

The Heart of a Servant

Nehemiah 1:1-11

INTRODUCTION:

1. Two times in Nehemiah 1:11, Nehemiah refers to himself as “your (i.e. God’s, A.K.) servant” and one time to the people of Israel as “your servants.”
2. In the verses that precede that text, we see that he was certainly a man with a servant heart, and we learn something about the kind of heart that is.

DISCUSSION: The servant heart is...

I. A broken heart.

- A. When Nehemiah heard the bad news from Jerusalem, He “sat down and wept and mourned for days” (v. 4).
- B. His heart was broken because the work of rebuilding was not being done.
 1. “The remnant...who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame” (v. 3).
 2. The verb is in the present tense indicating that the reproach was continuing.
 3. God’s purposes were not being fulfilled.
 4. Enemies triumphed over God’s people and defeated them.
 5. Later, another man’s heart was broken over Jerusalem (cf. Luke 19:41-44).
- C. Nehemiah wept over ruins!
 1. We should mourn the ruins in our families.
 2. We should mourn the ruins in congregations of the Lord’s church.
 3. We should mourn the ruins in our own spiritual lives.

II. A believing heart.

- A. He answered to an unbelieving king, Artaxerxes, but he first took his problem to God.
- B. Nehemiah took his eyes off of his problem and fixed his mind on God: “...I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven” (v. 4).
- C. He believed in...
 1. God’s power: “O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments” (v. 5).
 2. God promises: “Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses...if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them...I will gather them from there and bring them to the place that I have chosen...” (v. 9).

III. A bathed heart.

- A. As Nehemiah thought of the broken-down walls, he remembered the reason for them was sin.
- B. With eyes on the awesome God, he sensed his own unworthiness and poured out his heart (vv. 6, 7).

1. The sin was national but also very personal.
2. The cupbearer confessed his own sin.
- C. His prayer remembered: “They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand” (v. 10).
 1. God had redeemed Israel from Egypt.
 2. He had before brought them out of slavery and into freedom.
- D. Redemption has been the major theme of the Bible since Genesis 3 and is even now (cf. 1 Pet. 1:18, 19).

IV. A behaving heart.

- A. “...give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man (i.e. King Artaxerxes, A.K.)” (v. 11).
 1. Four months had passed since Nehemiah had heard the bad news about Jerusalem from his brother, Hanani, yet, in his prayer, he says, “now” or “today.”
 2. Prayer changes a man, and, now, Nehemiah himself is ready to go to the work.
- B. Be careful concerning for what you pray. An obedient heart is given more responsibility. A willing mind can have a change in direction after prayer.

CONCLUSION:

1. God’s servant must have a broken heart that weeps over the ruins.
2. God’s servant must have a believing heart that lays hold of God’s power and promises.
3. God’s servant must be bathed in the blood of Jesus Christ for redemption.
4. God’s servant must behave in a way that changes the heart and pleases God.