

## Nehemiah was a man of faith...and Faith is work...

*JAS 2:17* ..... *faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.* *JAS 2:18* *But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. faith and deeds go hand in hand...faith is a living thing...one should see your faith displayed in your actions!*

**Faith works but Faith requires you do Work...in the hall of faith given in chapter 11 in Hebrews ...we are told the one great quality of all those who are great in Faith...**

*Hebrews 11:13* *All these people were still living by faith when they died..... they lived it!*

**Faith does require action to lay hold of the things that we are trusting God for. The eyes of faith look for and recognize the opportunity to act We must plan so that we can take action when the opportunity comes...I need to persevere in both Faith and action**

**Nehemiah was a man whose Faith Worked!...He was challenged in his spirit to a crisis that had been going on for over a 150 years...and continuing in his life and he is deeply troubled by it 150 years ago the city of Jerusalem was ransacked and destroyed and the temple burnt to the ground and all its artifacts stolen.....But For the last 90 years or so...the Jews had been allowed to return and to live and worship in Jerusalem...**

- yet the city, though now inhabited still lays in ruins with a temple that is built and occupied, but in every way inferior to the Temple King Nebuchanezzar destroyed 150 years earlier..
- **Enter Nehemiah, means comforted by Jehovah,** was the son of Hachaliah of Judah. He family was among the Jews of the exile to Babylon 150 years earlier, yet continued to live there now under the authority of the Persians,
- Nehemiah found himself as the royal cup-bearer in the palace of the Persian king Artaxerxes. That trusted and responsible position made possible Nehemiah's role in **History** -
- While serving at the palace in Susa, Nehemiah became greatly distressed when he got word that Jerusalem still remained in ruins...apparently he did not know this...**funny how sometimes we are the last to realize our own condition!**

*NE 1:1* *The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of Kislev (November/December) in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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." <sup>4</sup> When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.*

- **Question: Why did the people tolerate living and worshipping in a ruined city for over 90+ years??...Think about it...every Sabbath they would have to step and climb over piles of burnt out building , walls to go wherever they went...how depressing and **shame-filled and stuck** were these people.**
  - **Somebody had to say..."I think it would be a good idea to clean this up and rebuild the city walls" ... Seeing a ruin and doing something about it are two different things...**
- **I believe the answer lies in the word found in verse 3...Disgrace...**
- **Webster's dictionary defines disgrace as: the loss of respect, honor, esteem ...**
- **which results in a life filled with shame, or embarrassment...they had survived and were free...but had no idea how to prosper in that freedom, without the will to rebuild...the best they could do is just get by...**
- **Even if they did want to change they were cynical and fatalistic about it.....they talked themselves out of it...it's too hard...it will take too long...cost too much...I am too stressed...I have never done this before...any obstacle too much...**
- **What is really sad about that mindset...is that they had God on their side...but they probably did not believe it too much....after all he allowed them to go through this..**
- **So They would step over the rubble everyday for some and on the Sabbath for all to go and worship God...but yet could not or would not trust him to help them change their circumstances...**
- **Burned doors...doors offer protection...even if they built or when they built their enemies demoralized them...or destroyed their work. they lived at the mercy of others...**
- **They would go into a broken down city to worship God...then leave with no more belief or power or hope to change as when they came in...**
- **What is familiar about that Picture??? Our past, Our character defects, our circumstances which cause shame in us or embarrass us, our choices and history in our relationships haunt us, failures and disillusionments...the storms and turbulent times...all take their toll sap our strength and will to try again... to rebuild...**
- **We begin to make due and we get used to stepping over the rubble, trying to go around just getting stuck by obstacles..or just ignoring or down playing the many opportunities to progress...saying it is just the way I am... and just the way it is..I cannot change...sometimes while we faithfully go to church!**

