

# CAPITOL STUDIES

JANUARY 12, 2022 • WEEK 3



## NEHEMIAH: THE CIVIL SERVANT FROM SUSA

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His Prayer, His  
Answer 2
- II. Nehemiah's  
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### *Verse of the Week*

Nehemiah  
1:11; 2:11

*O LORD, I beseech  
You, may Your ear  
be attentive to the  
prayer of Your  
servant.... I did not  
tell anyone what my  
God was putting  
into my mind  
(heart) to do for  
Jerusalem....*

## Nehemiah: The Builder of Hope and Heart



**L**EADERSHIP IS AN INTERESTING THING. We all lead in something. Some of the world's greatest leaders were enigmas. Take Winston Churchill; his speeches were motivational machines. Here are a few of his best quotes:

"I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat."

"Victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory there is no survival."

"...[W]e shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight in the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air; we shall defend our Island whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender...."<sup>1</sup>

Pastor Arin Hess  
Chaplain, Capitol Studies



Our journey into the life and legacy of Nehemiah, the cupbearer for King Artaxerxes Longimanus, began several months ago. Today, we will review and build upon those first couple lessons before continuing on in the book. We marvel at the providence of God in bringing Nehemiah to the exiled Hebrews to help in restoring the walls of their once beautiful city, Jerusalem. This hopeful, humble servant repeatedly sought the Lord concerning this endeavor. Nehemiah's prayer and devotion were honored as God abundantly answered his requests. God used him to provide Hope (chapter 1), Heart (chapter 2), and Help (chapter 3) to the Jewish exiles. A look at Nehemiah's life reveals great spiritual leadership truths that are very applicable for us today.

## **Nehemiah Brings HOPE to His People - Chapter 1:**

Nehemiah is aware of the limitless power of God to change circumstances beyond human control. His action, upon hearing of Jerusalem's plight, was to pray that compassion would be stirred in the heart of King Artaxerxes. Though famous and influential, Artaxerxes was still only a man under the authority of the King of the universe. Therefore, Nehemiah could implore the King of the universe to move this king's spirit. Proverbs 21:1 says, "The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes."

It was not just a lucky thing that Nehemiah was in such a position of prominence with access to the king of Persia. God had providentially directed his life's journey and prepared him for this crucial moment in history. His was not in some minor position like a present-day butler. As an escort of the monarch at meals, the cupbearer had a unique advantage to petition the king. Since the cupbearer tasted all the king's beverages and food for possible poison, the king owed him his life. This brought Nehemiah into a unique relationship as a close confidant of the king. God sovereignly used this bond between a Gentile and Jew to deliver His people, just as He did with Joseph, Daniel, Esther, and Mordecai.

Perhaps God has brought you to a place and position today to bring about good for His people. What might He have for you to do?

## **Nehemiah Brings HEART to His People - Chapter 2:**

### **I. NEHEMIAH'S REQUEST, HIS PRAYER, HIS ANSWER**

#### **A. Nehemiah's Heart Is Revealed**

*Nehemiah 2:1-3*

*And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. <sup>2</sup>So the king said to me, "Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart." Then I was very much afraid. <sup>3</sup>I said to the king, "Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the*



*city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?"*

## B. The King's Help Is Requested

*Nehemiah 2:4-8a*

*Then the king said to me, "What would you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup>I said to the king, "If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it." <sup>6</sup>Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, "How long will your journey be, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time. <sup>7</sup>And I said to the king, "If it please the king, let letters be given me for the governors of the provinces beyond the River, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah, <sup>8</sup>and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, for the wall of the city and for the house to which I will go."*

## C. Nehemiah's Prayer Is Rewarded

*Nehemiah 2:8b*

*And the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me.*

## D. God's Protection Is Received

*Nehemiah 2:9*

*Then I came to the governors of the provinces beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen.*

God provided wonderful protection along the way. Though we may not have an army to accompany us as we travel the way of God's leading for us, we have the promise of God that He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5-6). He will fulfill His will in and through us (Phil. 2:13; Psalm 84:11).

God kept Nehemiah safe from execution, enemy attack, and personal injury. He spoke often of the "good hand of God upon him." Nehemiah was doing a job for God, and God protected him as he did it.

## E. Enemy Opposition Is Received

*Nehemiah 2:10*

*When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about it, it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel.*

There will always be enemies of God's work. There will always be battles to fight (1 Cor. 16:13; 2 Cor. 2:11). Satan will always resist someone seeking the welfare of God's children. Be prepared for this.





