

THREE Scripture Texts from Sunday Sermon:

¹ 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 1:1-4 (v.5-11 are his prayer as well) (NIV)

---After 4 months of prayer (time between 1:1 and 2:1), Nehemiah finally engages/asks the King for support-----

⁴ The king said to me, "What is it you want?"

Then I prayed to the God of heaven,⁵ and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it."

⁶ Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.

⁷ I also said to him, "If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah?⁸ And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?" And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests. *Nehemiah 2:4-8 (NIV)*

(See also v.18 where Nehemiah casts vision to the people of Jerusalem)

--- Note 2:10 foreshadows that there will be major EXTERNAL opposition to the Mission -----

--- Note ch.3 shows how EVERYBODY contributed to the Mission -----

--- Note ch.5 shows INTERNAL opposition and division to the Mission -----

--- Note 6:15 shows the wall being completed in 52 days -----

--- Note ch.8 shows God's people listening to the Word of God and being convicted about the state of their own hearts; it's also a call to celebrate the accomplishment of God's mission -----

² So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand.³ He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

⁴ Ezra the teacher of the Law stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam.

⁵ Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. ⁶ Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

⁷ The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah—instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. ⁸ They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear^[a] and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read.

⁹ Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.

¹⁰ Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

¹¹ The Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve."

¹² Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

Nehemiah 8:2-12 (NIV)

Observation (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)

Discussion/Topic Starters (Ice Breakers)

- Describe your reflexive response when challenges enter your life.
- O: What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

Know (what does the text say about God?) **Be** (what does it say about us?) **Do** (what does it call us to do?)

Nehemiah 1:1-4 (5-11 as well) (NIV)

- O: What was Nehemiah's first response when faced with a seemingly hopeless predicament? (v.4)
- I: What does Nehemiah's prayer reveal about his view of himself and of God? (KNOW/BE)
 - Follow-up: List everything you observe from 1:5-11 about the character of God?
 - Follow-up: How do you think prayer prepared Nehemiah to lead his people?
 - Follow-up: In what way can prayer change a person's attitude toward life's difficulties?
- A: What role does prayer play in your plans?
- A: How grieved are you (we) about the physical and spiritual state of God's people? Of our city? Enough to pray? Fast? Act?
- A: How can you/we practically work on expanding our prayer life? (DO)
 - ***Follow-up: What BOLD THINGS can we pray for right now as a group for each other, for our group, our church, our city, and our world? THEN PRAY

Nehemiah 2:4-8 (NIV)

- O: What fears and obstacles did Nehemiah overcome (as he engaged the king and his own personal calling)?
 - Think big picture, what fears would you have if in his shoes? (BE)
 - Follow-up: How did he handle his fears?
 - Follow-up: In what ways did God protect and provide for Nehemiah?
 - Follow-up: What do you usually do when you are feeling overwhelmed with fear?
- O: Why is it significant that Nehemiah took a moment to pray before answering (v.4)?
 - Follow-up: What lessons can we learn from this small action? How did God answer his prayer?
- I: What can we conclude from 2:4-8 about how God works in the lives of His people & in our nation? (KNOW)
- A: Think about the risks Nehemiah took to pursue his goal. What risks do committed Christians encounter today in their work for God's kingdom? What risks might God be leading you to take in pursuing His goals? (DO)

Nehemiah 8:2-12 (NIV)

- O: Given the situation we find Israel in in this story, what do you think prompts them to ask Ezra to read from the Law of Moses? (Read Lev 23:23-25 for further context)
- I: Israel displays a special reverence for the reading of God's word. Is this kind of reverence still appropriate today? Why? What are some ways we can give visible witness in the same way how they view the reading of Scripture?
(KNOW)
- A: Ultimately, Israel is called to remember God's commands and in doing so rejoice and celebrate. Why is God's Word and Mission cause for celebration? What is it about them that supposedly makes the heart glad?
 - Follow-up: What keeps you/us from having a response to God's Word and Mission that is both reverent and repentant and celebratory? (BE/DO)

Recommended Follow-up:

- Pray: Pray together, and really focus in on how we (individually and corporately) are to "Do Mission With God."
- Respond: Spend this week responding to God's word as fleshed out in the group time, as well as journey through this week's companion devotional guide.
- Read: Next week's sermon (9/29/19) will focus on Galatians 6:1-10. Take time prior to next Sunday to read & study the passage, pray through the passage, meditate on the passage, as well as journey through this week's companion devotional guide.