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**C1330 – September 11, 2013 – Nehemiah 2:1-20**  
**Nehemiah's Rise To Leadership**

Last time we began the verse by verse exposition of Nehemiah. A key theme of this book is leadership. Every commentator who has ever written on the book has emphasized leadership. Donald Campbell titled his commentary, *Nehemiah: Man in Charge* to emphasize Nehemiah's leadership. Therefore everyone in this room who is in church leadership or aspires to church leadership needs to pay close attention because there are principles throughout the book. Of course, in chapter 1 Nehemiah has yet to rise to his position of leadership but he was a leader in the making while serving in the office of cupbearer to the great Persian King Artaxerxes. The title 'cupbearer' betrays one of his chief responsibilities, to serve wine to the king. Before serving it he would ladle a small quantity into his left hand in front of the king and swallow it to ensure that it was not poisoned. Then he would fill the wine cup gracefully and he would hand it to the king with three fingers in such a way that the king could easily take it from his fingers without spilling a single drop. This procedure was very delicate. Beyond this procedure his duty was to guard the entrance to the royal apartment. No one could go in before the king without the cupbearer's permission. Even princes in the royal blood line had to submit to the cupbearer's authority before seeing the king. Thus this office was a very important and powerful one. It gave the holder direct access to the king on a continual basis so that he would be well-informed on kingdom affairs.

This is the office chapter 1 informs us Nehemiah held during the twentieth year of the great Persian King Artaxerxes. The palace he served in was at Susa, the winter palace of Persian kings that had been expanded and beautified by the prior King Ahasuerus who was husband of Queen Esther. The palace was built of cedar, gold, silver and ivory imported from exotic locations. And yet surrounded by extreme luxury he was not distracted from

his top priorities. Nehemiah maintained that the Jewish people and the Jewish city of Jerusalem were the most important issues in all of life. They were God's top priorities and for anyone to become God's man he has to first have God's priorities. Far too often we are swept away by the things of this world and our priority system is not God's priority system and therefore we are rendered virtually useless to God. So to become useful to God the first step is to set aside your priorities and desires and put God's priorities and desires first. This requires studying the Scriptures in order to identify God's priorities. It then requires a conscious setting aside of our desires and deliberate putting of His desires above our own. Finally, it requires steadfastness so that we continually remember what is most important.

The purpose of chapter 1 is to show that Nehemiah was a leader in the making. He had taken the first step toward setting aside his priorities and putting God's priorities first. He probably was not consciously aware that he was well on his way to becoming God's man but he nonetheless was. We observed that when one of his brothers and some others came from Judah his first concern was the state of the Jewish people and the Jewish city of Jerusalem. From the human standpoint he could have been indifferent to the issue altogether and remained lost in the luxury of the beautiful palace and his close association with the king. And yet rather than remaining indifferent he eagerly requested a report concerning their status. In response he was told that they were facing grave military distress and reproach from their enemies. This revealed to Nehemiah that the people were about to come under the fifth degree of divine discipline. He shows that he was a man of the word of God and was therefore able to read the signs of the times. When he was told about their state he could again have responded with cold indifference by saying, well, they should shape up or else God is going to spank their little behinds, but he didn't. Instead he identified with the people's sin by crumpling to the ground, weeping and mourning for days and fasting with prayer, beseeching God on the basis of His mercy to hear. These are all signs of a leader in the making; a man who is able to identify with the sins of the people and not consider himself above the people; a man whose concern is not merely surface but deep. His prayer is therefore elaborate and well-structured including three of the four common elements of prayer. First, he begins with *praise*. Praise to God for who He is and what He has done through His loyalty to the covenants. Praise is always a proper place to begin prayer since it exalts God. Second, his prayer continues with *confession*.

