

What We Must Do When the Walls are Down

Nehemiah 1:1-4 NASB 2020

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.

Now it happened in the month Chislev, *in* the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capitol, that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them about the Jews who had escaped and had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem. And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and disgrace, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates have been burned with fire.”

Now when I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Intro

The Historical Context

Nehemiah arrived in the Persian province of Judea in around 445 B.C. This was approximately 142 years after the

seige of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and 71 years after the completion of the new temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel and the High Priest Joshua. Around 14 years prior to the arrival of Nehemiah, Ezra had arrived and made many good reforms but the people had not kept their spiritual or national fervor alive.

Our Present Context

The reason why this sermon series is needed is that we today are in dire straits, more than most Christians seem to realize. Our culture is in shambles and it won't do for us to blame others, or the political process, or the secularization of others. The church is supposed to be the preserving factor in a culture and with so many supposed Christians present here, it is fair to ask how things have gone as they have with us being here.

Truth

I. The Walls are Down

In Nehemiah's days, the results of the fall of the Davidic kingdom ran rampant. In our days, the results of the fall of Christendom run rampant.

Our land is dominated by sexual sin, confusion, rampant brokenness, and a culture of death.

John MacArthur has truthfully spoken, that when God passes judgement on a culture, the first step is generally a sexual revolution.

On top of all of this, much of the church has either become complicit or outright participatory in the wickedness which

abounds. We have left our post as the Ekklesia of Jesus, we have not stood strong against the tide of wickedness rising. The walls are down, and distress and disgrace are abounding.

What are some ways in which the Jewish remnant was in distress?

- With their walls down, they were subject to attacks from wild animals and raiders.
- They were subject to foreign powers who were more interested in keeping them down than seeing them thrive.
- They were under great economic pressure because of their lack of security.
- Their city had become a slum and their culture was in shambles.

What are some ways people around us are in distress?

- Financial distress
- The breakdown of families
- The breakdown of relationships and communities
- Unjust leadership
- Fear over disease and pestilence
- Without a Biblically centered worldview, people are wandering their own destruction at an alarming rate.

What are some ways in which the Jewish remnant was in disgrace?

- They had forsaken the laws of God and embraced a worldly lifestyle.
- They had embraced a sort of sexual revolution by marrying foreign women who did not fear the Lord and

were influencing them towards worldliness.

- They were abusive to one another, even enslaving and underpaying their fellow Jews.
- The nobles were taking advantage of their fellow Jews rather than using their resources to advantage them.

What are some ways people around us are in disgrace (literally a state of dishonor or shame)?

- We are in disgrace in that we have been complicit and perhaps even participants in the murder of countless unborn children.
- We are in disgrace in that we have been complicit with and even participated in the sexual revolution.
- We are in disgrace in that we have become largely lazy with regards to the practice of our Christian faith both privately and in public spaces.

Many of God's people in our days are living in distress and disgrace.

- Christendom has fallen and this has left mass confusion in its wake.
- Many in the church are confused, lacking knowledge of the scriptures and the teaching of our historic faith.
- The church has been compromised with a watered down and even blatantly false gospel.
- “Even in the home, the heart and hearth of society, a sense of duty has been replaced by a sense of entitlement, a sense that we have a right to what we want, even if it means violating standards of proper behavior. Adults who once gave firm and unequivocal moral direction---parents,

teachers, even pastors---have been indoctrinated with the idea that the way to ensure healthy children is not to tell them what's right and wrong but to let them discover their own values. As a result, many Americans have lost even the vocabulary of moral accountability. Sin and moral responsibility have become alien concepts.” -Chuck Colson (How Now Shall We Live?)

II. We must rise up

Until we inherit the problems we face, we cannot begin to address them.

We must mourn over sin and brokenness like Nehemiah.

Matthew 5:4 NASB 2020

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

a. He wasn't angry with the people so much as he was grieved over their plight.

i. He was moved by a holy compassion for sinful and broken people who have no shepherd to guide them.

b. When was the last time you wept over the sin and suffering of others?

c. When was the last time you were moved to grief over your own sin?

We must fast in order to refocus our hearts upon the Lord.

1. He fasted out of concern for the people and a desire to hear God for a solution.

a. He already knew that God cares for His people and surely Nehemiah's concern came out of an intimate understanding of God's heart.

2. In fasting, we are reminded that we are dependent upon outside sources to sustain us physically. How much more is this true for us spiritually?

3. Fasting can help us cut through the fat of all of the things which distract us to get to the meat of what God is actually saying to us.

We must earnestly pray, seeking the Lord's direction, favor, and empowering with great ferocity.

1. Nehemiah prayed because He knew that only God could remedy the situation.

a. The revival, renewal, grace, and strength required to restore the kingdom could only come supernaturally and not by the mere effort of man.

2. He prayed specifically.

a. Rather than blaming others, Nehemiah took personal responsibility for the sin and state of his nation.

3. In prayer, we acknowledge that we depend on God for everything and that we need Him to intervene if anything is to change in us or our world.

a. "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face..."

i. Prayer is a sign of humility and seeking the Lord and His will over our own.

Matthew 6:33 NASB 2020

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you.

4. In prayer we join God in the work of ruling and reigning with Him, bringing His kingdom power to bear on this

world.

Gospel Application

We must recognize that Christians in America have largely abandoned our post as ambassadors for the Kingdom of God.

Nehemiah became a rebuilder because of his zeal for God's glory, for God's people, and because he was unwilling to be okay with the status quo.

Do we want to see our broken culture restored? If we really want it, we cannot merely sit around and wait for change. We can't rely on the political processes, or on spiritual heavy hitters.

When everyday, normal, and average Joe Christians get serious about our faith... about the pursuit of God and holiness in our own lives... that is what shakes a decaying culture. It is a church on fire with zeal for the holiness of God and for the restoration of souls which are busted up by sin which has the potential to turn the tide of the rot.

I believe that the greatest challenge we face today isn't a secularized Western culture. The greatest challenge we face is a slothful and lazy church which has lost its passion for Christ, trading His mission and message for a ghetto of supposed comfort rather than dying to ourselves in order to honor Christ and engage a dying world with gospel truth.

We must get back to a place at which God's glory is our

greatest desire. When Christ is truly our center, we cannot be stopped because we will be set ablaze with power from on high.

Challenge

“Here we play our part in the double ministry of Christ. As kings, we rule with Him. As priests, we share His ministry of prayer and intercession. We must never seek to separate these two functions from each other. If we would rule as kings, we must serve as priests. The practice of our priestly ministry is the key to the exercise of our kingly authority. It is through prayer and intercession that we administer the authority that is ours in the name of Jesus.” -Derek Prince