

## **Nehemiah 2: Active Restoration**

- It is 4 months since Nehemiah received the report that grieved him deeply (1:1 vs 2:1)
- He has spent that time in persistent prayer, and active planning.
  - o **NB** the final clause of his prayer (1:11) demonstrates a prayerful planning.
  - o That plan is enacted in chapter 2, and God grants success

### **God oversees the plans of his faithful servant to accomplish his purposes**

#### Structure of Nehemiah 2:

The chapter divides into 2:

v1-10	Plans and Permission
v1-4	Before to the King
v5-8	Granted Favour
v9-10	Meeting Opposition
v11-20	Plans and Collaboration
v11-16	Around the Walls
v17-18	Granted Favour
v19-20	Meeting Opposition

*Notice that opposition arises from Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem, local governors who appear to have their own desires for power. These men become a thorn in the side of the people for the rest of the book. There is more there than meets the eye: why are God's people opposed so violently? The theology at work is deep!*

*Notice too, that in both central sections (v5-8 and v17-18) Nehemiah praises God who grants success.*

#### Outline

##### **v1-10: Prayerful Action**

- Nehemiah has three interchanges with the king. He is afraid, especially to begin with
- Where does this fear come from? He is asking Artaxerxes to reverse imperial policy.
- 20 years before Artaxerxes had issued a decree that Jerusalem not be rebuilt.
- Nehemiah's prayers (Ch 1) have fuelled the action he takes in approaching the king
  - o He still doesn't know how things will pan out. That's the deal for trusting God!
  - o He has carefully planned (v7-9: look at the detail!) but success is God's alone (v8)
- Why does he request military escort when Ezra didn't? Does he lack faith?
  - o Different situations call for differing actions. Ezra put God's protection on display
  - o Now Nehemiah is putting God's sovereignty over imperial policy on display!

##### **v11-20: Careful Action**

- Nehemiah is an incredibly wise leader. He doesn't jump to things straight away
- He researches the scale of the problem in a night recon mission (v11-16)
- He then draws the local leaders in (v17-18):
  - o Nehemiah identified himself wholly with God's people and 'the trouble we are in'
  - o He inspires confidence by reminding them that God is still with them (v18)
- As we have seen in Ezra-Nehemiah so far, opposition is never far away.
- Nehemiah draws the same line as the exiles in Ezra 4. These enemies have no part.

### Key Themes

- **Prayerful action.** As a faithful servant Nehemiah does not passively pray. He acts.
- **Prayerful Planning.** Nehemiah plans. He doesn't passively 'leave it to God'
- **Active Trust.** Despite his plans he trusts God, not himself, and gives God glory.
- **Wise Leadership.** Nehemiah's the new guy in Jerusalem, and draws people in.
- **Facing Opposition.** Not surprising but needs facing faithfully by God's people.

### Suggested Questions

Imagine you were turning Nehemiah into a film, and you were working on chapter 2...

- How would you set the scene?
- What would the mood be like?
- What might the soundtrack be?
  
- How does Nehemiah's confidence in God show itself through this chapter?
- How does Nehemiah's wisdom show itself through this chapter?
- Does the opposition from Sanballat et al. surprise you? Why/Why not?
- How can you cultivate a trust in God which will drive you to act boldly to serve him?