Confession of his sin and the sin of his nation. Confession is necessary to humble oneself before God since it is an admission of sin. Further he frankly admitted that God was just in sending the people into exile for their sins but he also reminded Him that He had promised to restore them if they returned to Him and obeyed Him. So he claimed the promises of God. Third, his prayer concludes with *requests*. Requests that God would complete His great work with His nation as He had promised and that He would give him success and compassion before the king when he went in before him concerning this matter. Requests reveal that the person praying is admitting his inability to bring about the desired end. God must do it. However, at the same time, Nehemiah's request for compassion before the king indicates that he knew that God used men to answer prayer. Another sign of leadership here is the willingness to be used by God to bring about change when a change is needed. Nehemiah recognized that his position as cupbearer gave him a unique opportunity to be used by God to effect these changes. But he would have to go in before the king and be given the opportunity to speak to the king concerning the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem. Thus chapter one shows in many ways a leader in the makings; the pre-requisites of which are that the man have God's priorities as his own priorities, that he is able to identify with the people, that he is dedicated to prayer and that he is willing to be used by God to act when God provides the opportunity.

Chapter 2 shows us how and when Nehemiah took action. **And it came about, in 2:1, in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year.** This was four months after the report in chapter 1. He had allowed four entire months to pass before taking action. Observe in 1:1 that the report came "in the month Chislev, in the twentieth year." Chislev corresponds to our Nov/Dec whereas in 2:1 **Nisan** corresponds to our Mar/Apr.<sup>i</sup> So you see that four months transpired between the time the report arrived in chapter 1 and Nehemiah's taking action by going in before the king in chapter 2. What was he doing for those four months? Some people take it there was a number of cupbearers who rotated their service. That may be, I don't know, but I take it that he spent the four months praying the prayer of chapter 1. This is another leadership quality. The man who is a man of God in the making must first be a man who perseveres in prayer. You're not going to be God's man if you don't persevere in prayer because it betrays the attitude that you can do it all yourself. God's man can never do it himself. He can only do it because God is with him.

Now you will notice here that Nehemiah persisted in prayer for four months. Before you act prayer, prayer, and more prayer is the order of the day (as long as that is possible). Sometimes there is crunch time but if there is time then persistent prayer. Perseverance in prayer is revealed by even a cursory reading of Scripture. God does condition His answers to some prayers on our perseverance in prayer. Not all prayers are conditioned on perseverance. But since we don't know which ones then we must consistently persevere in prayer in all things. Of course these prayers must be in the will of God. If you pray for the Second Coming not to come then you're just wasting your time because that is a prayer that is never going to be answered, it's contrary to the plan of God in Scripture. You can pray it day and night forever and it won't be answered. Our prayers must be in the plan of God. So then our prayers are not going to change the plan of God but they are the means by which some parts of the plan of God are brought to pass. They are therefore very real and absolutely necessary even to the point that if we did not pray them then that part of the plan would not come to pass. Nehemiah persevered in prayer for four months right along the lines of the prayer recorded in chapter 1. He was willing to take action at the appropriate time but not before he bathed the situation in prayer.

It was at that time, in **the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes**, that's 444BC, and this is an important year in world history so mark it down that verse 1 was the year 444BC. That's on our calendar, 444BC. We're going to return to this year shortly because this chapter records the beginning of the 490 year prophecy that was given to Daniel in Daniel 9.<sup>ii</sup>

Now this king, **King Artaxerxes**, what do we know about this king? He was the son of King Ahasuerus who was married to Queen Esther and so he was the step-son of Esther. He was a worshipper of Ahura mazda, the chief God of Zoroastrianism, but he worshipped other gods and goddesses as well and he encouraged others in his kingdom to worship the gods and goddesses that were native to their area to procure their blessings. He came to power in 465BC in the wake of the events in the Book of Esther. The Jewish victory over their enemies resulted in the elimination of anti-Semitism in the Persian Empire, at least for a while, until the seeds of anti-Semitism were re-planted by Satan, which didn't take long, so this king would have to deal with some of it. When he came to power in 465BC it wasn't long before a small

