

Pain to Progress

Nehemiah 1:3-7,11; 2:1-5

- I. Pain v. 3-4
 - a. Nehemiah- Nehemiah held the important position of cupbearer to the king of Persia.
 - b. Nehemiah's People
 - i. Distressed- under misfortune
 - ii. Reproached – Disgraced shamed
 - iii. The Jews in Judah (a **province** of Persia) were greatly troubled and disgraced, and Jerusalem's **wall** was **broken down and its gates had been burned**.
 - iv. They were stopped by Artaxerxes who was pressured by some Samaritans and Rehum, the commanding officer, who may have been a Persian responsible to Artaxerxes (Ezra 4:17–23).
 - c. Nehemiah's Response
 - i. Wept- to cry freely and profusely from sadness or distress
 - 1. Mourning was often accompanied with the shaving of the head and beard.
 - ii. Mourned- to feel sadness and express it through vocalizations, tears.
Observe mourning rites
 - 1. Fasting was often added to prayer so the individual could concentrate wholly on the issue at hand, at the expense of physical needs.
- II. Prayer v.4-7
 - a. Praying - **make intercession** for, **act as an intercessor**
 - i. Pleading on the character of God
 - 1. Great indicates the one whom Nehemiah feared and the source and object of his deep faith
 - 2. Awesome - God's awesomeness is the impression his total character and person leaves on all who encounter him
 - 3. Preserver
 - a. Covenant – In the God's Word
 - b. Lovingkindness
 - c. For those who keep commandments
 - ii. Persistent
 - 1. Ear be attentive
 - 2. Eyes open to hear prayer
 - 3. Day and Night
 - a. On behalf of the sons of Israel
 - b. Fasting - the action of an individual in lamentation

- i. Fasting, though not a requirement of the Law except on the annual Day of Atonement, often evidenced one's distraught condition (cf. 2 Sam. 12:16; 1 Kings 21:27; Ezra 8:23).
 - c. Favor- v.11
 - i. Artaxerxes had issued a decree to stop the construction work in Jerusalem (Ezra 4:21; see comments on Neh. 1:1–3), and he was the only one who could reverse that order. That is why Nehemiah prayed specifically, **Give Your servant** (cf. v. 6) **success today by granting him favor** (lit., "compassion") **in the presence of this man**. Nehemiah was referring of course to King Artaxerxes (cf. 2:1).

III. Progress 2:1-5

- a. Four months went by before Nehemiah's opportunity came—
 - i. four months had passed since Nehemiah received news from Jerusalem. He had been praying and planning during these four months so that he would be ready when the opportunity arose.
 - ii. Still Saddened of Heart
 - 1. King thought he was sick
- b. Risk Everything
 - i. He was very afraid
 - 1. According to Ezra 4:21, this same Artaxerxes had earlier issued a decree to stop work on the city of Jerusalem, perhaps on the wall itself. To make such a request clearly contrary to royal policy might even prove dangerous.
 - ii. Talks about his country and people
 - 1. Nehemiah went on to say he was sad because of the condition of the city "where my fathers are buried." Such a description showed both Nehemiah's respect for his ancestors and also his sense of shame at the condition of his native city.
- c. Request with Prayer

