

Let's Pray

Remember from last wk's msg
as we meet Nehemiah today

it's been **90 YEARS** since the 1st wave of Israelites
returned to **Jerusalem**

& **they have been struggling** the entire 90 years

Zerubbabel began to rebuild the TEMPLE
& in came the **discouragement** & **opposition**

& so the people basically **GAVE UP**
even tho God had **CALLED them** to the task

& so to **start today**
I really want you to **get a picture**

of **HOW** God's people got so **discouraged** & **frustrated**
that they **stopped** the work that God had called them to

I want you to see **the APPROACH** that was **used**
to STOP God's people from **rebuilding** the Temple

I want you to **see it**
because they were very **subtle** & **deceitful** approaches

that were **used** to **disrupt** (delay) **the work** of God's people

So before we get to Nehemiah

let's get a picture of what Israel's been going thru
for the 90 years prior to Nehemiah being called
to Rebuild the WALL of Testimony

Turn back one book to Ezra Ch 4

NLT vs. ESV

Just after the foundation of the TEMPLE was completed (Ch 3)

Ezra 4:1-5 – NLT

1 The enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were rebuilding a Temple to the Lord, the God of Israel.

2 So they approached Zerubbabel and the other leaders and said, "Let us build with you, for we worship your God just as you do. We have sacrificed to him ever since King Esarhaddon of Assyria brought us here." (not true - goal = infiltrate & sidetrack the work)

3 But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the other leaders of Israel replied, "You may have no part in this work. We alone will build the Temple for the Lord, the God of Israel, just as King Cyrus of Persia commanded us."

4 Then the local residents tried to discourage and frighten the people of Judah to keep them from their work.

5 They bribed agents to work against them and to frustrate their plans. This went on during the entire reign of King Cyrus of Persia and lasted until King Darius of Persia took the throne.

This subtle, behind the back, opposition was going on
the entire time Israel was rebuilding Jerusalem

& what I need you to see today is
the **PRIMARY OPPOSITION** the people of God **FACED**
was from **the PEOPLE** who were **already** in **their MIDST**
& it has **ALWAYS** been this way

Back in **NUM CH 13** – when Israel **FIRST** arrived
at the edge of the Promised Land

What happened when the 12 spies came back
from **spying** out the Land God **PROMISED** to give to Israel

What did **10 of the 12** Spies say ??

[Num 13:31-32] - “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are. & it’s a land that devours its inhabitants, And there are GIANTS in the land . . .”

& **those 10** unbelieving spies - **turned** an entire **nation**
AGAINST what **God** had called them to do,
& **what** He had promised to do **for them**

& the **Discouragement** they sowed into the body
Cost God’s people **40 years** of wandering in the wilderness
until that Generation – **WAS DEAD**

Guys – **don’t let** that happen to **you**
& **don’t let** that happen **AROUND YOU**

There are **ALWAYS** people in your midst

Who desire to sow Discouragement & Fear & Frustration
into your life – WATCH OUT for them

They have been used for 4,000 years
to keep the people of God
from doing what God has called them to do

Same THEN - - Same NOW - **OK ?**

& back to the time of EZRA – Leading up to Nehemiah

those opposed to God's Work didn't stop at just
trying to discourage & frustrate God's people

they also trumped up false charges
& tried to get the authorities to stop the work of God

Look in (Nxt Vs) Ezra 4:6-7 – NLT

6 Years later when Xerxes began his reign, the enemies of Judah wrote a letter of accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

7 Even later, during the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, the enemies of Judah, led by Bishlam, Mithredath, and Tabeel, sent a letter to Artaxerxes in the Aramaic language, and it was translated for the king.

& down in Ezra 4:11- we have the letter
these "Opponents" sent to King Artaxerxes
to get him to stop the work of God

Ezra 4:11-16 – NLT

11 This is a copy of their letter: "To King Artaxerxes, from your loyal subjects in the province west of the Euphrates River.

12 “The king should know that the Jews who came here to Jerusalem from Babylon are rebuilding this rebellious and evil city. They have already laid the foundation and will soon finish its walls.

13 And the king should know that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are completed, it will be much to your disadvantage, for the Jews will then refuse to pay their tribute, customs, and tolls to you.

14 “Since we are your loyal subjects and do not want to see the king dishonored in this way, we have sent the king this information.

15 We suggest that a search be made in your ancestors’ records, where you will discover what a rebellious city this has been in the past. In fact, it was destroyed because of its long and troublesome history of revolt against the kings and countries who controlled it.

16 We declare to the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are completed, the province west of the Euphrates River will be lost to you.”

