

## NEHEMIAH 1:1-11

### A. Introduction

1. What are your dreams for the community: both the church community and the community around us? What do you long to see happen in the days, weeks, months or years ahead?

Church: growth in holiness, in knowledge and love of Lord Jesus, in obedience to Him; we shine more brightly and more distinctly in the community; increase numerically; our love for one another grows, our members have faith that endures to the end, we increase in number and spread out into new communities where there is no gospel witness and plant new churches.

Community: see conversions and disciples made, more people hearing about Jesus and having opportunities to consider His claims upon their lives.

2. These things we long for Banstead and for the church are the same things that Nehemiah longed for Jerusalem and God's people in Jerusalem in his day.

The book of Nehemiah begins with a community in a mess and God's people in trouble.

"The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, Hanani one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. 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." (Nehemiah 1:1-3)

445BC, Nehemiah is at the king's winter residence when some men including his brother Hanani come to visit him.

Nehemiah is keen to hear news about God's people (the Jewish remnant that survived the exile) and God's place (Jerusalem).

But the news is not good – the people are in trouble, and although the temple has been rebuilt, the city lies in ruin.

3. How does Nehemiah respond? What does his response teach us?

### B. We need to be people who weep

"When I heard these things, I sat down and wept." (Nehemiah 1:4)

1. Nehemiah is heartbroken when he hears the news.

He weeps for the people. He weeps for the city.

2. Do we?

Are our hearts affected by struggles, the burdens, the lack of progress or spiritual growth in the lives of people in the church?

Are our hearts affected by the darkness of the community, that only a small portion of the community knows Jesus, the danger most people in Banstead are in, the widespread rejection of Jesus – wilfully or through ignorance, the lack of conversions or inquirers, that there are churches not preaching the gospel?

3. The problem of normal.

It doesn't bother us because we're used to it. It is all we've ever known.

### **C. We need to be people who pray**

"For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven." (Nehemiah 1:4)

#### 1. He knew his God.

"Then I said: "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, 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." (Nehemiah 1:5-6)

He believed God could answer his prayer.

Do we believe God can answer our prayers?

#### 2. He knew his sin.

"I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly towards you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses." (Nehemiah 1:6-7)

He confesses the sins of the people, his family, and his own sin.

How well do we know ourselves?

#### 3. He knew his Bible.

"Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if you 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.' They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand." (Nehemiah 1:8-10)

His prayer is based on God's promises.

His prayer is not about His own agenda, but about God's Will.

The best way to pray is to pray God's Word back to Him. What does God's Word say about .....

#### 4. He knew his need.

"O 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 favour in the presence of this man." I was cupbearer to the king." (Nehemiah 1:11)

Nehemiah knew what was needed – the Lord's favour to give him success in what he was about to do.

### **D. We need to be people who have the heart of Jesus**

#### 1. Nehemiah sees the city and the people as Jesus sees it and feels about them as Jesus feels about them, and responds as Jesus responds.

Jesus weeps (Luke 19:41).

Jesus prays (John 17:20-26).

#### 2. Learn from the servant and the Saviour.

Growth in the church and the community begins with eyes that are wet with tears, heads bowed in prayer, and hearts longing for the things Jesus longs for.