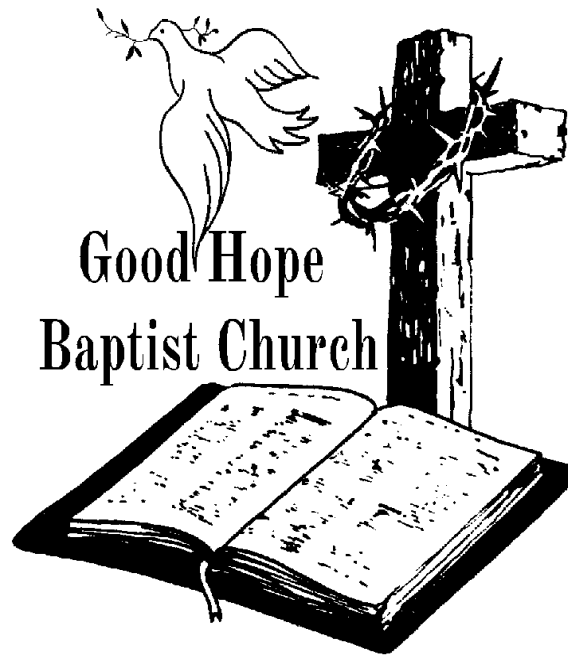


From Broken To Blessed On Bended Knee

Nehemiah 1:3-4



Living Together In The Love Of God

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Focal Read Together Nehemiah 1:3-4 And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. {4} And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

Israel is in a broken state. God promised His people that He would protect them and be with them - but specified that they needed to love Him and do as He said (see **Deuteronomy 28:15-20**). You see, God gives His children laws to follow not because He likes to see us jump, but because He knows what's best for us. He knew what was best for Israel, and told them to follow Him. God has always told His children:

Ephesians 5:1-2 Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children: {2} And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us...

When the believer - whether Old or New Testament - follows God and loves Him, when we *live out our faith* as our Lord commands, then we are blessed. But when we break fellowship with God and put other things above Him and what He says, it isn't too long before we ourselves are broken.

It is a truth that you never break a Law of God without that Law breaking you. If you don't believe me, step off of a ten story building and see what happens!

Israel broke God's Law, and broke God's heart! What did they do? Let's make a list:

- x Israel was given a **sabbath where they were suppose to worship and love the Lord**. They **broke the Sabbaths** and began to love the thing created rather than the Creator of things.
- x Israel was told to make sure that they did not marry the unbelievers of the land, lest they be dragged down to their unbelieving ways. Israel ignored that, and as a result they **broke their marriages, yoking themselves with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14)** contrary to what the Lord told them.
- x Israel was told to love God first, but they loved their **unbelieving spouses first, breaking their faith and breaking God's heart**.
- x Israel was told to love and train their children. As the believers became apathetic in their faith they began to tolerate **child sacrifice, killing their babies and breaking the family for the sake of convenience**.

Doesn't that list sound a whole lot like what is going on in America today?

Have we not put other activities above the practice of loving the Lord and cherishing His Word? **How many Churches will have to play the Superbowl on large screen televisions in order to get anyone to come to Church that day? How many families fail to worship the Lord daily, blessing their meals with prayer,**

taking time to speak to the Lord Who loves them? How many times have professing Christians married unbelievers, damaging their own faith? How many abortions do we have yearly in this country for convenience sake, breaking the fruit of the womb and spilling innocent blood? Dear friends, there is a lot of similarity between what happened to Israel and what is happening in America today.

Israel was broken as a nation because she broke God's heart. America is also broken because we have hurt our Lord by breaking His Word and His heart!

1 We will only go from broken to blessed as a nation when we begin to see things as they truly are - *as defined by the Word of God*. Oh, that God would open our eyes and let us see things as they really are. The Bible says:

a Proverbs 29:18 ^(KJV) Where [there is] no vision, the people perish

Explain "Vision" We have probably all heard preachers use this text when trying to get their flocks to build a new building, or start a new program. I'm not saying that this is necessarily a wrong thing, but that's not what the verse is talking about. **We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world (Ephesians 6:12)**. The Devil is our enemy. But the Devil is smart. He doesn't usually attack a people or a nation directly. He doesn't come right out and say, "Hey,

let's kill some babies today!". He doesn't say **"Let's get together with a young person and use our bodies as playgrounds, opening yourselves up to disease and emotional disaster"**. The Devil doesn't do that. What the Devil does is to **make us visionless**. To blind us to right and wrong as defined by God. To make us SUBJECTIVE in our thinking, to put OURSELVES first without regard to others. If the Devil can get us to look at things from a **"What's in it for me"** viewpoint, then he can twist us.

