

Nehemiah, man of prayer

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 January 2017

Preacher: Peter Adam

[0 : 00] Well, tonight I want to focus on Nehemiah as a person of prayer. I think that when we learn to pray, we often learn to pray by hearing other people pray.

I remember the man who converted me to Christ, then met with me every Tuesday for three years to disciple me and teach me the Christian way, the Christian life.

And one of the things he did, of course, was to encourage me to pray and to teach me to pray. And, of course, I learned as much about prayer from his prayers and the way he prayed as I did from what he said about praying.

And I also knew that he had a reputation once he started praying for you. He would not stop praying whatever you did or said or anything else like that. So that was a great example to me.

And so we're enriched, I think, by other people's prayers, by people we hear praying. But, of course, our prayers are enriched too, aren't they?

[1 : 08] Not just as individual prayers, but also churches learn to pray from people who pray up the front. And one of the important things people who lead prayers do is to model how to pray.

And how wise we are to turn to the Bible to find an example of someone praying, because surely God has given us those examples in the Bible of ordinary people praying to prompt and enrich our prayers as well.

Now, I will be talking a bit tonight about how our prayers can be strengthened and enriched and grow. But that's not to suggest for a moment that God won't listen attentively to the weakest prayer, the humblest prayer, the simplest prayer.

So, if you're in trouble and you say to God, please help me, well, God will certainly answer that prayer. He won't say, no, go away and write it out in more complicated English and then come back and pray.

And then I'll think about it and consider it. Put it in triplicate if you would. And if it's a reasonable prayer, then I'll answer it. No, God isn't stingy and like a teacher at all, is he?

[2 : 26] Or like a government department. No, God's ears are always open to our prayers. So, please, please don't think from tonight, well, if I can't pray like Nehemiah, I can't pray.

You can pray how you can pray. Get on with it. The fact that you're praying is wonderful. Please keep praying. But it's also important, isn't it, for those who believe in Jesus Christ, who want to know and love and serve God, to be lifelong learners.

Great phrase. Lifelong learners. And not least in our learning to pray. And as I've looked at Nehemiah's prayers, he's got some big prayers in this book and a very short prayer, which we'll perhaps see a few times.

Lord, remember me is all he has time to say. But what a great prayer. Don't forget me, God. I'm still here. Please care for me. That's a great prayer as well. But I hope this big prayer will stretch our prayers.

And also, of course, we'll be trained by this prayer to teach other people to pray. So, if one day somebody says to you, look, I'd really like to learn to pray a bit more.

[3 : 36] Well, can I encourage you to go to a prayer in the Bible? Go to the Lord's Prayer. Go to a psalm. Go to this prayer. And you show someone from the Bible how to pray.

You can give them good advice. That's a great thing to do. But it's much better, isn't it, to get people into the habit of thinking, well, if I want to pray, I should go to the Bible to find out how to do it.

So, can I encourage you in that ministry? Dear Heavenly Father, please teach us to pray. And please inspire our prayers so that we inspire others to pray.

And please help us to show and teach others how to pray as well. Now, I think it's so exciting that Nehemiah, as an example here of a man who prays, is not a man in the Old Testament who is a

minister.

He's not the Reverend Nehemiah, who's a curate at somewhere or other. He's a layperson who has a real job. He's a cupbearer.

[4 : 48] You might not think, well, that's not a very big job, carrying a cup around. I could manage that. But actually, the cupbearer to the king of Persia, who was a tremendously important person and thought he was even more important than he was.

The position of cupbearer to the king was a bit like being a very high class civil servant and the chief security officer for the king and his family.

And later on, we discover that Artaxerxes was appointed as a builder. Well, that's a big job. And a governor of a province in the Persian Empire, that's a big job.

And a community leader. So, I want those of you who aren't ordained or aren't ministers, I want you to think, I can learn from Nehemiah's prayer.

Because he was a person just like me. I'm perhaps not a security officer, but, you know, domestic duties are a bit like that, aren't they? I want you to notice that Nehemiah's big prayer in chapter 1 is both a deeply personal prayer and also a communal prayer, a corporate prayer.

[6 : 01] That is, he feels it very deeply himself. But the content of the prayer is not his own welfare. It's the welfare of God's people.

