

Nehemiah Chapter 1:1-11

A broken-down Nation

Take a moment and look in your mind's eye at your favorite photograph or picture if you can think of your favorite family picture that is even better, the closer you look at the picture the more details and memories you can recall.

We have heard it said that Every picture tells a story
picture is worth a thousand words

How did Israel become a broken-down nation a broken-down community, a broken-down people?

- The Nation was founded on God's given principles given to Moses and passed onto the people to live by, decrees to apply to every possible circumstance with clear guidelines to follow, literally written by the hand of God but thru the many 100s of years coupled with numerous generations of people the nation slowly began to compromise into
- Idolatry= putting any person place or thing in front of the place were God belongs
- Rebellion against God to be free to live as they pleased
- Selfishness or self-centeredness
- Self-satisfaction became the goal in life
- So, God allowed the nation to fall deeper into rebellion and then eventually crumble and fall morally, physically, and economically

If you want to take notes today, we are going to breakdown Nehemiah chapter 1 in 5 sections today highlighting the person God uses to rebuild what is broken down

Let's Pray

Section #1

V1-3 a man with love for the people

Neh 1:1-11 NLT

V1 These are the memoirs of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah. In late autumn, in the month of Kislev, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign, I was at the fortress of Susa.

- Nehemiah lived in Shushan, the capital city of the Persians, and he lived in the citadel - the fortified palace of the Persians. So Right away, we know Nehemiah is someone important in worlds economy and power, living in the palace of the king of Persia.
- Occupying an important position in the world's economy does not guarantee we are doing what God has planned for our lives, but God has used him and placed him there for the next season of his life .

- I am certain that God will find you and use you wherever you are, if you are sensitive to the spirit of God and willing to follow Him to accomplish His will and purpose.
- Nehemiah's body was in Persia but his heart was broken for Jerusalem - 800 miles away.

What are you longing for right now who or what has captivated your heart? Your body and mind are in one location, but your heart is in another place

Let's just take a glance at Nehemiah's current lifestyle and struggle in his heart

- This guy had a unlimited balance on his Persian credit card for the finest foods even when there was no indoor dining he had special privileges being close to the king's courts, he was also responsible for what the king ate and drank safely , so he was always eating the finest of foods.
- He had the best protection from harm offered, he had the luxury of not living in fear of running out of toilet paper even though the rest of the people outside the fortress were living consumed by the current events of the day supplied by social media and the stress and the fear of what tomorrow may hold .

- Sounds like the perfect job right!
- Nehemiah was also the governor 😊 a nonpartisans man that truly cared for the people he governed. There was no temptation for monetary gain or certain political party to please.
- Nehemiah was a faithful employee to the king, he truly did well with what God put in his hands to do, because God's hand was on him for a time such as this.
- He also rose above his circumstances much like Daniel in the lion's den, Shadrach Meshach Abednego in the fiery furnace
- It was evident Gods spirit was in control of his heart and life because he was supernaturally able to serve the king and nation who destroyed and conquered and suppressed his very own people.
- But..... deep down inside something was missing because his heart was broken for his own people, the heritage of people where he truly belonged.

- It is so important that our heart is in alignment with God during the different circumstances that God allows in our lives to experience above all else.

Pro 4:23 NLT 23 Guard your heart above all else, **for it determines the course of your life.**

- Most of us have grown up being career minded focusing on what we want to be when we grow up, most of which if we are honest has turned out a bit different than we thought wouldn't you agree.
- Speaking of which The picture of our children we draw then they draw (we miss out)
- What would happen in a community or in a body of believers or just a single individual person that begged God to show them what He would want to accomplish thru them and then follow thru with it ?

V2 Hanani, one of my brothers, came to visit me with some other men who had just arrived from Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had returned there from captivity and about how things were going in Jerusalem.

- God is about to show favor on a broken nation, filled with broken people with broken lives and a city surrounded by broken walls.

2Ch 16:9a NLT 9 The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order **to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.**

V2a. Hanani, came to visit me with some other men who had just arrived from Judah.

- **Hanani known as one of my brothers** = possibly one of his blood brothers, but more importantly his name is defined (gracious) (favorable or cause to be gracious). Gods miraculous grace is being portrayed in a man with a difficult message to bring to Nehemiah .
- How will God show his grace..... thru the lives of His people who have their heart turned toward him.
- David was known in the bible as a man after Gods own heart

- But you say Wait ,Wait but David made many mistakes just in one small time frame of his life his lust turned to adultery, adultery turned to murder.
- David like anyone was not perfect or free from sin and mistakes but David was a man after Gods own heart because when he failed he would realign his heart with Gods heart through prayer and confession of sin to God and those he sinned against.
- As imperfect as we all are God uses people, men, women, leaders gifted to encourage and influence others for the work of God

V2b. I asked them about the Jews and about how things were going in Jerusalem.

- God uses people who have a genuine love and burden for the well-being of other people..... here it is again (I asked about them)
- His heart was broken for those Specific individuals who were there with him

V2c. I asked them about the Jews and about how things were going in Jerusalem.