## II. NEHEMIAH'S INSPIRATION, HIS HEART, HIS GAME PLAN

### A. The Situation Is Reviewed

*Nehemiah 2:11-12*

*So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. <sup>12</sup>And I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem and there was no animal with me except the animal on which I was riding.*

**Nehemiah got alone with God.** “So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days.” It had taken him about three-to-four months to arrive after his interview with the king. We can well imagine that these three days were days of rest. But more than that, they were probably days alone with God, waiting on the Lord, praying for guidance and wisdom. Often it is only when we are truly alone with God that we can hear His voice. Elijah was alone on the mountain when God spoke to him with a “still, small voice.” Moses was alone caring for his sheep when God called him. Alone in the desert, Paul learned many spiritual truths from God. When we are alone, God can speak to us and show us His will for our lives. Do you have a designated time to be alone with God? If not, choose to make it a priority this year.

It's likely that Nehemiah met with some city dwellers, heard their assessment of the needs, then went to see for himself. A good leader will listen to the counsel of those closest to the problem. As leaders in the state, are you listening to your constituents? Do you really hear their genuine needs? Ask God to give discernment as to what are the real needs.

*Nehemiah 2:13-16*

*So I went out at night by the Valley Gate in the direction of the Dragon's Well and on to the Refuse Gate, inspecting the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were consumed by fire. <sup>14</sup>Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass. <sup>15</sup>So I went up at night by the ravine and inspected the wall. Then I entered the Valley Gate again and returned. <sup>16</sup>The officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; nor had I as yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials or the rest who did the work.*

**Nehemiah carefully inspected the ruin.** He went out at night to determine the magnitude of the situation. He “inspected” the walls. This word for inspection means to look very carefully. It is a medical word for probing a wound to see the extent of the damage. God made Nehemiah a doctor assessing the damage done to Jerusalem's walls and gates. This was a sad journey for him. Such desolation, such debris, and such rubbish. Yet, no one seemed to care. (Paul echoed that sentiment in Philippians 2:20-21 “For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned





for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.”)

We, too, must evaluate the corruption around us. We need to recognize the true state of hearts. Until we grasp the enormity of sin, we will not be stirred by it. The dearth of righteousness and the overwhelming prevalence of sin must impact our hearts if we are to make a difference in our world (“And of some have compassion, making a difference,” Jude 22 KJV).

**Nehemiah kept the burden to himself.** He did not confer with others until he had conferred with God. “I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind (heart) to do for Jerusalem.” He was looking for God to lead and direct each step of the way. He did not have any personal ambitions. He humbly waited for God to give a burden to the Jewish people so they could work together to rebuild the wall.

This wall reminds us of the “wall of protection” that Christ wants in each of our lives. (“Like a city that is broken into and without walls, is a man who has no control over his spirit,” Proverbs 25:28.) In what state is your wall? Does it keep out Satan, sin, and the world? Is it built on devotion for God and concern for the lost?

## B. The People Are Rallied

*Nehemiah 2:17-18*

*Then I said to them, “You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach.”<sup>18</sup>I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the king’s words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, “Let us arise and build.” So they put their hands to the good work.*

It is to the credit of the Jewish nobles that they accepted the challenge immediately and said, “Let us arise and build!” They were not so accustomed to their situation that they took it for granted and decided that nothing could be changed. Nor did they remind Nehemiah that the Jews had once tried to repair the walls and were stopped (Ezra 4). “We tried that once and it didn’t work. Why try again?”<sup>2</sup>

Someone has defined leadership as “the art of getting people to do what they ought to do because they want to do it.” If that definition is true, then Nehemiah certainly was a leader! Most of the people united behind him and risked their lives to get the work done.<sup>3</sup>

## C. Their Hearts Are Revived

Nehemiah identified himself with the Jewish people. He did not reproach them for their indifference, unfaithfulness, and neglect. He spoke of the “bad situation that we are in.” Living up to his name, “The Lord consoles or God comforts,” Nehemiah encouraged (comforted) them. He gave them heart. Our day is filled with sexual perversion, cheapened





human life, gambling, distorted thinking, misreporting, etc. Like that day, we need a revival of the Lord and His holiness.

He didn't mention the accomplishments of his own life, nor that the king had favored him with supplies and help. He didn't tell them of the lonely hours of fasting and praying. He gave God all the glory: "The good (gracious) hand of God is upon me." His message was that God was acting on their behalf.

Nehemiah instilled a burden for restoration. He was brokenhearted about the reproach brought on the holy Name of God. He directed the people's thoughts to the waste, to the burned gates, and to the terrible, deplorable condition of God's holy city.

