

PP Nehemiah: Mission Opposition!

Text **Nehemiah 2:9-10**

Part 5-6/2-3

There may not be a week that goes by that I am not hearing about and helping people whose lives have fallen into rubble

A marriage is on the brink of collapse, or someone has gotten involved in an addiction he or she cannot break free from

Financial mismanagement, an uncontrollable temper, open rebellion with parents, it goes on
People all around us, among us, have broken walls, their lives are a mess, and it is painful

Let's begin this morning with a brief look at a passage in Isaiah 61, before we get to our text in Nehemiah

PP ***"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound...They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations."*** **Isaiah 61:1-4**

Jesus came to free those held captive to sin, and they, once freed, are to build, and repair
Every Christian is to work to restore sin-ruined people and rebuild their lives to the glory of God

Nehemiah's name means *the Lord has comforted*

He had heard about the trouble in Jerusalem, how their city was in ruin and the wall in rubble
His heart broke for his people he had never met and his homeland he had never stepped foot on
He went to God and prayed for them, prayed about what he could do for four months all the while creating a plan

The day came when God opened up the heart of the king of Persia whom Nehemiah served, and he was given permission to go rebuild the city and the walls

This is not just an interesting book mired in ancient history, it has great application to us today

How do we help, what do we do, how do we rebuild and restore?

We can learn a lot by putting ourselves in the same shoes as Nehemiah and realizing first,

PP 1-We are all sent on mission

"Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen." **2:9**

There is a difference between a vision statement and a mission statement

The vision is the picture that comes to your mind when you envision what God wants to do
For Nehemiah, it was a restored city, with rebuilt walls and a revived people serving God

The mission is simply what needs to happen in order for the vision to become a reality

The vision is a noun, but mission is more a verb, requiring action and movement

Talking is no substitute for doing, and intentions are worthless without interventions

Imagine the Triune God talking together about sin-broken humanity, creating a plan of salvation, and day after day, century after century going over that plan, weeping over the need, but never doing anything about it?

God is a God on mission, and He sends His people to move and act on mission with Him!
And God's mission is one of restoration and rebuilding, in the power of the gospel

For Nehemiah, mission began with *'Then I came'* or as the NIV and KJV put it, *'went'*
He put his convictions into action and did something, but not whatever he wanted to do, *"Now the king had sent me"*

Now lift this out of just history and just Nehemiah, and let's apply it us today
The King of kings, the King of glory has sent us on mission to rebuild sin-ruined people!
The sovereign King of the universe has sent each of us to the broken-hearted
There are no draft dodgers in the kingdom of God, nobody has an exemption from this mission
We are all on God's mission to repair, to build, to restore broken people
To not be engaged is to be AWOL, absent without leave
The bible calls it by a different word, disobedient

Even more, Nehemiah tells us that he was sent with *"the king's letters"*
These letters transferred a portion of the king's authority to Nehemiah
It didn't matter that Nehemiah was as high in the Persian court as any Jew could be
It was worthless if the king had not sent him, and sent him with those letters
Brothers and sisters, our letter from the King is the Word of God, the gospel, and it has the
power to restore broken lives
Our academic degrees, our accolades and years of experience cannot bring success to the
mission, but God's Word can

PP *"But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"* **Romans 10:14-15**

God only has one mission: free captives to sin and rebuild their lives for eternal glory
And we participate in His mission, as those who rebuild and restore ruined peoples

Illus A friend of mine lives in Houston, Tx and his church has a pretty interesting ministry.
Near the church is a closed, gay community. Impenetrable from the outside to those who want
to share the gospel. So he has moved in with a group of guys to live in that community, and to
learn to develop authentic relationships with the men and women there so that they can
genuinely love them with the gospel.

That is mission, it is joining with God on His mission
And when we rise up to build,

PP 2-There will be opposition

Nehemiah was the highest ranking Jew in the world, who had the ear and heart of the King of
Persia, the most powerful man on the planet
He was wealthy, comfortable, yet when he heard of his people's *'great trouble and shame'*, his
heart broke and he began to ask God to intervene
God moved in the heart of the King and Nehemiah rode to Jerusalem right into...opposition!
Friends, all those who labor in the kingdom of God will experience opposition, sometimes severe

PP Jesus told His disciples, ***"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves."*** **Luke 10:2-3**

Did you notice that Nehemiah didn't even arrive to Jerusalem until verse 11, and he doesn't begin rebuilding until chapter 3?

