

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 1ST, 2021 // BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

### BEFORE THE KING (NEHEMIAH 2:1-8) "DURING THE MONTH OF NISAN"

When Nehemiah 2 starts we see that 4 months has passed from "Chislev" (Nov-Dec) and the month of Nisan (mid-Mar to mid-Apr).

- The date is important because it establishes when permission was given to restore Jerusalem and its walls, and Daniel 9:25 says that 173,880 days from this day the Messiah would be presented to Israel.

Nehemiah **fervently prayed** and **patiently waited** on the Lord for directions. Perhaps praying to God daily, "Lord, if today is the time you would have me speak to the King, then prepare the way."

- When **we wait on the Lord, we are not wasting our time; we are investing it!** Then, we are ready to move by faith when the right time arrives.

### NEHEMIAH SEES AN OPPORTUNITY

He had never been sad in the king's presence before this day, when he lowered his guard, even though it meant great risk.

- Servants in the Persian monarch were not to bring their troubles or even show they were unhappy in front of the king. To do so was a great insult that could result in death.

The king took note of Nehemiah's sadness and had compassion on him, asking him, "Why do you look sad, when you aren't sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart."

- The king was able to sense that Nehemiah was not physically ill, but that his heart was heavy and burdened by something.

He "was overwhelmed with fear" but in faith responded to the King's inquiry into his sadness.

- Faith isn't the absence of fear, but it is a stronger trust in a greater God and His goodness. Faith is the reality of what's hoped for, the proof of what is not seen (Heb 11:1).

He states his sadness because "the graves of his ancestors lies in ruins and its gates burned with fire."

- This would have resonated with the king because respect for ancestral graves would have been something of great importance to people of this time, especially imperial rulers.

### WISE AND HONEST RESPONSE

Some translations state that Nehemiah responded with, "Why should my face not be sad?"

- There is tremendous value in us being honest with those around us and sharing our concerns with someone that can join us in prayer and possibly share wisdom from their experiences and the Bible.

### ANSWERED PRAYER

Nehemiah's prayer was answered, and the King of Persia had compassion on Him (Neh 1:11), even asking him, "what is it you want?"

- "A king's heart is like channeled water in the Lord's hand: He directs it wherever He chooses. (Prov 21:1)" **All world leaders are put into their position of authority by God, and they serve Him, whether they know it or not!**

### NEHEMIAH'S REQUEST

Knowing he had received incredible favor from the king, he made the request of being sent to Judah to rebuild. He even boldly requested two letters from the king.

1. A letter to the governors west of the Euphrates River for safe passage.
2. A letter to Asaph, for timber to rebuild the temple fortress, wall, and his home.

### GIVING GOD THE CREDIT

While it was the king that granted his request, Nehemiah knew that was only because, "the gracious hand of God was on [him]" that his requests were granted.

- Instead of taking credit for what happened, he quickly acknowledged the truth that apart from God, he could do nothing (JN 15:5). It was God's gracious hand guiding and providing for him.

### THE PLANS UNFOLDS (NEHEMIAH 2:9-18)

#### DRAWING ATTENTION

Nehemiah had letters showing he was truly sent by the king as well supplies, captains of the army, and horsemen showing the king partnered with Him in the rebuilding.

- However, when the official caravan arrived, it garnered attention from people who hated the Jews and wanted to keep them from fortifying their city.

### OPPOSITION TO THE WELFARE OF THE ISRAELITES

Sanballat the Horonite, Governor of Samaria, and Nehemiah's chief enemy

- Tobiah the Ammonite, an avowed enemy of the Jews. Probably serving under Sanballat.
- Though their hostility was directed at Nehemiah, **he never took it personal, but as an attack on God's people, the Israelites. "...it hated me first.** (JN 15:18)"

### INSPECTING THE DAMAGE

Nehemiah would learn that someone in his camp was sharing information with Tobiah, who passed it along to Sanballat.

- Wisely, he kept the plan to himself and went at night to inspect the wall with only a few trusted men. There was general knowledge about what he was to accomplish, the "how" would be formed after seeing the extent of the damage.

Nehemiah started at the west side of the city and went counter-clockwise until he returned to his starting point. He made his way around the city, "inspecting" every gate and the remaining wall.

- The word for "inspected" that was used in v13, and v15 is a medical term for "probing a wound to see the extent of the damage." **If God is meticulous, then we should be as well!**

### RIGHTLY FOCUSED

He could have focused on the things that were going right (forced exile was over, the temple was rebuilt). Progress, although slow, was being made.

- He was given eyes to see the need of rebuilding the walls. We don't take for granted the things that are going right, but we also can't be satisfied to a point where we don't see the "broken down walls" around us.

### NEHEMIAH MEETS WITH THE LEADERS

When he calls everyone together to help in the rebuilding of the walls, he makes it clear that the result will be that they are "no longer a disgrace."

- It was more than bricks and mortar. It was about removing the condition of shame, fear, poverty, and insecurity from God's people. **The spiritual impact would far outweigh the hard labor.**

He shared the story of "how the gracious hand of God had been on [him], and what the king had said."

- They were encouraged and probably felt security for the first time in almost 100 years. Everyone that heard Nehemiah responded with enthusiasm and "their hands were strengthened to do good work."

### OPPOSITION BUILDS (NEHEMIAH 2:19-20)

#### OPPOSITION FROM ALL AROUND

The quick opposition to Nehemiah's plan suggests that Sanballat and Tobiah were receiving information from within Jerusalem. They, along with a third antagonist, Geshem the Arab, mocked and ridiculed the effort.

- Geshem, the king of Qedar, and the Persian officials all began to accuse them of sedition ("rebellious against the king").

### NEHEMIAH'S RESPONSE

Instead of trying to defend himself or attempt to please the opposition, he proclaims his confidence in God. Trusting that it is "the God of the heavens, who will grant them success."

- If God is for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31)? **It doesn't matter the opposition or who is against you; God's work will succeed!**

He tells them, we that work to rebuild are his servants, and they have no share, right, or claim in Jerusalem.

- This was more than an exclusion because of nationality. Their hearts showed that they were not servants of God and had no share, right, or claim in the work of God.

### HANDLING OPPOSITION

- Opposition came not in the praying or planning but in the "doing."
- Do we understand that "hurt people" hurt people?
- **Do we take it personal? "If the world hates you, remember it hated me first. (JN 15:18)"**
- **Does the "who is against us" overshadow the "who is for us?"**

### WE MUST BE FOCUSED

- We can't be seduced by the "wins" into a place of complacency.
- We have to be focused on mending "broken walls" in our community.
- **If we have been given a heart for the broken, do we carefully examine the situation for the best way to "rebuild"?**
- **Do we prayerfully seek God's will and way?**

### A CALL TO ACTION

- Though we may have a heart for prayer, the wisdom, the vision, the plan and the faith to accomplish God's will, **we must GO and do what needs to be done for the goal to become a reality.**
- **We can't substitute talking about something for actually doing it!**
- **Are we all talk and no action?**
- **Prov. 25:28 NKJV**