Guys – this is **STILL** the **PRIMARY WAY**
that the **work of God** is **opposed** **TODAY**

People will do their best to
Discourage & **Frighten** & **Frustrate** the people of God

& they will **trump up charges**
to try to **get OTHERS** to **stop** the work of God

God’s people have **ALWAYS FACED**
Discouragement & Frustration

MOSTLY FROM PEOPLE in their own midst’s

& **when they listen** to those people

feeding them that **discouragement** - **instead** of listening to God

the work of God gets put on **hold**

until God raises up **NEW PEOPLE** to begin the work again

& for 90 years **PRIOR** to us picking up the story in **Nehemiah**

The work that God had called His people to

Had **started** – & **stopped** - & **started** again

At times **gaining some ground**

At times **being frustrated** by the Opponents

That doesn't sound **THAT DIFFERENT**

than many works of God today – does it ?

Isn't it **AMAZING** – that the work of God

is really not that different **TODAY**

than it was in **500 BC** – when all this was occurring

INCREDIBLE !!

OK - like we **saw last week** – under **Zerubbabel** & **Ezra**

The TEMPLE had **finally** been finished

But that had been **70 YEARS** prior to **Nehemiah CH 1**

& the people (& city) of God – were **STILL - A MESS**

& **Nehemiah** – during this time – was **the Cupbearer** to the King

But don't **confuse Cupbearer** with a **Butler** or a **Waiter**

The **role of cupbearer** was a very **unique** position in the house of a King

The cupbearer tasted ALL the food before the King ate it in case of poison - but more importantly . . .

the **cupbearer** was in charge of making sure the **food** got to the King **correctly** & **safely**

& so the King put **high trust** in him

& **because** Kings ate **A LOT** the cupbearer was **ALWAYS** with the king

& so a **very close relationship** would develop between them

in fact – it's said that **only the Queen** had a **closer** relationship with the king, than his cupbearer

Nehemiah (as the cupbearer) was a **trusted Advisor** to the King

It's also **important** to know that Nehemiah was absolutely living in the **LAP** of LUXURY in this position as **Cupbearer** to the King

When we meet him – he's at the **Winter Palace**

& for him to consider leaving that **PALACE** to go to **JERUSALEM** - *during this time*

Would be like **DONALD TRUMP** moving to **SKID ROW** !!!

Do you get the Picture ??

OK – Our subject Today – is PREPARATION for Service

So let's see HOW God PREPARES Nehemiah
for the task that he's called him to

& I want you to know – the way God prepares Nehemiah

is the SAME WAY HE prepares you & I
when God calls us to build a Wall of Testimony

around our own lives

around our family

around our church, or elsewhere

THIS is the way – God prepares a person – for HIS SERVICE

Do you think it's about time

we actually read from the book of Nehemiah ?

Neh 1:1 – NLT

1 These are the memoirs of Nehemiah son of (Ha-Kal-Lay-A) Hacaliah. In late autumn, in the month of Kislev, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign, I was at the fortress of Susa.

MEET Nehemiah – the son of Ha-Kal-Lay-A

It's the end of Autumn – & Nehemiah & the King
are getting ready for winter at the Fortress of Susa

This fortress (palace) is where the King would stay for the winter
It's his WINTER PALACE (Ski Lifts, Snow Boarding, Hot tubs,)

& they were just **getting settled in** - when Nehemiah's **brother**,
& some others - come by for a **VISIT**

Neh 1:2 - NLT

2 (Ha-Nan-I) *Hanani, one of my brothers, came to visit me with some other men who had just arrived from Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had returned there from captivity and about how things were going in Jerusalem.*

Now – Nehemiah **MAY HAVE** just been
making **polite conversation** at this point

But **God** is about to **FLOOR** him
in order to **PREPARE** him
for the work God had **appointed** him to

Neh 1:3 - NLT

(he had asked them *how are things going - &)* **3 *They said to me, “Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been destroyed by fire.”***

Now – because of **Nehemiah's position** of influence

we **have to believe** he **KNEW** the wall was torn down
& the **gates** were destroyed when the Israelites returned

& he **had to know** some of the events
of the **rebuilding** of the **TEMPLE**

that had been **finished** for 70 **YEARS** now

I **believe** – what we are about to see

is **Nehemiah** responding to the fact

that the **WALLS** were **STILL** torn down

& that the gates were **STILL** destroyed
70 YEARS after the **TEMPLE** had been finished

Which is why I believe – these visitors say – here in **V.3**
The people are in great trouble and disgrace

Because **70 yrs** after the **TEMPLE** has been **finished**
things are **STILL** – a **WRECK** !!