Greek navy began to make incursions into his realm in Egypt along the Nile River. They even took the city of Memphis. This is what led the king to send Ezra back to Jerusalem in 458BC so that he would propitiate the God who dwelled in the Temple in Jerusalem and secure his western front against the threat of the Greek navy. Ezra successfully restored the Temple and returned the people to the Law. They also apparently began to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. This is where the anti-Semitism began to rear its ugly head again. Local enemies saw the rebuilding and wrote a letter to the king. The year was 446BC now and the letter was warning the king that if he allowed this rebuilding of the walls to occur then he would have no part in Jerusalem and Judah, the city and province would be broken off from the Persian Empire and may even inspire other rebellions beyond the River. So the king responded with a letter requiring that the Jews stop the work immediately until a further decree was issued authorizing the rebuilding. When the enemies delivered the letter they mocked the Jews and broke down the walls and burned the gates. This was the report Nehemiah had received in chapter 1 from his brother and some others, the walls were broken down, the gates were burned, the people were being mocked and so he started praying, for four months he prayed.

In 2:1 the occasion is about to arrive for him to take action, it was now the spring, Mar/Apr 444BC, **wine was before the king, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king.** He did so according to the graceful procedure we described earlier; tasting it beforehand and then with three fingers on the glass handing it so the king so that the king would not spill a drop. Then, as an important aside he notes, **Now I had not been sad in his presence.** That is, he had never gone into the king's **presence** with sadness. Predictably he is about to. It's not that he hadn't been sad for four months. It's that he had successfully hidden his sadness before the king for four months. Whenever he went in before the king he just put on his best and did his job.

Now it was dangerous to go into a royal court with sadness because it could be interpreted that you were displeased with the king's policies. And in fact Nehemiah was. Furthermore, Gentile kings wanted their courts to be pleasant places where everyone enjoyed the atmosphere; sadness had no place in a royal court. Putting these factors together it was extremely dangerous to go in with a sad face. Kings were known to execute people who

didn't agree with them. So at the very least Nehemiah is going to ruin the pleasant court atmosphere and at the most he's going to offend the king. But he was overwhelmed with sadness and so in verse 2...**the king said to me, "Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart."** The king knew something serious was wrong, he knew it was not sickness and therefore Nehemiah became **very much afraid**. The Hebrew means he was in terror; his fear is that he had offended the king.

Now I take it that Nehemiah interpreted the circumstances as the moment God had chosen for him to lay his concerns before the king, just put it out there, he'd been praying about it for four months, this was it. So verse 3, **I said to the king, "Let the king live forever;** a good way to start your response; flattery. It's used by Daniel and everybody else that comes into the presence of these powerful, tyrant kings (cf Dan 2:4; 3:9; 5:10). **O 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?"** He has the same concerns as chapter 1, God's top priorities, the Jews and the city of Jerusalem. Verse 4, **Then the king said to me, "What would you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven.** That's interesting. What do you observe that's strange in verse 4? He goes into a prayer in the middle of a conversation. I told you this man was a man of prayer. 11% of this book is prayer, that's 46 out of 406 verses. Nehemiah in the heat of the moment utters a short prayer. It had to be short because the king wouldn't tolerate a long period of silence. Here we have one of the rare instances of a spontaneous prayer in a pressure moment. You know the kinds of moments, you've been in these kinds of moments and you utter a quick prayer under your breath because you're humble and you realize this is it, this is the moment of truth. How quickly do you think our prayers must travel if we can utter them in the midst of a conversation and have them answered before the conversation resumes? It's remarkable the rate of speed with which our prayers travel. Physicists tell us that the thing that travels the fastest is light; they're wrong. Light travels 186,000 miles/second. That's going around the equator 7.5 times in one second. It's very fast. But one thing physicists have been unable to measure is the speed of prayer. And apparently prayer travels faster than light. If your prayer can reach all the way to God's throne room in heaven, which is outside the second heavens, outside the starry heavens, and the answer can get back before the conversation resumes, that's very fast, far, far faster than the speed of light.

