

Broken!

By Stephen Elmer

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Nehemiah 1:4

Preached on: Sunday, November 23, 2008

Grace Baptist Church of Mohawk

4245 North 200 West

Greenfield, Indiana 46140

Website: www.growatgrace.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/wordofgrace

All right! Nehemiah chapter one. We are going to get back here into Nehemiah and we just started two weeks ago and would like to get back into it here tonight.

We are only going to cover one verse, but I think it is an important verse because it really sets the ground work for everything that the Lord does in Nehemiah and through Nehemiah.

According to the book of Ecclesiastes there is a time for everything. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says:

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up.¹

That is the focus of our attention tonight and, really, throughout the series of Nehemiah is focusing on a time to build up. When something is broken down there comes a time to build.

In the book of Nehemiah there were some things that were broken. There were the walls of Jerusalem that were broken and then also it was the people in Jerusalem and in Judah that were broken spiritually, emotionally, physically they were broken. And it affected Nehemiah.

As his brother Hanani told him of their condition, Nehemiah wanted to know more. As we looked at two weeks ago—by way of review—he considered the broken condition of the people as well as the place of the fathers, the place of Jerusalem. He was thinking about it. He was concerned about it and the time and the place that he was in, Shushan the palace, it all pointed to the reasons why they were in a broken condition. It was because they had sinned against God.

\
You remember on the back of our message guide two weeks ago there was a map of that region and if you remember how far it was from the city of Shushan which is now in Iran

¹ Ecclesiastes 3:1-3

all the way to Jerusalem it was some 1300 miles going that way by the trade route and it would take up to four months to get there. In fact, in Ezra's time Ezra took four months to get from Susa all the way up the Euphrates Valley down to Jerusalem in order to visit the temple and try to fix and rebuild the temple.

And so as Nehemiah is there in Susa reflecting on the news of his brother, on the news of those messengers, he is realizing: There is a reason why we are here. It was because of the sin of this people against God. And so he considered what was going on at that time.

He was also concerned for the broken condition. He saw that God was giving him personally an opportunity to do something about it. We are not sure exactly the situation, where or why Hanani and his brother and those other messengers came to Nehemiah, but God put in Nehemiah's lap an opportunity saying, "Ok, Nehemiah, this is the condition of my people. This is the condition of my place. Now what are you going to do about it?"

And that is the case of each of us here tonight. God has brought us to a place where we see the condition of our families, of our church and of our own personal walk with God and he says, "This is the broken condition. Are you going to be concerned enough to see that I am giving you an opportunity to deal with it and get it right."

Every time, every time that we come into these doors, come into this place, have the Word of God opened, we are realizing an opportunity that God has given us to build, to rebuild that which is broken. And the question is: Are we going to do something with this opportunity? He considered their condition. He was concerned for their condition and then he came up with an honest assessment of the broken condition. We learned this in verse three.

He recognized that there were some real problems in Judah and in Jerusalem, some real problems. They were in great affliction and reproach it says in verse three and "the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire."²

Real problems, but he also recognized if he wanted to do something about it, there were going to be some real obstacles for him, Nehemiah to get to Jerusalem and Judah to even help out and try to do this rebuilding process.

But he also realized—as we see in verse four, which will be our text tonight—that something else had to take place before Nehemiah could actually be used by God in the process of rebuilding this city and this people.

Now this is not a natural reaction. Most of us, when we hear about something broken or we see something that is broken, what do we do? We go and we fix it or we try to fix it or we do something about it to try to get that problem fixed. And unless you are completely lazy, our first inclination is to fix that which is broken.

² Nehemiah 1:3

Now that's just fine with a car or a truck. That is fine with something in the house. That is fine with a dryer or a washing machine. Our first reaction ought to be to get up and do something about it, but not when it comes to broken hearts, broken lives, broken souls.

Again, it is a natural reaction to do something about something that is broken, but now when it comes to something as serious and as important as the condition of a person's life and soul.

In Nehemiah the broken walls of Jerusalem and the broken people of Judah resulted in a broken heart, in a broken heart. Nehemiah's heart was broken. The news that he had heard affected him greatly and so through Nehemiah we see what the very first reaction ought to be when we hear about the broken condition of someone's soul, including ours, or the broken condition of a family or the broken condition of a church. The response is, the very first reaction ought to be is that we need to be broken.

