**Prayer, Passion, and Providence: God-given Burdens**

**Sermon Based Discussion (September 11, 2016)**

**Strengthen Our Hands (Nehemiah)**

**WARM UP**

1. If you could ask your boss/employer/parent/etc. for any favor and you knew the answer would be “yes,” what would you ask?

*Meet Nehemiah. What may be helpful to know is that Nehemiah lived in the mid 400s BC. He was a Jew by birth living in the Persian Empire. He’s got quite a good life in Persia—being part of the royal court daily as the king’s cupbearer was probably an impressive job. But then news comes of the outside world. And his life will never be the same as he experiences a God-given burden to pray for and plan for.*

**INTO THE BIBLE (Read Nehemiah 1:1-2:8)**

1. What observations can you make about the type of person Nehemiah is from these opening paragraphs of the book?
2. What can we learn about God from Nehemiah’s prayer to God?

**UNDERSTANDING**

1. Why did the king’s question make Nehemiah afraid?
2. In verse 8, Nehemiah said that God’s good hand was upon him. What made Nehemiah believe that?

**DIFFERENCE**

1. How is Nehemiah a role model for us in terms of his prayer life?
2. How can we discern if a burden is God-given rather than something from our own flesh or selfish desires? How did Nehemiah know?
3. How can we tell if favorable circumstances is actually “the good hand of God” upon us, and thus pointing us in a certain life direction?

**APPLICATION**

1. What are one or two items in your life that God may be setting up as a burden for you to personally pray about?
2. Pray for each other that God might show us what burdens he wants us to pray for in the coming days. For many of us, that “first burden” might be the burden of living our lives our way instead of God’s way. Pray that we all might respond to God accordingly.