Now, I often go to prayer meetings. And at the end of the prayer meeting, somebody will say in the group, well, now, items for prayer.

And most people bring personal items for prayer. I certainly do. I say, well, you know, I've got a cold at present. The dog's hurt his paw, so can we pray for that?

We go around the room and get personal prayer items. And they're great things to do. I remember teaching some children once about the fact that God cares even for sparrows.

So I said, you might think that your daily concerns are not very important. But as a matter of fact, God even cares for sparrows, according to Jesus.

[7 : 02] Your heavenly father, not a sparrow falls to the ground. But your heavenly father knows it. Are you not of more value than sparrow? So I then led them in a prayer for sparrows, trying to show them that actually God's concerned about the smallest detail of even a sparrow's life.

I prayed for lonely sparrows, and sparrows were feeling a bit ill, and sparrows had lost their mummy, and so on. And I'm sure God heard and answered the prayer. So it's good to pray personal prayers, but please notice that Nehemiah feels the welfare of God's people as deeply as he feels his own welfare.

Isn't that interesting? He's as deeply concerned for God's people as he is for his own happiness and comfort and safety.

It's a personal prayer, but it's a corporate prayer, a communal prayer for God's people. And I think the prayer that Jesus taught us, the Lord's Prayer, is a great example of that, isn't it?

Because it begins with big prayers. Our Father in heaven, your name be hallowed. That's a big prayer to pray. That's a prayer that everyone in the whole world will honour and hallow God, our heavenly Father.

[8 : 31] Your kingdom come. Well, that's a great prayer to pray, which will only be finally answered when the Lord Jesus returns. But pray that God's kingdom, God's rule, God's judgment, God's provision, God's mercy, God's kindness, God's grace and compassion is known by everybody.

That's a big prayer to pray. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That's one big prayer. And then, what's the next line? Give us our daily bread, please.

Now I have some breakfast, if you don't mind. And in those days, of course, you only earned enough money to get your food for a day. So the prayer, give me a breakfast, was a heartfelt and real prayer.

So we are to pray for our own needs. That's the one God, our heavenly Father, loves hearing our prayers. We never tire God when we pray.

We may tire ourselves praying. But God is never tired with our prayers. Even the smallest of our prayers. We may bore ourselves with our prayers and think, here I go praying the same thing I got.

[9 : 40] But God is never bored with our prayers. He loves hearing our prayers. He is full of compassion and kindness and gentleness. So, Nehemiah is praying a deeply personal prayer.

But also praying for the welfare of his people. As Graham mentioned, Nehemiah means God, God comforts. And I think it's wonderful that Nehemiah's parents chose such a wonderful name for their

son.

God comforts. Because, as we'll see, as Nehemiah prays and then God answers his prayer, by that means God is indeed comforting or strengthening or consoling his people.

So, Nehemiah's parents were inspired to call him, the Lord is our comfort. So, in the month of Kislev, in the 20th year, I was in the citadel of Susa.

The Persian Empire had four capital cities. Susa was one of them. And the citadel was the kind of top part, the safest part of Susa, where the palace of the king was and where the administrative officers of the empire were.

[10:58] So, that's why Nehemiah was there as a civil servant. Hananiah, one of my brothers, came from Judah. So, please notice that there are people who've returned to Judah, as we've seen.

But, he is Nehemiah, a Jew, still in exile. Now, this, to me, seems immensely curious. Because, do you remember the great prophecy of Isaiah?

Comfort, comfort my people, chapter 40. Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. And proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed.

Her sin has been paid for. She's received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. Bring good news to Zion. Lift up your voice with a shout. The sovereign Lord comes with power.

And that's about the return of the people from exile in Babylon to Jerusalem. Well, a great prophecy. But, as a matter of fact, some of them have been left behind.

[12:05] And Ezra, as we find in the book of Ezra, and Nehemiah, are two of the many, many Jews who've been left behind. So, although God's made a great promise, it hasn't been fulfilled.

And although God promised so clearly that Jerusalem would be rebuilt, I quote it from Isaiah 40. But here is from Isaiah chapter 62.

I have posted, Watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem. There will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.

There was the clear promise of God through the prophet Isaiah. And yet, as we've heard, the walls of Jerusalem are broken down. Its gates have been burned by fire.

