

## Re-Build Committed Faith

### Nehemiah Review:

- God's people, the Israelites, are starting to return to Jerusalem after being exiled for years. Ezra led a group of Jews back, rebuilt God's Temple and through his persistent teaching, some of the people living in Jerusalem turned from their sinful lives back to God.
- Nehemiah is a cupbearer for King Artaxerxes in Persia. Nehemiah is called by God to return to Jerusalem and help rebuild the walls of the city. When Nehemiah asks how the Jews who survived the exile and returned to Jerusalem were doing, he hears that they are not doing well and that the walls of Jerusalem lie in ruin. Nehemiah's response is to weep, mourn, fast, and pray for approximately 4 months.

**Nehemiah 2:1-20 (NIV): We will see Nehemiah's concern is exposed, his request is presented, preparations are made, the rebuilding begins, and adversity is faced.**

### 1. Concern Exposed (Nehemiah 2:1-3)

- Approximately 4 months elapsed from the time Nehemiah received the news about Jerusalem until he was presented with the opportunity to speak to King Artaxerxes.
- During this waiting period, Nehemiah continued to pray and looked for an opportunity to help. We can also safely assume Nehemiah was forming plans for getting the walls rebuilt --- what materials would be needed, how to acquire them and where to rally the workforce.
- Here we see God's timing at work. We are called to join with God in His work; getting ahead of God is never a good idea.

**Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)** <sup>5</sup> Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; <sup>6</sup> in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

- God's delays are not always denials. There are times when patience is required to join with God in His work.

**Psalms 27:14 (NIV)** <sup>14</sup> Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

**Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV)** <sup>8</sup> "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. <sup>9</sup> "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

- Nehemiah displayed great courage in his approach to the king. In the courts of many ancient kings, it was forbidden to be sad in the presence of the king. When Nehemiah looked sad, it could have been taken as a terrible insult to the king.
- Nehemiah could have been fearful because he was asking the king to authorize rebuilding what he had previously stopped. (see **Ezra 4:17-23**).
- Courage is required to move forward by faith, either a small step or a big one. When Nehemiah received the call from God to go to Jerusalem, he didn't necessarily have all the answers, but he answered the call.

**Joshua 1:9 (NIV)** <sup>9</sup> Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

- Nehemiah opened his heart to the king. He referred to Jerusalem as the place where his ancestors are buried; there is an important historical and cultural context here.
- Most ancient people groups treasured their ancestral burial grounds and a family's living members were responsible for preserving and maintaining the burial site. King Artaxerxes knew this, and he sympathized with Nehemiah.
- *How can times of sorrow or fear also become opportunities to grow in your faith?*

### 2. Request Presented (Nehemiah 2:4-5)

- As a faithful servant to the king, Nehemiah comes to the king with a request from a standpoint of character and integrity; he humbly and respectfully approaches the king.

- Nehemiah's heart was to please God, and God granted him favor with the king.
- The quick prayer in verse 4 is a great example of an "arrow prayer", quick and to the point.
- Nehemiah carefully chose his words; instead of telling the king what he wanted to do, Nehemiah sparked the king's compassion and understanding.

**Proverbs 13:17 (NIV)** <sup>17</sup> A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a trustworthy envoy brings healing.

**2 Corinthians 5:20 (NIV)** <sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

- *As Christ follower's, how are we interacting with those that may not know Christ? What can we learn from Nehemiah about prayerful humility?*

### 3. Preparations Made (Nehemiah 2:6-8)

- Nehemiah's plan was specific, selfless and God-honoring. When we do God's word God's way, God is honored and pleased to be gracious to us.
- Nehemiah anticipated that he would encounter resistance from the enemies of God's people, and he knew he needed the king's endorsement, which he received.
- Nehemiah, like Ezra, knew that neither he nor the king of Persa was the decisive player in the restoration of God's people. It was the hand of God at work (Ezra 7:9, 8:18, Neh. 2:18).
- *How do you balance taking personal responsibility and trusting God's sovereignty?*

### 4. Rebuilding Begins (Nehemiah 2:17-18)

- After arriving in Jerusalem and privately examining the conditions around the city, Nehemiah spoke to the citizens and challenged the people to rebuild.
- Nehemiah reminded them of God's providence, protection, and sufficiency. Next, he told them of the king's words of permission and authority; this acknowledgement was in the right order.
- Nehemiah's leadership, the people's partnership, and God's authority inspired them to work.

### 5. Adversity Faced (Nehemiah 2:10, 19-20)

- Even with the gracious hand of God upon Nehemiah, and having the king's support, Nehemiah still faced adversity.
- Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite opposed Nehemiah—they would profit by Jerusalem continuing to lie in ruin. They were afraid of Jerusalem regaining its supremacy in the region as Samaria was the regional power.
- How does adversity come to us? Many times, it comes in the form of fear and false accusations. (2:19)
  - Faith and integrity are the weapons that will defeat ridicule and false accusations.

**Psalms 56:9-11 (NLT)** <sup>9</sup> My enemies will retreat when I call to you for help. This I know: God is on my side! <sup>10</sup> I praise God for what he has promised; Yes, I praise the Lord for what he has promised. <sup>11</sup> I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?

- In verse 20, Nehemiah tells them they have no part in what God is doing in Jerusalem.
  - *As the church, we want to reach the world for Jesus one person at a time. We don't want the world to change the church.*
- When the church is divided, turned inward and ineffective only the kingdom of darkness benefits. The greatest enemy of darkness is the church being unified in heart and purpose.
  - *Do you believe that you have been saved from something and for something? What are you doing to prepare yourself to be used by God?*

**Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)** <sup>10</sup> For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.