

NEHEMIAH: PATTERN FOR LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE IN HARD TIMES
Part I: Godly Leadership's Performance Prerequisite Of Selfless Concern For God's People
(Nehemiah 1:1-11)

I. Introduction

- A. There is much talk in Evangelical circles today about the proper **format** for leadership. Leadership format involves the polity, leadership style and the organizational, chain-of-command flow chart of a church.
- B. However, while justly concerning ourselves with oversight **format**, we must not forget the Biblical emphasis on the **performances** of those who lead -- **particularly in these days of apostasy!** When one leads in **today's** ministries, God wants him to **be upright** and **perform** well in the position assigned.
- C. One of the great examples of excellent leadership **performance** in hard times was Nehemiah, Cupbearer to Artaxerxes I, who administered the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. We peruse that journal in Scripture to glean insight into quality leadership **performance** for challenging apostate times of today.

II. Godly Leadership's Performance Prerequisite Of Selfless Concern For God's People, Neh. 1:1-11.

- A. Nehemiah was Cupbearer to Artaxerxes I, Neh. 1:1c. This position revealed that Nehemiah as a man was very gifted and of lofty character:
 1. A cupbearer to a king would always taste the food and wine delivered to the king so that if any poison was discovered, he would intercept it at his own peril to save the king's life, Ryrie St. Bi., KJV, p. 719.
 2. This position was of the highest trust afforded anyone in the ruler's realm so that the position itself became one of great influence upon the king, Ibid. Cupbearers were chosen for being "wise and discreet, and consistently honest and trustworthy. Nehemiah's position alone reveals much about his intellectual capabilities, his emotional maturity, and his spiritual status." (B.K.C., O.T., p. 674)
- B. Marking the first quality of excellence in spiritual leadership **performance**, Nehemiah demonstrated a genuine concern for God's afflicted people, Neh. 1:1-11b:
 1. When Nehemiah served the king of Persia in his grand palace at Shushan, he received word of the destitute plight of recently returned Jewish exiles to the charred ruins of Jerusalem, Neh. 1:1-3.
 2. Now, Nehemiah didn't have to show concern for these people who were a long ways away as he could have remained quite comfortable where he was serving in the palace, 1:1,1c.
 3. However, in a completely **unselfish** manner, Nehemiah demonstrated **deep concern** for God's afflicted people in distant Palestine, Neh. 1:4-11b:
 - a. Nehemiah was so upset at the plight of God's people that he couldn't stand, but sat down in a form of depression, and wept continually for days, Neh. 1:4a.
 - b. Along with this weeping went fasting as a regular habit, day and night, Neh. 1:6b.
 - c. Nehemiah went to intercessory prayer concerning the situation, Neh. 1:4b-11a. He properly prayed a corporate confessional as was commanded under Mosaic Covenant for the entire nation, Neh. 1:4b-11a with Deut. 30:1-3. He was thereby seeking God's promise of restoring the fortunes of the downtrodden returned exiles in Palestine, cf. Neh. 1:8-10.
 - d. In his prayer, Nehemiah asked if the Lord would use his position as Cupbearer to influence the king to grant petitions restoring the fortunes of these exiles, Neh. 1:11. In other words, he asked God for a chance to become **personally involved** in being part of the **solution!**

Lesson: *Had Nehemiah been content to bide his time as Cupbearer to Artaxerxes I and let the Jewish exiles pine away under affliction in Palestine, he could never have been an effective leader! Nehemiah felt compassion and got involved, using his position to help others to be effective!*

Application: *To be useful to God in leadership, (1) true, one must demonstrate personal achievement abilities: he needs to be a "Cupbearer" and show initiative and skills. (2) But **divinely effective** "Cupbearers" look beyond their comfortable, ego-teasing positions and feel for the afflicted among God's flock. They view personal position and skill as a divine trust for helping OTHERS gain blessing, NOT for fulfilling personal agendas (cf. Luke 12:42-48)!! Let us go and do likewise!*