

## **The Burden of the Lord**

Nehemiah 2: 1-10

<sup>1</sup>In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, <sup>2</sup> so the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart."

I was very much afraid, <sup>3</sup> but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"

<sup>4</sup> The king said to me, "What is it you want?"

Then I prayed to the God of heaven, <sup>5</sup> and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it."

<sup>6</sup> Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" It pleased the king to send me; so, I set a time.

<sup>7</sup> I also said to him, "If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? <sup>8</sup> And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?" And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests. <sup>9</sup> So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.

<sup>10</sup> When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.

Nehemiah was a cup bearer for the king, a humble servant, doing his task without complaint... His heart was burdened for the wall to be rebuilt, yet, within him there was a great deal of fear. Nehemiah now begins to display the sadness within his heart, and the king sees it. Then the king asks Nehemiah, "**Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill?**" The burden of the Lord can be heavy, as it was upon Nehemiah.

What I wonder is this, "**Do people still feel the burden of the Lord in their lives today?**" If we do, do we still feel the burden of ministry to the broken, the down, the splintered, the destroyed, the lost? And if so, "**What action are we willing to take?**"

Let's look more closely at what took place when Nehemiah felt the burden to rebuilding the wall...

### **Illustration:**

Jessica Huffman's little two-year old child asked her for a Snoopy band-aid. Mrs. Huffman promised the needed first aid and asked, "**What happened?**" The child said, "**I hurt my feelings.**"

Physical hurts are usually obvious, but emotional hurts can be much more difficult to spot. When we become more sensitive to the feelings of others, we will generally find there are many people around us, who need a Snoopy band-aid for their hurt feelings. We suddenly begin to feel the burden of others pain, a pain they often hold within.

Nehemiah, had need of a “**Snoopy Band Aid,**” for the pain he was feeling for what use to be a mighty place and wall.

Let’s look at this story again...

### **First - Nehemiah knew fear**

*<sup>1</sup>In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, <sup>2</sup> so the king asked me, “Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart.”*

*I was very much afraid, <sup>3</sup> but I said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?”*

Even though Nehemiah knew what the Lord was placing upon him a task to accomplish, there was fear within his heart. Having the knowledge of what we should do, and knowing we can do it, does not mean that all of the fear associated with this task is completely removed. At times, I believe the Lord allows us to walk through moments of fear, to help us keep our lives in check.

If everything we do in life was joyful, pleasant and easy for us to accomplish, we might start thinking more of ourselves than we should. We might start feeling as though everything is easy, and thus begin to procrastinate. (**Putting off what we should do now until a later time**) In my opinion, procrastination **is the death of many great things** needing to be done. However, there is a healthy fear which should reside within the hearts and minds of every believer. A fear which brings about respect, and awe, for those who are greater than us, for the power and presence of our creator. Nehemiah was fearful of what the king would say or do. Would he allow this to take place or try to stop it?

We need to be fearful of the king, not the king of Persia, or Babylon, or any other worldly kingdom, we need to fear the King of Kings, our Lord and God! A fear of respect for who He is. Jesus said in Luke 12,

***“But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.”*** LUK 12:5

Jesus was warning those who were listen to the Pharisees, and frightened of what they might do, so much so, that they, would do whatever the Pharisees told them to do, even when they knew it was wrong. So our Lord tells us, if you are going to fear someone, don’t fear the Pharisees, the rulers of this kingdom, fear Me, for everything we do in darkness will one day

come into the light. Fear the one who has the power to through our souls into hell. Fear God! So, what does Nehemiah do? He prays, then he speaks to the king about what the Lord has placed upon his heart. **He was BOLD for God.**

Prayer is a powerful tool, for those times when our hearts are being overcome with fear. Whenever we are faced with overwhelming odds, when the world seems to be attacking from all sides, stop, bend a knee, seek the Lord in prayer. God will hear us and answer us. He has the power to overcome anything and anyone.

## Second - Requests granted...

*<sup>4</sup> The king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I prayed to the God of heaven, <sup>5</sup> and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it."*

*<sup>6</sup> Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" It pleased the king to send me; so, I set a time.*

Nehemiah first prayed to God, then spoke boldly to the king, when it was appropriate, with due respect. The king listened to him and even considered the requests and comments he made. Once he saw that the king was favorable toward his requests, he offered information as to when, how long he would be gone, and so on. **Prayer moves the hand of God, toward the favor of His faithful children.** I believe God wants to demonstrate His loving kindness toward us.