So physicists are wrong about what travels the fastest. It's not light, it's prayer. Since Nehemiah realized this was the moment of truth he uttered a quick, silent prayer. Breneman says, "Quick prayers are possible and valid if one has prayed sufficiently beforehand. In this case Nehemiah's prayer is evidence of a life lived in constant communion with God. Nehemiah had prayed for months, but he knew he was completely dependent on God's work in the king's heart at this moment."<sup>iii</sup> This was the moment of truth. We're not told the content of his prayer but it was probably right along the lines of the end of his prayer in chapter 1, "God grant me favor in the eyes of the king!"

Now in verse 5 he begins the three requests. First, he requests permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city. **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.** His concern is personal, the city is the **city of his fathers' tombs**, it is an emotional appeal, his father's tombs are in a city laid waste, let me go rebuild it. However, it was a risky request because the king had stopped the rebuilding of the city just a year or two earlier by decree. Thus the king would have to reverse his earlier policy regarding Jerusalem in order to grant this request. In effect Nehemiah was displeased with the king's policy concerning Jerusalem. So very interestingly he doesn't even mention the name of the city. To do so may have struck a nerve with the king so he simply uses an emotional appeal based on his personal connection to the city.

After this request, **the king said**, in verse 6, **the queen sitting beside him, "How long will your journey be, and when will you return?"** Nehemiah already had an answer prepared. We don't know the answer but **it pleased the king...and Nehemiah gave him a definite time.** Later in the book mention is made that he returned from Jerusalem twelve years later. However, I would suggest that he did not request a twelve year departure. Probably he either returned shortly and requested a longer extension, a return that is not mentioned in the book or he requested an extension without coming back. But at this time, whatever length of time he suggested **the king was pleased** with it. Had God answered prayer? Yes he had. Verse 5 is an answer to persevering prayer.

Second, in verse 7 he requests letters that will permit safe and easy passage on the return to Jerusalem. **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.** The main roads were obviously patrolled by the king's soldiers and there were checkpoints along the way that required authorization to pass. The people **beyond the River** were often enemies of the Jews. Therefore, knowing he would face resistance he requested letters from **the king** that would **allow him to pass through** these provinces without opposition all the way **to the province of Judah.**

Third, in verse 8 he requested a letter to acquire supplies for the rebuilding. **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 go."** And **the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me.** There it is. Why did the king grant these requests? **Because the good hand of my God was on me.** God's hand working from outside of history in Nehemiah's life. Does God answer prayer? Absolutely. Can God work through great, powerful Gentile kings to make a king look favorably upon you? Absolutely. It's not a problem for Him. He's the One who raises kings and lowers kings, He's the One who establishes them and disposes of them. It's a piece of cake for Him. And this was a tyrant of a king.

Nehemiah's not shaking in his boots for no reason in verse 2. He'd probably seen people offend the king and taken out for execution by impalement. We won't draw that terrible picture; suffice it to say up the rear with a pole and put on public display. But our God is greater than that; He can easily bend the favor of a tyrant king in our favor.

Now there are three construction projects under this final request in verse 8 involving **a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest.** It shows Nehemiah knew well the environs of Jerusalem and the officers in the province. **Timber** from this forest would be necessary for the three construction projects. The first project was the **gates for the fortress which is by the temple.** The exact location of this fortress of Jerusalem in the Time of Nehemiah, was the northwest side of the Temple Mount which was the most vulnerable point. Leen Ritmeyer holds that the fortress was destroyed by the Babylonians who attacked from the north and that it remained in disrepair until Nehemiah reconstructed it. The name of the



