



Restore - Nehemiah 1

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 1 Peter 5:10

Background and Context of Nehemiah

Nehemiah was one of the Jewish exiles in Babylon in 445 BC who had a passionate desire to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, the Holy city that housed the temple of God. 141 years before (586 BC) it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and then he captured the people of God and took them to Babylon for slave labour.

Now the exile was over. The Jewish people in exile had grown to about 2 million, but approximately only about 48,000 of them returned to Jerusalem to rebuild their nation. It was discouraging for them to observe how few people seemed to care about the health and wellbeing of the people of God as they carried out God's mission in that area.

Jerusalem had been burned and ravaged and its three-kilometer-long wall was completely collapsed. After 141 years, you can imagine the grass and shrubs that had grown up amidst the rubble of the city. Imagine the non-Jewish people who were claiming ownership of the area, now that the Jewish people had been exiled. The returning Jews had no protection to resume their spiritual practices, as enemies were continually attacking and disrupting the way of life they were wanting to restore. They would build a bit, and then enemies would come and tear it down again. They would try to build a bit more, but then their enemies would tear it all down again. It must have felt like they were taking one step forward and two steps back.

No doubt the Jewish people were very discouraged. It probably felt like an impossible task and that there would be no way for the people of God to see their city, temple and way of life restored to its former glory.

But God had another plan. Like he raised up Daniel for such a time, so he raised up a man called Nehemiah to give leadership, and rally the people of God to accomplish an incredible feat. After extensive planning the whole project was completed in 52 days, an incredible achievement and testimony to God's goodness. And from that point on, the people of God were able to restore their practices of faith and carry on the work of God in their part of the world. It is an incredible story of restoration.

Nehemiah 1

Defining Reality

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. ³ 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." ⁴ When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah's Prayer - _____

⁵ Then 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, 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.

Nehemiah's Prayer - _____

I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. ⁷ We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

Nehemiah's Prayer - _____

⁸ "Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, ⁹ but 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.

Nehemiah's Prayer - _____

¹¹ Lord, 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.

Call to Action!

Every day this week, ask God to open your eyes to the brokenness in your family, our church and our community and envision the restoration you think he would desire. Then, toward the end of the week, write out a prayer, like Nehemiah's, following the ACTS format. Then, if you are really courageous, share your prayer with a trusted friend or one of the Campus pastors.