

Nehemiah and Ezra

Tears and Sorrow that Brought Repentance and Rebuilt Jerusalem

Nehemiah 1:4 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,

Today, we turn our hearts to the story of Nehemiah—a man whose tears and sorrow ignited a movement to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. His story serves as a powerful reminder of how God can stir our hearts to action when we recognize the ruins around us. As we discuss this, we will reflect on our responsibilities as Christians in a world that often appears hopeless and broken.

Seeing the Ruins of the World: First, we must acknowledge the reality of the world around us. There is so much pain, sin, and despair, and without Christ, there is no real hope. In **Ecclesiastes 1:2**, it says, “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.” As we look around, we see lives in ruins, families shattered, and communities crying out for help. It’s easy to become distracted by the pleasures of life, but we are called to look deeper, to see the need for change and healing. So, unless we first see the vanity of this world, our souls will never produce the tears that build the walls of Jerusalem. Secondly, we must recognize that sometimes, even the church may be in ruins. Churches can become stagnant, filled with routine and complacency, forgetting their mission to spread the love and message of Christ. Sometimes, we become numb to the decline of faith and dedication among believers.

Nehemiah’s Example: Nehemiah gives us a perfect example of how to respond to such brokenness. When he heard the troubling news about Jerusalem's destruction, he didn’t merely feel sorrow; he acted. In **Nehemiah 1:4**, we read, “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.” His tears were not just for the city; they were for the people—heartfelt and passionate, leading him to humble himself before God. I invite all of you at this special juncture in the New Year of 2025 to pray the Lord grant us the sorrow and tears of Nehemiah with which to enter the New Year and change happen.

What Nehemiah did next was remarkable. He sought God in prayer, asking for wisdom and favor. He stepped forward, presenting himself to King Artaxerxes with a bold request to return to Jerusalem to rebuild. Nehemiah's willingness to act—a combination of sorrow and determination—was crucial. He understood that restoration would require effort, bravery, and the work of God. So, we see that godly sorrow and tears embolden a Christian. Love for the Lord Jesus Christ and his Kingdom will make you lose fear of everyone and everything.

The Power of Tears: Ezra's Example: Nehemiah's tears were impactful, but we also see a parallel in the story of Ezra—another leader who wept over the spiritual state of God's people. In **Ezra 10:1**, it says, "Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore." Ezra's tears had the power to gather the people together in repentance. His heartfelt sorrow over their sin and separation from God moved the people to acknowledgment of their wrongdoings. When leaders like Ezra weep for their communities, it stirs the hearts of the people and brings them to the foot of the cross. This demonstrates how tears can be a catalyst for repentance and spiritual awakening.

We need leaders today who are not afraid to weep over the state of the church and the world, recognizing the importance of confession and the need for God's mercy. Just as Ezra's tears led to a collective turn back to God, our tears and passion can inspire others to seek restoration. Ezra's tears brought the people to repentance while Nehemiah's tears rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. Dry faces do not accomplish anything. Let us pray the Lord will grant us to enter the New Year with tears and sorrow for repentance and rebuilding the walls of the Church.

The Divine Partnership: The Lord did not rebuild the walls of Jerusalem solely by miraculous means; He stirred Nehemiah's heart to lead the way. In much the same manner, God desires to stir our hearts for the task at hand. He calls us to recognize the inherent need for rebuilding, both in ourselves and in the world around us. Are we willing to acknowledge the ruins and respond like Nehemiah? As Paul reminds us in **1 Corinthians 3:9**, "For we are labourers together with God." This is a profound truth. God invites us into partnership with Him. He wants our hearts to break for what breaks His, to see the brokenness, and to work

alongside Him to bring restoration to our world. The Lord is not just waiting for us; He is actively seeking those whose hearts are open to being moved.

Facing Opposition: However, the path of rebuilding is not without obstacles. Nehemiah faced fierce opposition from enemy leaders such as Tobiah and Sanballat. Despite their threats and attempts to intimidate him, Nehemiah remained steadfast. In **Nehemiah 4:14**, he encourages the people, saying, “Be not ye afraid of them. Remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.” We, too, will face challenges as we seek to rebuild the walls of God’s Kingdom. There will be voices of doubt, criticism, and fear that may attempt to deter us from our mission. But we must find strength in the Lord. Like Nehemiah, we are called to be courageous, to remember our purpose, and to rally together with a commitment to build the walls of God’s Kingdom.

The Call to Repentance: Just as Nehemiah’s and Ezra’s tears were instrumental in inspiring action and repentance, we are also called to lead with that same heart. If we are honest, we cannot overlook the spiritual state of our communities and even our hearts. In our churches, we must cultivate an atmosphere where repentance is welcomed and healing can take place. Ezra’s example shows us that genuine humility, expressed through tears, can lead to powerful transformation. We can invite those around us to return to God, to acknowledge their need for Him, just as Ezra led the Israelites in collective repentance after he wept. Our sorrow for the state of our world and our church must drive us to our knees, allowing God to use our hearts to bring about change.

Unity and Restoration: As we move toward rebuilding, it is important to recognize that this effort requires unity among believers. Nehemiah did not rebuild the walls alone; he inspired a whole community to work together (Nehemiah 3). In the same way, we must come together as the body of Christ, putting aside differences and personal agendas to labor side by side. This unity is rooted in a shared vision of restoring what has been broken. When we gather, we can not only acknowledge the ruins but also build each other up in Christ. As we work together, our collective tears of sorrow can turn into tears of joy as we witness God’s hand at work.

A Divine Encouragement: In our efforts to rebuild, we must be encouraged by the promise of God’s presence. Just as He was with Nehemiah, He is with us as we commit our hearts and hands to the work of His Kingdom. In **Isaiah 41:10**, the Lord reassures us, saying, “Fear thou

not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” As we stand against the opposition and embrace the call to rebuild, we must hold fast to this promise. The tears we shed, whether out of sorrow or joy, are never in vain when they are offered up to the Lord. He sees our efforts and is ready to empower us for the work ahead.

In closing, we recognize that our world is in despair, and at times, so is the church. But even amid the ruins, there is hope. Just as Nehemiah's and Ezra's tears ignited movements of restoration, we, too, are called to be moved by compassion, sorrow, and hope. The time has come for us to weep for the world, to feel the urgency for repentance, and to roll up our sleeves for God's Kingdom. Let us ask the Lord to break our hearts for what breaks His. May our tears lead us to action, gathering together to rebuild with Him. As we labor side by side, empowered by the Spirit, we will witness the transformation that comes from our unified efforts. Let us arise, just as Nehemiah did, and respond to the call to rebuild the walls of God's Kingdom. It is not merely about physical restoration, but about renewing our commitment to God and one another. We can change the narrative—not just for ourselves, but for the generations to come. Together with the Lord, we can build a future filled with hope, joy, and love.