THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH
“A Call to Build”
Nehemiah 2:17-20

Review
1. Our Lord, when He saw a need, did something about it (Mt. 9:35-38). It was so with Nehemiah. Having heard of the difficulties in Jerusalem, he did something about it (1:3, 4).

2. First Nehemiah prayed to God (2:4) and then asked Artaxerxes the king to send him to Jerusalem to repair the damages (2:5-8). Note: Nehemiah was called of God (1:1-4); walked with God (1:5-11); talked with God (2:4); acted with God (2:5-8).

3. As God’s man, Nehemiah was: authorized (2:9); prepared (3:11); opposed (2:10); involved (1:12-15). Indeed, Nehemiah enjoyed the essentials to be activated for the service of the Lord.

4. With all the ground work done, God’s man now came to the leadership of Israel in Jerusalem (2:16, 17). His object, at this point, was to present the project to which God had made him privy. This is how he did it:

1. Nehemiah described the NEED v. 17

   a. Distress ( ). Nehemiah calls attention to the calamity of the nation. This same noun is translated “affliction” (1:3). The nation is told to see (plural pronoun and verb), but Nehemiah associates himself with his brethren for he says “we are in.” The use of the emphatic pronouns is significant. Nehemiah’s sorrow was genuine (cf. 1:4).

   b. Jerusalem
   It is recorded that the city is wasted ( ). This means it was destroyed (cf. 2:3). Moreover, the gates (plural) were burned with fire or consumed ( ). The sight was distressful. Every eye could see. There was no guess work.

   c. Reproach ( )
   This noun indicates “scorn, shame, disgrace” (cf. Josh. 5:9). The condition of the city made Nehemiah believe this was the way the nations perceived the situation. If this were true, it also brought shame to the Lord. God’s servant wanted this changed.

2. Nehemiah explained the SUPPLY v. 18

   a. Through God
   Notice how Nehemiah puts God first. He had done this earlier on (2:4, 5). The verb he employs is causative (hifil) and means to “declare, show, make manifest” ( ). Nehemiah desired the leadership to understand about 1) God’s “hand.” 2) God was “my” God. 3) God was “good.” 4) God was “upon me.” All this affirmed that Nehemiah had heaven’s authority and approval.

   b. Through the king
   Here is an important point. The fact that the king had supported Nehemiah’s mission was not forgotten (cf. 2:5-9). While the help of man may fail, it is not to be decried when provided.

3. Nehemiah admitted the DIFFICULTIES v. 19
   a. Identified
   The persons of opposition are not ethereal, but substantive. They are: 1) Sanballat the Horonite. 2) Tobiah the Ammonite (called “the servant”). 3) Geshem the Arabian ( ). These three were inveterate opponents to the work of God (cf. 2:10; here; 4:1-3, 9; 6:1ff.; 13:7). Incredibly, these were relatives of the Jews, hence one must expect opposition from strange sources.

   b. Described
   Four words tell the story: 1) The enemies heard. Any work for God will be “heard.” That is the signal for the enemy to oppose. Rather than cooperate for God’s glory and removal of “reproach” (v. 17) -- oppose. How cruel and incredulous. 2) The enemies laughed ( ). This verb means to scorn, mock, jest or speak in a barbarous foreign tongue (cf. Job 9:23; Ps 35:16 (noun). 3) The enemies despised ( ). The primary meaning is “to tread under foot” (cf. 4:4; Prov. 27:7). This term raises the feeling higher than the previous verb. 4) The enemies questioned ( ). Two are recorded: the first questions the very activity and the second questions their loyalty. Neither were of any affect. Note: If you run unopposed in the Lord’s work, better check to see if you are running at all!!!

4. He affirmed the RESOLVE v. 20
   a. By Nehemiah v. 17
   This is most forceful to read. Nehemiah did not describe the need and stop there. Rather, he said “come” ( ) and “let us build” (middle sense, personal involvement). He felt the constraint of God’s will and blessing. Nehemiah wanted to be part of the job!

   b. By Israel v. 18
   The third person plural shows that the leaders wasted no time to join heartily with Nehemiah 1) for “they said” ( ) “let us rise up and build.” “Rise up” is added to the commitment of Nehemiah (v. 17). 2) They strengthened their hands. The verb ( ) means to bind fast, make firm and express vigor. 3) They intended what was “for good” ( ). This meant the work outlined by Nehemiah.

   c. By God v. 20
   Granted, this is by intimation, but if God did not help, their building would be in vain (Ps 127:1). Three important statements are made about the God of heaven:

   1) He will prosper the work. The verb is hifil and means “give success, finish happily” ( cf. Josh. 1:8).

   2) He will allow the building. This is remarkable because Israel are “His servants” ( ).

   3) He will reject the enemies. Nehemiah makes it clear that there is “no portion” (lot), “no right” (rectitude), “no memorial” (record, memento) in Jerusalem. Believers and non-believers have “no thing” in common (2 Cor. 6:11 - 7:1).

Conclusion
Work carried on in this fashion will glorify the Lord. The job will be done in a manner consistent with His purposes. God give us to see the need -- whatever -- and do something about it. Be like Nehemiah. Moreover, be like your Lord. Amen.