Look at verse four. It says, "And it came to pass..."³ Nehemiah is speaking here. "And it came to pass, when I heard these words..."⁴ the words spoken by his brother Hanani and those messengers that came with him from Jerusalem and told him about the condition of the people and the condition of the city and the walls, "When I heard these words..."⁵ what was his first reaction? "That I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven."⁶

His reaction all started when he first heard these words, the words spoken by his brother on the condition of his people. But with the hearing that he did not let sit rest. It started in the hearing and then it went to the head and he thought about it. He thought, "What is going on? Why are we in this broken condition?"

And he realized it was because of sin. God had warned them over and over and over again through the prophets, through the law, warning them. "If you disobey me, you will be punished. You will go into captivity, far, far away from home." And do you know what else? "You will be judged, but I will still be gracious to you."

It went into his head, but then, finally—and this was the first reaction that ought to take place when we hear and recognize that something is broken spiritually—it ought to go to our hearts. And it did for Nehemiah. It went from the hearing to the head to the heart and the news that he heard broke his heart.

Nehemiah knew that he had to do something. He knew that he had to do something in a matter so great, but not just anything would do. He wasn't just going to jump up, get on the first caravan out of Shushan to go to Jerusalem and see what he could do. We would do that if we broke something in our car or broke something in our house. But he

³ Nehemiah 1:4

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

realized that a matter of that importance, required a deeper reaction because it required a matter of the heart.

The broken walls of Jerusalem and the broken people of Judah resulted in a broken heart in Nehemiah and we see his reaction in verse four. The very first thing we see is that in brokenness he sat down.

“And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down.”⁷

If you have ever read through the book of Nehemiah you realize that Nehemiah was a man of action, a man of activity. Nehemiah was not someone that was known for sitting down on the job and being lazy. If he was lazy, if he was known for that he would have never been promoted to be the cup bearer for the king of Persia which was the greatest empire at that time and he would have had that responsibility if he was not a man of diligence and character.

But when he heard the news from his brother Hanani, instead of doing what he normally would have done, getting up and getting busy, what did he do? He sat down.

Why did he sit down? It is because he was broken. The broken walls of Jerusalem and the broken people of Judah broke the very heart of Nehemiah and he sat down. And while sitting down he sought the only one who could rebuild his broken heart. He sought the only one who could rebuild those broken walls and he sought the only one who could rebuild the broken people.

Nehemiah understood while he sitting there opening his heart to God, he understood what it says in Psalms 46:10, “Be still, and know that I am God.”⁸ And then God adds, “I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”⁹

What is the very first reaction to us when something is broken? Usually we need to get up and do something about a broken dryer or a broken car. But what about a broken soul and a broken spirit broken by sin? What is our first reaction? Does it break our heart? We ought to realize it breaks God’s heart.

Does sin break our heart like it breaks God’s heart? Does my sin break my heart? Does your sin break your heart like it broke Nehemiah’s heart?

Psalm 27:13 and 14 says:

I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.¹⁰

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Psalm 46:10

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Psalm 27:13-14

Is there a time in your life, perhaps tonight, after going through a week's worth of meetings where we heard about areas in our life that need to be more fully surrendered to God? Have you spent some time this week to just sit down and to think about what is breaking the heart of God, to think about what is broken in your life? Like we mentioned this morning, what is stopped up that God needs to come and take out so that he can fill us with his goodness and his law? In brokenness Nehemiah sat down and so must we. That ought to be our first reaction when we realize that something is broken in our heart, in our family and in our church.

When was the last time we sat down like Nehemiah did in a broken condition?

As we go on to verse four we see the extra part of this reaction was that in brokenness he also wept.

“And it came to pass, when I heard these words,” Nehemiah says, “that I sat down and wept.”¹¹ Again, Nehemiah was not a man prone to weeping. He was a man of power and authority. He was a passionate man, an energetic man, a powerful man, but he was a man. We probably think of him as a manly man. But when it came to something so deep and so broken, he was not afraid and he was not ashamed to express his emotions and his sorrow especially with a deepness of sin.

What does it say he did? He wept. He cried. Why did he weep? Why did he cry? Because his heart was broken. His heart was broken over his people. His heart was broken for their sin and he was broken in compassion for their condition, the condition of his broken people, the condition of his broken city. Why? Because he loved them. He longed for them and that condition of sin broke his heart and so he cried and so he wept.

