

Series: Rebuild; Sermon: **Start with Prayer**

delivered by **Dr. Josh Moody**, senior pastor, on October 18, 2020

**Bible text explored: Nehemiah 1:1–11**

<sup>1</sup>The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.

Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, <sup>2</sup>that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.”

<sup>4</sup>As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup>And I said, “O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast 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 of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. <sup>7</sup>We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. <sup>8</sup>Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, <sup>9</sup>but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.’ <sup>10</sup>They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. <sup>11</sup>O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.”

Now I was cupbearer to the king.

[ESV]

**Review and application:**

Nehemiah in historic and biblical context

580 BC or before:	Judah's exile and return predicted	<i>Jeremiah 29:10-14</i>
586 BC:	Jerusalem captured, temple razed, people exiled	<i>2 Kings 25:8-12</i>
538 BC:	First exile group returns to Jerusalem	<i>Ezra 2:1</i>
536 BC:	Temple rebuilding begun	<i>Ezra 3:8</i>
515 BC:	Temple rebuilding completed	<i>Ezra 6:15-16</i>
458 BC:	Ezra leads second exile group to Jerusalem	<i>Ezra 7:6-10</i>
445 BC:	The twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign	

1. Was the problem Nehemiah discussed with his brother Hanani (*verses 1-3*) fundamentally military, political, or spiritual?
2. Why were the exiles who had returned to Jerusalem in “great trouble”? Why was this a source of “shame” for this remnant? (See *Joel 2:17b*.)
3. If you agree with Martyn Lloyd-Jones that God always works through a remnant, why is that the case?
4. What (*verse 4*) was Nehemiah's immediate response to this news? How long did he maintain this intense focus before considering any solution that involved human action? (See *Nehemiah 2:1*.)

5. How (*verses 5-10*) does the way Nehemiah addresses God recognize his rule over Babylonian and Persian peoples as well as over the Jews?
6. How did Nehemiah avoid making excuses, accepting individual as well as group responsibility?  
(See *Daniel 9:4-19* and *Ezra 9:5-15* for others identifying with Judah's sins.)
7. In what role did Nehemiah see himself, Moses, and his fellow Israelites?  
Who ultimately perfectly fulfilled this role? (See *Mark 10:45*.)  
How (*verse 11*) did this perspective apply to the Persian monarch he served?
8. How did Nehemiah come to see his daily access to the king as an opportunity to be seized?  
Am I willing to inconvenience myself by becoming part of the answer to my own prayers?
9. How could you replicate the process Nehemiah followed:
  - a) identify a real problem,
  - b) lay it out before an all-powerful God, and,
  - c) because of how he has gifted you, determine what risk you should take?