

Nehemiah 1:1-11

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, ² Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. ³They said to me, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.” ⁴When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. ⁵Then I said: “LORD, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s family, have committed against you. ⁷We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees, and laws you gave your servant Moses. ⁸“Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, ⁹but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.’” ¹⁰“They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. ¹¹Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.” I was cupbearer to the king.

The book of **Nehemiah** is the story of one man’s **52-day** journey to restore the walls of a nation.

Historical context:

- The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book.
- These two books focus on **3 main characters**
 - **3 Main Characters**
 - **Zerubbabel “Offspring of Babylon”**: Returns the exiles to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. Zerubbabel also rebuilds the temple.
 - **Ezra “God Protects”**: 60 years after Zerubbabel, Ezra arrives to teach the Torah and rebuild the community.
 - **Nehemiah “God comforts”**: Nehemiah arrives after Ezra with the purpose of re-building the walls of Jerusalem.

1. **Disregard for the values and ways of God leads to exile.**
2. **Rebuilding begins with the heart.**

1. Disregard for the values and ways of God “always” leads to exile.

a. **Vs. 4** They said to me, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.”

i. **Jesus sets captives free: Luke 4:18** “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.”

2. Rebuilding begins with the heart.

a. **Vs. 6** Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s family, have committed against you.

A rebuilding project that does not begin with a true heart’s confession is a disordered renovation and destined for destruction.

- God commissioned Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple before he led Nehemiah to rebuild the wall.
 - **Proverbs 4:23** Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.
- God commissioned Ezra to teach the Torah before he sent Nehemiah to secure the city.

- Proverbs 30:15 “Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.

“... Oh, where do we begin? The rubble or our sins?”
Pompeii by Bastille

Practical Takeaways:

- 1. Confess your sins.**
- 2. Ask God to renew your heart.**

Small Group Questions:

1. Nehemiah rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem in 52 days. What areas of your life could benefit from a 52-day rebuilding focus?
2. Why would God build the temple within the city before rebuilding the walls to protect it?
3. The sermon said, “Disregard for the ways and values of God leads to exile.” Can this be true today and what things might we be exiled from?
4. Proverbs 4:23 calls us to “protect our hearts above all else”. What do you think that means?
5. Why is confession so important to rebuilding the walls that guard our lives?