He was also broken in concern for the cause of that broken condition. You see, as you remember, Nehemiah knew why they were in captivity in Shushan, 1400 miles away from Judah. It was because of sin. Nehemiah knew why they were in exile far, far away from home. And more than likely Nehemiah was never born or raised or even had seen Jerusalem at this time. He was probably born and raised some where in Babylonia and he probably had never even seen those walls. But he was concerned because they were in exile because of their sin and it broke his heart. He knew why they were broken down. It was because they had failed to remember their God and so the cause of their condition broke his heart and he wept.

Now why are we not broken over the conditions that we see much like the conditions that Nehemiah saw, the conditions of our country? Why don't we weep over what we see in the sin of our country, the sin that we see and hear about in the news, the sin that we see and hear about on the internet, the sin that we see and hear about in the movie theater, the sin that we see and hear in the daily reporter?

¹¹ Nehemiah 1:4

I was telling my wife I read this article online not too long ago just this week about a man who committed suicide while people watched on over the internet. Some 1500 people were online there and he had a webcam and he said, "I am going to do it." He was describing how many pills he was going to take and how he was going to take his life and people were like, "No, you are not kidding. You are not going to do that."

A couple of people said< "Go on with it already."

So while 1500 people are watching on this internet he takes those pills and he lays down on the bed and after a few hours people started to think, "Maybe he was serious this time."

So somehow they were able to find out where lived and they called the police and the police go and you see the police coming in and they tried to stir him. He was already dead. And then they turn off the web cam.

Why does that not break our hearts? It shocks us. But why doesn't it break our heart? Are we past feeling anymore as Christians? Are we past the feeling? Do we think that it is... it is a shameful thing to cry and to show the emotions that God has given to us? Why aren't we broken over the conditions in our church?

It was good this week to see how many people came. But, once again, here we are, same group. Doesn't that break our heart? Does it bring us to a point of weeping over our sin and over the apathy and over the lack of care and interest in the things of the Lord? Does I bring us to a point of crying and weeping? Or have we lost any feeling?

Are we broken over the conditions in our family? Why is our family so broken? It is because of sin. Has it affected us? Has it impacted us? What about our own hearts? Why don't we weep anymore? Why can't we weep?

Some will say it is a sign of weakness.

Good. We need to show our weakness before God and that is exactly what Nehemiah, the great, strong, cup bearer to the king of Shushan... what was he doing? He was weeping? Why? Because he had a broken heart. He was not afraid to show his weakness because when we are weak who is strong? God is strong. It is good to show weakness because God is stronger than our weakness.

Some will say, "Well, it is a sign of emotionalism. We don't want any emotionalism in our churches."

Don't we? It is good to cry. It is good to weep. It is good to show vigor and vitality in life.

We are concerned when a baby is born and there is no crying, there is no feistiness, there is no fight in that child. I remember when Paige was born the doctor was bringing her

out, delivering her and... and the doctor kind of heart a little pant or a little whimper and I heard the doctor say, "We need a little bit more than that." He wanted her to bawl. He wanted her to weep and God wants the same out of our own hearts. He wants to see us sitting down and weeping over the condition of our life and our family and our church and our country. And it is not bad to show a little emotionalism when it shows a heart, a sincere heart that is soft to God.

Why is it that we couldn't come forward this week? Is it because we are afraid, because we are ashamed?

"Well, I can make that decision," you might think.

Well, sure you can. But it shows a little humility that we need, right?

Why can't we feel anymore? Are we past that?

"Well, I cried over my sin when I got saved, but now, you know, it just kind of hangs with me."

Some will say, "Well, it is a sign of embarrassment and shame."

Good. We need to be ashamed over sin. We need to be ashamed over our sin and our family's sin. And we need to show God a heart that is broken. When is the last time we wept? When was the last time you wept over your own sin and your own frailty?

You know, you may not do all the sins that are egregious to the Lord and egregious to a church, but when was the last time you actually went before God and say, "God, I so desire to be more like you and I know I haven't been doing this and I know I haven't been doing this. I know I have been having victory here, but I am so sinful. Be merciful to me a sinner because of my own nature. God, I am weak. God I am lowly. God I am like a worm. I less than nothing. Apart from your goodness and your grace, apart from what Jesus Christ has done for me, I need you every day."