**\*\*\*\*\*What are we to do? Do first What Nehemiah did ...over 40 times in this book...he prayed!**

*<sup>4</sup> When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.*

**He was a busy man..but he stopped...sat down and wept...he acknowledged the hurt and pain and circumstances ...of himself , his people and his land...he grieved the reality...he mourned...**

- **He was burdened...a burden is a deep concern, a deep caring, to be troubled in your soul... a burden is when you feel the heart of God about a situation..you cant help it and you cant get rid of the burden...**
- **it drives you to take it to God...who gave it to you...**
- **So he took it to God....and fasted and prayed...fasting along with intense prayer usually only happens when we are heavily burdened...weighed down...**

**Prayer puts us in touch with the causes of the problem...the roots...**

*Neh 1:5 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, <sup>6</sup> 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. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. <sup>7</sup> We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.*

*<sup>8</sup> "Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, <sup>9</sup> 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.'<sup>10</sup> "They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. <sup>11</sup> 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.*

- **He is deeply burdened for his people and his country...and prays, his praying went on for four months...he got a handle on the problem.. prayer gives us a heavenly perspective...a greater understanding...**
- **he understood it was their sin that caused them to be taken captive...and forced into slavery...**
- **He takes responsibility for himself... he is part of the problem...not everyone else, they have their own responsibility, but acknowledges he is part of the problem**
- **then calls on God's mercy, that same mercy has been exhibited before and is available now...but more...he can restore and rebuild...and will bring them back not only home...but better... for he is a restoring God..**
- **In the eyes of the world Artaxerxes was an important person, a man with influence, who could decide on life or death. In the eyes of Nehemiah, **Artaxerxes was just a man** like any other man. The Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes**

2. Notice **He did not criticize... he prayeritized...** here is the principle: **If you don't care enough to participate much, you ought not care enough to criticize it much.**

- If one is not willing to participate one has no right to critique...
- Now a burden is not a critique...unless the criticism breaks your heart , driving you to prayer opening your heart to respond....if that is not happening than quit criticizing...
- **the problem with Prayer is it almost always opens the door to action...**

<sup>11</sup> 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.

- **Where you are currently...is where you will initially be effective...it is your strategic location...**
- **Nehemiah has a political appointment as cupbearer...and confidant or the king:**
- the office of cupbearer in the Persian was a position second only in authority to the king . Nehemiah was keeper of the king's signet ring, a treasurer position... but he also tasted the king's food and drink to make sure no one had poisoned it
- As a royal cupbearer He would be a man of great influence as one with the closest access to the king, and one who could well determine who could see the king.
- Above all, Nehemiah had to be an individual who enjoyed the unreserved confidence of the king."

**Yet...He believed God would build the city of Jerusalem ...because God said so How? put your Faith to work...Faith works but Faith requires you do Work**

- **He believed God and he made a goal...Nehemiah's Goal was to re-build the Wall of Jerusalem, and to restore Jerusalem as a fortified city, thriving city.**
- **Impact starts with prayer....will you join me in praying to rebuild the torn down walls of our own lives, our families and our communities...and as you pray God will give you something to do about it! do it!!**
- **You are the Nehemiah's in this area...it may be broader but it starts where you are at! look for divine appointments...**

1....**Nehemiah had the faith to wait for the opportunity....**four months had passed since he asked his brother the condition of the city...he is broken in his spirit.

- **True faith brings a calmness to the heart ...that keeps us from rushing and trying to do in our own strength that which only God can do in his....**

*GAL 3: 3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?*

- **We must learn to Not only weep and pray...but wait and pray...**

- when you wait on the Lord you are not wasting time ...but investing your time...knowing that God is working out the details, preparing you, others and the circumstances.

*Neh 2:1 In the month of Nisan(four months later) in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before,<sup>2</sup> so the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart." I was very much afraid,*

- Nehemiah was probably very fearful because Artaxerxes could have interpreted sadness in his presence as dissatisfaction with the king
- But this was the moment! the opening he had been waiting for...the King to ask him!

