

Building What Lasts

A SERIES IN NEHEMIAH



WEEK 2 • SEPT 20

NORTHSHORE'S COMPELLING STATEMENT

Hope changes everything.

ICE BREAKER

Do you prefer to process your thoughts internally, or do you like to talk things through with others? Where do you think that preference comes from?

BACKGROUND

Chapter 2 of Nehemiah begins in 445 B.C. It had been 140 years since the walls of Jerusalem were destroyed by Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, and nearly 100 years after the Persian King Cyrus had decreed that the Jews could return home from exile. The exiles had managed to rebuild the temple by 516 B.C., but after 70 years, the walls were still in complete devastation. Without its walls, Jerusalem was vulnerable to raids, making it hard to establish a stable economy and difficult to find any sense of security.

In the previous chapter, Nehemiah learned of Jerusalem's devastated state. Walls broken, gates burned, and a remnant of people left in shame. Nehemiah mourned when he heard this. Nehemiah's position was cupbearer for the king (1:11), but in this era of the Persian empire, it was against protocol to show sadness in the king's presence (see also Esther 4:1-2). This meant that Nehemiah needed to conceal his sadness, or otherwise risk severe consequences.

He fasted and prayed continually, knowing that the God of heaven was Jerusalem's only chance of restoration. After four months of sadness, chapter 2 begins, where the God of heaven responds to Nehemiah's prayers and petitions.

REVIEW

What was meaningful from the above context or the sermon from last Sunday?



KEY VERSES: Nehemiah 2:4-5

Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it.

READ: Nehemiah 2



HEAD LEVEL: *What does it say? These help us to examine what the Word tells us.*

1. What was Nehemiah's position in the Persian empire, and who was the king?
2. What two letters did Nehemiah request the king to write for him? Who were they written to, and for what purpose?
3. Who opposed Nehemiah's plan to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem? Why were they opposed to it?

DIGGING DEEPER

Read the following verses. In what ways do these verses explain the long-standing resentment that Nehemiah's opponents felt toward Israel?

- Ezekiel 25:1-3 - Tobiah (Ammonites)
- Deuteronomy 23:3-4 - Tobiah (Ammonites)
- 2 Kings 17:21-41 - Sanballat (Governor of Samaria)
- 2 Chronicles 21:16-17 - Geshem (Arabs)



HEART LEVEL: *What does it mean? These questions help us shape our beliefs around the objective truth of God's word.*

1. What was Nehemiah's attitude while serving the king (v. 1), and how do you think that affected his relationship with the king? How can we as Christians maintain that kind of attitude in our work?
2. Why was Nehemiah afraid when the king asked him why he was sad? How did Nehemiah handle his fear (v. 4)?
3. Why do you think Nehemiah first inspected the walls and gates, and why did he do it with such secrecy?



HANDS LEVEL: *What does it mean to me? These questions help us commit to live out the truth in our everyday lives and commit to potential next steps.*

1. For 4 months, Nehemiah was in great sorrow over the broken state of his people and presumably steadfast in prayer for them. Is there someone that needs you to help bear their burdens? What support do you need to remain steadfast in praying for them?
2. Nehemiah did not shy away from asking the King for help when the opportunity arose. Do you have a community around you that will help shoulder your burdens? Is there anything that holds you back from seeking your community's help when you need it?
3. What kind of opposition from the world are you facing and how are you responding? What can you take away from Nehemiah's response to opposition?



MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 56:3

When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

(Please remember that these requests are confidential and need to stay within the group.)