

Nehemiah 2 Trusting God's Faithfulness and God's Goodness

Victory in the Face of Opposition

I. Nehemiah Sent to Jerusalem

1 And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before.

- Month of Nisan in 20th year of King Artaxerxes
- **After 4 months of prayer:** Is Nehemiah is ready? Is the King ready?

Sad [Troubled] in the king's presence. Forbidden.
Looking like caught with hand in the cookie jar

Courage is not the absence of fear but being terrified and doing it anyway

"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear - not absence of fear." [Mark Twain]

"Courage isn't having the strength to go on - it is going on when you don't have strength." [Napoléon Bonaparte]

"Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway." [John Wayne]

- **Nehemiah presses on...**

2 Therefore the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart." **So I became dreadfully afraid...**

- **Sorrow of Heart?** Lit. I'm sensing *Naughtiness*
- **Dreadfully afraid:** Lit. Increasingly fearful by the second

Off with his head!

3 [I] and said to the king, "**May the king live forever!** Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?" 4 Then the king said to me, "What do you request?"

God intervenes... **"What is your request?"**

4b...So I prayed to the God of heaven.

Nehemiah Prayer: Quick Silent prayer to the God who hears...

- **Genesis 24:** Unnamed Servant prays silently for a wife for Isaac
- **1 Samuel 1:** Hannah silently prays for a son

Nehemiah: Shoots up one quick silent powerful prayer before pulling the trigger

5 And I said to the king, "**If it pleases the king, and if your servant has**

found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."

Can I take some time off...

6 Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), "**How long** will your journey be? And when will you return?" So it **pleased the king** to send me; and I set him a time.

- Pleased the king to send me
- Pleased the Queen also? Seemed to amaze Nehemiah. Spurgeon thinks it was Esther

Set a time to leave...

7 Furthermore I said to the king, "**If it pleases** the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, 8 and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that **he must give** me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy."

God does not get the glory unless we believe He will act
We are to live in constant expectation that He will act in greater ways than we can imagine

- **Since we're on a role:** Obvious Lord is with us...
 1. **Letters of passage** for all governors beyond Euphrates River
 2. **Letter of credit** to the Keeper of Kings forest for lumber to build...

Gates of the Jerusalem, walls of the Jerusalem and...my house...

Philippians 4:19 God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 3:20 [God] is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think

- Prophet Elisha old
- King of Israel Joash is afraid of coming Syrian army
- Elisha tells Joash he will have victory

2 Kings 13:18 And he said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground"; so he struck three times, and stopped. 19 And the man of God was angry with him, and said, "You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it! But now you will strike Syria only three times." [Unenthusiastic about what God could do]

God wants us to be excited about what He can and wants to do for us

The more we expect/the more He does/the more He gets the Glory

- Letters of Passage and a Credit Card to build the gates/walls and my house...

8b...And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my

God upon me.

The king granted my request according to the *good hand* of my God upon me

- **Nehemiah is given Decree of Artaxerxes to rebuild the walls**
- The prophetic 70 weeks of Daniel begin right here...

Prophet Daniel prophesied to the day when Jesus would ride into Jerusalem

Daniel 9:25 "from the *going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem [Decree of Artaxerxes] Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks*

**From this decree in Nehemiah until Jesus rides into Jerusalem
69 weeks of years [Exactly 483 years]**

- **69 Weeks** of years till Jesus First Coming: Life/Death Resurrection/Assentation
- **2000 Year Pause:** Church Age/Culminating in rapture and Bride/Husband
- **Last week of years:** Seven year tribulation period culminating in **2nd Coming**

Nehemiah gives a very important date:

Beginning of fulfillment of one of the greatest prophesies the world has ever known

- **After decree signed:** Nehemiah leaves Persia for Jerusalem

9 Then I went to the governors in the region beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

- To those who are in God's will/Fear Him/Walk in His Spirit
 1. **God gives Provisions:** Where God guides God provides
 2. **God grants Protection...**

Psalms 34:7 The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them. 8 Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

Whenever God's work about to begin/Opposition is about to start

10 When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of it, they were **deeply disturbed** that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.