reconstructed tower fortress was the Tower of Hananeel. This structure gave way to other defensive structures over time into the time of Christ. Dan Bahat explains, “The northwestern corner of the Temple Mount had always been its most vulnerable point because of the topography of the land lying to the north—a hill higher than the mount itself, to the north of which was the Antonia ridge. Evidence exists that in the biblical era a fortress was situated in this corner for the purpose of protecting the Temple Mount. At the end of the First Temple period, the Hananel Tower was built on this site, and during the Hasmonean period the Baris stood there....Herod radically changed the face of the hill...forming a rock platform upon which the Antonia Fortress was built, in honor of...the military commander Marc Anthony.”<sup>iv</sup> What he’s explaining is the series of fortresses that were built on the NW corner of the Temple Mount in order to protect the Temple. It was an important location to set up your defenses because just about every attack against Jerusalem comes from the north (even in end-times). Nehemiah is therefore requesting authorization for a construction project that would restore the **gates** of the **fortress**. Otherwise the Jews were open to enemy attack. Ritmeyer also suggests that there were twin towers on this NW corner. He says, “we dare suggest that this fortress at the northwest corner may have had twin towers, the eastern one of which may have been the Tower Meah, or the “Tower of the Hundred” (Neh 3:1; 12:39), as this tower is always mentioned together with the Tower of Hananeel.”<sup>v</sup>

The second construction project, also in verse 8, is **timber for the wall of the city**. The walls of the city are what made the city defensible. Without walls the city was open to enemy attack. Ezra had tried to rebuild the walls but they had been torn down a year or two before so Nehemiah is requesting the necessary **timber** to repair the **wall of the city**. This is the condition necessary to begin the seventy sevens of Daniel prophecy according to Dan 9:25 so let’s review briefly that prophecy by turning to Daniel 9.

Leading in to this prophecy Daniel was studying the books of Jeremiah where he read that Jerusalem would be in desolation for 70 years. Since it was the 69<sup>th</sup> year (539BC) he began to confess his sin and the sin of his nation in hope that Jerusalem would be restored and the kingdom of God would come. However, in the middle of his prayer Gabriel revealed that after the 70 years there would be a partial restoration but the final restoration would not be until 490 years. Verse 24 opens the most mathematically precise prophecy in

all of Scripture. “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city,” that’s the Jews and Jerusalem. The seventy weeks or sevens (Heb. *shabuim*) refer to seventy periods of seven years which is 490 years. 490 years to what? “to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.” In short, the first three things listed there relate to accomplishments of the first coming of the Messiah and the last three things relate to the application to Israel at the second coming of the Messiah. Of course you couldn’t know that from the OT but there would be 490 years in all to complete these six things. When would the 490 years start? Verse 25 reveals the starting point. “So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem...” There you have the starting point, (Lat. *terminus a quo*). Technically the requirement is that a king issue a decree that authorizes the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem so that it would be a defensible city. While some scholars have chosen Cyrus’ decree in 539BC as the decree that started the 490 years his decree only authorized the return of the Jews to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple not the city. Others have chosen Darius’ decree in 520BC as the decree that started the 490 year countdown but his decree only re-authorized the rebuilding of the Temple. Still others have chosen Artaxerxes decree in 458BC made to Ezra but this decree only authorized the return of more exiles and the adorning of the Temple. Finally, the majority of scholars now admit that Artaxerxes’ decree in 444BC to Nehemiah is the decree that started the seventy sevens because his decree does authorize the rebuilding of the walls of the city of Jerusalem fitting the requirements exactly of Dan 9:25. Therefore the 490 years began with the decree of Artaxerxes issued in Nehemiah 2 in Nisan (Mar/Apr) of 444BC. “Sixty-nine of those seventy weeks (173,880 days) were literally fulfilled when Jesus entered Jerusalem, presented Himself at His ‘royal entry’ as Israel’s messiah, on March 30, A.D. 33. The prophecy of Daniel was fulfilled to the very day (cf. Luke 19:40–42). The seventieth week of Daniel, the Tribulation (cf. Matt. 24:4–28; Rev. 6–19), will find its fulfillment in the future.”<sup>vi</sup> So, turning back to Neh 2:8, the request here, which was granted, is the starting point for the 490 years.