In V.4 we see Nehemiah's **RESPONSE**

& we **immediately** see **HOW** God prepares Nehemiah
for the work He was calling him to

Neh 1:4 - NLT

***4 When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I
mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven.***

God **Pierced** Nehemiah's **HEART**
with a **Great Burden** for His **people**

& Nehemiah **went** straight away
into **Mourning, Fasting, & Praying**

& pls hear this – the **ENTIRE** remainder of this book

is Nehemiah's **RESPONSE** to the Great Burden
he felt **RIGHT HERE** on behalf of God's people

Sometimes we can *know* **ABOUT** something
In kind of a **superficial** – **news reporter** type way

But **what is it** that **CAUSES** us to actually **RESPOND**
to a **great work** that God is **calling us to** ?

Isn't it **usually** some **CRISIS** that **CAPTURES** us ??

Some crisis that **so consumes us**
that we are initially overwhelmed

& we go right into **Mourning** – **Fasting** - & **Praying**

For some of us it's a crisis event with our **CHILDREN**

Or maybe it's a shocking **MEDICAL** report out of the blue

Or maybe some **FAMILY** crisis that drives us to our knees in agony

& God **IMPRESSES** something on us - in such a **great way**
that we **cannot barely** lift our head from **PRAYER**

All we can do **INITIALLY** – is to **CRY OUT** to God
on behalf of those we love

& when **Nehemiah** was faced with the **FULL FORCE**
of the **TRUE CONDITION** of the people of God

He responded in **ONE WAY**

HE **HIT** HIS **KNEES** - & HE **STAYED THERE**

& HE interceded FOR them in;

Mourning

Fasting

Praying

Alexander MacLaren says:

***No man will do worthy work at rebuilding the walls
who has not wept over the ruins***

Nehemiah didn't rush off - head-long into action

He didn't [**AT FIRST**] **Pound his Fist** & say
Let's Change some things

ALTHO HE WILL end up **POUNING** His Fist
& he **WILL** bring radical change to God's people

He **DIDN'T START** there !!

He started at the **POWER SOURCE** - He started in **PRAYER**

He accepted the **great burden** that God had made **REAL** to him
& he immediately **began** to **intercede** for God's People

Do you see it ??

& so – If God has a **WORK** for US – in our Lives

He may very well **BEGIN** by **SHOWING** us
the true condition - of the people He's calling us to

& He may very well bring
a **CRUSHING BURDEN** upon us

to **drive us** into **intercession** for those people

It may be in your **OWN LIFE**

It may be in your **OWN FAMILY**

It may be in your **CHURCH**, or anywhere in this **WORLD**

If God is placing a **Crushing Concern** on your heart

it may **very well mean** - **HE** is **preparing you** for His Service
to **those** for whom He has - **so burdened you**

& so – Nehemiah **PRAYS**
he prays **hard**, and he prays **long**

way before considering **human assistance**
Nehemiah turned to **God**

Even tho **Nehemiah** had the ear of the **King**
he **didn't put his trust** in the King

instead he **put his trust**
in the One **Far More Powerful** than the KING

The **God of Israel** – Who is **OUR GOD**

Nehemiah **KNEW** where to go
To get things started off **RIGHT**

& so - **let's look** at his **prayer**

Nehemiah begins his prayer
Just like WE should begin our **prayers**

By recognizing **WHO** God **IS** (Adoration)

Neh 1:5 - NLT

5 Then I said, "O Lord (Yaweh – covenant name), ***God of heaven***
(sovereignty), ***the great and awesome God*** (omnipotence) ***who***

keeps his covenant of unfailing love with those who love him and obey his commands (God's faithfulness),

The **Covenant Keeping** – **Sovereign** –
Omnipotent – **Faithful** – GOD !!

THAT'S the way to **start a prayer**, right?

& then – **after Nehemiah** reminds **HIMSELF** of **WHO** God IS
He moves right in - **to CONFESSION**

Remember – He's **interceding** for the people
But he **includes himself** – in the **confession** of sin

Neh 1:6-7 - NLT

6 listen to my prayer (not a command but reassuring cry)! ***Look down and see me praying night and day*** (continually) ***for your people Israel. I confess that we have sinned against you. Yes, even my own family and I have sinned!***

7 We have sinned terribly by not obeying the commands, decrees, and regulations that you gave us through your servant Moses.

