



## PART 1: THE HAND OF OUR GOD

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### Sermon Notes

**Text: Nehemiah 1:1-2:10**

#### Intro:

The book of Nehemiah is a personal account, which tells the story of the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

#### Covenant and Exile:

Israel broke the covenant with God, so he used the Babylonians to remove them from the Promised Land in 587BC - The Bible calls this the exile.

“The essential meaning of exile is that we are where we don’t want to be” ~Eugene Peterson

Jeremiah 29:4-11

“All of us are given moments, days, months, years of exile. What will we do with them? Wish we were someplace else? Complain? Escape into fantasies? Drug ourselves into oblivion? Or build and plant and marry and seek the shalom of the place we inhabit and the people we are with? Exile reveals what really matters and frees us to pursue what really matters, which is to seek the Lord with all our hearts” ~Eugene Peterson

Persians overthrow Babylon in 539BC, and reverse the religious policy by allowing exiles to return home to rebuild their places of worship.

2 Chronicles 36:22-23

Nehemiah 1:1-2:10 - Nehemiah hears the news that Jerusalem is in ruins, and begins to pray (446BC).

#### 1. Our first responsibility is to pray

Nehemiah doesn’t ask God to do the work for him, he focusses on confession and asks God to help him be successful.

God either gives us what we ask, or he gives us what we would have asked if we knew what he knows.

“Most of us love the idea of God changing our circumstances more than the idea of God changing us” ~Steven Furtick

#### 2. Our second responsibility is to support our prayers with action

Nehemiah 2:8 v. 8 “And because the gracious **hand of my God was on me**, the king granted my requests.”

The very fact that Nehemiah noticed the need meant that God wanted him to be part of the solution.

Nehemiah teaches us that we do not need to be powerful culturally or in power politically, to be obedient to God and accomplish his purposes in the world. All we need is to be faithful.

**Brick #1:** The hand of our God is on us

#### Conclusion:

## Life Group Discussion

### Warm up:

1. Recap the Sunday sermon. What intrigued you? Perplexed you? What did you learn? What questions remain?
2. Have you ever struggled with understanding the balance between God's sovereignty (he is in control of everything) and human responsibility? How do you understand it? What questions do you have about it?

### Study & Discussion:

1. Read Jeremiah 29:4-11. What was God saying to the exiles? How might this apply to us today? In what way are Christians in exile? Are there any scriptures in the New Testament that talk about this (see 2 Peter 2:11-12 for an example)?
2. Read Nehemiah's prayer in Nehemiah 1:4-10. What do you notice about it? What elements are included? What does Nehemiah ask God to do? How can we learn to pray differently from this prayer?
3. Consider the quote from Steven Furtick: "Most of us love the idea of God changing our circumstances more than the idea of God changing us." Do you think this is generally true? How so?

### Application:

1. Consider what God has brought to your attention: A need in the community. A potential ministry in the church. A neighbour who is struggling, etc. If he has put that on your heart it may be that he's calling you to do something about it? How will you pray about it? How will you take action? Maybe your Life Group can take action together.

### Prayer:

1. Pray that God would help us to pray good prayers, and take bold action.
2. Other Requests
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