

Speaker: Pr. Giancarlo de Miranda

Nehemiah Series, Part 1

Sermon Title: *When God Puts a Burden on Your Heart*

Exegetical Ideal: When Nehemiah fervently and perseveringly prayed for God's people and city, God miraculously moved upon the King's heart to send and support Nehemiah's mission.

Homiletical Idea: God places a burden on the heart of those who earnestly have an interest in God's glory and pray for the property of God's mission.

Purpose Statement: People should pray more earnestly and engage in the prosperity of God's mission through the local church.

1. Brief description of the book of Nehemiah:

- a. The book is named after the main character—Nehemiah;
- b. The book of Nehemiah is a continuation of the story of returns;
- c. Nehemiah's story begins in the year 444 BC, the 20th year of King Artaxerxes I;
- d. Nehemiah means "the LORD comforts;"
- e. Nehemiah was the cupbearer of the Persian king Artaxerxes I;
- f. Nehemiah is eventually appointed as the governor of the Persian Empire for Judea from 444 to 432 BC;
- g. During this period Nehemiah leads God's people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and to implement religious reforms;
- h. Nehemiah also engages in social justice to the poor;
- i. During this period Israel did not have a king, and therefore, the larger community becomes more and more the center of authority;
 - i. Ezra and Nehemiah cannot get the job done without the community.
 - ii. The temple leadership becomes increasingly important.
- j. Ezra-Nehemiah marks a transition from oral to written authority;

"Ezra and Nehemiah illustrate... how a few people can do great things for God when led by God-fearing, sincere, unselfish, but fearless and determined leaders. These books contain much that edifies and that strengthens faith in the unfailing leadership of God." The SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 3, p. 322

2. Nehemiah had a deep interest in the things of God:

- a. Nehemiah 1:2 – Nehemiah asked concerning the Jews in Palestine and Jerusalem. He had an interest in the prosperity of God's people and city.
 - i. At the time there were rumors about the attack of the Samaritans against Jerusalem, and that part of the walls had been broken.
- b. Nehemiah 1:3, 4 – The failure and weakness of God's people and city was heartbreaking to Nehemiah.
 - i. He has to answer within himself – "How can I turn my back on this situation? How can I pretend that I don't know there's a problem?"

Application: Do I have an interest in the prosperity of God’s kingdom and church? Is it of my interest to know how the church is doing? Or do I allow the world to absorb all my interest, energy and time? Do I rejoice when the church fails? Do I turn my back to God’s church when there is a problem? Do I pretend that I don’t know there is a problem?

3. Nehemiah pours out his heart to God in a four-month season of prayer:
 - a. Nehemiah’s prayer has 7 characteristics:
 - i. **Perseverance** – The many days that Nehemiah mourned, fasted, and prayed were four months (Nehemiah 1:4, 6).
 - ii. **Praise** – “LORD God of heaven, O goat and awesome God” (Nehemiah 1:5).
 - iii. **Intercessory prayer** – “I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel” (Nehemiah 1:6).
 - iv. **Confession of sins** – “and confess the sins of the children of Isreal which we have sinned against You...” (Nehemiah 1:6, 7).
 - v. **Pray God’s Word** – “Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses...” (Nehemiah 1:8-10).
 - vi. **Filled with humility and desire to honor God** – “please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name” (Nehemiah 1:11).
 - vii. **Petition** – “Let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man” (Nehemiah 1:11).
 - b. Everything God does in the work of ministry, He does through prayer. How often we rush ahead of God because we haven’t been obedient to pray.
 - i. Nehemiah prayed for four to five months before he did anything else.
 - ii. With God’s plan, Nehemiah was able to accomplish in less than two months, what others had not accomplished in nearly 100 years.
 - c. Four benefits of prayer:
 - i. Makes me wait
 - ii. Clears my vision
 - iii. Quiets my heart
 - iv. Activates my faith
4. How did Nehemiah find out that God was actually calling him to do the work that he felt the burden to do? After all, the heart is deceitful above all things!
 - a. Through persevering and earnest prayer.
 - b. Nehemiah 1:11 – Nehemiah felt the desire to do something for God and prayed for God’s providential leading.
 - c. Nehemiah 2:4-6, 8 – God moves upon the heart of the king, answering Nehemiah’s prayer. We clearly see God’s providential leading in the project, even confirming by providing letters of security and materials for the project.

“... as he prayed a holy purpose formed in his mind. He resolved that if he could obtain the consent of the king, and the necessary aid in procuring implements and material, he would himself undertake the task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and restoring Israel's national strength.” Prophets and Kings, p. 629

- d. Nehemiah 2:5 – Nehemiah was willing to sacrifice himself for God’s glory—he had the right motivation.
- e. Nehemiah 2:6 – The fact that “it pleased the king to send” Nehemiah shows that he was being faithful where he was.

Conclusion:

1. We must cultivate interest in the cause of God.
2. We must pray earnestly for God to make His people and work prosper.
3. Allow God to put a burden in your heart to do great things for Him.
4. Be faithful in what you are currently doing.
5. Watch for God’s providential leading in removing the obstacles and providing for the needs.