- His heart was broken for a Specific group of people or community of persons
- Nehemiah enquired about their well-being with a willingness to help.
- We have all experienced having a genuine desire to help someone and then as we get deeper and deeper into the service it can become more than we can handle you know what I am talking about.
- God is revealing a desperate need to His people that have an ear to listen to Him, that at first glance is truly a God sized problem, but if God is leading than God will empower those He calls.

V2d. I asked them about the Jews and about how things were going in Jerusalem.

- His heart was broken for a Specific location of people

God is about to expose a great need to a group of men, leaders, encouragers/ influencers to begin to show His gracious unmerited favor on His beaten down people by their surrounding enemies.

Nehemiah 1:3 NKJV 3 And they said to me, "**The survivors** who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire."

- The phrase Great distress is extreme anxiety, sorrow, or pain
- Reproach = poor opinion and disapproval by the people around them.....
- we have all done this traveling anywhere close to home or far away and come across a group of people that are living in a less fortunate way of life some by choice others just really down on their luck and we will look at them in disgust or reproach of how they might live.
- No wonder the people lived in constant distress, in constant disgrace (reproach), They were living only as survivors, just sitting waiting for the other shoe to drop on their lives .
- God has much more for our lives than to be just survivors. God not only wants us to be conquerors, but more than conquerors through Him who loved us

- **Rom 8:35, 37 NKJV** 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... **37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.**
- The broken state of the people and the broken state of the city walls were intimately connected, because the hearts of the people were desperately broken because fellowship with God was broken.
- It is much easier to blame someone else for the condition of our home, family or our nation, but like Nehemiah now that we know the condition of our lives, family and nation... what are we going to do about it ?
- We as people are all fully aware of the decline of our nation and how we have methodically removed ourselves from the protection of God by slowly removing Him from the foundation and framework of our country by refusing to obey His statutes and commandments.
- We have all willingly gone astray chasing our own desires ,hoarding items to make sure we have what we need searching for satisfaction and security apart from God.

- Just think what our lives or nation would be like if we were all rushing to turn back to God standing in long lines waiting to hear from God instead of desperately searching to see if the shelves have been stocked with supplies.
- a city without walls and no foundation is completely open and vulnerable too :
- Enemies of **doubt**
- Wild Animals of **discouragement**
- Varmints and rodents of **defeat**
- And the most dangerous of all **deception** from the bombardment of too much information at our fingertips
- Do you think it 😊 could ever get so bad that person would try to capitalize on our current unrest to push their agenda onto an already broken frazzled people and nation?
- They had no defense, no protection at all, people it is time to run straight way to Gods word and his promises while we still can...

Judges 9:51 NLT 51 But there was a strong tower inside the town, and all the men and women--**the entire population--fled to it.** They barricaded themselves in and climbed up to the roof of the tower.

- Those living in an unwalled city lived in constant stress and tension
- No protection, But

Pro 18:10 NLT 10 The name of the LORD is a **strong fortress;** the godly run to him and are safe.

- They never knew when they might be attacked and brutalized.
- Every man lived in constant fear for his wife and children.

Psa 61:3 NLT 3 for you are my safe refuge, **a fortress where my enemies cannot reach me.**

- The temple could be rebuilt, but never made beautiful, because anything valuable would be taken easily.

- As we get older with less time in front of us than behind us our priorities begin to change,
- Personal wealth loses its value, there are 2 sides of a silver dollar the shrinking us dollar is certainly one side and the sobering reality that it does not bring happiness and fulfillment is the other side
- Our Purpose in life becomes priceless
- Time becomes the most precious commodity
- We might think that a prominent man like Nehemiah had more important things to think about than a distant city he had never been to, but God has been providing and sending people that are called to a specific location for a long time, these missionaries have been known to sacrifice many things to answer the call even one's life.
- Every headstone in a cemetery has a date of birth and a date of death, but what makes each one uniquely different is the little dash in between the 2 dates it is called your life.

What do you want to be remembered by in your life before it is too late?

Because right now it's not too late to start!!!!

Ok we are ready to move to section # 2 😊

Section # 2

V4 a man with a God sized problem

V4. When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven.

- You know there are many things we need to take ownership for as men, husbands' fathers, women, wives & mothers that are clearly our responsibility, it is wise to take inventory of our responsibilities frequently and prioritize our responsibilities based on current conditions of the needs and the people in our lives .
- But then in the midst of life we are faced with a God sized problems, that belong to God and God alone and unless God intervenes, or impowers us we don't stand a chance or even know where to start and for a time we default to just surviving , just scratching and clawing finning for ourselves just trying to get

thru it, until we acknowledge we cannot take another breath unless God helps us.

Let me read V 4 again....

V4. When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven.

- when I said those words When I heard this..... what God sized problem did you think of at that moment.
- When I said ...I sat down and wept.....what drives you to tears that only God can resolve and causes you to be weak in the knees.
- When we read In fact, for days I mourned,.....for days weeks months what has consumed your thoughts to where you have just been trying to survive.
- fasted and prayed to the God in heaven

Fasting and prayer is talked about but Mistakenly known as the double barrel desperation method to get our immediate answer from God.

