

Question, Contemplation, Prayer

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. **Slide2** Good Friday Communion Service 7-7:30am. Cross Walk 11am Temeku Theater. Easter 7, 8:30, 10am.
- B. **Slide3** Men's Breakfast this Sat morn 7:30-9am in gym. Suggested donation \$5 at door.
- C. **Slide4** Steve & Oddny Gumaer, from Partners Relief & Dev. will be sharing this Sunday.

I. Slide5 Intro: Question, Contemplation, Prayer

- A. Originally Nehemiah was a part of Ezra in the Hebrew bible. *The story continues.*
- B. The Returns:
 - 1. **Trip #1** 49,897 people return [Zerubbabel leads, 538bc] [purpose rebuild temple]
 - 2. **Trip #2** 1,754 return [Ezra is in] (80 yrs. later) [purpose to rebuild the people]
 - 3. **Trip #3** Nehemiah leads (14 yrs. later) [purpose to rebuild the wall]
- C. The Book Outline:
 - 1. **Slide6** Nehemiah can be broken up:
 - a) Ch.1-6 The **Physical Construction** of the Wall around Jerusalem.
 - b) Ch.7-13 The **Spiritual Restoration** of the People.
 - 2. **Slide7** Another way of looking at it is:
 - a) 1:1-2:10 **Cupbearer**. 2:11-ch.6 **Foreman**. Ch.7-13 **Governor**.
 - (1) 3 roles...1 man...1 heart for God.
- D. Chapter Outline: Nehemiah's Question. Nehemiah's Contemplation. Nehemiah's Prayer.

II. Slide8 NEHEMIAH'S QUESTION (1-3)

- A. The setting (1)
 - 1. Was in **Sushan/Susa** the winter capitol of Persia (E. of Babylon 200 mi.)
 - 2. This is also the setting for **Esther** just a few years earlier.
- B. The Man:
 - 1. **What do you know about this man...How do you picture him...Maybe you picture him wearing a construction hat?**
 - 2. **Nehemiah = Comfort of Yahweh**
 - a) He was born in captivity over in Babylon.
 - b) He was a **Jewish Patriot & Persian Statesman**.

3. Slide9 He was a Cupbearer (vs.11)

- a) The Egyptians, Persians, Assyrians, & even some Jewish Monarchs had cupbearers. (Solomon did)
- b) **1 Kings 10:4,5** And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food on his table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their apparel, his **cupbearers**, and his entryway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her.
- c) Why is this such an *off-handed* mention of his occupation? *Humility?*
- d) The apocryphal book of **Tobit** (1:22), which comes from the Persian period, speaks of one **cupbearer** as, *The signet, administrator & treasurer under Sennacherib.*
- e) In the ancient world the cupbearer was an *influential official w/direct & constant access to the king.*
 - (1) Not only in the kings **presence** but had a relationship of **familiarity**.
- f) *What does the cupbearer do?* (Drinks the kings cup to check for poison)
- g) Remember the **Butler** & the Baker in Gen.40 w/Joseph? **Then he restored the chief butler to his butler-ship again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.** Gen.40:21
- h) *Was this an important job? You bet your kings life it was!*
 - (1) Literally the king's life was completely in his hand (or in his **plate**).
 - (2) I see Nehemiah's life as a **total life of sacrifice** every time he took a drink.
- i) But Nehemiah in his **humility** has to tell us **what he did for a living** so the next chapter makes sense in his *talking to the king*. 2:1,2

4. We are often called to be **cupbearers** or as McManus says, **we're called to be mushroom eaters**. (asking, **why did that 1st guy eat that 1st mushroom, sea cucumber, raw oyster, or jellyfish?**) **Were they hungry? Starving? trapped at sea long enough?** It's putting a value to **risk & sacrifice**. It's living courageous lives.
 - a) McManus said, *John the Baptist was mushroom eater, and it cost him his life. Jesus, too, was a mushroom eater, and he found himself nailed to a tree. Neither Man saw his 35th birthday. Both of them point to the barbarian way.* [The Barbarian Way, pg. 53]

5. Slide10 Nehemiah is about to give up a life as a **wealthy official** to **build a wall**.
 - a) He will leave the most **beautiful** city in the known world to move to a city that had been in **ruins** for many years.
 - b) He leaves the **protection** from the most powerful city to move to a city that is no longer powerful.

- (1) He was willing to **sacrifice** his own comfort to serve God & His people.
- (2) Nehemiah was *like Christ* then in that they **both**...left a highly exalted position to identify w/the plight of Gods people & lead them to restoration. **Both** had prayerful dependence on God.

c) He later becomes the **Governor** of Judah (10:1).

C. (2) Why does just this question already tell you about Nehemiah? (3)

1. He cared for both **Gods people & Gods city** (*which he's never personally seen*)

D. **Slide11** (3) Why were *broken down walls* so important?

1. I have a few broken boards in my cedar fence at home that need mending... **but** it's not the highest on my priority list.

