

Week of May 21, 2023

Nehemiah 2v1-10

The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah:

During the month of Chislev in the twentieth year, when I was in the fortress city of Susa, 2 Hanani, one of my brothers, arrived with men from Judah, and I questioned them about Jerusalem and the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile. 3 They said to me, “The remnant in the province, who survived the exile, are in great trouble and disgrace. Jerusalem’s wall has been broken down, and its gates have been burned.” 4 When I heard these words, I sat down and wept. I mourned for a number of days, fasting and praying before the God of the heavens. 5 I said,

Lord, the God of the heavens, the great and awe-inspiring God who keeps his gracious covenant with those who love him and keep his commands, 6 let your eyes be open and your ears be attentive to hear your servant’s prayer that I now pray to you day and night for your servants, the Israelites. I confess the sins we have committed against you. Both I and my father’s family have sinned. 7 We have acted corruptly toward you and have not kept the commands, statutes, and ordinances you gave your servant Moses. 8 Please remember what you commanded your servant Moses: “If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples. 9 But if you return to me and carefully observe my commands, even though your exiles were banished to the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place where I chose to have my name dwell.”

10 They are your servants and your people. You redeemed them by your great power and strong hand. 11 Please, Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to that of your servants who delight to revere your name. Give your servant success today, and grant him compassion in the presence of this man.

At the time, I was the king’s cupbearer.

Questions:

- How would you describe the character of God as portrayed in Nehemiah 1?
- In what ways does the character of God give us hope that God is actively involved in the affairs of humanity and willing to bring about change? How does this impact our perspective on the possibility of transformation in our own lives and communities?
- What is the significance of Nehemiah's response to the news of Jerusalem's desolation? How does his personal faith and trust in God's character and promises serve as an example for us in our own journeys of hope and change?
- In what ways can the story of Nehemiah 1 challenge our perception of hopelessness and helplessness in the face of adversity?
- How does the narrative of Nehemiah 1 invite us to participate in the process of change and restoration?
- Do you agree with the statement that many Christians are more afraid of the great struggle and disgrace than they are genuinely grieving? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, why is it important to shift the focus from contending with the world to contending with God to revive what is dead? What benefits or insights might arise from this shift in perspective?