And yet what do we do? Even though we don't struggle with this sin and this temptation we just go on our merry way thinking we have got it all licked, we have got it all covered. And we fail to remember how weak we really are. We need to weep.

Are we past feeling? Listen to what Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 9:1. He said, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"¹²

Jeremiah wasn't ashamed or afraid to show emotion over the condition of his people. And Nehemiah also was not ashamed. Neither must we.

¹² Jeremiah 9:1

Now Nehemiah also was not the last person in the Bible to grieve and weep over the condition, the broken condition of Jerusalem. Remember Jesus? Matthew 23:37 Jesus says as he is standing there looking over Jerusalem, he wailed, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”¹³

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane wept with great drops of blood sweat and tears. And are we beyond any feeling over sin and brokenness in our own heart? Nehemiah was in good company with Jesus Christ and so must we be. In brokenness we need to weep. But also the other part of his reaction of verse four was in brokenness he mourned.

“And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days.”¹⁴

To mourn simply is to express your grief. You can be grieving. If you have ever been recently to a showing or been to a funeral you know that people are grieving because of the death of a loved one or a friend, someone that they were acquainted with. And they were in deep, deep grief. Mourning is the expression of that grief.

It is something that can be seen. It is something that can be heard and it is something that can be felt by yourself and even by others.

If you have ever seen on TV one of those funeral processions in the Middle East, one of those Muslim funeral processions, they don't call the hearse and then put the casket in the hearse and then have a line of cars driving to the funeral parlor. What do they do? They pick up the casket and the million people or whoever are there are carrying the casket through the crowd and you see and you hear and you can even through the TV feel the grief and the mourning and the lamentation of what is going on because they loved this person who was alive but is now dead.

That is exactly what Nehemiah was doing. He was mourning for the condition of his people and it was not something that was just held in close to his chest. It was even seen by the king of Persia himself.

Look at chapter two verse one and two. It says, “And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king...”¹⁵ Remember this was the most powerful empire in the world at that time, “that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king.”¹⁶ He was the cupbearer. “Now,” he says, “I had not been beforetime sad in his presence.”¹⁷

¹³ Matthew 23:37

¹⁴ Nehemiah 1:4

¹⁵ Nehemiah 2:1

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Nehemiah 2:1-2

As I was doing a little preparation in reading books about Nehemiah the king of Persia was a king that basically lived a sequestered and cloistered life. No one was to go into the presence of the king of Persia with a sound countenance because his life was always to be happy and joyful and if you showed a sad countenance in front of him because he was to be like a God to you it was basically slapping him in the face and saying, “You are not my joy.” And he could have killed Nehemiah just for seeing this.

But we see a glimpse of the relationship between the king, that pagan, heathen king and this godly man Nehemiah because in verse two, “Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. [And] Then,” Nehemiah says, “I was very sore afraid.”¹⁸

Nehemiah’s mourning, even before the king of Persia, the most powerful man, the most powerful ruler at that time, was an expression of a tender, broken heart. Why did he mourn? Because he was broken. He was broken over the condition of his people and the condition of his city and the condition of his own sin and relationship with God. He was broken and so he mourned. And this expression of his broken heart lasted, it says here in verse four, “certain days.”

It wasn’t just one time at the altar and he was up and happy. No, it lasted a long time. Why? Because it took him time to consider his condition and then it also took time for him to take his cause before the Lord.

It ought to take us time to consider our own condition. And then it also ought to take time for us to take that cause to the Lord. We live in such a fast paced society. We don’t take the time to see the beauty in this world very often. We just drive by. We don’t take the time to even take what was given to us this Sunday morning to meditate on it throughout the week and to help it prepare us for today. And we don’t take the time that was necessary to assess our own walk and relationship with God and then deal with it biblically before God in a private time with him.

Whatever happened to the song, “Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer that calls me from a world of care”?

Can we sing that with a straight face or without a convicted heart?

Sweet hour of prayer? That is a long time. Yes, it takes time. And sometimes we need to take the time.

Now the time isn’t for the benefit of God, ok? God knows our needs even before we ask it. Who is the time for? You know if you rush through things spiritually who are you gypping? God? No. You are gypping yourself. Why? Because you need the time to consider your condition and then to pour out your heart before the Lord. This time that you are taking is for you and for the Lord. It is what benefits you. And the less time we don’t gyp God...

