

Nehemiah 1:1-2:9

The Burden of the Lord

NEHEMIAH has for many years been one of my favorite books of the Scriptures.

A) It has many different facets that minister to us.

B) It is an **EXCELLENT study in REVIVAL**.

➤ How God takes a broken down people and brings them together – Restores them

C) The name NEHEMIAH actually means *The Lord has comforted*

1) He is an excellent type of how the Holy Spirit comes

➤ **REBUILDING and RESTORING** the broken walls of the human life

It is an **EXCELLENT study in LEADERSHIP**.

A) IF you are involved or interested in leadership, there is no finer study than the life of Nehemiah.

B) In the book of Nehemiah we see a great picture of how to begin and complete any work that God has called us to on HIS BEHALF.

C) All works of God have a beginning, a middle and an End! Common threads in each

1) See those in this Study

➤ Nehemiah is an excellent picture of how the Body of Christ is to function.

And we can learn some great insights concerning Spiritual Warfare.

A) The various way that the enemy attacks a work of God or attacks a body of believers or attacks individual believers is seen in this book.

B) Excited to be studying this book together as a body right now – it has so much for us.

2 Divisions in the book:

Ch.1-6 Reconstruction of the Wall.

Ch.7-13 Reinstruction of God's people.

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel, Chislev is NOV/Dec – winter months

Shushan – winter palace of the Persian Kings
Persia – modern day Iran

So it was during that time ² that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

Hanani and these guys have gone to visit Jerusalem and have now come back – GIVE A REPORT.

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.”

Distress = Great grief – severely unsettled – a state of Misery & affliction

Reproach = disgraced – loss of dignity

REASON: The walls were still down. - A) 605BC Nebuchadnezzar comes into Jerusalem and ransacks it. – Walls torn down – 150 years still down.

B) Walls important for Protection and Separation from the outside world.

C) Imagine all the doors and windows of your house – being gone.

1) How would you sleep at night?

D) Africa – No windows – Lion Story – Or Netting – Not keep out Snakes

1) Needless to say – didn't sleep that well.

➤ Slept with one eye open.

Notice the Reaction of Nehemiah:

⁴ So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

⁵ And I said: “I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, ⁶ please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we

have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned. ⁷We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses.

⁸Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; ⁹but *if* you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, *yet* I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.'

¹⁰Now these *are* Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand. ¹¹O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."
For I was the king's cupbearer.

There 6 things that I want us to consider today about Nehemiah's Character that made him a man God would use.

#1 Nehemiah was a man of humility

A) The final phrase of chapter one gives to us an insight into Nehemiah's great humility ***I WAS THE KINGS CUPBEARER***

B) Being the king's cupbearer was a tremendous honor in that time of history.

1) Originally, the king's cupbearer was the one who sat next to the king to sample the king's drink and food **before the king ate it.**

C) There was Always the danger of having one of his subjects turning on him – *A little Poison in the Kings food would do the trick*

1) So when the King was feasting – a little Wine – {before King takes a drink – **Nehemiah takes a sip** - and the king would watch to see if he fell over dead-

D) Nehemiah – Pretty tasty – count to 10 still alive Ok lets drink !!!!

1) Feast Drum stick – Wait – takes a bite – not bad use a little gravy – but ok

So initially that was what the position was about – but As time progressed, so did the prestige and dignity of the position

A) Because this was the man sitting next to the king.

B)He was the man who was closest to the king. – **Became the kings Closet confidant**

C) He had the ear of the king, he became the kings adviser.

1) He became the king's right hand man. He was "chief of staff" so to speak.

So Nehemiah has this important Government Job – he is in a place of tremendous influence

A)And this is where we see his Humility:

B)See most of us would have been tempted to mention this little **fact at the beginning of the book**

"Nehemiah, the kings cupbearer (chief of staff, right hand man, confidant and advisor)"

C)Take a Selfie – look who I am hanging out with.

D)But that wasn't the kind of guy Nehemiah was – he was Humble

He only mentions it in passing at the end of the chapter, and only then because it had bearing on the rest of the story that is about to unfold.

A)See God had placed Nehemiah in this position for a reason

B) It turned out that God had a work for him to do there that he could not have accomplished elsewhere.