And, as a matter of fact, it's Artaxerxes who allowed that to happen. So, that adds a certain tension to the story. Well, when Nehemiah heard these things, he sat down and wept.

[13:12] He mourned and fasted and prayed before the Lord of heaven. Then we read in verse 5, Then I said, and I think what we have in verse 5 to 11 is a summary of all the prayers he'd prayed.

You know, you often find out what to pray by praying, don't you? I find when I'm praying to people, I pray for them. At the end of a long period of prayer, or a number of days of prayer for people, I then think, oh, that's the right prayer to pray for them.

So, we learn to pray by praying. Can I encourage you to persist in your pray, in your prayers, and expect that God will hone your prayers, will sharpen your prayers, will shape your prayers as you pray.

So, he's been fasting and mourning and praying for a number of days. He sat down and wept. That is, this is a really intense time of prayer.

And then he prays this prayer, which is, if you like, the summary of the prayer. And please notice, his concern is, my point is, it's personal and communal.

[14:24] So, Lord the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love, let your ear be attentive to your prayer, to hear the prayer your servant is praying for you, for your servants, the people of Israel.

So, let's just do a little test for your prayers. I hope you pray for yourself every day.

Who else do you pray for every day? Very good, very good. Anyone pray for their church? Good, pleased to hear it.

Anyone pray for churches overseas? Yes, good. Very good. Pleased to hear it. Anyone pray for our nation? Yes, very good.

Anyone pray for missionaries? Oh, yes, I'm sure you do that. Brilliant. Pray for friends? That's a good thing to do, isn't it? Yeah. I've got three friends with cancer at present.

[15:27] Isn't that awful? So, I'm praying every day for them. So, it's good to pray for ourselves. Please don't stop praying for yourself. Some of you look as if you need lots of prayer, if I might say so.

And you could say, well, actually, dear brother, you look as if you need lots of prayer too. And I do. That's quite right. But please remember also to pray for others.

And it's interesting, isn't it? That when Jesus teaches to pray, please listen to this. He says, pray our Father. Isn't that interesting?

Not my Father, but our Father. Because do you know what's happening when you're praying? When you are praying, even in your room all on your own, or going for a walk praying, God is hearing your prayers together with everybody else's prayers.

He's linking all our prayers together every day. He's like a tapestry, kind of weaving them together into one big prayer, which he hears from all his people from the lips of his Son.

[16:32] So, please don't think you have to pray for absolutely everything. For every, you know, bad news story or something like that. Or for every country. Please realize that you're just one person, but you're praying to our Heavenly Father.

So, God is linking your prayers with everyone else's prayers. Isn't that wonderful? So, the prayers you forget to pray, I forget to pray. Somebody else will be praying, won't they?

So, Nehemiah's big prayer is both personal and corporate. It's also biblical and relevant. Please notice how much Nehemiah quotes from the Bible when he prays.

I've talked to you about using a prayer in the Bible to pray. Lots of prayers in the Old Testament. Lots of great prayers that Paul prays. If you ever think, I don't know what to pray for our church, turn to Colossians or Ephesians and pray one of those prayers.

They're great prayers to pray. But notice here that what Nehemiah is doing is taking verses from the Bible and quoting them back to God. He says, verse 5, Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of love with those who love and keep his commandments.

[17:48] Well, he's summarizing most of Deuteronomy in that prayer. He quotes Deuteronomy directly in verse 8.

Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses saying, if you are unfaithful, I will scatter you. If you return to me, I will gather you. And then in verse 10, he's quoting from Exodus chapter 15.

These are your servants and your people whom you redeem by your great strength and your mighty hand. So I notice some people want their prayers to be so personal and so contemporary that they don't use Bible words at all.

They'll say, well, we'll say sorry to God. We'll ask God to help people who are in trouble. Notice I'm carefully not using Bible words.

Ask God rather than pray to God to help people rather than to strengthen them or something like that. People who are in trouble. So often people in an attempt to make prayer relevant, remove the Bible content.