¹⁸ Nehemiah 2:2

Have you ever went through a time and a season of not praying and then you get before God and you say, “God, I am sorry.” I have done that. “God, I am sorry that I haven’t spent more time with you in prayer.”

You know, it isn’t a serious confession, but we were gypping ourselves. We are the one that needs that time with God. We are the one that needs to take that time to mourn.

What does Jesus say in the beatitudes? “Blessed are they that mourn.”¹⁹ Do we mourn and take the time to consider our cause and then to take that cause to the Lord? If we are truly broken over sin and over the conditions of the things that we see that are sinful, we will mourn and we will take the time that we need to pour out the contents of our broken hearts to the Lord.

If you remember the story of the woman with the alabaster box filled with perfume and ointment and she went up to Jesus and what did she do? She broke that alabaster box and she spilled out the ointment for the Lord. That is what he wants us to do. But what must first happen? Our hearts must be broken. Our hearts must be broken. That is that sincere heart that we were talking about this morning.

If you go to the Lord in prayer with just a list and you are going through the list and there is no sincerity, there is no brokenness, you haven’t poured out anything to the Lord.

We need to break our hearts and we need to say, “God, this is the condition and the concerns that I have and spend the time necessary to mourn,” and to pour out the contents of our broken heart to him. In brokenness we need to mourn.

Another aspect of his reaction was that in brokenness he also fasted. Verse four again. “And it came to pass, when I heard these words,”²⁰ the condition of his people, the condition of the place in Jerusalem, “that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted.”²¹

Now Nehemiah was a very busy man. He was probably more busy than any of us are. He was a trusted official in the king’s palace. He was expected to do certain things and he was expected to be certain places and he knew that in order for him to take the time that he needed alone with God something was going to have to change. And that thing that was going to have to change was his schedule. But he could not neglect the responsibility that he had around the palace and to the king. So what did he change about his schedule? Instead of stopping his responsibilities, he stopped eating. He stopped eating so that he could take the time that he would normally spend eating at a meal and spend that time pouring out the contents of his broken heart to the Lord.

¹⁹ See Mathew 5:4

²⁰ Nehemiah 1:4

²¹ Ibid.

Now that is an example to follow. What is it in our life when something happens in our relationship with God, do we take away from?

I don't want to take away from that football game. I don't want to take away from that family time. I don't want to take away from this, that or the other, all good things. But I certainly don't want to take away from the time of eating. I mean that is the most important thing of the day. Breakfast, the most important meal of the day, three squares a day is very important to us.

If it is more important for us to eat than it is to pour out our hearts to God then we are not broken. And do you know what? God will never use us to rebuild anything, nothing.

We need to have a broken heart.

Why did he fast? Because he was broken.

Many times this is what it will take. Fasting is throughout the passages of Scripture. Throughout the Bible we see fasting and praying, fasting and praying, fasting and praying. Fasting shows a broken heart.

Your need and my need to pour out a broken heart to God is important and necessary. The time that we need to pour out our heart to God is important and necessary even more important and even more necessary than food.

In fact, turn over with me to book of Job, Job chapter 23.

If the time that we need with God is important than feeding our flesh, it shows who is our priority.

Now Job, here in Job we, it shows us that communion with God was his priority. It says in Job 23: 12, "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."²²

He understood fasting and the point of it. He understood that having a communion time with God was more important than even eating his necessary food. And when you are truly broken and when I am truly broken we will deny ourselves, we will deny our flesh so that we can spend time with God, the time that we need with him.

And that comes from a heart of brokenness in which we will fast.

But also another aspect of this reaction was that in brokenness Nehemiah prayed. Now everything else that we have read in verse four leads up to this. He says, again, "And it came to pass, when I heard these words,"²³ from his brother and those other messengers that traveled 1400 miles in order to tell him what was going on there in Jerusalem and to

²² Job 12:23

²³ Nehemiah 1:4

the people, it says, “that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.”²⁴

Why did Nehemiah pray? It is because he was broken. He was broken for his people. He was broken for his city. He was broken for the walls of Jerusalem and he was broken in his own heart and Nehemiah knew that the God of heaven in verse four was the only answer. God, the God of heaven was the only answer to the broken walls of Jerusalem. God, the God of heaven was the only answer to the broken people of Judah. And God, the God of heaven, was the only answer for his broken heart.

