

A LIFE THAT COUNTS FOR GOD

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Nehemiah 1:1-11

1. Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries.
2. Last week we focused on Ezra and saw that he had set his heart to study the word of God, to practice the word of God, and to teach the word of God.
3. I pointed out that Ezra was an exceptional man, and one we would do well to emulate.
4. We also saw that the good hand of God was upon Ezra.
5. God used a man named Zerubbabel to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.
6. He chose and used Ezra to guide and direct the rebuilding of the religious life of the Jewish people.
7. Then, Nehemiah arrived to govern the people and to rebuild the walls of the city.
NOTE: This momentous task was completed in 52 days (6:15) in spite of serious and ongoing opposition from those who opposed the work God wanted done and the welfare of the Jewish people. 2:9-10
8. Both Ezra and Nehemiah lived lives that counted for God; their lives had temporal and eternal significance.
9. Our goal should be to live a life that matters now and for eternity.
10. For that to happen what was true about Nehemiah must be true about us.

I. Nehemiah was a man who cared.

- A. A number of exiled Jews, starting with Daniel and his three friends, rose to positions of power and trust in Babylonian Empire and in the Medio Persian Empire.
- B. Nehemiah was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes.
NOTE: His job was to protect the king from being poisoned.
- C. At some point a delegation arrived from Jerusalem that included Nehemiah's brother, Hanani.
- D. Because he cared Nehemiah asked about Jerusalem and the Jewish people who had escaped or survived the Exile.
- E. Upon hearing the dire condition that the people were in, and that a big part of the problem was that the city had no protection, Nehemiah sat down and wept for days.
NOTE: This did not mean that Nehemiah neglected his position as the king's cupbearer. There are times when we have to put on a brave face and keep functioning even though our hearts are broken.

II. Nehemiah was a man who prayed.

- A. He prayed because he cared deeply.
- B. He was preoccupied with prayer for days. 4
NOTE: He went without food and sleep because of his concern. 6
- C. He exalted God as he prayed. 5
- D. He prayed from a loving and obedient heart. 5

- E. He declared himself to be God's servant. 6
- F. He confessed the private and corporate sins of the people including himself. 6-7
- G. He relied on the character and promises of God. 8-9
- H. He reminded God that the Jews were His covenant people. 10
- I. He apparently enlisted other to pray as well. 11

III. Nehemiah was a man who was on a mission.

- A. Because he cared he prayed, and because he prayed a plan began to form in his mind.
- B. He knew that he would have to have the king's consent and help so he prayed a specific prayer related to that fact. 11
- C. He waited four months for the right opportunity to present itself, but when it did he was ready. 2:1-8
- NOTE: Nehemiah was instant in prayer. 2:4
- D. Nehemiah was successful because the good hand of His God was on him. 2:8
- E. If we would count for God we must see ourselves on mission for God.

IV. Nehemiah was a man who inspired others.

- A. After determining the scope of the problem and what needed to be done about it (2:11-16) Nehemiah called the Jewish leaders together and issued a challenge. 2:17
- B. After hearing Nehemiah's testimony the leaders declared, "Let us arise and build." 2:18
- C. Not only did the leaders agree that the work needed to be done, but they also put their hands to the good work.
- D. The people followed the example of their leaders, and the work progressed and was eventually completed because, "the people had a mind to work." 4:6
- NOTE: Spiritual progress and church growth require, among other things, work.

APPLICATION

1. This message suggests some questions each of us must ask ourselves.
 - a. What do I care most about?
 - b. What does my prayer life look like?
 - c. Am I on a mission, and what is it?
 - d. What am I doing to encourage others? Hebrews 10:19-25

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 **let us** draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 **Let us** hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and **let us** consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.
2. A final question: am I living a life that really matters?