Nehemiah

Part 3 – Chapter 2

* Nehemiah talks with the King (2:1-10)
  + “I was the cupbearer to the king… I took up the wine and gave it to the king” (1:11, 2:1) – position of honor, influence, and trust
  + Nisan (Mar/Apr), 20th year – 4 months have passed since Nehemiah heard the news
  + “I had not been sad in his presence…” (2:1) – Why?
  + “Why is your face sad… this is nothing but sadness of heart” (2:2) – Why did Nehemiah choose this occasion to show his emotion? (Herodotus – 5th century BC Greek historian)
  + “Then I was very much afraid” (2:2) – Why? -> Ezra 4:7-23 – Artaxerxes had previously ordered the halting of the work in Jerusalem (perhaps during an Egyptian rebellion against Persia)
  + Nehemiah’s reply (v. 3) – “the place of my father’s tombs”
  + The king responds – “what would you request?” (v. 4)
  + “So I prayed to the God of heaven…”
  + Nehemiah’s request (v. 5)
  + Why is the queen mentioned? (v. 6)
  + The king responds – “how long… when will you return?” (v. 6)
  + Nehemiah’s plan
    - He had thought about when and how to ask (“why should my face…”)
    - He prayed “with his eyes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” in the moment
    - He crafted language to make a respectful request
    - He knew how long he would need to complete his mission (v. 6)
    - He knew of the potential dangers of the journey and was ready to ask for help (v. 7)
    - He knew what supplies he would need and was prepared to request of the king (v. 8)
  + Nehemiah’s trust (v. 8)
* Nehemiah’s enemies (2:9-10)
  + “beyond the River” = beyond the Euphrates
  + Sanballat – governor of Samaria
  + Tobiah – governor of Ammon
  + These men had previously complained to the king about the Jews rebuilding in Jerusalem which led to Artaxerxes’ decree to stop building (Ezra 4:23). Naturally, they would not have been excited about a new Jewish governor who was coming to inquire about the welfare of Israelites (v. 10)
  + Hence… “the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen” (v. 9)
* Nehemiah’s night inspection (2:11-16)
  + “I came to Jerusalem and was there three days” (v. 11)
  + “And I arose at night, I and a few men with me” (v. 11)
  + “I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem…”
* Nehemiah addresses the Jews (2:17-18)
  + Nehemiah’s appeal and charge (v. 17)
  + Notice his reasoning… “so that we will no longer be a reproach…” (v. 17, cf. 1:3, 9, 11)
  + Watch how he motivates them to action (v. 18)
  + He doesn’t order them, he \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ them to see the need, understand the task, and to desire to do the work (v. 18)
* Nehemiah’s opposition (2:19-20)
  + What is their charge against Nehemiah and the Jews? (v. 19)
  + How does Nehemiah respond? (v. 20)
* Insights on leadership
  + Leaders think through the when and how of important conversations (v. 2)
  + Leaders “pray with their eyes open” (v. 4)
  + Leaders know how to respectfully appeal to authority (v. 5)
  + Leaders plan and are well prepared (vv. 6-8)
  + Leaders discover the will of God and lead others to discover it and do it (v. 17)
  + Leaders help people to see the hand of God at work (v. 18)
  + Leaders recognize that any success is of God’s favor and doing (vv. 8, 20)
  + Leaders and others who strive to do the will of God are often opposed (v. 19)