The third project for which he requests timber, near the end of verse 8, was **timber...for the house to which I will go**. It was for Nehemiah’s own personal residence.<sup>vii</sup>

Verse 9, **Then I came to the governors of the provinces beyond the River and gave them the king's letters.** So obviously the king granted all his requests. He's going to have safe passage. Notice the end of verse 9, **Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen.** He didn't request them but the king **sent** them. Nehemiah was granted a military escort which shows the king must have loved him and must have been concerned for his safety. Furthermore, we might recall that Ezra did not request a military escort when he returned 14 years earlier because he had told the king how mighty his God was and it would have been a disgrace to then ask for an escort. But Nehemiah wasn't under those constraints so he accepted the military escort.

Verse 10, **When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about it,** and these were enemies of the Jews, they hated the Jews. And by the way, this **Sanballat** is mentioned in the Elephantine papyri, so we have an extrabiblical evidence of this man; it's not necessary to have that historical evidence but it's there anyway. He was an enemy of the Jews along with **Tobiah** and they were happy that for the time being they had the upper hand over the Jews. But when Nehemiah came, **it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel.** Yet there was nothing they could do about it because Nehemiah came with letters from the king along with soldiers and cavalry.

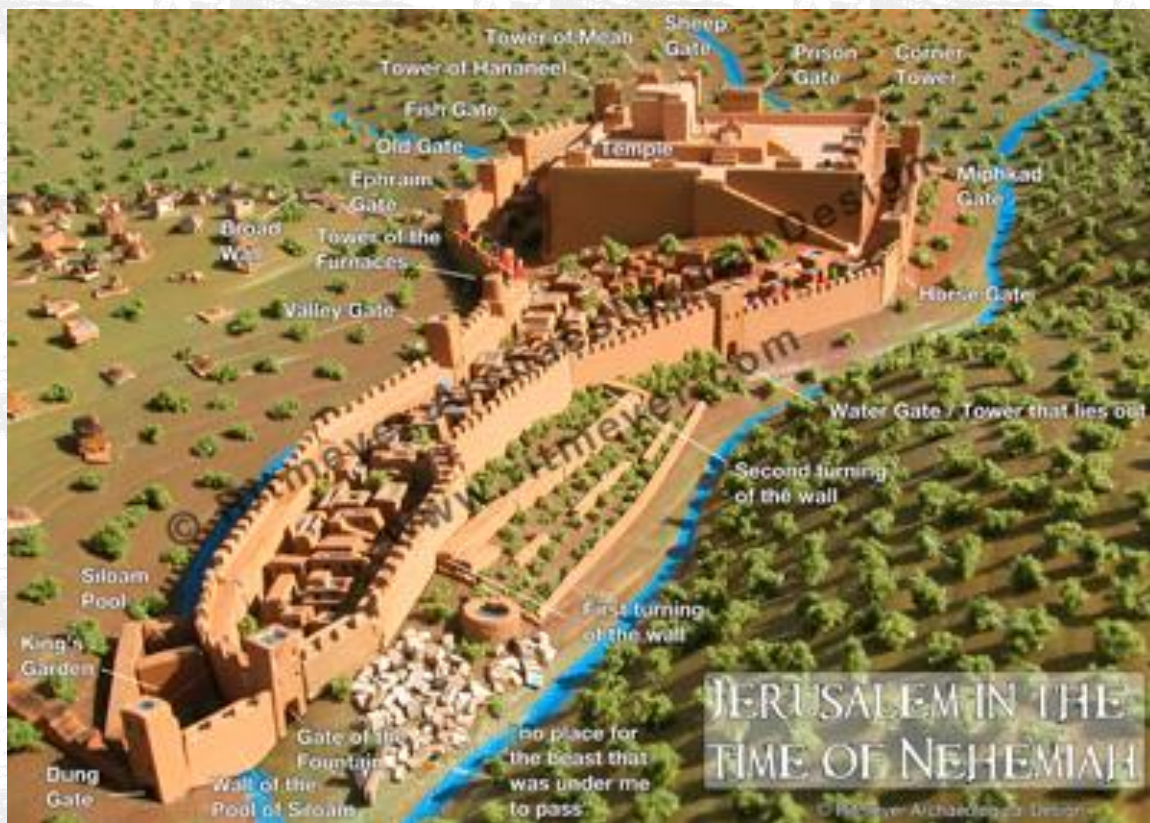
Now in verse 11 he arrives. **I came to Jerusalem and was there three days.** He was probably resting and getting familiar with some of the local leadership. Verse 12, **And I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem and there was no animal with me except the animal on which I was riding.** He didn't want this information to leak, no wiki-leaks because then the Jews might try to dissuade him or the enemies might find out and bring resistance which would delay the project. He wanted to avoid all resistance, get the jump on this project and finish the work quickly before the resistance got organized; a brilliant strategy, undercut the resistance by surprise, a clear leadership principle.

