

**“Preparation”**  
**Nehemiah 2:9-20**  
**Nehemiah: Rebuilding a City & People for God**  
**Mercy Hill Church | February 26, 2023**

<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.”

**Big Idea: We can faithfully and diligently do God's work because He is gracious and sovereign.**

**Recap of Nehemiah so far...**

- In the opening chapter of Nehemiah, we see Nehemiah's conviction for God's purposes (vv.2-4a) and his conviction to pray (vv.4b-11) in response to the latest report from his brother concerning the poor condition of the walls of Jerusalem and the people of God. Nehemiah's grief leads him to fast and pray. In Nehemiah's prayer we see his convictions of who God is (vv.5-6a), his convictions of corporate and personal sin (vv.6b-7), his convictions of God's promises and redemption (vv. 8-10) and his conviction of God's power and righteousness (v.11).
- In Nehemiah 2:1-8, approximately 4 months have passed but Nehemiah remains fervent in his prayer and conviction for the walls of Jerusalem to be rebuilt and for God's people (and glory) to be restored. Nehemiah takes a prayerful risk in sharing with the king his desire to rebuild the walls. In vv.5-8 we see that not only has Nehemiah been praying but he's also been planning. The king not only grants Nehemiah permission to take an extended leave but also resources and safe passage as well (vv.7-8). Nehemiah acknowledges all this is because of God's grace and sovereignty.
- In this morning's passage, we see Nehemiah's journey to Jerusalem as he prepares to rebuild the walls...

**1. A Personal Inspection (vv.11-16)**

- Nehemiah first rested (v.11)
  - Nehemiah presumably rested after what would have been a long 4 month's journey from Susa to Jerusalem. Before starting the important work of surveying the condition of the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah rested.
  - Throughout Scripture we see commands and examples of the importance of rest (cf. Exodus 20:8-11; Mark 1:35, 6:31; 11:11, 15-19) and work.

- Nehemiah takes inventory (vv.13-15)
  - While Nehemiah earlier heard from his brothers the terrible condition of the walls of Jerusalem (cf. Nehemiah 1:2-3), Nehemiah now personally inspects assesses and evaluates the condition of the walls firsthand with his own eyes.
- Nehemiah does all this quietly (vv.12-13, 15-16)
  - The phrase “...in/by the night...” is mentioned 3x (vv.12-13, 15) as Nehemiah takes inventory.
  - The reason for Nehemiah’s secret mission is provided in v.16: Nehemiah does not want to reveal the conviction and mission he has until he first personally inspects and prepares.
- “Walk before you talk, investigate before you instigate.”
- “Those that would build up the church’s walls must first take notice of the ruin of those walls.”  
Matthew Henry

## 2. A Call to Action Together (vv.17-18)

- Nehemiah highlights the situation (v.17)
  - Even though the people of Jerusalem see the condition of the walls of Jerusalem, they had grown complacent. Nehemiah doesn’t hold back or sugarcoat the situation and condition of the walls of Jerusalem and God’s people.
  - Israel as a nation was suppose to be a light to the other nations – the nation and people through whom God had chosen to demonstrate His power, glory and grace – and other nations would come to be blessed and know God through Israel. Instead, Israel in their sin and disobedience became, “horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a reproach, a byword, a taunt, and a curse in all the places where I shall drive them.” (cf. Jeremiah 24:9)
  - Can’t solve a problem if you don’t identify and know what the problem is. (cf. Mark 11:11, 15-19, 13:1-2)
- Nehemiah includes himself
  - While Nehemiah has never lived in Jerusalem, he still includes and identifies himself with the people of Jerusalem. Even though he is a foreigner, he says, “we” and “us” – he doesn’t separate himself from the people.
  - We previously saw Nehemiah’s prayer of confession (cf. Nehemiah 1:6-7) convey that same sense of solidary and identification.
  - Nehemiah also knows that this mission of rebuilding the walls is not a solo endeavor but must be a collective mission.
- Nehemiah calls people to action -- now!
  - Having a conviction, a clear mission, and an honest assessment of the condition or situation should lead to action.
  - The Christian life is one of faith and works, reflection and action (cf. Luke 5:1-10)
- Nehemiah points the people to God’s work
  - Ultimately, the fuel which propels Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem to rebuild the walls is not just a rousing speech by Nehemiah, Nehemiah’s leadership skills (or ideal circumstances) but the hand (sovereignty) and grace of God.
  - Nehemiah gives testimony of how God has been at work and how God is at work – and ultimately points to the glory of God (cf. John 17:1)

## 3. The Rising Opposition (vv.9-10, 19-20)

- Doing the work of God, following God, will often bring opposition. Following God (or “being in God’s will”) does not mean there will not be any difficulties, challenges, frustrations or obstacles.

- The opposition Nehemiah faces is false accusations and verbal threats from Sanballat, Tobiah and Gehem – leaders from neighboring areas who saw Nehemiah’s presence and the rebuilding of the walls as threat to their political power and influence.
- The power of words & the necessity and foundation of God’s Word for faithful living
  - Throughout Scripture we’re reminded of how powerful words can be – to tempt, destroy, etc. but also to create, encourage, etc. (cf. James 3:1-12, Ephesians 4:29, Genesis 3:1-5)
- God’s Word is an anchor and foundation for Nehemiah as he’s confronted with false accusations and facing opposition. Nehemiah doesn’t get into a debate with his accusers but responds back with God’s Word. Nehemiah knows the truth – the grace and sovereignty of God, God’s glory, and that knowledge and conviction sustains him in his mission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

**Big Idea: We can faithfully and diligently do God’s work because He is gracious and sovereign.**

### Reflection Questions

- What role does rest play in the Christian life? How have you seen Christians neglect the importance of rest (and the sabbath)?
- What are some characteristics of a good leader? What about a godly leader? In what ways is Nehemiah not just a good leader but a godly leader? What are some ways you can grow as a godly leader?
- How would you have responded to Sanballat’s accusations and opposition? How do you typically responded to difficulties, challenges or frustrations as you’ve tried to faithfully follow Jesus? How have you experienced the power of God’s Word to help you persevere in faithful obedience of God?
- How does knowing – and believing in -- the grace of God and the sovereignty of God encourage and empower you to continue to faithfully live, serve and love Him (and others)? How is Jesus’ life (and death) an example and reminder of this?