C)God put Nehemiah in Shushan just as He had put Esther there YEARS before,

1)and just as He had put Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon.

D) When God wants to accomplish a work, He always prepares His workers and puts them in the right places at the right time

Nehemiah was born in Captivity – Recall if you have been with us – Started in 605 BC Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon – 70 years

A) Jewish population grew in Captivity: Many Scholars believe at least 2 million people.

B) After 70 years Babylon overtaken by Persia – and under Persia the Jewish people fared well.

1) Jobs, land owners, positions in the Kingdom.

C) The Persian King Cyrus – initiates a return – Go build your temple

1) Zerubbabel leads a group of 50,000 to do that.

D) 458BC – Ezra the priest leads another small group back for the purpose of teaching and instructing the people – in temple worship.

1) In the laws of God.

Nehemiah is a contemporary of Ezra – this is 12 years later – God stirs the heart of this man for His people.

A) No doubt it was just another routine day when Nehemiah met his brothers who had just returned from a visit to Jerusalem,

B) but it turned out to be a turning point in Nehemiah's life.

Been Said : *Like large doors, great life-changing events can swing on very small hinges.*

It was just another day when Moses went out to care for his sheep, but on that day he heard the Lord's call and became a prophet (Ex. 3).

A) It was an ordinary day when David was called home from shepherding his flock; but on that day, he was anointed king (1 Sam. 16).

B) It was an ordinary day when Peter, Andrew, James, and John were mending their nets after a night of failure in FISHING

1) but that was the day Jesus called them to become fishers of men.

C) You never know what God has in store, when or how He is going to call

1) So keep your heart open to God's providential leading.

D) Nehemiah's heart is ROCKED as he hears the news about his countrymen.

Well this leads us to consider the 2nd thing about Nehemiah's Character that made him a man God could use.

A) Not only was Nehemiah a man of Humility –

#2 Nehemiah was a man of Compassion

B) When Nehemiah hears of the Conditions of the people & the state of affairs in Jerusalem his heart is broken –

1) V. 4 He wept & mourned for many days –

C) He didn't say: *Man what a bummer – Glad I am here and not there – want to see my new quarters / want to ride in my Chariot*

1) No his Heart was Burdened – He had compassion for the people in Jerusalem.

D) Wept = To flow in drops

1) Mourn = To wail.

Nehemiah as we shall see is one tough dude. He is not easily intimidated

A) But when he gets the news his heart is broken. – Why?

B) His heart breaks for God's people.

1) This is really a key sign in a godly leader – the type of person that God can use.

C) They are more concerned for God's people than their own personal needs, goals, or ambitions.

We will see over and over that Nehemiah is that kind of man!

A) Puts aside the best for himself and chooses instead what is best for God's people.

B) We will see this played out over and over again as we study this book.

1) Nehemiah hears of the condition of the people in Jerusalem and his heart is broken.

Ministry Starts with Compassion: Starts by seeing the need – seeing what others don't – Burden – he wept

A) You know how you can tell when a Burden is from the Lord? – IT DOESN'T GO AWAY!

B) Can't shake it – keep praying – try to escape but it is growing in your heart!

C) Nehemiah's burden is growing – He is weeping –

1) Heart broken!

D) He was a Man of Humility – Man of Compassion

#3 Man of Prayer

His prayer is laid out for us in v. 5-11:

These verses give us some insight into why he was affective in Prayer – Consider quickly 4 things

A) **1st His view of God** – v. 5 *And I said: "I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments,*

B) How did Nehemiah see God? As a Great and Awesome God –

- 1) How big is your God?
- 2) Bigger than **any problem** you might face? – **Any Challenge**

C) **My God - Holds world in the span of His hand**

- 1) Knows all the stars by name – Billions of Stars in 1,000's of Galaxies

D) **Nothing too great for Him**

- Nehemiah Knew there was a big Job ahead – But his eyes were focused on a Big God – Great & Awesome

Also a God who keeps His Promises – Covenant keeping God – *You who keep Your covenant –*

A) In other words He is a God I can trust

B) **He is a Merciful God** – Doesn't give us what we do deserve

- 1) **3 Important things to key in on about God**

So first we get some insight into Nehemiah's View of God –

Next insight into his prayer is

2nd His view of the Problem

6 please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned.7 We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses

The Problem? Sin! – No excuses here –

A) Nehemiah Knows this all started with Rebellion – that is why they were sent into 70 years of Captivity to begin with

B) The apathy that existed now was another example of the sin that existed

C) Problem was sin –

- 1) When this happened Nehemiah wasn't even born – **note – My sin & my fathers**

D) He did NOT pray: “Lord forgive THEM for they are not completing the work.”