- Sanballat the Horonite
- Tobiah the Ammonite

...**deeply disturbed** that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.

- Enemies of Israel become "deeply disturbed"
- Hatred toward Israel is Satanic at its core
- **President Assad of Syria on PBS:** Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde

SUMMARY Nehemiah Sent to Jerusalem

II. Nehemiah Assesses Jerusalem: Glass half-full Guy

While some focus on what's broken...
Nehemiah looks at what it will take to fix it

11 So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days.

- Three days of chilling out...

12 Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode.

- God put it on my heart to do this!
- **Moving with the Spirit:** Pillar of cloud by day fire by night

What work has God put on your heart?

- **Nehemiah riding:** Few men following. It is night...

13 And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. 14 Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass. 15 So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned.

- **Viewed:** Lit. "Probing a wound to see the extent of damage" goal of healing
 1. Due to vast destruction had to go around...
 2. Turned around and back through Valley Gate

16 And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work.

- Good Leaders don't reveal plans until solidified by Lord: **Good Sense of Timing**

"You will often find it best not to commit your plans to others. If you want to serve God, go and do it, and then let other people find it out afterwards. You have no need to tell what you are going to do, and, I may add, there is no need for you retelling what you have done, for very, very frequently God withdraws himself when we boast of what is being done."
[Spurgeon]

17 Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire.

- **Rationale for Proposal to Rebuild:**
 1. People are in Distress
 2. Jerusalem lies waste

3. Gates Burned with fire for 100 years...

Stop standing around looking at one another
Stop believing that this is the way that it has to be. God is with us!

17b...Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach." 18 And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me.

- **"Let us" build the wall**
- **We have both...**
 1. God's good hand
 2. King's Authority

18b...So they said, **"Let us rise up and build."** Then they set their hands to this good work.

- Nehemiah encouraging "God is in this"
- Spirit of God working in hearts

SUMMARY Nehemiah Assesses Jerusalem

III. Enemies Arise

19 **But** when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?"

Whenever God's work about to begin/Opposition is about to start

Some people fear ever stepping out for the LORD, because they know opposition will come. They somehow think their life will be better or easier if they stay in their low, mediocre state before God. What deception! A better life from holding back for Jesus Christ? Tough times are going to come anyway; but when we are growing and stepping forth in the Lord, we are far more equipped to deal with them. [Guzic]

Ambassadors of Discouragement: Found under a rock

- **Sanballat** the Horonite; possibly the Governor of Samaria
- **Tobiah** the Ammonite: Jewish name meaning "The LORD is good"
- **Geshem** the Arab

1. Laughed and Despised:

This scorn may come to us in an inward feeling ("Who am I trying to kid? I must be some kind of fool!"). Or it may come through the words of those who, if they know it or not, are being used by our spiritual enemies. [Guzic]

2. **Mocked:** What do you think you're doing?
3. **Sought to bring fear/paralyze**

"What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?"

- Notice Nehemiah did not show them the King's documents

20 So I answered them, and said to them, "The **God of heaven** Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build..."

- **Boldness in the face of Opposition: We trust in God!**
 1. He will give us success because this is His work
 2. We will have success because we are His servants in His work...

Isaiah 59:19 So shall they fear The name of the Lord from the west, And His glory from the rising of the sun; When the enemy comes in like a flood, The Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.

- Boldness in the face of opposition

"There is a stubbornness about me that never can bear to be frightened at the will of others. My courage always rises at every attempt to intimidate me." [Jane Austen]

- Confrontation is part of being a victorious Christian...get used to it

We will arise...We will build because we are on God's side...

20b...but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."

- Funny when non-believers want to tell us what is right/wrong...

Will you rebel against King Jesus?

John 8:44 You are of your father the devil...

- Always around during God's work. They will be back
- **Nehemiah has a BIG God**

God does not get the glory unless we believe He will act
We are to live in constant expectation that *He will act and in greater ways than we can imagine*