[19:06] Well, that may be, it's all right to do it. It's okay to pray a prayer like that. And if we're praying with lots of unbelievers present, as can happen at a funeral and things like that, or praying with family, when I said grace on Christmas Day, with my non-Christian family, I carefully prayed a prayer which wasn't too biblical and theological, but nevertheless prayed the right things to God.

I used everyday language rather than rich biblical language. I didn't quote Bible verses, though I could have. But please notice that what Nehemiah does is to pray a prayer which includes both big Bible verses, but it's also a profoundly relevant prayer, isn't it?

Very moving to see that. Nehemiah, like a good preacher, knows how to link the truths of the Bible to everyday life. Well, actually, Nehemiah, like a good Christian, knows how to link the truths of the Bible to everyday life.

That is, to shape his thinking and his action and his prayers by the great truths revealed by God in the Bible.

Nehemiah's prayer is both personal and communal. It's biblical and relevant. And notice it's both theological and practical. Notice the wonderful theology of God that Nehemiah reveals in this prayer.

[20:41] It's a God-focused prayer. And he's not only thinking of what the needs of God's people are, but who God is.

He says, Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God. That's who God is. Then what does God do? God keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments.

And then he says, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open. Well, there are lovely verses in the Psalms about God's ears always being open to our prayers and his eyes missing nothing that happens in the world, you see.

So Nehemiah has this wonderful picture of the power and the gentleness of God. Do you see that? Both the kind of great dignity of God, the transcendence of God in verse 5, but also the closeness of God in never taking his attention away from the welfare of his people.

I recently turned 70 for the first time. And I thought to myself, well, what have I learned about God recently in the last few years?

[21 : 55] And I thought about it a lot. And I thought, well, what I've learned about God is that I think that God is so powerful and so gentle.

And I thought, isn't that a lovely combination? You could have a powerful God, couldn't you, who wasn't gentle. But you could have a gentle God who wasn't powerful.

I've learned God is powerful and gentle. Well, see what Nehemiah has learned about God.

God is a great and awesome God, but he's a faithful God who keeps his covenant of love, his promise of love. And he's a God who's attentive and his ears are attentive and his eyes open to hear the prayers of his servants.

And then look at verse 10. Here's another example. Oh, see the promise in verse 9, sorry, from Deuteronomy. If you're unfaithful, I'll scatter you.

[23 : 03] But if you turn to me, here it is in verse 9, I will gather you. So God is a gathering God. See, when God scatters in the Bible, it's usually because he's judging.

When God gathers people together, it's because he's being merciful and kind to them. So God is a gathering God, a gracious God, an active God.

It's not that, to take Jesus' parable, that the lost sheep get together and say, let's see if we can find our shepherd. No, the shepherd goes to find the sheep.

That's the way it works in the Bible. That's what God is like. And then please notice verse 10. I think this is just wonderful. They're your servants. That is, you've made these people your covenant people.

They're your own people. They are your servants and your people whom you have redeemed, that is, set free from Egypt by your great strength and your mighty hand.

[24 : 00] So there's a God who, in the words of Exodus, has come down to rescue his people. So what a great picture of God that is.

A God who is powerful. A great and awesome God. A God who keeps his promises. A God who is attentive to his people, to human beings.

A God who gathers those who are lost. And a God who has redeemed his people. Well, if you wanted a summary of a picture of God in the Old Testament, that's exactly it. And Nehemiah has it right.

See, a big picture of God. Well, you know, if you don't have a big picture of God, it won't really be worth praying.

Will it? I'm speaking humanly here. But see, lots of people today have what I call godlets. You know, a piglet is a little pig.

[24 : 59] Well, a godlet is a little God. And if you've got a little God, then no matter how hard you pray, nothing much is going to happen. Is it? If you've got a big God, you can pray big prayers, which is exactly what Nehemiah is doing.

And if you've got a big God and pray big prayers, God will do big things. Isn't it wonderful? J.B. Phillips wrote a book, Your God is Too Small.

Back in the 60s, I think it was. And I think lots of Christians' gods are too small. Well, it's both a theological prayer and a practical prayer. Because let your ear, verse 11, be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to the prayers of your servants.

Please notice that Nehemiah knows his prayer is linked with others. The prayers of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.

Isn't that extraordinary? Had this great picture of God and now Nehemiah is saying, I'm going to pray that you'll begin to answer this prayer this very day through me.