Rather than truly searching and seeking what is Gods specific will in a matter by taking our eyes off the things of this world by depriving ourselves and focus our thoughts on God will for a designated time.

Section #3

V5-7 a man driven to pray

V5. Then I said, "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of unfailing love with those who love him and obey his commands,

- Let's take look Nehemiah's powerful model of prayer
- First we have adoration= acknowledging Gods character and attributes...the great and awesome God
- Adoration directly to God also Remind us who we are speaking too.

V6. listen to my prayer! Look down and see me praying night and day for your people Israel. I confess that we have sinned against you. Yes, even my own family and I have sinned!

- Pleading desperately with true humility accepting full responsibility
- confession= agreeing with God, not blaming God, or trying to justify our sinful actions.

There is a real need for specific confession to God:

- Cooperate confession (as a nation)
- Family Confession (as a church)
- Personal confession (as an individual)
- Please don't miss this..... God already knows about our sin, but He wants us to agree with him about our sin, remember the first

step to any kind of recovery program is admitting you have a problem.

V7. We have sinned terribly by not obeying the commands, decrees, and regulations that you gave us through your servant Moses.

a. commands= or ordinances & precepts

b. decrees = "The decrees of God are his eternal, unchangeable, holy, wise, and sovereign purpose given to us

c. regulations= favorable or unfavorable divine given law issued to individuals or collectively

Deut 6:1-5 NLT

Moses speaking

1 "These are the commands, decrees, and regulations that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you. You must obey them in the land you are about to enter and occupy,

2 and you and your children and grandchildren must fear the LORD your God as long as you live. If you obey all his decrees and commands, you will enjoy a long life.

3 Listen closely, Israel, and be careful to obey. Then all will go well with you, and you will have many children in the land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

4 "Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.

5 And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.

The shama

Section #4

V8-9 a man clinging to Gods promises

- This is a powerful way to come to God, asking Him to remember His promises, but you need to know and be familiar with Gods promises yourself to be able to cling to them.

V8. "Please remember what you told your servant Moses: 'If you are unfaithful to me, I will scatter you among the nations.

- All Gods promises **are yes and amen** this is a promise that God kept..... 'If you are unfaithful to me, I will scatter you among the nations.
- But the next verse is a promise of hope and God will make good and is in the process of making good right now in the text

V9. But if you return to me and obey my commands and live by them, then even if you are exiled to the ends of the earth, I will bring you back to the place I have chosen for my name to be honored.'

- When we ask God to remember His promises, I do not think that He has forgotten them. I do not think that it helps God to remind Him of His promises, but it sure helps us and truly increases our faith.

V10. "The people you rescued by your great power and strong hand are your servants.

I really LOVE this next verse

Psa 81:10 NLT 10 For it was I, the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it with good things.

Promises

Songs

Protection

Hope

Joy

victory

Every promise of God restores hope, gives us the strength we need for the moment and the faith we need to do more than just survive.

Section #5

V11 A man ready to do something with a petition to God

V11. O Lord, please hear my prayer! Listen to the prayers of those of us who delight in honoring you. Please grant me success today by making the king favorable to me. Put it into his heart to be kind to me." In those days I was the king's cup-bearer.

- Nehemiah was going to do something about the sorry state of Jerusalem's walls and the sorry state of the people, because of the burden God had put on his heart not for any other reason.
- But he also knows without God's intervention, he can do nothing this was a God sized problem, that requires a God sized answer.
- This Prayer request came with the heart and plan not criticism from an armchair quarterback.
- Take note this is a humble genuine petition in prayer with no complaints or asking God to make it better or even sending someone else, only his plea to God ...use me to be a part of the answer.
- The answer for the nation then and for us as a nation now is to desperately turn back to God before it is too late.

- Let's begin to close with a powerful promise from God.

Pro 21:1 NLT 1 The king's heart is like a stream of water directed by the LORD; he guides it wherever he pleases.

- According to this verse God is totally in control of our nation, he can guide the heart of a king or our new president wherever he chooses.
- Next week we will see the results of Nehemiah's prayer, kicking off an incredible construction project where God will provide the funds, the materials, the schedule, and the leaders to prepare the way for rebuilding the walls and make ready for a spiritual revival of the people through Ezra the prophet.
- We will review the God given tools that Nehemiah had to work with in chapter 2 that are essential for leadership to oversee a God sized project. Tools like.....
 - passion,
 - permission
 - miraculous provision,
 - Gods given protection

- following Gods plan
- relying on Gods favor and power
- Perseverance

- Let me end with 2 quotes

Alan Redpath

Recognition of need must be followed by earnest, persistent waiting upon God until the overwhelming sense of world need becomes a specific burden in my soul for one particular piece of work which God would have me do." (Redpath)

Charles Spurgeon

"Laying the matter to heart, he did not begin to speak with other people about what they would do, nor did he draw up a wonderful scheme about what might be done if so many thousand people joined in the enterprise; but it occurred to him that he would do something himself." (Spurgeon)

Let's Pray