

# Handling Sorrow

**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." When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.**

**--Nehemiah 1:3-4**

Nehemiah was taken by surprise that day when he asked how things were in the home country of Israel.

Things are bad, was the report. Very bad. The capital city had suffered disgrace, and its people were very insecure because there was no gate to protect them from further trouble and harm. They had turned their backs on God and forgotten His covenant with them. So God had lifted His hand of protection from them for a time. Now they had begun to repent and return to the land, but the consequences of their sins lingered, and they were feeling vulnerable, humiliated, and defenseless.

Nehemiah was not personally affected. In fact, he lived in peace, safety, and extravagance as a servant and possibly a confidant of a powerful foreign king. But that didn't matter now. Because Nehemiah loved his country, and more importantly, he loved the God who had formed his country and blessed it greatly with His presence, provision and protection in generations past. So this dire report shook Nehemiah's soul.

At first, all he could do was cry. Just sit down and weep tears that welled up from a pain deep in his bones. This pain wouldn't fade quickly. It would take several days.

Several days of mourning.

Several days of fasting.

Several days of crying out to the God of Israel and the God of heaven for His restoring hand to be upon His people once again.

Can you identify?

Do you mourn over the condition of your country, or your church, or your family? Are you in a situation where the people and places you care most about are in turmoil that rots your life with sadness while comfort seems to be so slow in coming?

If that's the case, take heart. Because God uses a person who mourns what He mourns. God blesses the one who weeps when He weeps.

Nehemiah was such a man. So God had a plan for him. He would use Nehemiah to do some amazing things and bring about a level of restoration that seemed impossible in that moment when the bad news came.

For a time, Nehemiah would weep, and mourn, and fast, and pray. Then God would turn Nehemiah's grief into dogged determination and utter reliance upon Him, and He would use Nehemiah as His instrument to rebuild a wall around the Holy

City. Nehemiah's resulting walk of faith would give him one of the most impressive testimonies in Bible history.

If the walls have come down for you, this book will be one you'll enjoy studying. It will bring you hope, and give you guidance on how to be used of God to rebuild the walls once again.

If you're grieving today over the news that has come your way, then God is already taking you on the first step of a journey of rebuilding. Now is the time for you to follow Nehemiah's example on how to handle grief: When everything falls apart, take your tears to the Lord. In heartfelt prayer and an attitude of recognizing just how deeply you need Him, pray. Then today's tears can become the seeds of tomorrow's joy, because they will build your resolve and fortify your trust in a God who never disappoints those whose desire to serve Him does not wane and whose trust in Him does not waver.