

## **Nehemiah 2:9-20**

Nehemiah was a great leader of men in a time of crisis.

Having been granted permission to return to Jerusalem in a time of lethargy and loss of vision, Nehemiah roused the inhabitants of the city into action that did not stop until the task that he had been given authority to oversee was completed.

### **Summary**

**In Nehemiah 2:9-20, Nehemiah comes to Jerusalem and makes a nighttime tour of the ruined city following which he appeals to the Jews to rebuild the walls in spite of the derision of their enemies.**

#### **1. Revisited Issue vv. 9**

On his journey to Jerusalem, Nehemiah was given a military escort (**Neh. 2:9**). Previously, Ezra had refused such an escort as a matter of faith (**Ezra 8:21–23**). Here, Nehemiah accepted his escort as a matter of wisdom. As we saw in the passage in Ezra, the fact that two godly men could arrive at different conclusions about a similar issue is a reminder that we need to be careful not to harbor judgmental opinions about others' actions when we do not know the whole story. It is possible that one or the other was mistaken in his conclusion, but what seems more likely is that both were correct given their particular circumstances.

#### **2. Secret Nighttime Tour vv. 9-16**

The text does not record any details of the probable four-month journey to Jerusalem, focusing instead on what Nehemiah did when he got there. First of all Nehemiah came to the governors of the province and gave them the king's letters. but they were not pleased that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel (**Neh 13:9-10**). Three days after getting to Jerusalem and taking on the role of Jerusalem's chief administrator, Nehemiah went on an unannounced nighttime expedition to assess the state of the walls (**Neh 2:11-16**). His tour comprised only about half the city, but it was sufficient for him to determine a reasonable rebuilding strategy. For Nehemiah, faith and planning were not opposing forces but complementary to each other.

#### **3. Powerful Motivation vv. 16-17**

Nehemiah was a leader of men who knew how to inspire action. The strategy now was to get the buy-in of those under his authority—"the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest" (**Neh. 2:16-17**). The prospect of facing disgrace was the motivator that Nehemiah used. Nehemiah reminded them of their identity in order to motivate them to action and a sense of duty.

#### 4. Ever-Present Opposition vv. 10; 19-20

Satan always resists God's work. Here, three individuals are his agents.

Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah, the Ammonite servant were greatly displeased that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel" (**Neh 2:10**). Together with Geshem, the Arab, Sanballat and Tobiah "jeered" and "despised" Nehemiah for what he had come to do in the city, accusing him of plotting against the king (**Neh 2:19**). Nehemiah responded by saying that they had "no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem" (**Neh 2:20**).

Behind these three men lay the actions of Satan. We may watch him at work here, and watch Nehemiah's response, and learn to fight Satan in our own battles.

#### 5. God's Work vv. 12; 18

Nehemiah then adds another powerful motivation: the promise of divine approval and divine help in the task before the Jews. The plan to rebuild the walls was not merely Nehemiah's or the people's; it was God who had put it into Nehemiah's heart (**Neh 2:12**). Nehemiah reassured the people that this was indeed the case (**Neh 2:18**). Nothing could have signaled God's hand more clearly than the fact that Artaxerxes had himself given written support for the work.

God was in this project, no matter how difficult it might be and no matter what threats might exist against them if they were to undertake it. The sufficiency of God is a powerful motivator. No task is too difficult when the omnipotent God is the One orchestrating it and in whose hands you are but an instrument. When God has purposed to do something, nothing can stand in His way.

These motivations were enough for the exiles, "and they said, 'Let us rise up and build.' So they strengthened their hands for the good work" (**Neh. 2:18**).

And no sooner had they begun the work, as we have seen, than opposition to it arose. When such opposition included accusations that in building the wall they were engaging in a form of insurrection, Nehemiah's response was, "The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build" (**Neh 2:20**). If there is one particular lesson that this section of Nehemiah is meant to teach us, it is that we should trust God more than we do.

"Where is Christ in this section of Nehemiah?"

As we pan out the camera from specific historical events to a panoramic overview, we see "Nehemiah within the flow of redemptive history and see how God is fulfilling his purpose to redeem his people. It is to this city of Jerusalem that Christ will come and offer his life as a "ransom for many" (**Mark 10:45**).