The Good Hand of God 2.7.10

2:1 In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. 2 And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid. 3 I said to the king, "Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" 4 Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. 5 And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it." 6 And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), "how long will you be gone, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time. 7 And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah, 8 and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy." And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me. (Nehemiah 2:1-8)

Nehemiah is EXTREMELY normal

- In a Bible full of prophets and miracle-workers Nehemiah is a just a guy
- He works hard and God blesses him and is pleased with him (2:8)
- Nehemiah is an encouragement to other normal people who want to serve God and be blessed.
- What did Nehemiah do that we can do?

1. Nehemiah had a broken heart over a serious need (2:1-3)

- The news of the broken walls led to Nehemiah's broken heart (1:4)
- Where is your heart breaking? Is it breaking at all?

2. Nehemiah turned to God in prayer (2:4)

- Prayer is when we turn to God to speak to him and ask for his help
- Nehemiah is a man of prayer (cf. 1:4ff, 4:4-5; 5:19; 6:9, 14; 13:14, 22, 29, 31)
- Nehemiah did not keep his brokenness to himself but aimed it in a Godward direction

3. Nehemiah turned to God in Scripture (1:5, 7-9)

- Nehemiah's life—all his prayers and plans were informed by Scripture
- The words of Nehemiah's prayers and the foundation for his plans did not fall out of the sky but were rooted in texts of Scripture
    - The Great God who keeps a covenant of love (Deut 5:10)
    - The commandments, statutes, and rules (Deut 6:6)
    - The promise to scatter and return (Lev 26:33-45; 2 Chron 6:36-39)

4. Nehemiah meditated on the character of God (1:5)

- Nehemiah's Scripture-soaked prayers reflect the thoughts of a man pondering God
- Nehemiah's exalted view of God
    - The God of heaven (Deut 10:14-15)
    - The great and awesome God (Deut 7:21)
    - The God who keeps covenant and steadfast love (Deut 7:9)
- What does your brain sound like?

5. Nehemiah took time to think and plan (1:1; 2:1)

- From idea to implementation Nehemiah took 4 months
- This gave Nehemiah time to think, prepare, and pray about . . .
    - How do bring up the matter with the king (2:3; cf. Ezra 4:17-23)
    - How long the work would take (2:6)
    - What he would need to get the job done (2:7-8)
- Nehemiah didn't rush in (Prov 14:8)
- But neither did he drag his feet (1:11)

6. Nehemiah acted, trusting God (2:4)

- All preparation finally Gave way to implementation
- Nehemiah was scared (2:2) but he trusted God and acted

All this met with God's blessing (2:8)

- Be careful: God's blessing ≠ Getting what you want!
- 3 cautions from Nehemiah
    - Nehemiah's evaluation was based on the long-term
    - Nehemiah was self-sacrificing
    - Nehemiah was focused on God's redemptive purposes