Notice also he says **God** put this **into** his **mind to do.** I don't know how you theologically articulate what is happening here but I would suggest it takes

the lines of God working through Nehemiah's intellectual capabilities, his spiritual maturity, his bible knowledge and his office as cupbearer before the king to convince him that this is what he wanted him to do. God can put into our minds ideas consistent with our constitution and station in life and if you have a problem with Nehemiah assigning the source of his desires as God then you can take it up with God and Nehemiah.

Now to do this for Jerusalem he starts by going out at **night**. He's got a **few men** with him, men who were obviously reliable, and his goal was to survey the damage. It was probably a full moon or very near to it so he would have some light. This is all planning, up front work and this is another leadership quality. A leader has in mind a vision, what he wants to accomplish and he analyzes the situation and thinks it through and plans a strategy for accomplishing the vision. Nehemiah's vision is to rebuild the fortress and the walls, that's what this survey is all about so he's going to try and make a circuit around the Temple and the city to assess the situation.

Verse 13, **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. 14Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass. 15So I went up at night by the ravine and inspected the wall. Then I entered the Valley Gate again and returned.** Basically, he describes the route he took. The difficulty is reconstructing the route since there are only three sources for the description of Jerusalem from the time of the partial return to the time of the Hasmoneans, a period of ~350 years; the accounts in Nehemiah, the letter of Aristeas and the Timocharus writings. I've passed out a model of Nehemiah based on the work of many archaeologists but published by Leen Ritmeyer. Ritmeyer is the leading world authority on the Temple mount and its environs so I'm depending on him for this reconstruction of the route. This would be Jerusalem in the Time of Nehemiah.



You see the Temple Mount in the north of the city, it's in the high elevation, and the south is the City of David, the walls encompassing the Temple and the city. On the east **you have the water running through the ravine known as the Kidron Valley. When Nehemiah set out to inspect the damage he went out the Valley Gate on the west and** went south along the wall toward the Dragon's Well, which identification is unknown, then on to the Refuse or Dung Gate, that's where all the trash went out of the city and he was **inspecting the walls** along this route and the **gates**. Then he went around the southern end of the city to the Fountain Gate which was right by the King's Pool and at that point he ran into the fallen eastern wall so there was no place for his mount to pass . His animal couldn't get by so he walked down into the ravine and inspected the damage, then he comes back to his animal, mounts up and retraces his steps to the Valley Gate. So he wasn't able to inspect everything at the time but he was familiarized with these portions of the western and eastern wall and in chapter 3 we'll come into contact with more of these locations mentioned on the map. The point is that he wanted to inspect the damage so he could come up with a plan for rebuilding before anyone could catch wind of the project because if you know people, they're not ready for change. So as a leader you have to have all your ducks in a row, you can't be scrambling around trying to come up with a plan at the last minute. So he's getting all his ducks in a row so everyone realizes

this man has a plan and he's thought it through and he knows what he's doing. Leadership! Leadership! Leadership! Be, Know, Do! That's the army manual for leadership. Be somebody, have character, honor, integrity and personal courage. Know your goals and abilities; conceptually, technically, tactically. Do it; take action by influencing people, communicating clearly, motivating them, prepping them, etc...It's all right here in Nehemiah.