Nehemiah inspired them to cooperation. "Let us arise, and build," was his cry, which became their cry. He called for unity in vision and labor. They could work together to repair and restore Jerusalem for God's glory. The people did not react in anger. They didn't show an independent spirit. They united their hearts and abilities to get the job done. They strengthened their hands to do God's good work. This meant they vigorously set about this work. How we need that same spirit today.

#### D. Enemy Opposition Is Received

*Nehemiah 2:19*

*[W]hen Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard it, they mocked us and despised us and said, "What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?"*

Nehemiah faced opposition from self-proclaimed patriots. These employed scorn and slander. The leaders of the opposition were Sanballat, whose name means "hate in disguise," and Tobiah and Geshem. All three were indirect relatives of the Jews. These men represent those who profess to be children of God but are not. They were spurious enemies of the Lord's people, just as many religionists today are enemies of all who claim the Name of Christ.

#### E. Success Is Reaffirmed and Enemies Are Rebuked

*Nehemiah 2:20*

*So I answered them and said to them, "The God of heaven will give us success; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right or memorial in Jerusalem."*

They believed God. They had faith that God would bring them real success. "When once a person or a group begins to do something for God's glory, opposition is only a stone's throw away."<sup>4</sup>

"Nehemiah replied to their accusations with a statement of confidence in God, and he reminded them that they had no portion (*heleq*), nor right (*sdaqa*), nor memorial (*zillaron*) in the city. The three terms cover the various bases on which the Samaritans might claim authority in Jerusalem. They did not have a *heleq* (a legal claim), a *sdaqa* (an ethical or moral claim), or a *zikkaron* (a historical claim). Nehemiah thus



repelled the first round of a great deal of opposition to him and his work....”<sup>5</sup>

The Jews’ enemies knew rebuilding the wall would bring Israel back to its God-given separation and blessing. They did not want this to happen. “Nehemiah’s answer to their opposition was magnificent, ‘The God of heaven, He will prosper us.’ He put God first, and his utter confidence in God inspired the people to trust Him, also. He believed that God would intervene because it was His work. Nehemiah spoke to the enemy with courage, boldness, and authority.”<sup>6</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The stage is set, and the drama is beginning. Before we join the workers on the wall in our next lessons, let’s ask ourselves a few questions. Like Nehemiah, do I lead with a heart burdened for the work God has called me to do? Am I willing to sacrifice to see His will accomplished? Am I patient in gathering facts and in planning my work? Do I enlist the help of others or try to do everything myself? Do I motivate people on a spiritual basis—what God wants, or simply on a personal basis—what I want? Are people following me or following the Lord as He leads me?

As a follower, do I truly listen when leaders share their burdens? Do I cling to the past or desire to see God do something new? Have I sought God for His plan for me? Am I willing to join hands in the work? Am I cooperating in any way with the enemy and thus weakening the cause?

Anyone can go through life as a destroyer. God has called His people to be builders. What an example Nehemiah is to us! Trace his “so” statements and see how mightily God used him: “So I prayed” (2:4); “So I came to Jerusalem” (2:11); “So they strengthened their hands for this good work” (2:18); “So built we the wall” (4:6); “So we labored in the work” (4:21); “So the wall was finished” (6:15).<sup>7</sup>

Like those of Nehemiah’s day, “let us” challenge one another to unite and “build” for God’s glory. There is thrill and enthusiasm to begin this new term of Nebraska’s Unicameral Session. Together we can build “the wall” of God’s protection in our personal lives and in the lives of those around us and the state God has called us to serve. Thankfully, He only asks us to do what He promises to give us the grace, ability, wisdom, and resources to do.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Arin Hess".

Pastor Arin Hess



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the Week*

Nehemiah  
1:11; 2:11

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You, may Your ear  
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FOOTNOTES

1. John Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations*, Little Brown and Company, 1955, pg. 3, 4, 6.
2. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Determined*, Victor Books, 1996, pg. 32.
3. *Ibid.*, pg. 33.
4. Cyril J. Barber, *Nehemiah and the Dynamics of Effective Leadership*, Loizeaux Brothers, 1976, pg. 42.
5. Peter A. Stevenson, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, Bob Jones University Press, 2011, pg. 116-117.
6. Edward Watke, *Building and Battling for the Lord*, Watke.org, 2002, pg. 9.
7. Wiersbe, *Be Determined*, pg. 35.
8. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 Update.

*Personal Study Notes*

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**WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY**

Meets during the  
107<sup>th</sup> Legislature's  
Second Session

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