

A Glimpse of Nehemiah's Prayer

Nehemiah 1:1-3

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire."

When Nehemiah inquired of Jerusalem and the remnant, the news was devastating, thus began the burden of leadership which Nehemiah would bear.

Nehemiah 1:4

As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

First, he cared enough to ask the obvious yet difficult question. Nehemiah's care and concern was so deep that at the hearing of the bad news regarding his people he sat down and wept! The burden of caring for others is heavy, and the Lord allowed Nehemiah to have this burden, for he was a pastor at heart and he was blessed to be able to share in the sufferings of Christ.

Second, the burden affected his whole being, he mourned and fasted, for there was no joy in his heart or body. That is the weight of the care of Christ within him for his own people. Prayer at first may have been difficult because of the sadness that was deep within him. Yet he knew it was before the God of heaven that he was collapsed, nothing else seemed to matter.

The burden that the Lord shares with his servants and those He entrusts in leadership can be heavy and very disheartening at times, as the Holy Spirit gives insight into the weaknesses of the church or in the church, or of individuals which we serve. It can be the burden of too few laborers, needs that are so desperately lacking within the church, or the seeming lack of concern by others. The pastor sees the hurting and the immature struggling believer, the struggling dysfunctional families, the need of people just in plain need of pastoral care. He knows he must give his people hope in the midst of a crooked and perverse world, and in the meantime he himself feels inadequate, weak and perplexed, and at times beaten down by satanic strongholds that are far beyond human strength. Nehemiah, like many pastors, had no one to run to who really understood his burdens that he was to bear.

(The apostle Paul was at the top, it is not a position one should covet. I did when I was younger, I no longer do. It's a privilege to be called to a senior pastorate, but it is also a very lonely place at times, because the Lord burdens you with responsibilities and insights and discernment that only you are prepared for, in which you will have no other option but to bring before His throne.)

Nehemiah 1:4-6

As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. And I said, "O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants..."

Nehemiah after many days of heaviness approached the One that all burdened leaders must approach, the One who knows more than anyone, the One who has made us to care and share in

the sufferings of Christ; the One who has called us to this ministry of grace, this ministry of suffering in order to know Christ in a much deeper sense. As Paul said, *“To know You in Your sufferings...”* What a bold and broken statement. Bold to ask for suffering, broken in the sense that his heart was in the best place because of his trials and hardships. Paul's own will was being replaced by the heart of Christ.

Nehemiah had a deep respect for God and His truth. He calls on His powerful character and His covenant promises. He humbly asks God to consider His prayers, the prayers that have been coming from his heart for many days. Maybe it has been in his heart and now he is finally able to utter it. Nehemiah is a man at the very core. Contemplating, internally struggling, and not sharing for days. His prayer is finally uttered, very intentional after much internal thought.

Nehemiah 1:6–10

“...confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father’s house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.’ They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand.”

Nehemiah is carrying the greatest burden, it is for Gods struggling disobedient people, his family Israel which has been a disgrace to the nations for many years. His life in the East is a result of Israel’s disobedience, and lack of godly leaders. He is stranger in a strange land, an alien, for his home is the promised land of Israel.

He first is blatantly honest! He confesses the sins of all Israel. He doesn't blame anyone but himself, his family and all Israel.

(A true compassionate pastor like Nehemiah does not resort to a criticizing spirit regarding his brethren, because anyone can criticize the faults that are within the church, it takes no mastermind to see the weaknesses in it, unbelievers do. The caring mature leader discerns the pain and sometimes sin, and allows the Spirit to open his eyes to the issues and to the biblical solutions to the problems; It takes supernatural amounts of the love and patience within the grace and truth of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the power of Gods Spirit to even approach dealing with or healing issues in Christ's body.)

"We" is the key word in his prayers. If only the church could better understand this identity truth. We like to individualize and blame others for the poor testimony of the church in this world, but we must first look within our own hearts and see that sin has any easy way of abiding in our own hearts.

Nehemiah goes on to remind the Lord of His promises, which included the scattering of Israel, but also the promise of restoration, even the regathering of Israelites from the farthest places. Zion is in the hearts of the true Israelites, and Nehemiah knows this. It is the special city on a hill set up for the Kings glory!

(The body of Christ, individuals possessing the Spirit of Christ, are to be that light in the world radiating the grace and truth of Christ. Jesus’ claimed that the love and unity we have with one another would be a testimony to His first coming.)

Nehemiah knew that they were Gods servants, redeemed by Gods power for greater purposes than what they were doing. They had become a scattered people, with only a small remnant seeming to care about the testimony of their covenant keeping God who redeemed them to be a special people.

(Nehemiah easily recognized the sin of disobedience to their covenant with God. Yet, our sin is may be much worse, for we have not sinned against the mediator Moses, we have sinned against Jesus, the mediator of the greatest covenant. John 17 is the deep heartfelt prayer of Christ for His own as He is approaching the cross for the sins of mankind, and for my filthy sinfulness, and there is little doubt that we have surely broken His heart on a daily basis by our pride, contention, disunity, lack of love and grace in His body. When one hand hurts we seem to smash it with a hammer with the other hand. O Lord, we again are in need of Your cleansing for our sin against You and Your people!)

Lastly, Nehemiah knew where he was at, and knew that he needed a miracle to happen in order to carry out Gods burden placed upon him! O Lord, the church needs a miracle, and that may come through persecution, the outside pressure we need because we ignore the inside biblical pleas of the Holy Spirit!