

Nehemiah 2:12-20 – Foundations of Reconstruction

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Gill, Geneva, Trapp, Handfuls, Armstrong, Henry, Gaebelin, Barnes, Gray, Clarke, JFB, Delitzsch, Expositor, INT
Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: After arriving in Jerusalem, because he was well-prepared, Nehemiah went right to work to examine the state of Jerusalem. He did so in a wise, bold, and determined way. This is God's message for you today.

Our headings are:

Examination of the Destruction

Exhortation to Reconstruction

Exclusion from the Congregation

Our goals are: **That you will work with your leaders to plan for the rebuilding of Christ's church that has fallen into disrepair and you will be bold and determined to stand up to those who oppose its rebuilding.**

Examination of the Destruction

12 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.

1. Nehemiah did not assume he knew everything, but rather, he worked with others to examine the condition of the wall.

He wanted to see the nature of the damage and evaluate what needed to be done to rebuild the walls and how to do it.

13 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. 14 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. 15 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. 16 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.

2. He took some men for safety and security.

Robbers were common. The city gates were missing so they were not closed at nights. He would be an easy target by himself.

He took only one animal (He was probably exhausted from his trip.) in order to not draw attention to his presence.

3. He then went even to inconvenient places:

a. The Valley Gate went out to the mountains outside of Jerusalem. It was great for perspective.

b. The Serpent Well, which wasn't an easy place to walk to, being on a "serpentine" path.

c. The Refuse Gate, which wasn't known for its pleasant smells. Garbage and sewage were taken out from this gate.

d. The Fountain Gate, which was either built or repaired (and it worked) during Hezekiah's reign, but which was so clogged with filth and garbage, it could not be used.

4. Nehemiah did this examination of the condition of Jerusalem at night.

a. This made sure it wasn't a distraction, as this would have surely stirred up a crowd in eastern cultures.

b. This made sure it wasn't a distraction to the leaders in Jerusalem, as they would wonder what this new "official" was trying to do. They were already in fear of their neighbors.

5. Nehemiah did his work so subtly, none of the officials knew what he had done and where he went.

This was a time to be silent. Ecclesiastes 3:7. This was wisdom.

6. Lessons:

a. Work with others for the good of the church. Kingdom work is too important to have an ego. You are called to work with all believers. (See why it is wrong to marry non-believers! How can you work together with the same goal?)

b. Work wisely in order to advance Christ's cause. Don't "lay all your cards on the table." Don't work with just anyone!

Matthew 10:16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

Don't work with show-offs. Men who think too much of themselves will not think enough about Christ.

c. Take the time to examine the danger the church is in. Talk to thinkers. **Don't live in a fool's paradise.** And not because things are going well with you and your church it means things are going well with the church everywhere.

d. Jesus went into Jerusalem on a donkey to repair the spiritual walls that had fallen. He would then have to go through the Valley Gate on his way to Calvary for you. From where he looked with sadness at Jerusalem.

Exhortation to Reconstruction

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**. Come and **let us build the wall of Jerusalem**, that we may **no longer be a reproach**." 18 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.**

1. Nehemiah then exhorted the Jews, the leaders in particular, to begin reconstruction and repair the walls of the city and the building adjoining to the temple.

Isaiah 50:4 "The Lord **GOD has given Me The tongue of the learned**, That I should know **how to speak A word in season** to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning; He awakens My ear to hear as the learned.

Nehemiah did not say, "**You go** and build," but, "**Let us go** and build." What a speaker!

2. Nehemiah's appeal was based on the glory of God. He said...

a. You see the distress we are in...the city laid waste (and in waste) ...the gates burned...the city from which Messiah would come.

Economically, Nehemiah was in great shape.

Socially, he was in great shape.

He could have just "minded his own business," but he was a child of the covenant and could not remain independent. He said: "**See the distress WE are in!**"

b. You see how we are a reproach...as people mock us and **our God who did not protect us from the captivity...**

c. You see God will help a repentant people...He explained God's providence...how God had placed him close to the King of Persia. He didn't boast about his personal achievement. God was his help!

d. You see how God made the king, their enemy, amenable to our situation... how the king gave him letters for safety and lumber for construction, and even military protection he didn't ask for.

It is remarkable **Nehemiah did not begin by condemning them for taking so long to get to work** to rebuild the walls.

3. Nehemiah's words worked: The people set their mind and their hands to build.

He made a strong argument, an argument based on their God...not on their own strength or their own righteousness.