**2...He had the faith to ask...and what did he do before he asked...prayed...but this was not his first prayer...he had been praying for four months...**

*<sup>3</sup> but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"<sup>NE 2:4</sup> The king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I prayed to the God of heaven,*

- He immediately let the King know he was not upset with him..."may he live forever" **then he shoots up a quick prayer....Quick prayers** are possible and valid if one has prayed sufficiently beforehand.
- In this case Nehemiah's prayer is evidence of a life lived in constant communication with God.
- Nehemiah had prayed for months, but he knew he was completely dependent on God's work in the king's heart at this moment." right now!

**3...He had the faith to plan beforehand...before he had the opportunity**

*<sup>5</sup> 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 fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it."*

- Notice the respect he showed to the one in authority...a non believer! Why? God is sovereign ...he has the power to work out his will using unbelievers as well as believers!!
- He already had a plan...what is your plan to build those around you?
- Nehemiah was going to build a wall of protection around the city and a place of refuge in the city.....
- a great idea and a great accomplishment are two different things...so is starting and finishing!



Luke 14:28 “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? <sup>29</sup> For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, <sup>30</sup> saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’

- **We build lives at HP..we set up our church to build lives ...we plan for it... and have spent 23 years working at it!**
- **Nehemiah was going to build a wall of protection around the city and a place of refuge in the city.....there was much planning to go on..**
- **we are doing the same thing in our community! not putting walls around a city...but building walls of hope and faith...through Love...**

NE 2:6 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.

- **he knew how long it would take!...key is time! everything takes time...a broken down wall...has measurements is one thing...a life that is broken down is another thing all together...**

NE 2:7 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?"

- **I need protection...the wall was broken...and could not be rebuilt...there are enemies...to any rebuilding project...**

<sup>8</sup> And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, 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 upon me, the king granted my requests. <sup>9</sup> So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. **The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.**

- ***I need help! resources...and a residence...I am not a carpenter and wall builder...I need help to secure what is needed to accomplish the task!***
- **The king provided more than he thought he needed...Soldiers...we get angels!**
- **The king might have used this as a plan to strengthen his hold on the Palestine area as a buffer against Egypt**
- **Interestingly Nehemiah had to wait for the King to address him before he could ask a question...**
- **But you and I get to go boldly into the throne room of the King of the Universe...and ask help with confidence...**

HEB 4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then approach the **throne** of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

- Nehemiah's life changed in a day....it took ninety plus years to get there but it all changed in a day...
- So Nehemiah starts on a two month 400-600+ hundred mile journey from Samaria to Jerusalem...

**Faith does require action to lay hold of the things that we are trusting God for.**

- **All of that would have meant nothing if he could not withstand the hostility of Jerusalem's powerful neighbors who formerly had caused the building of the wall to be postponed. We must overcome our adversary!**

**4...He had the faith to face adversaries...and continue on his mission**

*NE 2:10 When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.*

- Sanballat the Horonite...probably the governor of Samaria... northwest of Jerusalem ...so from the North there is trouble..
- He would have been included among the governors to whom Nehemiah had brought letters, and learnt the fact that "a man was come to promote the welfare of the children of the Israelites"
- Tobiah the Ammonite...from the region of Ammon east of the Jordan River...thereby trouble from the east... He would have been included among the governors to whom Nehemiah had brought letters ...the Ammonites have a long history of animosity toward the Israelites...
- So...The most powerful political figures in the area were set against Nehemiah's plans from the start...it might infringe or threaten their land or power.

**"Jerusalem was always attacked where...she was most vulnerable, you will be attacked where you are most vulnerable....where is that? start building the wall there! the doors of your eyes and mind..."**

**A defenseless wall, a broken down wall represents an area of our life where we are vulnerable to the enemy. This is a place where we have yet to fortify; it is a place of sin, a place of immaturity, a place we have not overcome and a place of self-will.**

**For example, if you lose the battle of your mind then the walls surrounding your inner man are too weak. end**

**end**