[26 : 13] Couldn't get more practical than that, could you? This prayer is up in the air, but boy is it down to earth as well. Notice too, here's the next feature of Nehemiah's prayer, which I think is so

instructive, that it's God-focused and so sin-aware.

We often think about our lives and the lives of our churches in what we like. We're often running the happiness marathon rather than the holiness marathon.

And the happiness marathon is, am I happy? And is our church happy? That's what we want, a happy church and happy lives.

Had a good year? Oh yes, everything has gone really well. But actually, it's more important to have a holy year than a happy year, isn't it?

And to have a holy year means that we increase, increase in our awareness of the holiness of God. And if we increase in our awareness of the holiness of God, we'll be aware of our own sin.

[27 : 38] Now, I'm sorry if I've mentioned this story before, but it's an ongoing battle. You know how Christian people, you know mature Christians, often have sins in their lives of which they're completely unconscious, though all their friends know about it.

I thought, well, perhaps that's true. I noticed it's true of all my friends. I thought, perhaps it's true of me too. So I said to God, please show me my sins which were invisible to me.

And God mentioned driving, because I've been driving for the last 95 years, selfishly and competitively and dangerously and failing so to love my neighbour on the road.

And I remember, I suddenly struck me, oh no, I have to love my neighbour on the road as well.

Those people who cut in in front of me, those big white vans who pull out in front of me, the big trucks who bear down on me, I have to love them, the slow pedestrians, the impudent cyclists.

Yes, said God, they are your neighbours. Well, the first day it lasted two minutes. And then I lost my cool entirely.

[29 : 02] I can now, in God's kindness, if I pray before I drive, last for one and a half hours by saying as I drive, God bless you, God bless you, God bless you, God bless you, God bless you, God bless even you.

And the funny thing is, I get there just as quickly. The road is a safer place for me and for others.

And I'm quite relaxed when I get there. I used to be so tense because I'd been so ambitious in my driving. I'm pathetic. I know you're looking at me and thinking, I thought he was a nice, mild-mannered old man.

Now I discover he's a sinner. Well, surprise, surprise. Dear sister, dear brother, look in your own heart. Somebody asked me at a church I was preaching at recently, what can we pray for you?

Are they expecting me to say, well, I've got a really important conference in Tasmania. Please pray for that. I said, well, please pray that I'll stop sinning. I keep on with the petty sins of old age, envy, resentment, jealousy, grumpiness.

[30 : 16] Please pray that I stop. And please notice that Nehemiah is confessing not only his own sins and his father's family, but the sins of we Israelites, that is, of God's people.

Nehemiah is so attuned to a holy God, he knows his own sin, the sin of his family, and the sin of his church. I hope you know those sins.

I hope you confess them. And, of course, God will forgive your sins. And please notice that this prayer is full of content and full of emotion.

We often think, well, mind and heart are so far behind. If you've got a prayer which is full of truth and theology, it won't be an emotional prayer.

But, you know, we're going to pray emotional prayers, so forget about the truth. But actually this prayer is profoundly true and profoundly passionate.

[31 : 26] May your prayers be the same. profoundly true. Profoundly true. Profoundly passionate. And please notice, profoundly practical. Because you can have prayers, can't you, which are profoundly true, and never land.

Prayers which are very emotional, very passionate, but never land in practical action. But I remind you of how Nehemiah's prayer ends. After all this passion and all this great truth, give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man, he was cupbearer to the king.

So, Nehemiah expected God to begin answering that prayer that day through him. Now, of course, if we want to shape our prayers, as Christians, we will do well to not only look at Nehemiah chapter 1, but also at the Lord's Prayer.

Can I encourage you to do that? Indeed, I often shape, if I'm leading church, sorry, prayers in church, intercessions in church, I often shape my prayer on the Lord's Prayer.

So, I read out the Lord's Prayer and then expand each section. Or I've also taken other prayers from the Psalms or from Paul, and I've used the prayer as the basis for my public prayer.

[32 : 59] But, of course, the big thing that we know that Nehemiah didn't know is that we come to God every time we pray through Jesus Christ. I found a great quotation from the reformer John Calvin.

