

New Eyes

Nehemiah 1:1-11

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The book of Nehemiah is largely a vision that God had given to a man to rebuild Jerusalem, the city of God. Jerusalem was a city where the name of God would dwell (1 Kings 12:21) and a witness to the nations as a light, pushing out the darkness (2 Sam. 7:8-16). It is a foretaste of the future eternal city of God, the kingdom of God. Similarly, the local church is called to be a city on a hill, burning as a light amidst the darkness and a foretaste of the future city of God that is to come.

After being conquered by the Babylonians, the nation of Israel was broken and in ruins. Her people were scattered and exiled. The city of Israel had lost the vision God had for it. The pandemic has surfaced the brokenness in our lives, and like the Israelites, we too have lost sight of the vision that God might have for us. We need to recover that vision and come out of this pandemic flourishing!

vv1-3 - While the temple was already rebuilt, much of the city was still broken.

Verse 3 gives us three pieces of important information:

#1 There was only a remnant left behind in the city

#2 The walls were broken

#3 The gates had been destroyed by fire

In Jerusalem, the three things needed for the thriving of the city were not there: population density (people), protection from enemies (walls) and security within the walls (gates).

Population density allowed for stronger community amongst the people. Amidst this pandemic, we need to find new ways to stay close! We need people around us to grow and be encouraged (Heb. 10:25).

Despite the city of Jerusalem being broken for over 140 years, Nehemiah responded to it with weeping and mourning (v4a). Even

amidst this pandemic, may the Holy Spirit grant us new eyes to see the brokenness we have in our lives and around us that we have become ignorant towards.

Nehemiah also responded in prayer (v4b). He knew that the rebuilding project was too big and beyond him, and this led him to pray persistently. *'Our problem with prayer is not the lack of faith. Our problem in prayer is the lack of patience.'* – John Hori.

Four things in Nehemiah's prayer before the big bold ask:

1) He begins by meditating on the character of God

v5 – Nehemiah lifted his eyes off the situation around him and gazed upon God to find hope. Even amidst the brokenness, he acknowledged God as king and ruler. Behind every brokenness and fracture, there is someone or a system in authority that made a promise but did not keep it. God is the only authority that keeps His promises! He is a covenant keeping God.

2) He comes to God empty-handed

vv6-7 – In the light of God's steadfast love and holiness, Nehemiah saw his sinfulness. He acknowledged that he was not entitled to anything from God.

3) He clings to God's promises

vv8-9 – Nehemiah remembered the promise of God to make His name dwell in the city. Like God's promise, his vision was for God's name to be made great again in Jerusalem.

4) He remembers his redemption

v10 – Nehemiah remembered God's deliverance of His people and believed whole-heartedly that He would and could do it again. God, who in Christ Jesus has saved us today, would also surely be able to bring us through the brokenness in this pandemic.

v11 – Nehemiah brought his bold request (success and favour) not just to the king of Persia, but also to the King of kings, Lord of lords, covenant keeping and steadfast loving God. Like Nehemiah, Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem. While Nehemiah sacrificed a lot to rebuild Jerusalem, Jesus went on to sacrifice His own life to give His people the new Jerusalem. It is the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross that enables us to have a new vision and hope, no matter the season!