The Devil doesn't want us to look at the world through the Word of God, but through the word of ME. He wants us to be lustful rather than loving, selfish rather than selfless, protecting my rights rather than doing what God says is right!

We read:

Context Nehemiah 1:1-2 ^(KJV) **The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, 2 That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and [certain] men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. ...**

Israel had selfishly put themselves before God, and because of this the Lord stopped blessing the nation. Israel was under Persian bondage, and Nehemiah himself was a captive believer.

Now as captives went, Nehemiah had a pretty good life. He had the ear of the King. As the Cup Bearer, Nehemiah had plenty to eat, plenty to drink, a nice room in the Palace, and a great roof over his head. As exiles went, Nehemiah had it pretty good. The Bible says that **Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and [certain] men of Judah** and gave Nehemiah a report on what was happening in his nation Israel. **Hanani said:**

Focal Nehemiah 1:3 ... **The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.**

The remnant - those left in Israel - are in **GREAT AFFLICTION and REPROACH**. People are mocking God's people! They are making fun of the chosen of God. The **wall of Jerusalem is BROKEN DOWN**. The nation is broken!

Nehemiah could have done like many of us do. We hear the statistics:

**42 million babies aborted worldwide every year
115,000 babies worldwide murdered each day**

One out of every three babies born in the the U.S. are aborted according to a Southeastern Seminary study presented by Leonard O Goenaga in September 2010. The paper goes on to state that **93% of all abortions are for social reasons, i.e. they just don't want the inconvenience of a baby**. The author went on to

conclude that **we kill more babies and potential unique U.S. citizens a year by abortion than the total number of all Americans killed during all major U.S. engagements.** That is astounding!

We hear the words - but are unmoved by them. We are hardened in our hearts, for the words are but statistics! When Nehemiah heard the report of Israel look how he responded:

Focal Nehemiah 1:4 ^(KJV) **And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept ...**

"Without vision, the people perish". God weeps over the murdered children. God weeps over the confused homosexual and adulterer. God weeps over the hardness of our hearts. God weeps over our selfishness and lovelessness. God weeps over the minor care and small efforts we give to His Word and to the Great Commission, because He knows if we keep on sitting here complacent that the Devil will take the nation forever.

Nehemiah sat down and wept, though those who carried the report to him shed not a tear. Dear friends, without vision the people perish. But God is with the broken hearted, and uses them to accomplish great things!

b **The walls of Israel were broken down, and the gates were burned. The walls were destined to destruction when each family stopped doing what**

God told them to do.

Illustrate I lay in my bedroom the other night thinking how blessed I was to live where I live. The doors - like gates - were locked on the house. The walls were solid and sure all around myself and my wife. **Walls enclose and protect us.** There are wild animals in the woods *and in the world* that cannot get into my bedroom because the walls of my house are strong. **Walls separate us.** The winds of wintertime can howl and ice can fall, but the walls keep warmth around us and cold far away. **Walls in the Bible symbolize God's protection for His people, His ever loving embrace.** When Israel left Egypt, they marched through the Red Sea, and God caused **"the waters to be a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left" (Exodus 14:22).** Walls symbolize God's protection, God's salvation, God's care for us.

The walls of America are broken down today. America has gone the way of Sodom and Gomorrah. Our children go to schools like tumbleweeds, tossed to and fro by the winds of peer pressure and the Devil's minion.

One out of every three children are aborted, and the two that live go to schools where neither God nor morality is mentioned.

Angry children go to school with guns, so much so that many schools have metal detectors on the doors and require children to carry see through backpacks for their books. School books emphasize evolution and

humanism. Bibles are not passed out, though condoms can be easily picked up from the school nurse.

