

## Building Our Lives

Nehemiah 1:1-11



Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1



## Faith is About Trust

- Faith is not about intellectual belief
- It is about conviction/assurance
- It is about how you live your life
- About walking with God



## How Do We Build Our Lives?

- Beginning 2020 – What is the nature of our ‘walking with God?’
- We will address this theme by considering the stories of other builders



## The Plight of Jerusalem

Nehemiah 1:1-3



## Where?

- Susa – the winter capital of the Persian empire
- Modern day Iraq





## When?

- 150 years after the exile to Babylon
- Now Persian rule
- 20<sup>th</sup> year of King Artaxerxes
- 444 B.C.

## What?

- One of Nehemiah's brothers returns from Jerusalem with a report of the city
- The city lies in ruins in spite of the return from exile
- 10-12 years after Ezra's return
- Nehemiah has a high administrative post

## Weight?

1. Physical Predicament
  - Vulnerable state, defenceless, broken walls
2. A Holy Place – the city is a reproach before God – mocked by its enemies (2:17,19)
  - the broken state undermines the city as the throne of God

## Prayer of Nehemiah

Nehemiah 1:4-11

## Nehemiah's Response of Prayer

- Mourning
- Fasting
- Prayer before God of heaven
- Continues this attitude for a period of 4 months – Chislev (1:1) to Nisan (2:1)

## No Rush to Action

- Nehemiah prays, reflects, considers what needs to be done
- We see in chapter 2 that he has considered all the needs – safe travel (2:7), resources for building (2:8)



## Dynamics of Nehemiah's Prayer



## 1. Compassion/Empathy

- He identifies with the people of the city – the remnant
- He weeps – suffers with the people



## 2. Discernment/Vision

- He reflects on the theological implications – covenant, hesed (v5)
- He sees what needs to happen – he envisions the final result
- He understands the depth of the situation



## 3. Participation

- When it comes to implementation he is an active participant (2:17)
- Not simply an observer
- Contemplation and activity



## 4. Perseverance

- Prays for 4 months (1:4)
- At a great cost to his own life – leaving a good position & comfortable life (2:5)
- It's not about his own convenience – it is a risky business



## 5. Remembrance

- His vision of heaven & earth meeting - working for the purposes of God (2:20)
- He remembers who he is and his relationship with God
- “We remember who we are by whose we are.”



## The God of Nehemiah's Prayer



## 1. Powerful

- The God of heaven and earth (1:4-5)
- He is great, awesome
- ‘Great power’ and ‘strong hand’ (v10)
- The God of galaxies and quarks



## 2. Steadfast Love

- Hesed/mercy (v5)
- Loyal
- Redeemed by God (v10)
- The working out of Deuteronomy 30:1-5



...then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, gathering you again from all the peoples among whom the LORD your God has scattered you.

Deuteronomy 30:3



## 3. Covenant

- God keeps his covenant & stays in relationship with people
- Nehemiah reminds God of his promise (v8)
- Not a contract but based on a relationship of mercy
- A mutual remembering



## Going Forward



## Nehemiah was a Builder

- What are we building?
- What is our purpose?
- What is our vision?



## Who Do We Build For?

- Self – our tower of Babel
- God – our participation in his great work



## It Comes Back to Our Faith

- Our walking with God
- Our on-going relationship with God in 2020

