

## GOD RESTORES HIS PEOPLE

### God's Servants on Mission

#### Nehemiah 2 & 3

**Big Idea:** Understand that God uses servant leaders to accomplish his mission.

#### What is a servant?

- A servant surrenders his rights to God.
- A servant does the will of God.
- A servant depends on the provisions of God.

> **What is God's mission?** God is restoring all things from the fall.

#### Six characteristics of a servant:

##### 1. God's servants live on mission (1:4, 11; 2:2).

- a. Nehemiah lived on mission because he cared about what God cared about (1:4, 11; 2:1).

1:4 As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

1:11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." Now I was cupbearer to the king.

- b. Nehemiah lived on mission because he knew God had planted him in a strategic place (1:11e -2:1).

1:1e Now I was cupbearer to the king.

2:1 In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence.

##### 2. God's servants fear God more than man (1:11; 2:2-6).

- a. Nehemiah knew he would encounter fearful situations (v. 2).

2 And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid.

#### Psalm 118:5-7

5 Out of my distress I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me free.

6 The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? 7 The LORD is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.

- b. Nehemiah was empowered by the fear of the Lord to exercise daring faith (v. 3-5).

(1) He revealed his burden (v. 3).

3 I said to the king, "Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"

(2) He prayed (v. 4).

Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" So I prayed to the God of heaven.

(3) He made bold requests (v. 5).

5 And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it."

> This was the supernatural work of God (v. 8a).

And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.

#### Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.

##### 3. God's servants trust God for provision (2:1, 5-9).

- a. Nehemiah was prepared (2:1).

2:1 In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king.

**Ephesians 2:10**

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Organizing has crowded out agonizing. There is too much working before men and too little waiting before God. There is more and more motion, but less and less unction.

**J. Sidlow Baxter – *Explore The Book*, p.238**

b. Nehemiah's request was granted (v. 6).

6 And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), "How long will you be gone, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time.

c. Nehemiah's needs were provided (vv. 7-8).

- Passports (v. 7) And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah,
- Timber (v. 8) and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy."
- Protection (v. 9) Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen.

**4. God's servants persevere through opposition (2:10, 11-13, 19-20).**

a. Nehemiah faced opposition because he was doing the will of God (v. 10).

10 But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

**2 Thessalonians 3:1-3**

3 Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, 2 and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.

b. Nehemiah responded to the opposition (v.19).

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?"

▪ He responded wisely (vv. 11-13).

11 So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days. 12 Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There was no animal with me but the one on which I rode. 13 I went out by night by the Valley Gate to the Dragon Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire.

**2 Corinthians 2:10-11**

10 Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, 11 so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

▪ He responded boldly (v. 20).

20 Then I replied to them, "The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem."

Nehemiah shows us how to respond to opposition:

> Rely on God (v. 20a) - "The God of heaven will make us prosper."

> Remember who you are (v. 20b) - "and we his servants will arise and build,"

> Refuse to compromise (v. 20c) – “but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.”

## 5. God’s servants motivate others to live on mission (2:14-18).

a. Nehemiah sought to understand the context of his mission (2:11-15).

14 Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King’s Pool, but there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass. 15 Then I went up in the night by the valley and inspected the wall, and I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. 16 And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, and I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest who were to do the work.

b. Nehemiah helped God’s people see the truth (vv. 17-18).

(1) We are in trouble (v. 17a).

17 Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned.

### > What causes us to not see what God sees?

- Familiarity
- Idolatry

### > How do we fight against familiarity and idolatry?

- Repent daily
- Read and obey the word
- Go on mission trips
- Be stirred up by the preaching of God’s Word

(2) We are suffering reproach (v. 17b).

Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.”

(3) God is at work (v. 18).

18 And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, “Let us rise up and build.” So they strengthened their hands for the good work.

## 6. God’s servants exercise humility (3:1-5).

a. Nehemiah’s vision and humility inspired the people to work (3:1-5).

1 Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brothers the priests, and they built the Sheep Gate. They consecrated it and set its doors. They consecrated it as far as the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Tower of Hananel.

> There are those who would not help (v. 5).

5 And next to them the Tekoites repaired, but their nobles would not stoop to serve their Lord.

b. Nehemiah called them to work together (Ch. 3).

**Eph. 4:16 (NIV)**

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

\* God’s suffering servant Jesus Christ was crucified, buried, and resurrected to restore us to God.

**Philippians 2:5–11**

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the

name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.