Nehemiah confesses **HIS** sins & the sins of **the people**
for **NOT** obeying God's commands through **MOSES**

then, after Nehemiah's **confession** - he **does a great thing** - -
something we've been **teaching** people here

He **prays God's Word** back to Him

Neh 1:8-9 – NLT

8 "Please remember what you told your servant Moses: 'If you are unfaithful to me, I will scatter you among the nations.

9 But if you return to me and obey my commands and live by

them, then even if you are exiled to the ends of the earth, I will bring you back to the place I have chosen for my name to be honored.'

Nehemiah is praying scripture
right out of **LEV** & **DEUT**

he may've been a **high level servant** to a **Babylonian King**
but this cupbearer **KNEW** his Scripture

& He **KNEW** how to use **God's Own Word**
right in his prayer !!

& Then – in **V.10** – Nehemiah **REALLY** reminds God
of His **own power** toward His **own people**

Neh 1:10 – NLT

10 “The people you rescued by your great power and strong hand are your servants.

He's going back to **THE EXODUS** from EGYPT now

He's saying - God I'm praying for YOUR People

the ones you have a **COVENANT** with
the ones you've **RESCUED** by your great power & strong hand

I'm praying for **YOUR people** (your servants)

& let's **remember** something about prayer right here

Prayer is **NOT** informing God
of something He **DOESN'T** Know About !!

God's **NOT saying** to Nehemiah

“Oh, thanks for reminding me”

& yet - **PRAYER CHANGES THINGS**

But we **need to be clear** on one thing for sure

The **FIRST THING** Prayer changes – **IS US !!!**

& in these Vs's Nehemiah is Praying

The **TRUTH** of **WHO** God is – *which God already knows*

He's **Confessing** his & the people's **sins** – *which God knows*

He's **Rehearsing** the Great **PROMISES**

& the Great **POWER** of God – *which God already knows*

& the **PRIMARY THING** that is changing in this Prayer
IS NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah is **BEING PREPARED**

IN the midst of his own prayer

Do you see it ??

God is PREPARING Nehemiah BY;

Putting this **Crushing Burden** on him for the people

Driving him to days of **Fasting & Prayer**

Causing him to pray the **Great truths & Promises** of God

And ***THEN FINALLY . . .***

He Leads Nehemiah to make his Petition to God

Neh 1:11 – NLT

11 O Lord, please hear my prayer! Listen to the prayers of those of us who delight in honoring you. Please grant me success today by making the king favorable to me. Put it into his heart to be kind to me.” . . .

AFTER:

Exalting WHO God IS

Confessing both his & the people’s sins

Praying God’s own Word back to Him

Rehearsing God’s Past Victories for His people

AFTER ALL THAT – After DAYS (even months) of that . . .

Nehemiah prays;

Please grant me success today by making the king favorable to me. Put it into his heart to be kind to me.

**Do you see how much space
the Actual **PETITION** takes up in this prayer**

Not that much space – right ?

How about with our Prayers ?

Can we say that about **OUR own prayers ?**

Pls hear me - When God prepares **YOU
for a work He is calling **YOU** to**

He will **BEGIN** by giving you - a **Great Burden** for His people

He will **THEN** drive you - to **Serious Sacrificial** prayer

He will then **PREPARE YOU** – **IN** that **Prayer & IN that Burden**
As an **Intercessor** for His people

Until you are ready to cast off . . .

All your own **comforts** of this life
& all your own **goals** of this life

& He will **KEEP** you there - Until you are **READY**
To **truly ask Him**

To **make a way** for you to USED by Him
no Matter what it **costs** you personally

& I promise you – **it WILL cost** you something

In the last words in **CH 1 of Nehemiah** – We read . . .

*. . . **In those days I was the king's cup-bearer.***

& **THAT** – is the beginning – of what it **COST** Nehemiah
To be **used by God** – **for the benefit** of God's people

Nehemiah is headed to a place

that is a **FAR CRY** from the **Winter Palace**
of the most **Power King** in the World

In order to be **used by God**
for the benefit of God's people

You & I may **not** have to **give up** the *Palace of the King*
But - **there will** indeed **be a cost**

But there are – **Immeasurable Blessings**
In **responding** to the **Call** of God

***To Forfeit what we can't keep
In order to Gain what we can Never Lose***

Mat 16:25 – ESV

25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Is God Preparing YOU – to build a Wall of Testimony

Around your **Own** Life

Around your **Family's** Life

Around your **Church's** Life – or somewhere **Else**

WATCH & PRAY – to SEE the Burden of God

& then **Continue to PRAY** - & **Carry** that Burden
Until God gives you Opportunity **– to ACT**

Which is exactly what **we'll see** – **NEXT WEEK**
In **Nehemiah**

Let's Pray