E) He said: “Lord, forgive US.”

- 1) He identifies himself with them, not only in their victories, but in their setbacks.

3rd His View of the Solution: V.8-9 *Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; 9 but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.'*

A) The Key is REPENTENCE – RETURNING

- 1) Turn from our sin – turn to the Lord

B) Answer for America is not who is in the Whitehouse.

C) AMERICA doesn't need a President – we need a King – JESUS!

D) Application for us – like Nehemiah – we need to not cast the blame – but to acknowledge – we have Sinned

2 Chronicles 7:14 *“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”*

4th His view of their relationship with God v.10

10 Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand.

A) They were a redeemed people – they had been redeemed from Egypt by the power of God

B) They had been purchased – they were valuable

C) Same thing applies to us.

1) Redeemed – Blood Bought – Valuable – God paid a high price for YOU AND ME!

PAUL REMINDS US - Romans 8:31-33

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

GOD Gave us Jesus – He is not going to give up on us Now

A) Nehemiah realized the same about Israel – God's People – redeemed them and He would not forsake them

B) WORD for someone here tonight – doubting – God loves you – He bought you –

1) Never going to forsake you

C) Cling to that – even when in the midst of your present situation it looks bleak.

Notice Nehemiah didn't just Pray he fasted –

A) Purpose of a Fast ... deny flesh – seek God
Could be a Day / a Meal

B) Can't do that – Food is important

C) Here's how much we eat in lifetime from 0-70

1) 2000 Chickens / 300 head of Cattle / 50 pigs / 200 Acres of grains & veggies / 150 Acres of Fruits

D) Can't give up a Chicken – I need all 2,000 of them

Nehemiah a man of Humility / Compassion – Burden / Man of Prayer and

#4 A man who was Available

11 O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

A) Nehemiah discerned that somehow the King was going to be used in meeting this need – Nehemiah made himself Available

B) It has well been said that prayer is not getting man's will done in heaven but getting God's will done on earth.

C) However, for God's will to be done on earth, He needs people to be available for Him to use.

Nehemiah had it made in Shushan.

A) But he is willing to lay aside all of his position and possessions and prizes to get involved in the work of God

B) The king's cupbearer would have to sacrifice the comfort and security of the palace for the rigors and dangers of life in a ruined city.

1) Luxury would be replaced by ruins, and prestige by ridicule and slander. – AVAILABLE

Another great lesson in Nehemiah – when you answer God's call – doesn't mean it will be easy!

A) There is going to be a BATTLE!

B) THERE IS GOING TO BE OPPOSITION!

#5 Nehemiah was a man of Patience

2 And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king.

Here is what I want you to note:

There is a 4 month gap between Ch. 1 – Ch.2

A) For 4 months – Nehemiah has been praying fasting and – burden is growing

B) Wasn't a one week thing or couple of weeks

C) I see this all the time in myself and others

1) Passionate for a week or two – a month

D) Pray – NOTHING HAPPENS –

1) LOSE THAT PASSION .

Another thing that is interesting is Nehemiah is burdened – but NO ONE KNOWS –

A) END of V.1 I had never been sad in the King's presence before.

B)Penalty of death – But interesting – no detection

Until: ² Therefore the king said to me, “Why is your face sad, since you *are* not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart.”

So I became dreadfully afraid, {Deep breath swallows hard}³ and said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, *lies* waste, and its gates are burned with fire?”

⁴Then the king said to me, “What do you request?”

So I prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵ And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.”

⁶Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), “How long will your journey be? And when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

⁷ Furthermore I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors *of the region* beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, ⁸ and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which *pertains* to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy.”

And the king granted *them* to me according to the good hand of my God upon me.

#6 Nehemiah is a man with a Vision:

A)Four months of Praying and Fasting – resulted in a very detailed plan

B)Opportunity came – Ready to go.