

# Nehemiah: God-Centered Servant in Troubled Times

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## Nehemiah 2:9-20

<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision." <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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?" <sup>20</sup> 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."

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June 19, 2022

**Open:** How do you tend to respond when people challenge you or oppose you?

**Read & Discuss:** Nehemiah 2:9-20

1. Those who oppose God's work through Nehemiah are mentioned ten times in this book. (*As in verses 10 and 19*). When you do work for God, do you expect opposition? Explain. Share about a time you experienced opposition when doing what you believed was the work of God.
2. Note the motivation of Nehemiah's opponents in verse 10, and their comments to the people in verse 19. How would you characterize Nehemiah's response in verse 20? What can we learn from Nehemiah's approach here?
3. According to 2:11-15, Nehemiah does a covert, on-site assessment of the walls of Jerusalem. In what ways might this have reflected wisdom on Nehemiah's part? When have you seen God give you or someone else wisdom in navigating a difficult situation?
4. How would Nehemiah's use of the word "we" (v. 17) have helped rally the inhabitants of Jerusalem to his cause? What does this approach tell us about Nehemiah's view of himself and the Jewish people? How is your identity shaped by your connection with other believers?
5. In verses 12, 18 and 20, it is evident Nehemiah believes God has led him back to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall. What may have contributed significantly to this belief? (*See 1:4-6; 2:4, 8*) Can you recall a time when you had a clear sense God was leading you to do something specific? What do you think helped bring you to that point? How did you see God you carry through the process of accomplishing the task?
6. The condition of Jerusalem is seen as a cause of shame (1:3) and derision (2:17). Why do you think this was of such great concern to Nehemiah? Read 1 Chronicles 17:20-22 for perspective on this. In what ways should our care for the honor of God find expression in our lives today?

**Apply:** How are you encouraged or challenged by Nehemiah's example here? What are one or two specific ways you will apply that encouragement or challenge?

**Pray:** Pray that God will help us to walk forward with both courage and wisdom as we face a world increasingly hostile to the purpose of God.

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