Verse 17, he's down to the action now. He is somebody, He knows his plan, now he's taking action. **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.** Clear communication. They recognized that Nehemiah was a man with character, they recognized that he knew the situation, they saw that he was a man of action. Therefore they followed Nehemiah's effective leadership. He's very convincing, he gives a proper analysis of the situation, it was **bad**. He had God's support. He had the king's authorization and he had a plan. So the people said, "Let's follow him."

And immediately what do we find in verse 19? Enemy resistance. **But when 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?"** Intimidation tactics. There's nothing substantial behind the intimidation, it's a lot of hot air and baloney talk but you have to have to be a real leader not to be discouraged by it. So Nehemiah **answered them with courage 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."** That's courage. He stuck it to them just like Ezra stuck it to them 14 years earlier. You have no portion, no right, no memorial in Jerusalem. Our God is going to give us success so why don't you just get out of town. That's courageous leadership and that's Nehemiah.

In conclusion, I won't summarize because the 21 leadership principles from chapter 2 are so well picked out by Donald Campbell that we'll just go

through this list. I've *modified* some of them slightly but you'll be able to recall the circumstances where we saw the leadership principles in the passage. Anyone in church leadership or aspiring to church leadership needs to know and apply consistently these 21 principles.

1. Establish a reasonable and attainable goal
2. Have a vision
3. Be willing to get involved
4. Have proper priorities in order to accomplish the goal
5. Be patient waiting for God's timing
6. Be respectful to your superiors
7. Be in prayer constantly
8. Be tactful and respectful in your requests
9. Be well prepared and thought of his needs in advance
10. Respect proper channels
11. Take time to rest, pray, and plan
12. Investigate the situation firsthand
13. Inform others only after you know the size of the problem
14. Identify yourself with the people
15. Give them a reasonable and attainable goal
16. Assure them God is in the project
17. Be courageous in facing obstacles
18. Display God's confidence in facing obstacles
19. Do not argue with opponents
20. Do not be discouraged by opposition
21. Be courageous in your use of the authority of your position<sup>viii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> How can the events of chapter 1 precede those of chapter 2 since the month in chapter 1 comes after the month in chapter 2? The clear answer alluded scholars until the discovery of the Elephantine papyri in the late 19th century. These records show that the Jews in Persia during the 5th century BC reckoned the year from Tishri to Tishri which corresponds to Sept/Oct and not Nisan to Nisan as the Persian's. If the Tishri to –Tishri reckoning was being used then the New Year began in Sept/Oct and not Mar/Apr. Therefore the month Chislev (Nov/Dec) would precede Nisan (Mar/Apr) not follow it. Nehemiah has no problem with his dates since he was using the calendar reckoning that started the New Year with Tishri.

<sup>ii</sup> The twentieth year is the twentieth year of Artaxerxes reign. On the Jewish reckoning his accession to the throne occurred in 465BC and continued into 464, his first regal year began in 464BC and continued into 463BC. Thus the twentieth year began in 445BC and continued into 444BC. Since the events of chapter 1 occurred in the month Chislev, on the Jewish reckoning this was Nov/Dec of 445BC. While the events of chapter 2 occur in the same regal year of the king, they occur in the later month of Nisan which would put it in Mar/Apr of 444BC. Therefore chapter 1 is occurring in Nov/Dec of 445BC and chapter 2 is occurring in Mar/Apr of 444BC. (See Harold Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, pp. 127-129.)

iii Constable, T. (2003). *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Ne 2:1). Galaxie Software.

iv Dan Bahat, *The Atlas of Biblical Jerusalem* (Carta, Jerusalem, 1994), 31.

v Leen Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, p 201.

vi Constable, T. (2003). *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Ne 2:1). Galaxie Software.

vii This third request for timber to build a residence may signal a longer journey than most would expect.

viii Donald K. Campbell, *Nehemiah: Man in Charge*, p. 23.

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