That is why he didn't just up on the next caravan out to Jerusalem to see what he could do. A lot of us would have done that. I think a lot of us wouldn't have even thought about it. We are just not even thinking twice. They need help. But we fail to realize that this is an opportunity for us to be broken before God. Why? Because we need to be rebuilt first.

Do you realize that? I need to be rebuilt before God can use me to rebuild someone else. It talks about, in the New Testament how we ought to be there for one another to build each other up and to help one another go through the difficulties and even the temptations of life. But he says, “Take heed to thyself lest you are also tempted.”²⁵

You need to be rebuilt after being broken before God first and then you are in a position to be used by him to rebuild the church that you are in, the family that you are in and the workplace that you are in. Why? Because we need to be broken and used for him.

Well, who is this prayer directed to? The God of heaven. The God of heaven. God was everywhere and could see everything. That is something that Nehemiah recognized. He is the God of heaven. And because he is in heaven he looks down on earth. He is in control of the things on earth. He knows everything that is going on and so whether it was in Shushan the palace or in Jerusalem, God saw everything and God cared and it was God who could rebuild. And that is why his prayer was directed to God, the God of heaven.

This is what ultimately ought to take place.

When we hear of the broken condition of ourselves, of our family, of our church, of another family, we ought to sit down. We ought to weep. We ought to mourn certain days. We ought to fast. But ultimately it all ought to lead to praying before the God of heaven who sees all and who can be there for all and can do all to rebuild.

We also see from this passage that prayer was a priority for Nehemiah. Prayer was a priority. This was more important to him than just getting up first thing and heading to Jerusalem. Prayer was a priority. It ought to be for us as well like Raymond Brown who wrote a commentary on Nehemiah states, “Prayer, is the most eloquent expression of our priorities. Prayer is the most eloquent expression of our priorities.” That is so true. If

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ See Galatians 6:1

you don't pray it shows where your priorities are. And when you do pray what you pray about shows where your priorities are.

Is prayer a priority for you? If you are broken you will pray. If you are not broken you won't pray and God won't use you to rebuild because he needs to see you and put you in a place where you need to be rebuilt.

Now we are going to look at Nehemiah's prayer next week. The question I want us to think about again is: Are we ready to rebuild? Until we are broken we are in no position to rebuild. We need to be broken. I need to be rebroken. Until God rebuilds us from the inside out then and only then can we be used by him to rebuild his church.

Psalm 34:18 is a verse that has become a favorite of mine because it talks about what God does to someone who is broken. "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart"²⁶ I can just hear that verse and see that verse ringing in the heart and mind of Nehemiah as he had a broken heart.

And with that broken heart he sat down, he wept, he mourned, he fasted and he prayed. And then I am sure the Holy Spirit moved in his heart and said, "Nehemiah, the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart and he saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."²⁷

Are we broken? Have we been? Are we still?

You know, God is still in a rebuilding process. And sometimes there may have been something built up in our life that needs to be torn down again because it is wrong, because we have the wrong ideas or we had the wrong interpretation or because we were doing it with a wrong priority or because we are doing it with pride.

There are things in our life that need to be broken down and we need to be broken over it. And then we need to, in brokenness like Nehemiah sit down and patiently wait on the Lord. We need to weep over it and truly weep. We need to mourn and express that. We need to fast and pray before the God of heaven who sees all and who cares about all and who is the only one who can rebuild it all.

Are we broken? And then if we are broken are we praying? Because nothing will fill a broken heart except for God. And the only way that we can take this broken heart and have it filled and fixed by God is to pray. This ought to be our first reaction. This was Nehemiah's first reaction.

Are we broken? And then do we pray?

Remember, prayer is the most eloquent expression of our priorities. Before we pray and before we truly pray we must be broken.

²⁶ Psalm 34:18

²⁷ See Psalm 34:18

Tonight as we go to prayer let's think about it. Are we broken before God? When was the last time we sat down and wept and mourned and fasted and prayed before God over our sins and over our weakness and our frailties and our just uselessness for God? When was the last time we were like Nehemiah when it comes to the conditions of our country and of our church and of our families?

He says, "I am near the person who has a broken heart. Not only that I will raise you up and I will exalt myself in your family. I will exalt myself in your church. I will exalt myself even in your nation."

Do we have a broken heart?