Nehemiah asked and the king said, **"Yes, you can go."** **"Yes, you can have the letter to get lumber."** **"Yes, Nehemiah, such faith and conviction I have seldom seen, Go!"**

Paul tells us in Galatians,

**"He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."** GAL 3:14

God desires to give us His blessings, the Promise of the Spirit unto His children.

John reminds us,

**"From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another."** JOH 1:16

Not only is God going to bless us, He is already showering His blessing upon us. As God blesses our lives, so we in turn bless others. The blessings are far much more than we might ever know or understand at times.

Oswald Chambers once said,

*"A river reaches places which its source never knows. And Jesus said that if we have received His fullness, 'rivers of living water' will flow out from us, reaching in blessing even 'to the end of the earth' regardless of how small the visible effects of our lives may appear to be. We have nothing to do with the outflow . . . God rarely allows a person to see how great a blessing he is to others."* God uses us to affect others, and we may never see the end result. However, many others will be changed by our faithfulness to allow God to use us. Our God is an awesome God, who reigns from heaven above.

Lavishing His love and blessings upon His children, every day! If we don't see any blessings, well, perhaps it is our vision? ***Where we are looking and what we are looking for?*** By the fullness of His grace, we all have received one blessing after another. That means you too! Tell Him what we need, why we need it, and what our hopes are, He knows what's best. Then allow Him to move as He knows is needed. He will answer our prayers. God desires to answer our requests just as He did Nehemiah's.

### **Third - Pondered upon, disliked, and misunderstood**

<sup>10</sup> *When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.*

Have you ever noticed just how much others are worried about the Christians and what we stand for? The world is filled with people who will ridicule us, mock us, bad mouth us, and do whatever they can to simply make our life worse than it is. All in an effort to stop what we stand for, the right, moral and holy way of life we are seeking to live. For Nehemiah it was two men who kept harassing him. I'll bet these two men were sitting there waiting for something or someone to jump on.

Keep this in mind: ***"The world will never understand the fullness of God's love and blessing."*** When God pours out His love upon His children, others will begin to complain, some more loudly than others. Some may say, ***"What kind of a God is this? He only loves you or those people?"*** Others may directly criticize Him saying, ***"You say He is love, yet, He didn't give me what I want?"***

Some people, rather than try to comply with God's Word and live by a higher standard, would rather complain, repeatedly, stating that ***"life is too hard."*** They don't seem to be able to rise up to the standard God sets, or rather, don't want to rise up, so they complain, ridicule, and mock others to make themselves feel better about who and where they are at in life.

The men Nehemiah must have offended were asking themselves, ***"Why are they spending so much time and energy on the Israelites?"*** ***"How does watching out for their welfare do anything for us?"*** Doesn't that sound like this world? We want to get what we want, who cares about anyone else. The Love of God is so good. ***"God is good!"*** ***"All the Time."*** ***"God is good,"*** ***"All The Time."***

When the burden of God has been placed upon our hearts, and when we know there is much more God needs us to do, and we start seeking for that, it doesn't matter who may complain, or what group tells us to stop praying, or stop caring, ***we are called to stay the course.*** Our confidence comes from God, directly. From Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and we will follow Him, wherever He leads. I believe we are being challenged to get our neighbors, friends and relatives into His house, the time is now. Drawing them into a relationship with Him. Whatever that takes, however we must, leading them to Christ.

Know this, those who have become comfortable in their walk after the Lord, those who have allowed complacency to rule their hearts and souls, those who don't want to see lives changed, because that means they must change or be uncomfortable, they will complain, criticize, and do their best to ridicule the rest of us, because they don't understand what God has done in us and wants to do through us.

We need to pray for the burden of Christ to become our burden.

What is it Lord, you are wanting us to do?

Maybe it is for us to gain a passion for the lost, the destroyed, those suffering in pain.

Like Nehemiah, it begins with prayer.

- Will we pray with together for the lost in this community around us?
- Will we pray together for the lost in our families?
- Will we pray and seek after that which God desires, putting aside everything which hinders us, and allow the Spirit to direct our course?
- Will we do something now, right now, for the Lord?

It is my prayer that He places a burden for life upon your hearts today! Not just living, or surviving, living life to the fullest!

• ***Nehemiah knew fear, but that did not stop him...***

• ***Nehemiah made his request known, and they were granted...***

Just as the Lord waits to grant our requests...

• ***Nehemiah had those who mocked him, laughed at him and made him feel uncomfortable, yet, that didn't stop him...***

If anything, it motivated him to work harder.

***Realize, that at this point,*** Nehemiah hasn't even begun the project yet, however, the Lord has already begun to work in his life in a mighty way.

Is God working in our lives? He can!

***Prayer....***