

Series: Rebuild; *Sermon:* **Establish Reality**
delivered by **Josh Moody**, senior pastor, on November 1, 2020

Bible text explored: Nehemiah 2:9–20

⁹Then 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. ¹⁰But 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.

¹¹So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days. ¹²Then 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. ¹³I 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. ¹⁴Then 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. ¹⁵Then 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. ¹⁶And 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.

¹⁷Then 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." ¹⁸And 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. ¹⁹But 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?" ²⁰Then 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." [ESV]

Review and application:

1. Why did the legal and symbolic signals of Nehemiah's arrival (*verses 9-10*) alarm those in Samaria who ruled the Beyond the River Province?
The rulers represented the remnant from the Northern Kingdom of Israel mixed with peoples imported from elsewhere by the Assyrian Empire. What had given them the political upper hand? (See *Ezra 4:19-21*.)
Why did a change in the standing of the Southern Kingdom remnant centered in Jerusalem threaten their political dominance?
2. Why should believers expect conflict whenever following Jesus goes against the societal flow?
3. Why (*verses 11-16*) did Nehemiah conceal his initial assessment efforts . . .
. . . from his opponents?
. . . from Jerusalem's leaders and citizens?
4. Why is personal involvement essential for understanding how to serve effectively?

5. How (*verses 17-18*) did Nehemiah's fresh personal assessment position him to convince Jerusalem's leaders that they'd become resigned to a disgraceful state of affairs?
How did sharing about God's clear involvement and the king's backing create a new readiness to roll up their sleeves and tackle a major challenge?
How could you interact with someone else to absorb chaos, communicate calm, or provide hope?
6. How did Nehemiah rely on persuasion rather than on commanding?
Why must a leader major on the "soft skills" of servant leadership but, when firm action is required, be prepared to exercise the "hard skills" of conviction and authority?
7. How did Jerusalem's adversaries seek to undermine Nehemiah's credibility, discourage the city's residents, and stop progress?
Why were they disqualified from inheriting lands God had allotted to the children of Israel?
How did Nehemiah's response indicate that his detractors were not simply resisting a minor local deity?

Paul notes that reviewing Old Testament incidents equips us to rebuild today:
"Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope" —*Romans 15:4.NIV*. How timely!