Opposition began the moment these enemies heard that someone came to help God's people
"But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah, the Ammonite servant, heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel." **2:10**

Sometimes opposition comes from our own family, our coworkers, our friends
But even more often, there is another enemy at work opposing the rebuilding of spiritual walls
Look with me a little closer at the identities of these two enemies: ***"Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah, the Ammonite servant"***

Sanballat was the governor of Samaria, just north of Jerusalem and Tobiah was governor of Ammon, east of Jerusalem

Tobiah it seems, by the designation, ***'servant'*** was a pawn of Sanballat

Together, these powerful leaders were responsible for the ***great trouble and shame*** of the Jews

Abusive people like those who are weak and able to be controlled

Verbal, emotional and physical abuse is intended to keep that person weak

Now we can understand what a threat Nehemiah was to them, and what a threat you will be when you enter this type of mess with a person whose walls have been smashed and prevented from rebuilding

Illus Years ago, a team of us began to help a lady who was enmeshed in an abusive relationship with an alcoholic husband. I received a phone call from him at 1 in the morning, he was drunk and angry at me for getting involved. The next day, he called me at the church to intimidate me, which finally degenerated with suicidal threats

This is not unusual to experience this in my world, and neither will it be as you move in the power of God to restore broken lives

The Sanballats and Tobiahs will rise up to oppose and they can be formidable enemies

But let's dial in even a little closer and see where the Sanballats and Tobiahs are today

Sanballat was likely from Horanaim, a city of Moab making him a Moabite while Tobiah clearly an Ammonite

In the bible, if a people group ended with an 'ite', they were enemies of God

PP ***"the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, heard of this...gathered together as one to fight against Joshua and Israel."*** **Joshua 9:1-2**

The exception would be the Israelites!

All through the Old Testament, the Moabites were enemies to Israel

It was the Moabites who introduced the pagan worship of Baal into the Israelites and sent their women into the Israelite camp to entice the men away from their God

It was Moab who tried to hire the prophet Balaam to curse the Israelites and because of this, God

PP commanded Israel, ***"No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the Lord...You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever."***

Deuteronomy 23:3-6

But where did the Ammonites and Moabites come from?
Do you remember Lot, the nephew of Abraham, who, after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah took his two daughters and lived in a cave
A woman without children in that time was a woman living in despair and shame, but for these two women, there weren't any available men to marry
So instead of waiting on God, the two sisters got their father drunk and on consecutive nights, became pregnant by Lot, their father, who was the nephew of Abraham
The older daughter's son was named Moab, the younger's son became the father of the Ammonites
They were illegitimate cousins of Israel and settled beside them, their language practically the same as the Hebrew language

And that is where we begin to see how Sanballat and Tobiah relate to us today
They represent our enemy that the New Testament speaks of so clearly...the flesh
The old man, the old nature that entices us to sin and sets itself against God

PP ***"For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."*** **Romans 8:7-8**

PP ***"For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other"*** **Galatians 5:17**

Every Christian has three powerful enemies: demonic forces, the God-opposing world and our own flesh, that part in us remaining that wars against the Spirit of God
None of them are to ever be treated lightly, they are masters at keeping Christians, and churches in ***'great trouble and shame'***
Our flesh, which opposes the desires of God will recoil when the rebuilding of our walls even hints at starting

Whenever the servants of God rise up to rebuild, Satan, who energizes our flesh, will rise up to

PP oppose us, yet ***"If God is for us, who can be against us?"*** **Romans 8:31**

Let's look at one more small detail to encourage us as we learn to be wall-builders ourselves!

PP 3-Rebuilding can start with one faithful servant

"...that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel." **2:10**

Did you catch what bothered these enemies of God so much?
Not the soldiers with Nehemiah, not even the letters, but that ***'someone had come'*** for Israel ***'Someone'***, singular, not plural

What we need to keep in mind with the person of Nehemiah, is that his life points us forward to the greatest wall-builder in human history, Jesus Christ the Son of God

Remember **Isaiah 61** which we began with this morning!

There is no One Who brought greater fear to the enemies of God than Jesus Christ Himself

In His lifetime we see more demonic activity than at any other time in biblical history

Jesus was sent by the King of Kings on mission to redeem, restore sin-captive people and dwell

among them

And He has given that mission to us to live as He co-laborers among us

Friends, God will do incredible things in His kingdom when even one person rises up to build

PP *“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” 1 Corinthians 15:58*

Nehemiah did in 52 days what 90 years of previous effort could not do

God is simply waiting for us to live the mission He has given, and say here I am God, I will go!

Has God made clear the vision He has for you?

If God has called you to be a wall-building leader like Nehemiah, then pray until the fog lifts and

His plan becomes clear

Then step out on mission, and take the Word of God that gives hope to hurting people

Add your voice in with the people of God and say, *“Let us rise up and build” 2:18*

Pray