When I was just a child I was taught that the seed you plant will grow into the plant you want. If you want to harvest soy you plant soy beans. If you want to harvest cotton you plant cotton seed. What you plant effects what you harvest!

What seed are we planting? Our children grow up, spending many hours in a school where God is ignored, and many hours before a television where God is mocked, and we bring them to Church - maybe - for one or two hours once a week. What are we planting? The walls are broken down. **Patrick J. Buchanan** wrote:

"In the West, the God of Christianity has been superseded by the gods of modernity: money, sex, fame, power. These gods give a good life, but they cannot sustain life. As Christianity is a dying faith in every Western nation, every Western nation is dying."

We are losing our freedom in America because we have forgotten God. The walls are broken and the gates are burned! We will only start to fix these fallen walls when we - weeping - repent and do what God told us to do. We must take hand in training our children on the truths of God's Word. We must instill His vision in our children and grandchildren. We can do this through nightly family devotions - but we must, or else the walls will stay down and the Devil will have his way. God told Israel:

Deuteronomy 6:5-7 (HCSB) Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. 7 Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

This is how we rebuild the walls of America! We become people of vision, letting God's Word guide us in all we do. *We teach our children* to become people of vision by sharing God's Word with them. Teach them to think *biblically*. Listen Beloved:

It might matter *today* who wins the basketball rivalry between the schools, but in America's future what matters is that we have vision - and pass vision on to our children.

C The walls of Israel of Israel were broken down and the gates were burned. These walls were destined to destruction when each Church stopped doing what God told them to do. In the Old Testament when the priests failed to love the Lord and promote His Word, this cancer spread throughout the nation.

All across America Christ's Church is not teaching the primacy of God's Word. Each Christian is a priest before God. The Bible says:

Revelation 1:5-6 (HCSB) {It is} Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of

the kings of the earth ... who loves us and has set us free from our sins by His blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father — the glory and dominion are His forever and ever. Amen.

We as God's priests (and we who are saved are all priests according to the Word of God) are to love God, love one another, and in love reach out to our neighbor.

The Church is to promote LOVE, Biblical LOVE. We cannot waste our time on the foolish things, for when we do we help tear the walls of America down. Listen to what these Churches did:

A pastor was fired for not letting Satan Claus in the pulpit on Christmas morning.

A local Church split into two warring factions, each angry over a *pine tree* that was cut down.

A local Church (and this was in the news) kicked out a member who married a man who was not her color.

A local Church pickets the funerals of our fallen military, carrying signs "God hates Faggots".

I could go on and on, but I won't. The purpose of God's local Church is to be His hands and His feet in this fallen world. We cannot put our heads in the sand. We cannot wait for someone else to do something. We as God's Church must - through His Word - reach out in love to the fallen world, sharing our faith with those around us.

We cannot count on government to rebuild the walls. We must rebuild the walls by putting the Lord and His Word *first*, and then DO what He told us to do.

2 Once Nehemiah *visualized* the problem through the lens of God's Word, he then went to the Lord and *agonized in prayer*. Read with me:

Focal Nehemiah 1:4 ... when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

This was not some useless moaning about the problems the nation faced. Nehemiah *visualized* the problem, but **he kept his perspective by focusing on God.**

Look at the six little words at the end of the verse.

**Prayed
Before
The God
Of Heaven**

Adrian Rogers once said: "What is wrong with us today is that society has forgotten how to blush, and the Church has forgotten how to weep".

Nehemiah wept as he prayed, but it was not the weeping of hopelessness. He was **before the God**, the Lord Who can make a difference. God is able! God can make a way! God can rebuild the walls of Israel, and can rebuild

the walls of America, for **He is God! He alone is able!**
Just before Israel went into the Promised Land God spoke to them through their leader Joel, saying:

Joel 2:12-13 ^(HCSB) **Even now — this is the LORD's declaration — turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning. 13 Tear your hearts, not just your clothes, and return to the LORD your God. For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love, and He relents from sending disaster.**

We cannot be a dry eyed Church in a hell bent world! If we're going to make a difference we need to come, without reservation, to God! Look at Nehemiah's prayer and you can see his heart.

a Nehemiah made it a point to *not blame God for the broken walls*. Look at his words.

