

Friday, September 28, 2018

Willing

Ezra 4-5

But Zerubbabel, Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, "You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us."

Ezra 4:3

The work that has been given to the exiles is important work and it has been entrusted to them. When it begins to look successful, some of the enemies of Judah and Benjamin come sniffing around to see if they can get in on the process. They claim to be worshipers of God who have great interest in getting the temple rebuilt. But it is clear these are not followers of the God of Jerusalem. They can have no part in this important work and Zerubbabel and Jeshua make that very clear. Immediately, this brings oppression from the very ones who said they were allies. They set out to frustrate the plans and discourage the people who are working on the temple. They hired people to make sure the discouragement took hold. It caused the people to become afraid and the work stopped. It was very important that these imposters not be allowed to pollute the work of the LORD, even if it meant a delay.

Dear God, how I long to be about Your work without distractions, and yet it seems so many times that I allow myself to be paralyzed by fear from voices outside of Your will. Please give me a boldness to stay focused on the call You have on my life. Let me serve You with reckless abandon! Amen.

Saturday, September 29, 2018

Hand of the LORD

Ezra 6-7

Praise be to the LORD, the God of our fathers, who has put it into the king's heart to bring honor to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem in this way and who has extended his good favor to me before the king and his advisers and all the king's powerful officials. Because the hand of the LORD my God was on me, I took courage and gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

Ezra 7:27-28

It is amazing to read the decrees of the kings—Cyrus, Darius, and finally, Artaxerxes. God had clearly stirred in their hearts. From their vantage point, they knew there was a God that was not being appeased. It was the God of Jerusalem. Their desire was to make sure that there was not any god that may not be finding favor with them. But God used their selfish desire for His purpose. When I read Ezra 7 and the letter that Ezra received, I can see why Ezra would have great boldness to go ahead with what he had been called to do—the very thing that he had been trained to do. He could have boldness because of the absolute certainty he had that the hand of the LORD his God was upon him. This call to return to Jerusalem followed many years of prayer, seeking the LORD's favor and pleading for Him to reveal His hand to His nation. Our God is faithful and remembers His children. I must learn to seek the hand of the LORD in my life. I must long for His presence and learn how to linger there. Then I, like Ezra, can take courage and go on to that which He has called me with great boldness.

Dear God, lay Your hand upon me. Fill me with Your presence that I may have boldness to go forward in the call You have placed on my life! Amen.

September 24 - 29, 2018



by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka
a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, September 24, 2018

God of Jerusalem

2 Chronicles 32-33

They spoke about the God of Jerusalem as they did about the gods of the other peoples of the world—the work of men’s hands. 2 Chronicles 32:19

Make no mistake. There is a God of Jerusalem and He is the one and only true God. All other gods are created by the created. Sennacherib would soon discover that this was true. He wrote letters insulting the Lord, the God of Israel, and Hezekiah, the king that He had placed on the throne. This was not a wise choice. Sennacherib was about to discover that the God of Jerusalem is much different than the other gods. Other gods—including those of Assyria—are gods of man’s design. They are made by the hands and the imagination of people. There is no power in those gods that can stand against God, who has created all there is and is sovereign over it all. Sennacherib would learn that the only victories he ever had were allowed or decreed by the one true God. It would cost him his life. The Israelites did not have to fight. One angel annihilated all the fighting men, the leaders, and officers in the camp of the Assyrian king (32:21). This left no question as to who is God. My God is the God of Jerusalem. He is great and powerful and mighty and He is not to be mocked. What can men say against my God? Am I ready to defend my God as He defends me? Am I ready to stand and say that my God is God, no matter what others may say or think?

Dear God, thank You that You have revealed to me that You are God. Thank You that You still reign over all there is—including Jerusalem and Your people. Help me to be bold, knowing that You are my defender and my protector and that nothing can separate me from You or Your love. Amen.

Tuesday, September 25, 2018

Because

2 Chronicles 34-35

Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before God when you heard what he spoke against this place and its people, and because you humbled yourself before me and tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD. 2 Chronicles 34:27

Josiah walked in the ways of his father David. He sought to serve the LORD with his whole heart. The previous kings had once again allowed the temple to fall into ruin. Josiah ordered that it be rebuilt. In the process, the Book of the Law was found. This speaks highly of Josiah. Even without the Book of the Law, Josiah’s heart was tender toward the LORD. When the Book was found and read, Josiah knew what it meant. He knew that the people had turned from God and that, because God is righteous and just, rightful judgment was coming. Josiah responded in humble repentance before the LORD. It would have been possible for Josiah to respond in pride. After all, he was the one who was cleaning up the mess that was left for him. But rather than look at his accomplishments, he looked at the holiness of God and he was humbled in God’s presence. God hears the words of the humble king. While God opposes the proud, He gives grace to the humble. May I always be humble before God, remembering that even my best efforts are no source of pride before Him.

Dear God, thank You for this great reminder of my need to be humble before You. Please continue to reveal to me the areas of my life that need to be exposed before You. As You expose those areas, help me not make excuses for them. Help me be beautifully broken before You. Amen.

Wednesday, September 26, 2018

Destroyed

2 Chronicles 36-Ezra 1

He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the LORD’S temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. They set fire to God’s temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there. 2 Chronicles 36:18-19

The account of the Chronicler comes to an end. The glory of God has departed from the temple (Ezekiel 10) and so the temple is just a building to be destroyed. Nebuchadnezzar has not destroyed God—or even the dwelling place of God. Without the protective presence of God, Jerusalem is exposed and totally destroyed. The promise God made when Solomon dedicated the temple was conditional upon the hearts of the people of Israel. God’s patience was exhausted and so the temple lies in ruins. I must remember that this account comes after the building of the second temple and the rebuilding of the walls. This account is given by the Chronicler as a reminder that God alone is worthy of praise. In fact, first and second Chronicles are a guide for the postexilic nation, reminding them how to view the God of David and how to worship Him in the temple. The reminder is also a warning, lest the temple come to ruin again. The returning exiles have an opportunity to follow the commands of God and again have pure worship of the LORD taking place in the temple He has allowed to be rebuilt.

Dear God, take and hold Your rightful place on the throne of my life. May I always be mindful that I am a temple of Your presence and Your grace. May I never defame You in anything that I do or anything that I am. Amen.

Thursday, September 27, 2018

Sang

Ezra 2-3

With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: “He is good; his love to Israel endures forever.” And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. Ezra 3:11

I love reading all the ways that singing is involved in the worship of God by Israel. This verse harkens back to the praise of David in 1 Chronicles 16. It is a phrase that finds its way into so many places in Scripture. The Lord is good and His love endures forever. Genuine praise and thanksgiving of Almighty God seems to express itself in song. It is on the lips of infants that God has ordained praise (Psalm 8:2). It has been said that praise opens the door for God to rule. The exiles have come back and face a daunting task. They are to rebuild the temple. They have made it a priority to rebuild the altar and begin again the sacrifices to the Lord in accordance with the Law. And now, they have laid the foundation of the temple. What were the emotions that flooded through their hearts? I imagine being one of those who was willing to take on this assignment from God. I imagine standing up and saying, “Yes! I will go and rebuild the temple so that we can once again worship God on His holy mountain!” These people have packed up and come to a broken down city to begin to rebuild the city of God. They are thankful for the assignment, but they are more thankful for their God who is faithful and whose love never fails. They break out in the timeless song.

Dear Lord, help me live my life with a song on my lips—a song of praise for my Redeemer, who is good and whose love endures forever! Amen.