

Nehemiah 1

Read Nehemiah 1:1-3: Nehemiah wrote this book. He was a cup bearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia, in the city of Susa, in 444 B.C. Nehemiah led the third wave of Jews back to re-settle in Jerusalem; after their 70-years of Babylonian captivity. The book of Ezra was written just before Nehemiah. Ezra recorded the first two waves of Jews who returned to rebuild the temple, and settle in Jerusalem. It is the story of a faithful people trying to rebuild a fallen country. My hope is that the United States does not have to be burned to the ground, in order to bring about a lasting repentance. Once judgement begins, we cannot control how long or how severe the lessons and disciplinary acts last. We can repent at any given moment; and re-invigorate our fellowship with God. That does not mean that the fallout and consequences of bad decision-making won't carry on for a long time.

As believers we can focus on the fallen culture that we live in. In reality; God is waiting on us to awaken from our slumber; and engage him in prayer.

⁴if 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 I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Jerusalem had been burnt down. There were families who wanted to restore their homeland. The task was huge; and they had no options to hire out the work. Rebuilding lives that have succumb to the sins of this world is an ugly and unpleasant work. Ask any recovering drug addict. In effect; they left their *defensive gates* open; and got invaded by cruel torturers. The Bible tells us to close our eye gates and ear gates when the devil's propaganda are knocking on the door.

"I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman. (Job 31:1)

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,² but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, (Psalm 1:1-2a)

The reconstruction of the wall did not happen overnight. The Bible calls us to be the wall repairmen. We are to go around and help repair broken lives.

"Is this not the fast which I choose, To loosen the bonds of wickedness, To undo the bands of the yoke, And to let the oppressed go free And break every yoke?

⁷ "Is it not to divide your bread ^[c]with the hungry And bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, to cover him; And not to hide yourself from your own flesh? ⁸ "Then your light will break out like the dawn, And your recovery will speedily spring forth; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.⁹ "Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; You will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you remove the yoke from your midst, The ^[d]pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, ¹⁰ And if you ^[e]give yourself to the hungry And satisfy the ^[f]desire of the afflicted, Then your light will rise in darkness And your gloom will become like midday.¹¹ "And the LORD will continually guide you, And satisfy your ^[g]desire in scorched places, And give strength to your bones; And you will be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not ^[h]fail. "Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; You will raise up the age-old foundations; And you will be called the repairer of the breach, The restorer of the ^[i]streets in which to dwell. (Isaiah 58:6-12)

A cities walls are its resistance to harmful outside influences. Being too relaxed with what we listen to and watch on TV; is like leaving a gate open in a city; and allowing harmful thoughts inside. It weakens us. Jerusalem had become like a prostitute who not only took on all comers; but she invited them for free.

"Look up to the barren heights and see. Is there any place where you have not been ravished? By the roadside you sat waiting for lovers, sat like a nomad in the desert. You have defiled the land with your prostitution and wickedness. ³ Therefore the showers have been withheld, and no spring rains have fallen.

Yet you have the brazen look of a prostitute; you refuse to blush with shame.

⁴ Have you not just called to me: 'My Father, my friend from my youth, ⁵ will you always be angry? Will your wrath continue forever?' This is how you talk, but you do all the evil you can." (Jeremiah 3:2-5)

Alcohol decreases our resolve to do what is right. Do you have set boundaries for what you allow your eyes and ears to take in?

Read Nehemiah 1:4-11: The first phase of repairing a broken life is repentance. We need an honest and sober assessment of ourself. We won't be motivated to let God rebuild ur lives if we do not see the mess and destruction. We have to identify the problem in ourselves; and be honest about it. We need to identify the tumor; and get it cut out. Prayer is the only way to take on such a monumental task of

rebuilding a city wall or a broken life. God kept his promise. He told them what sins they would commit; and what he would do about it.

Jerusalem is symbolic of the center of spiritual activity; and Babylon is the symbol of demonic activity. The spiritual homeland for Israel had been wiped out. The children of Israel had succumbed to the demonic influences behind the idols. We cannot serve two masters. We will neglect one of them.

"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. (Matthew 6:24)

What do you do when you have discovered that the center of your spiritual life is in disrepair? Does it make you weep; and desire to rebuild it? What do you do about it? Nehemiah is about the importance of re-establishing boundaries from the alluring outside influences that seek to destroy us.