2. Un-walled cities in ancient times had **no defense** against enemies.

a) They were thus dismissed as **insignificant** cities.

b) So, for Jerusalem to *lack walls* was a **disgrace** to the city God has chosen. **And** it brought **dishonor** to the Lord.

3. **What the walls were to Jerusalem, are our lives** are before God.

a) Is there any rebuilding/reconstruction needed in the walls of **your** life?

b) **Anything in your life left in ruins?** - usually starts with a crack. **Then** a loose piece of stone or mortar. **Then** a hole. **Next** weeds of carnality start growing in there.

Now, the enemy has gained access into your life.

c) **It's time to rebuild that wall in your life.** It's a necessary hedge or wall of protection.

(1) **A wall encloses:** regarding purity Sol says, *a garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.*

(2) **A wall divides:** its a protective & restrictive barrier that only you can set up in your life that help you to maintain your convictions.

(3) **There are spiritual Hedges provided by God.** Job 1:9,10 **So Satan answered the LORD and said, Does Job fear God for nothing? Have **You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side?** Only if God **lowers the hedge**, and that for His own purposes, can disaster strike.**

(4) **There are spiritual Hedges we must plant/build.** Prov. 25:28 **Whoever has no rule over his own spirit Is like a city broken down, without walls.**

III. Slide12 NEHEMIAH'S CONTEMPLATION (4)

- A. He was immediately burdened...**Distance** didn't make a Difference.
1. It was approx. 400 miles away.
- B. He was burdened for his city...are you for yours?
1. He didn't say, *hey Hanani* (huh`NAY`nigh), *not my problem!*
- C. No, He turned **tears** into **prayers**. He turned from **man** to **God**.
1. He prayed about this for **4 months** (dates in 1:1 & 2:1; Dec.-April)
- D. Do we ever mourn for God's church today?
1. Have we ever sat down, wept, mourned, prayed or fasted for the state of the Church?
 2. Slide13 G. Cambell Morgan said, *We should deal much more **successfully** with **men** if, like Nehemiah, we dealt more **largely** with **God**.*
 - a) Slide14 *Meet & conquer your enemies **before** you see them.* (in prayer)

IV. Slide15 NEHEMIAH PRAYER (5-11)

- A. Slide16 We find here that he is a *man of prayer* (10 times in this book).
1. The book **starts** & **ends** in prayer.
 2. It shows him praying **day & night**. (6)
 3. **Prayer should be as natural to the believer as breathing.**
 4. Did you know that our knees don't knock when we kneel on them?
- B. (5-11) What did Nehemiah think about his God? *He believed in a Great God who...*
1. Slide17a He believed in a great God who **kept** His promises (5,8,9)
 - a) Jer.29:10 For thus says the LORD: After 70 years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you & perform My good word toward you, & cause you to return to this place.
 - b) In vs.8,9 He reminds the Lord of His gracious promises.
 - (1) Not that God forgot, **but** the plea is to **activate** His Word.
 2. Slide17b He believed in a great God to **confess** to & be **forgiven** by (6b,7)
 - a) Just like Ezra, Nehemiah **identifies himself** with the sins & sorrows of the nation.
 3. Slide17c He believed in a great God who **hears** His people when they call out to Him (10,11)
 - a) It seems like he's joined here by *a little band of prayer warriors* that saw & joined in on his prayer. (10)

(1) Here's how to grow a prayer meeting... *pray till others are praying with you.*

b) (11) At the end of vs.11 we find a great prayer we can pray as we go forth into **our** daily calling, let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, & grant him mercy in the sight of this man.

(1) You've heard of the prayer of Jabez...this is the the Prayer of *Nehemiah-bez.*

(2) We all have an Artaxerxes (**this man**) to deal with on a daily basis, that we should be **prepared** (in prayer) to meet.

C. **Pray...but then be prepared to work.**

1. **Slide18** He was not content merely to **get** answers to prayer; he wanted to **be** an answer to prayer.¹

2. Alexander Whyte (Bible Characters of the OT & NT) wrote of Nehemiah, *he will not begin till he has counted the cost & then he will not stop till he has finished the work.*

3. Many problems. A run down city. A weak nation. **But one man** made the difference

a) **Slide19a** I read about **David Livingstone**. Scottish **doctor, missionary, & explorer** considered one of the most important European explorers of Africa in the early/mid 1800's. Latin grammar at age 10 in the machine shop. He originally wanted to become a missionary to **China**. Problems there, so he went to **Africa**. He saw something written on a map that grabbed his heart...written across the map of **Slide19b** Africa from the middle to the far south...*Unexplored Territory.*

b) **Slide20** *One man that made an incredible difference.* [maps/medicine/missions work]

D. **Slide21** God is still seeking men & women willing to sacrifice to do his work.

1. **Are you available?**

2. His sterling character stood the acid test, for he was a man of **dependence upon God**. And that's all you need to be, a man/women **completely dependent on God**...**That's it...are you available?**

a) **Here I am Lord, send me.**

b) **For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.** 2 Chron.16:9

3. **What steps** can you take this week to strengthen your prayer life?

a) Weep, Pray, & make yourself available.

¹ Warren Wiersbe, With the Word, pg. 264.