

Nehemiah 1 - “Godly Sorrow”

- A. There is a difference between being sad & having a deep sorrow like that of Nehemiah.
 - 1. Nehemiah described his deep sorrow in **v4**: **“I sat down & wept & mourned for days”**
 - 2. The Hebrew word for **“mourned”** can also be translated as “grieved”
- B. Nehemiah identified himself at the end of the chapter as **“the cupbearer to the king.”**
 - 1. **Neh 2:1** identifies the king as Artaxerxes. This was Artaxerxes the 1st who reigned over a massive Persian empire from 465-424 B.C.
 - 2. As the cupbearer of King Artaxerxes I meant that he was trusted official.
 - a. He served in the Persian citadel or capitol in Susa which is in modern-day Iran.
 - b. Even though Nehemiah had a place of trust & honor before the most powerful man in the world, he was there because of sin of God’s chosen people which brought them into pagan captivity in the first place.

God calls you to imitate Nehemiah’s Godly sorrow.	I. SORROW OVER THE DISTRESS OF GOD’S KINGDOM II. SORROW OVER SIN & HOW TO CONFESS IT
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I. SORROW OVER THE DISTRESS OF GOD’S KINGDOM- Men came from Jerusalem & give Nehemiah a report that caused him great grief of heart. → look at **v3**

- A. In the ancient world, living in a city without walls & gates for protection was not a good thing.
- B. Nehemiah had great concern for the safety & welfare of God’s people in Jerusalem.
 - 1. When Solomon dedicated the temple in Jerusalem, God said **“I have chosen & consecrated this house that My name may be there forever, & My eyes & My heart will be there perpetually” (2 Chron 7:16).**
 - 2. In **Neh 11:1**, Jerusalem is called the **“holy city.”**
 - 3. That is why Nehemiah said in **v4**, **“I sat down & wept & mourned for days.”**
- C. Because of the perfect work of Christ, both the temple & Jerusalem have lost most of significance.
 - 1. In **Jn 4** Jesus said, **“... an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ...²³ But an hour is coming, & now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit & truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.”**
 - 2. Forgiveness of sin is tied to a Person [JJC] & not to our participation in our offering sacrifices in God’s temple in Jerusalem. Since this is the case, what is the relevance of this passage now?
 - a. Like Nehemiah, we should have sorrow when the church of Christ is in distress or disfunction of some sort (i.e. compromised doctrine, broken families, the lost, unrepentant Christians).
 - b. Such grief— such sorrow over the bride of Christ— should spur us on to action rather than cause us to become apathetic.
 - 1) Nehemiah was spurred to action. This entire book tells how this godly man’s grief was turned into action on behalf of the kingdom of God.
 - 2) 1st notice how Nehemiah’s sorrow moved him to fast & diligently pray **“before the God of heaven” (v4) “day & night” (v6).**
 - 3) He began his prayer by praising God for His person & His covenant faithfulness. → look at **v5**.

II. SORROW OVER SIN & HOW TO CONFESS IT –

- A. His confession was on behalf of the son of Israel along with himself & his own family → Look at **v6**.
1. Nehemiah was not a priest; however, he interceded before the throne of God on behalf of his people.
 2. The doctrine of the “priesthood of all believers” didn’t originate with the giving of the NT epistles.¹ The OT speaks of this doctrine as well:
 - a. Turn to **Ex 19:4-6**
 - b. **Isa 61:6: “But you will be called the priests of the Lord...”**
 - c. **Rev 1:** John used this OT language when he said his revelation was from “**Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, & the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us & released us from our sins by His blood—⁶ & He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God & Father”(5-6).**
 - d. Like Nehemiah, each of you can pray to God on behalf of your family & the Christians of our nation who have sinned against the God of heaven.
- B. Key to this faithful confession of sin is acknowledgment that God’s law has been broken. → **v7**
1. This is why we teach on the law of God & read that law in our worship. Without a knowledge of the moral law of God, there would be no conviction of sin to confess before God.
 2. **WSC 14:** “Sin is any want [lack] of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.”
- C. As with Nehemiah, your godly sorrow over sin during your confession is pleasing in His sight according to **2 Cor 7:10:** “**For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.**”
- D. Nehemiah recounted how their captivity was due to God disciplining them because of sin; however, he also reminded God of His promise to restore if they turned back to Him. → Look at **vv8-10**
1. Key to God’s salvation is repentance. It requires that a sinner “**return to**” Him. That involves a turning away from sin & a turning back to God with an endeavor after new obedience.
 2. Confessing sin with the plan to “go back at it” after church is detestable in God’s sight.
- D. Nehemiah prayed for success and compassion as he approached King Artaxerxes on behalf of the sons of Israel in Jerusalem (**v11**).

Review, further application, & conclusion:

¹ See **1 Pet 2:9**.