

Nehemiah 2:11–20

- <sup>11</sup> So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days.
- <sup>12</sup> 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.
- <sup>13</sup> 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.
- <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 under me to pass.
- <sup>15</sup> 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.
- <sup>16</sup> 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.
- <sup>17</sup> Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach."
- <sup>18</sup> 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. So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to this good work.
- <sup>19</sup> 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?"
- <sup>20</sup> So I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."

## ***I Have a Dream*** **Nehemiah 2:11-20**

INTRO:

Nehemiah was a dreamer too. He dreamed about what God was about to do in down trodden and defeated Jerusalem. The last part of **chapter two** tells us how he took the first steps as God began to work through Nehemiah and the people to make the dream into a reality.

*I. He Assessed the Need (v. 11-16)*

*II. He Shared His Vision (v. 17-18)*

*III. He Dealt With the Opposition (v. 19-20)*

*I. He Assessed the Need (v. 11-16)*

**Nehemiah 2:11–16** *“So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.”*

A. **Verse 11** is a triumphant verse. *“So I came to Jerusalem.”* We must keep in mind what Nehemiah went through to get to Jerusalem. He prayed and fasted for four long months waiting for God to open a door for him to come to Jerusalem and build the walls.

1. After four months, finally the opening came. The preparations were made to come to Jerusalem. Still, one didn't just catch a 747 from Shushan airport to travel the 800 miles to Jerusalem. The trip involved three months of hard, dangerous travel.

2. Finally, the long awaited day dawns and at last Nehemiah arrived at Jerusalem. What did he do? Why of course he immediately took command and puts people to work on the wall, right? Wrong. He waited three days before he did anything.

B. Why did he wait? Because he had two things to do before he could talk to the leaders of the people. First, he had to spend some time with the Lord. You might wonder, *“Where is this in the text?”* It's not there. However, think about it. How did he respond to the burden God put on his heart when Hanani came to Shushan? He

prayed. How did he respond when it became clear God was opening the door? He prayed. Does it not make sense, then, that when he came to Jerusalem and before he undertook the sensitive task of dealing with the people, he would bathe the issue in prayer?

C. There is a second thing he did in the waiting time. He assessed the need. He slipped out and surveyed the job he had to do.

***“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.”***

We, too, must view the job God has for us to do the way Nehemiah did.

1. First, he saw it realistically. Nehemiah wore no rose-colored glasses to hide the difficulty of the job he had to do. Look at the terms he used to describe the task.

**vs.13-15** ***“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. 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. 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.”***

The job God gives us to do is hard. When we work for the Lord, He expects us to work. When we assess our job we need to see it for what it is, difficult, and without the help of God and others, impossible.

2. It is not enough to view the task realistically, we also have to view it with the eyes of faith. It is not enough to see things as they are, we also must be able to see how they can be with God's help. This was especially necessary for Kathy and me when we were Church Planters. Starting a church means seeing what God can do when there is nothing promising there.

D. Having assessed the work, Nehemiah then took his second step on the road to translating his dream to reality.

## ***II. He Shared His Vision (v. 17-18)***

**Nehemiah 2:17–18** ***“Then I said to them, ‘You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach.’ 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. So they said, “Let us rise up and build.” Then they set their hands to this good work.”***

A. Nehemiah's next step was to bring the leaders of the people together and he did something very important here. He began to communicate his dream. Even though he came from the King with all kinds of authority, he still took the step of showing the

leaders of the people because God's people will never do God's bidding with a mind to work until they share ownership in the dream. God's work is not accomplished by compulsion, but by willing people.

B. Look how Nehemiah communicated his dream. First, he gave them a realistic assessment of the situation.

**v.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.'"*

1. The work we are supposed to do is also hard. There is a community of people outside those doors who are on the road to a Christless eternity. Satan will do everything in his power to keep them in that condition.
2. God has called us to touch those lives with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and see God work a miracle in those lives.

C. Second, he told them his dream. Look at **v.12** and then look at **v.18**. Let me paraphrase what he said. He said, *"I have a dream. A dream of a Jerusalem that is no longer a reproach to the name of God, but an honor. I have a dream of a Jerusalem, surrounded and protected by walls. I have a dream of Jerusalem being great again showing how great our God is."*

1. The people heard and began to see Nehemiah's dream. It became their dream too. A dream they were willing to pray and work for. They said, ***"Let us arise and build."*** God gave them their dream.

2. I too have a dream. I dream of a Calvary Baptist Church which is united in her vision and effort to reach Lansing, and DeWitt for the Lord Jesus Christ. I have a dream of a church who is obsessed with the truth of God's Word and with the God of the Word. A church which cares for the spiritual needs of her community and the people who live there. I dream of a church filled with people who build one another up in the Lord. A church who offers opportunities for folks to have a real relationship with the true and living God. A church that effectively touches every corner of the world for the Lord. An **Acts 11:20-21** church.

***"But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord."***

In short, my dream is of a church that will bring glory to God.

D. I have no illusions the work is hard. Indeed, without God it is impossible. However, I have no doubt that God has put this dream in my heart and can do it. My question is: What will we do with the dream? Is it our dream too? Can you see it? Will you take ownership in it? If we will, we will answer as these folks did in Nehemiah's time. We will roll up our sleeves and say, ***"Let us rise up and build."***

### *III. He Dealt With the Opposition (v. 19-20)*

**Nehemiah 2:19-20** *“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?’ So I answered them, and said to them, ‘The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem.’”*

A. Once the need was assessed and the vision communicated and owned, there is one other thing which must be done. The opposition must be dealt with. We find here a principle we must not forget. Whenever God is going to work, there will always be opposition. No sooner does the intention to work for the Lord get voiced, than look who comes on the scene

B. Two things we must see here. First, what kinds of opposition will there be? External opposition is first. Ridicule is spoken, *“a fox will knock it down.”* On the heels of this came threats, *“We will kill you!”* These opponents even used gossip, rumors, and lies *“You come to Ono or else we will tell the king that you are setting yourself up as king.”* There would also be internal opposition. (Nehemiah 4:10). Judahites said *“The work is too hard, we can't do it.”*

B. How do we handle it? Commit it to the LORD. Keep on working. Satan's desire is to stop the work any way and any how he can. Keep working and one day we will be able to say as Nehemiah did, *“The walls were finished!”* Never forget, it is God's work and He will see us through.

### ***SUMMING ALL THIS UP***

We must see our task realistically and also with the eyes of faith. Remember whose church it really is.

We must keep the dream before our eyes and realize that it can be done with God's help.

We must then arise and build. It is not my dream until I have invested my prayers, my effort, my time, my talents, and my treasures in the work. Those who rejoiced at the end were those who worked.

When the opposition comes, and it will come, remember to keep your eyes on the Lord, keep your grasp on the dream and your hand to the task.

### **Hymn #59 *I Sing the Mighty Power of God***