of heart." It is not wrong, biblically, to have a heavy heart and if we do it will show on our face and in our mannerisms as we work through that sorrow. It was, however, a problem for Nehemiah as there would have been certain consequences for being anything but happy in the king's presence.**
- D. "Then I was very sore afraid" – it doesn't say why he was afraid so all we can do is speculate. Considering what follows in this episode in the life of Nehemiah, it would be safe to consider that this concern stemmed from not knowing how the king would respond to what he was about to ask.**

"A Persian subject was expected to be perfectly content so long as he had the happiness of being with his king. A request to quit the court was thus a serious matter." (Barnes)

"[L]est the king should have suspicion of an ill design on him; or lest, since he must be obliged to give the true reason, he should not succeed in his request, it being so large, and perhaps many about the king were no friends to the Jews." (Gill)

E. Are we cheerful, are we happy, to be blessed for simply being a Christian, as well as for having the privilege of serving our King? That's the "takeaway" here. All through the Bible we find the principle of happiness as part of our walk with the Lord (often seen in the older English versions of the Bible in the word "blessed" – as in the Beatitudes of Matthew 5).

Psalm 1:1

¹ Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

Psalm 33:12

¹² Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

Psalm 89:15

¹⁵ Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.

Matthew 5:3–11

³ Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the

earth.

⁶ Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

III. A CHRISTIAN WORKER HAS RESPECT FOR THOSE IN AUTHORITY OVER THEM – VS. 3

A. This is seen in the clause, "Let the king live for ever." This was a common salutation at the time and was one to show the respect due the authority. Again, we can learn a great deal from this simple salutation in how we are to respond to those in authority – whether it be the king (President), the governor, the mayor; or, those in the workplace over us; or, those in the church over us.

[1 Peter 2:18-20](#)

¹⁸ Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

¹⁹ For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

²⁰ For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

Ephesians 6:5-6

⁵ Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

⁶ Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

Hebrews 13:17

¹⁷ Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

B. Nehemiah showed this respect even in the face of his concern for how he would be received in his request. Either way, he was ultimately respectful.

IV. A CHRISTIAN WORKER IS BLESSED BY THE LORD – VS. 4-9

A. In verse four is a unique sentence that shows us that prayer is not always a set, formal thing we are to do – it can be something “spur of the moment,” and something done in the urgency of the occasion: “So I prayed to the God of heaven.” He didn’t stop and pray out loud, nor is this showing a pause in the timeline of the occasion (he had spent up to four months in prayer about the matter – he was “all prayed up”). He

simply asked God, in his spirit, to give him the courage to say what needed said, and the right words.

B. Verses 4-7 give us the request – pretty straightforward and self-explanatory.

C. Verses 8 and 9, in the conclusion of the request, Nehemiah asked for both physical help, as well as, ultimately, financial assistance to do what needed done in Jerusalem. The portion of the verse that is relevant to the point of being blessed by the Lord is the last portion: "And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me." This was only possible because of Nehemiah's testimony in his actions in the past – he was not only honored by the king; he was also (and more importantly) blessed by the Lord.

Another point to be seen here, and an important one at that, is that we cannot do the work that needs done alone (seen in verse 9). It will take others.

V. A CHRISTIAN WORKER WILL OFTEN FACE OPPOSITION – VS. 10

A. There will be more on this later in this study of the book of Nehemiah.

B. One of the things that upset Sanballet and Tobiah the most ("grieved them exceedingly") was that someone was coming to help those in need – someone cared for the "welfare of the children of

Israel.” Again, going back to Nehemiah’s character – how much do we care about the “welfare” of those in need around us?

Conclusion: How are we as a Christian worker? In every facet of the principle – how are we at being a Christian servant?