Their fathers lost God's favor by disobedience, but they would regain it by diligence.

4. Lessons:

a. When you want people to change their lives and live more godly lives, you have to start with your big argument. Start with, "You need to do this for the glory of Christ." All good things that happen to you is because of the grace of God.

b. Don't appeal to your goodness. Don't start with, "**Come to church, it will be good for your children's future.**" There is nothing wrong in working to do good for your children and their future, but that is the weaker argument.

Your children are sinful and your children will never do for you what the Lord Jesus did for you. **Appeal to Christ's work!**

c. A few words, well-placed, are more beneficial than the eloquent ramblings of a fool.

d. United in faith leads to united in effort. Only this will take away the reproach on Christ's church.

Exclusion from the Congregation

19 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?"

1. Nehemiah immediately faced opposition from three horrible men.

Sanballat (strength and courage) was the half-breed Jew who did not want to see Jerusalem restored, as it was a threat to Samaria, Israel's capital, the northern 10 ½ tribes. He probably had financial reasons too.

Tobiah (God is good) was the former slave who became an official of the Ammonites.

Geshem was an Arab. He particularly hated Nehemiah because his actions would threaten the Arabs whom Sargon, the Assyrian king, had brought in to replace the Jews he took captive to foreign countries.

These 3 were enemies, but they hated Jerusalem more and so they joined in conspiracy against Nehemiah.

But to be against Jerusalem would be to be against the coming of the Savior.

2. How did these three men oppose Nehemiah and his plans to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem?

According to history, a number of the tribes of Palestine had earlier convinced Artaxerxes to make the Jews stop rebuilding, and the king stopped them.

a. They laughed. This is one way of making the Jews feel small and hoping this would stop their work.

b. They hated. They could not stand the fact the walls would be rebuilt and stability would come to Judah again. This would have been bad for their finances (Jews were great businessmen!) and for their pride, as you will see later.

c. They accused Nehemiah of treason. This was a capital offense. They knew Nehemiah came from the king, but they were counting on lying and causing local people to believe them. You would think they were working for the CBC. When their mocking and hate didn't work, they turned to threats.

20 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."

3. Nehemiah did not get into the mud with them because he knew he was doing what God called him to do.

He knew wicked people would want to destroy God's people, and accusing them of treason in that time was the worst accusation possible.

4. Even with serious opposition, Nehemiah declared *God would prosper his work, displaying his faith, and cause the Jews to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and furthermore, these three evil men would have no part in the coming glory*

(denying their claims).

Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem had no interest in redemption. They had no interest in preparing for the coming of the Lord.

No wonder Nehemiah did not tell them anything of the king's approval and support!

5. Lessons:

a. When people oppose how you live with your wife, how you raise your children, how you worship, how you vote, how you choose your job, how you determine what kind of friends you have, just state what God's Word says.

Don't change your way because they laugh at you.

b. When people hate you for what you do, don't stop doing it. Jesus said you must count on people hating and opposing you.

If people don't oppose the things you do, you are either living in perfect world (and you are not) or you don't live a strong Christian life in front of the world.

It is a foolish Christian who thinks everything is okay with the church.

The kingdom needs you to keep working!

c. When people oppose you for opposing the government, stop and think.

If the government you are opposing is opposing God, you are on a solid footing. If they oppose God's law, oppose them.

d. God will destroy all those who oppose him, often in this life, and surely in the life to come.

Conclusion:

Nehemiah carefully considered what needed to be done. He then confronted and challenged the local leaders to do it. And he then prepared himself for opposition of this noble work.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus:

1. Jesus died and provided everything you needed for your body and soul for you to work and build up the church of Jesus Christ.

2. You must build in two ways. You must **evangelize** and bring in new people. You must **help those who are “broken down.”**

That also means you must teach, encourage, and pray for weak Christians, churches and federations.

The church is struggling. Many have exposed their people to dangers because they are not teaching doctrines, they don't practice discipline, and the sacraments are being given without obligations to faithfulness.

Be bold!

Build!

3. Learn to work with others to accomplish this good work. You can't do it by yourself. Support your elders, your pastor, your missionaries, your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Finally: To oppose God is death. If you wish to spend eternity in hell, continue to oppose God.

But if you are wise, and you want to please God, ask him to show you your sin, show you the work of the Savior, and give you faith to receive what the Savior did for you.