Context Nehemiah 1:5 ... I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments

- When **Hurricane Katrina** hit America in 2005, killing over 1800 people and destroying \$84 Billion in property people cried out "**Where was God in all this?**"
- When **terrorists attacked America in 2001**, killing 2973 innocents and 19 guilty Muslims people cried out "**Where was God in all this?**"

- When an 8.9 earthquake hit Japan March 2011, killing 5178 people, people cried out "**Where was God in all this?**"
- When an earthquake hit Haiti in January 2010 it killed 222,570 people. Many cried out "**Where was God in all this?**"

"**Where was God in all this?**" Anne Graham Lotz (the daughter of evangelist Billy Graham) was asked the same question over a similar disaster. She replied:

"...for several years now Americans in a sense have shaken their fist at God and said, God, we want You out of our schools, our government, our business, we want You out of our marketplace. And God, Who is a Gentleman, has just quietly backed out of our national and political life ... removing His hand of blessing and protection. We need to turn to God first of all and say, God, we are sorry we have treated You this way and we invite You now to come into our national life. We put our trust in You."

Israel was responsible for the state of Israel. We are responsible for the state of America.

Nehemiah didn't blame God - he honored God. Nehemiah didn't give up on life because of the disaster, he trusted the God of life in the disaster.

b Nehemiah *repented of his sin and the sins of his people*. He prayed

Context Nehemiah 1:6 ... Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.

We're all in this together. Nehemiah didn't blame the sin on others. We love to play the *blame game* in America. Let's find someone to blame and it will be all better. The truth is, every one of us - myself included - often do not love God as we ought to love God. Nehemiah prayed ..

Context Nehemiah 1:7 **WE have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.**

WE are at fault! It's my fault. It's your fault. We are visionless, and have failed to love God like we should. Now we repent. But now we repent, and call on God to remember, and restore the walls for His glory! Nehemiah prayed:

Context Nehemiah 1:8-9 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: {9} But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set

my name there.

Dear ones, God can restore the walls in America. Before He will do so, we must repent. If you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, call upon Him.

Romans 10:13 ^(HCSB) **For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**

He gave Himself for you, and He gave Himself for me. None of us have either earned nor deserved His love, but He loves us none the less.

If you love the Lord, show that love in your families. Share the Word of God daily with your children and your grandchildren. Turn off the television and turn to God. Share what God has done for you with your neighbors and friends. Let others see Christ in you.

Love fervently, and pray that God will daily make you a person of vision.

Pastor **Dick Halverson** said "**No where in the Bible is the world exhorted to 'come to Church'. But the Church's mandate is clear: she must go to the world.**" If we don't do our part the walls will never be rebuilt. If we do our part God will rebuild the walls, and we will be richly blessed in this generation.

We'll continue in Nehemiah next week.

Focal Read Together Nehemiah 1:3-4 And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. {4} And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

Deuteronomy 28:15-20; Ephesians 5:1-2

It is a truth that you never break a Law of God without that Law breaking you. If you don't believe me, step off of a ten story building and see what happens!

1 We will only go from broken to blessed as a nation when we _____

a Proverbs 29:18 ^(KJV) Where [there is] no vision, the people perish What is "vision"? _____

Ephesians 6:12; Nehemiah 1:1-2; Nehemiah 1:3; Nehemiah 1:4

b The walls of Israel were broken down, and the gates were burned. The walls were destined to destruction when _____ stopped doing what God told them to do. Deuteronomy 6:5-7

c The walls of Israel of Israel were broken down and

the gates were burned. These walls were destined to destruction when each _____ stopped doing what God told them to do. Revelation 1:5-6

2 Once Nehemiah *visualized* the problem through the lens of God's Word, he then _____

Nehemiah 1:4; Joel 2:12-13

Adrian Rogers "What is wrong with us today is that society has forgotten how to blush, and the Church has forgotten how to weep".

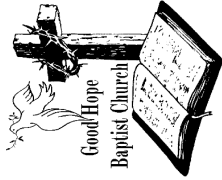
a Nehemiah made it a point to _____

Nehemiah 1:5

b Nehemiah *repented of his sin* and _____

Nehemiah 1:6; Nehemiah 1:7; Nehemiah 1:8-9; Romans 10:13

Love fervently, and pray that God will daily make you a person of vision.



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