He says in one of his catechisms for people to learn Christianity that when we pray, please listen to this, when we pray, whenever we pray, God hears us, as it were, from the lips, through the lips of his Son.

Because Jesus is our great high priest, Jesus is our intercessor. So, when we pray, we pray through Jesus Christ on the basis of the fact that he is the Son of God, so close to God.

We pray through Jesus Christ because he has offered a single sacrifice for sin. So, through him, who is our great high priest, through his shed blood on the cross, we have immediate and instant access to our Heavenly Father.

Immediate, instant, and constant access to our Heavenly Father. You know, when I was a young Christian and I'd sinned, I used to think, well, I'll punish myself by staying away from God for a while.

[34 : 13] What a silly thing to do that was. Because Jesus has borne the punishment for my sin. Why should I punish myself? That won't do me any good. And it insults the work of Christ on the cross.

No, the one prayer that God will always hear and answer immediately, yes, is the prayer, please forgive me. because Jesus died for me. So, if you're a person who's carrying around a burden of a sin you committed 40 or 50 or 60 or 70 years ago, please stop carrying that burden.

Please go straight to God now and say, please forgive me through the blood of your Son. And we have the promise in the Bible that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins.

Listen to it. And cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Do you mean to say that God has forgiven me all my sins now I've trusted in Jesus?

Yes, every one of them. You may remember them. He's forgotten them. That's what the Bible says. You may mull over them.

[35 : 26] He doesn't even remember they happened. And I notice lots of young people by which I'm anybody under 60 nowadays, when I hear them pray they often don't pray through Jesus Christ.

They say, God, please do this. Please do that. Please bless them. Please convert Molly or something like that. Amen. They forget to say as I was taught to pray to end every prayer through Jesus Christ.

Through Jesus Christ to my Lord or through Jesus Christ our Savior. That's not just a useful kind of thing to say. It's because I know that the basis of my approach to God is through Jesus Christ. How else will I pray to my great and holy and awesome and wonderful God but through his Son and through the Savior. Through his Savior provided for us.

Please notice we've looked at great length and I'm about to stop don't worry at Nehemiah's big prayer. We saw it was a personal prayer but a communal prayer.

[36 : 28] A biblical prayer but a relevant prayer. A theological prayer but a practical prayer. A God-focused prayer and so a sin-aware prayer and a prayer which is both full of content and full of emotion and full of action as well.

And having prayed for all those days and then prayed that particular prayer what happens? He said I was in chapter 2 this is verse 1 I took the wine and gave it to the king and Nehemiah's looking sad a dangerous thing I would have thought for a mere servant to do to wonder he wasn't killed on the spot.

I was very much afraid rightly so may the king live forever why should not my face look sad the city of my ancestors have buried lies and ruins that was actually partly Artaxerxes' fault but Nehemiah's too tactful to say so and he thinks how can I get round Nehemiah basically so isn't this awful to have your ancestors city and ruins so please let me go back to Jerusalem so that I can rebuild it the king says how long will you be so I set a time and then please notice he's such a wise man you know he's obviously a civil servant and a security officer and a builder may I have letters to the governors of Chancelphates that's all the provinces of Persia near Jerusalem they'll give me safe conduct and also some provision so he's on a roll God's answering his prayers so he's asking for all

he needs and notice he says and because the gracious hand of my God was on me the Lord granted my requests isn't that wonderful well he's prayed a big prayer he said to God please answer it today please begin the answer today and God's answered him in this I love this phrase it comes again and again in Ezra and Nehemiah because the gracious hand of my God was upon me please notice that he said his ears are attentive his eyes are open and his hand is on me isn't that a lovely picture of God and then as we know he arrived in Jerusalem did that reconnaissance which is so important and set to rebuild the walls now we're not going to deal with the rebuilding narrative but I'd encourage you to read the next few chapters and find out how it was done Artaxerxes by the way was the king who sent Ezra in Ezra chapter 7 as he sent Nehemiah in Nehemiah chapter 2 so God was working through Artaxerxes though would you believe one of the names of the Persian kings was King of Kings isn't that a splendid title wouldn't you like to be King of Kings they were such arrogant people but God can even use arrogant and mighty rulers well may Nehemiah's prayer enrich our prayers I pray in Jesus name Amen Amen Amen Amen