

**FOR THE BROTHERS:
A STUDY IN THE EPISTLES OF JAMES, JOHN, JUDE
AMEN BIBLE STUDY 2016-2017**

**The Man and His Mission – Nehemiah 1, 2
May 18, 2017**

Background:

- A. Historical background for Nehemiah
 - 1. Three exiles (605, 597, 586)
 - 2. Three returns (538, 457, 445)
- B. Theological background for us
 - 1. General calling
 - 2. Special calling

Body:

A. Ask something!

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, ² that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. ³ And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire."

B. Feel something!

⁴ As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept...

C. Do something!

...and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

D. Pray something!

⁵ And I said, "O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶ let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. ⁷ We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. ⁸ Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, ⁹ but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.' ¹⁰ They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. ¹¹ O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." Now I was cupbearer to the king.

E. Try something!

² In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. ² And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid. ³ I said to the king, "Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" ⁴ Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵ 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." ⁶ And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), "How long will you be gone, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time. ⁷ And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah, ⁸ 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 of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy." And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.

F. Start something!

⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days. ¹² Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There was no animal with me but the one on which I rode. ¹³ I went out by night by the Valley Gate to the Dragon Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire. ¹⁴ Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass. ¹⁵ Then I went up in the night by the valley and inspected the wall, and I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. ¹⁶ And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, and I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest who were to do the work. ¹⁷ Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision." ¹⁸ And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work.

G. Endure something!

¹⁹ But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" ²⁰ Then I replied to them, "The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem."

Conclusion: The difference one person can make!

... someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree or disagree with the idea that you have a specific mission or calling from God? How have you come to that conclusion?
2. What do you care about as much as Nehemiah cared about Jerusalem and the fate of those who had escaped the exile to Babylon (Neh. 1:1-4)?
3. What most impresses you about Nehemiah's prayer in verses 5-11 (the adoration in verse 5, the confession in verses 6-7, the promise claimed in verses 8-9, the supplication in verses 10-11, or something else)? How will that observation affect your own prayers going forward?
4. In 2:4 we learn that Nehemiah didn't just pray great, polished prayers at his leisure, but he also prayed what Spurgeon called "arrow prayers" at the moment of crisis or opportunity? For what do you think Nehemiah prayed in 2:1-8, and how do you think God answered him? For what opportunity are you praying, and how might you be preparing for it, as Nehemiah did?
5. What do you make of the shift from first person singular to first person plural in 2:9-18? Where does the shift take place, and what do you learn from that shift for your own leadership in your home, at your workplace, or in church?

Going Deeper

1. What opposition did Nehemiah encounter in his mission in 2:19-20? What do we learn from these verses about expecting and responding to opposition in our own missions for the Lord?
2. How do you think one person can make a difference in accomplishing God's purposes in this world? How do you think God wants *you* to make such a difference?