

Text: Nehemiah 1:1-11

Intro: We've been talking about , where's "God in the midst of crisis" for the past 3 weeks. This is week 4 of the sermon series. Where's God when it seems like the walls surrounding the securities of my life are broken down and the gates are burned with fire? (Where's God in the midst of my personal crisis?)

- Does He know?
- Does He see?
- Does He care?
- Will life ever be the same as it once was when I enjoyed the security of His love and the assurance obedience once gave me?

In the book of Nehemiah we read of a man named Nehemiah who was the Kings cup bearer in the time of King Artaxerxes. A cup bearer was a very trusted position to hold. He had the responsibility of keeping the King from being poisoned, by tasting himself the very wine the King would drink before the King, so that he would die first, in the event that someone would seek to poison the King. Very honorable position.

What does this tell you about Nehemiah? That he was a man who understood about laying yourself down before others. Putting others needs before himself. Sacrificing his life for the life of another. Even for a man that wasn't necessarily his friend, definitely not his brother.

I. Nehemiah Ch 1, God puts it into Nehemiah's heart to go back and rebuild the walls and gates.

A. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel God moved in the heart of King Cyrus of Persia to set a decree to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

1. This was prophesied in Jeremiah that God would do this.

-
2. The Persians were now ruling over Babylon.
 3. 70yrs after being taken into captivity God begins the work of returning worship to Him back in Jerusalem by rebuilding the temple.
 4. But only a remnant leave Babylon and return to do this work.
 - a. But the temple gets rebuilt
 5. Interesting thing happens though (Ezra 3). The old men weep while the other younger generation begin to shout with joy.
 - a. (Ah the good ol days)

B. Then 60yrs later God moves in the heart of Ezra to go back to Jerusalem to restore the spiritual condition of the people. Ezra goes back to teach the Tora and rebuild the community and to return the peoples hearts to worship God. By going back to the word of God.

1. Many of us who have experienced the glory of the good ol days; the joy of our salvation at the first. Like the elders who seen the glory of the old temple, we remember what it was like when we first were saved.
 - a. Our hearts right before Him, our worship filled with gratitude , hungered for the word of God and couldn't get enough – even in prayer.
 - b. You could look around your life and see the blessings like the great walls around a city. Gates opening opportunity and closing the enemy out from attack.
 - c. ***The good ol days***
2. But like the children of Israel, you may have walked away from your true worship. Allowed some false idol to be erected.
 - a. God sent warnings – but you didn't head.

-
- b.** Over and over until sin finally had its way. You find yourself somewhere you didn't meant to be. Babylon. Captive.
- 3.** But just like God moved in the heart of Zerubbabel to rebuild the altar and the temple of worship; God moved on your heart to return , to rebuild in your heart the altar, the temple of worship once again.
- a.** And like God moved on the heart of Ezra to return the people back to the study of the word of God and to return the spiritual condition of their lives; so He did with you.
- 4.** But there was still more God was wanting to do. Rebuild those walls. Those walls that reflected strength and defense. That showed the blessings and the hand of God on this nations capital.
- C.** And that's where we get to Nehemiah. He's a cup bearer to the now King Artaxerxes. He knows about the decree that went forth to rebuild the altar and temple. He knows about the move on Ezra's heart to return the people to the word of God and to restore their spiritual condition.
- 1.** So when Hanani one of his brethren from Judah with other men came he asks how's everything going back home.
- a.** Expecting to hear great things.
- i.** Altar, temple, Tora
- b.** No, instead he hears that they are in great distress and reproach.
- 2.** The initial report was "It's all bad". **"The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem also broken, and it's gates are burned with fire"**
- a.** Sometimes you want to be careful what you ask and who you ask. You just might get the truth.

-
- i. The truth according to their eyes.
 - b. "Wait a minute, the altar's been rebuilt, the temple's been rebuilt, worship's been restored the word of God has been re-established why is there this crisis, and where is God?"
 - i. Nehemiah could've gotten very discouraged and begin to blame God. *"We've done all we were supposed to do and look – we still are in distress"*
 - ii. "I've tried the God thing, it didn't work for me"
 - iii. "It seems that when I start going to church – praying – reading my bible things only get worse"
 - c. (Talk about Peter walking on the water)
 - Jesus sends them ahead.
 - Comes to them at 4th watch 3am- 6am
 - Something about fighting a battle for so long.
 - You tend to forget how good God is . What He looks like
 - "If it's you, command me to come to you on the water"
 - But when he saw the wind was boisterous....
 - The implications of this story is keep your eyes on Jesus not the storm.
 - Some of us have had our eyes on the storm , or the crisis so long we forgot how good God is, and even what He looks like. (Tell Illust.)

3. Ps 46:1-3 (expound) God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear,
Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be
carried into the midst of the sea; 3 Though its waters roar and be
troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling.

- a. **Ps 46:10** Be still, and know that I am God; I will be
exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

D. So what ends up happening with Nehemiah? Well, he gets word of the condition of the walls and gates. And instead of talking about the good old days and complaining about the present, or keeping his focus on the bad condition so much that He gets mad at God – blaming God with some sort of spiritual Alzheimer's, forgetting what God is like; he instead goes straight to prayer and fasting.

- **He confesses his and the nations sin against God.**
 - "We've acted corruptly against you and have not kept your word"
- **He puts God in remembrance of His word and promises He gave Moses.** "If you are unfaithful I will scatter you but If you return to me and keep my commands I will gather you from all the farthest parts of the earth and bring you back to the place I've chosen for My Name."
 - "Lord hear 'Our prayer'". (All who seek to do your will)
- **Then he prays and asks God to give him favor before the King**

1. To make a long story short he gets favor from the King and permission to go back and repair the walls of Jerusalem.

a. When he gets there, he finds opposition. Sanballat and Tobiah and Gesham – **"who were deeply distressed that a man had come to seek the well being of the children of Israel"**

b. He arose one night to go and take an evaluation of the damage.