

Harvester Class, Perimeter Church  
February 18, 2024  
"Nehemiah: Faithfulness to one's calling"

[slide 1 – title slide]

Good morning, everyone. It is great to be with you this morning. We are into week 3 of our series in Nehemiah.

[slide 2 – Where are we headed?]

Real quickly, here is the schedule for the next 5 weeks. I mentioned it took Nehemiah 52 days to rebuild the wall. As a mentioned, we will be in Nehemiah 49 days.

February 4, 2024 - Introduction Nehemiah 1:1-13 "Nehemiah: Faithfulness amid the Fragments"

February 11, 2024 - Nehemiah: Faithfulness to one's call (Nehemiah 1:1-2:8)

February 18, 2024 - Nehemiah: Faithfulness in one's calling (Nehemiah 2:1-3:32)

February 25, 2024 - Nehemiah: Faithfulness in the face of opposition, part 1 (Nehemiah 4:1-7:72)

March 3, 2024 - Nehemiah: Faithfulness in the face of opposition, part 2 (Nehemiah 4:1-7:72)

March 10, 2024 - Nehemiah: Faithfulness rooted in the Word (Nehemiah 7:73-10:39)

March 17, 2024 - Nehemiah: Faithfulness leading to urban renewal (Nehemiah 11:1-12:47)

March 24, 2024 - Nehemiah: Faithfulness for the long haul (Nehemiah 13)

[slide 3 – Quick review]

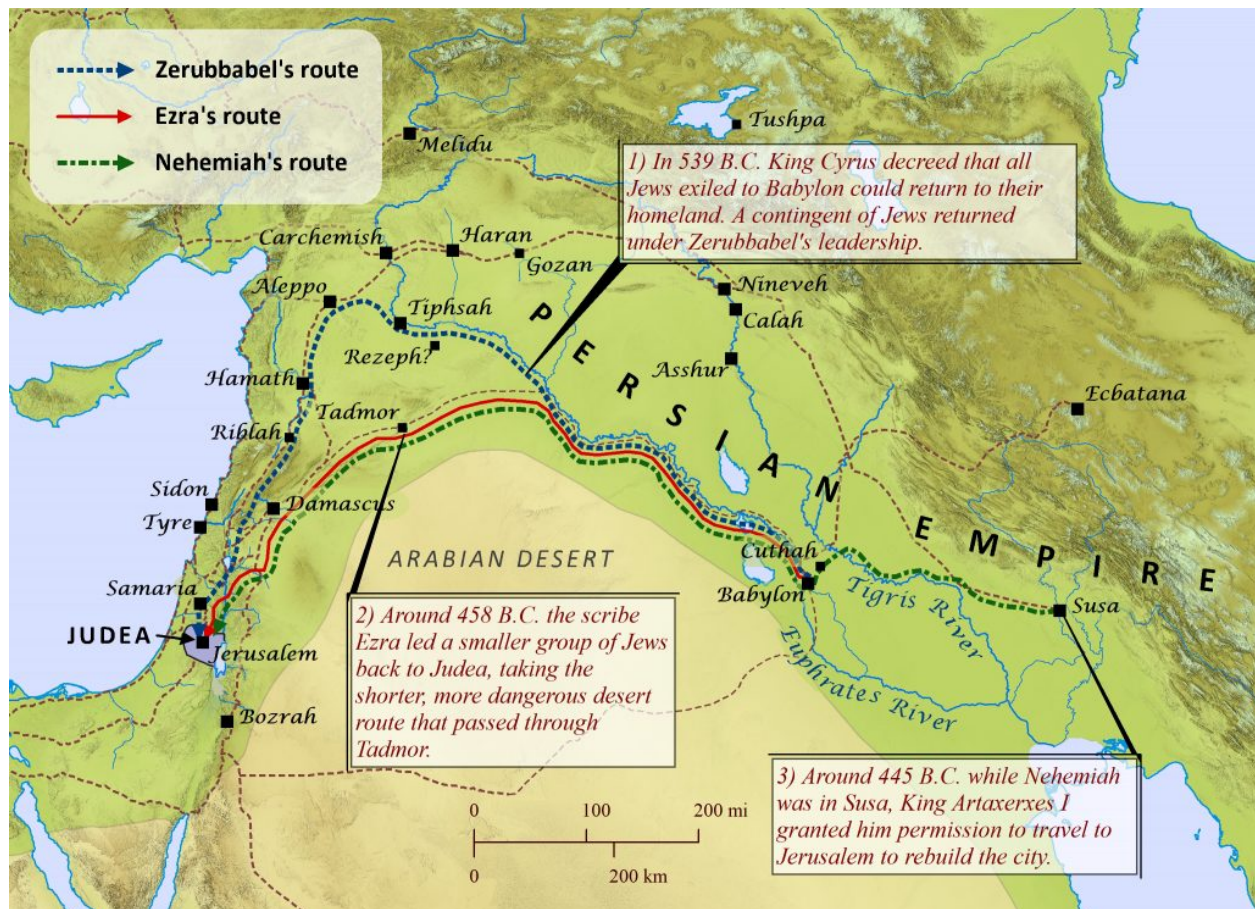
Remember, Nehemiah is leading the third return. There have been two others prior to this one.

Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.

[slide 4 – Context is our Friend, place]

Now let's talk about place.



I picked this map because it highlights all three returns. It was a journey of about 1,000 miles. This would take you anywhere from four to seven months. Ezra tells us it took him 4 months (Ezra 7:9)

[slide 5 – Lessons on prayer]

### Lessons about Prayer from Nehemiah

1. Personal – look at the language he uses.
2. Persistent – months of praying for this.
3. Penitent – he has solidarity with God’s people.
4. Petitionary – as asking a friend.

“Nehemiah’s public life was the outflow, and thus the revelation, of his personal life, and his personal life as his narrative shows it to us was steeped in, and shaped by habitual petitionary prayer, in which devotion to God, dependence on God, and desire for the glory of God found equal expression.”

- J.I. Packer

We talked about fasting last week and afterwards a number of you came up to me. I neglected to mention that we can fast from things other than food. Digital devices for example or some other form of entertainment. Anything that is perhaps distracting you from intimacy for your Savior.

Now let’s get to work..

[slide 6 – Nehemiah 2:1-4]

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.** <sup>2</sup> 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.** <sup>3</sup> 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?” <sup>4</sup> Then the king said to me, “What are you requesting?” **So I prayed to the God of heaven.**

We want to make a couple of observations

- Sadness in the king's presence was not appropriate (I love the way verse 3 begins)
- The reason for his sadness is the KING's previous decree from Ezra 4:17-21:

<sup>17</sup> The king sent an answer: “To Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe and the rest of their associates who live in Samaria and in the rest of the province Beyond the River, greeting. And now <sup>18</sup> the letter that you sent to us has been plainly read before me. <sup>19</sup> And I made a decree, and search has been made, and it has been found that this city from of old has risen against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made in it. <sup>20</sup> And mighty kings have been over Jerusalem, who ruled over the whole province Beyond the River, to whom tribute, custom, and toll were paid. <sup>21</sup> Therefore make a decree that these men be made to cease, and that this city be not rebuilt, until a decree is made by me. <sup>22</sup> And take care not to be slack in this matter. Why should damage grow to the hurt of the king?”

<sup>23</sup> Then, when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their associates, they went in haste to the Jews at Jerusalem and by force and power made them cease.

- Prayer comes in all sorts of forms.

[slide 7 – Nehemiah 2:5-8]

<sup>5</sup>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.” <sup>6</sup>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.<sup>7</sup> 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,<sup>8</sup> 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.***

Look at how Nehemiah approaches his superior, with honor and deference. He respects the mantle of authority, regardless of the one in authority.

What becomes clear in this exchange is that Nehemiah wasn't simply praying for the past 4-6 months, he was also planning.

During the depths of the pandemic, the government offered businesses a PPP loan. When I met with my board to discuss whether or not we should apply, this was the passage I cited. Nehemiah is undeterred to ask for the resources of Persians.

What we are reading about in these verses is Nehemiah's call to lead God's people in rebuilding the wall.

[slide 8 – Nehemiah's Call]

Nehemiah's call to this work is rooted in Humble Dependence upon God.

John Piper wrote a short essay entitled, "The Marks of a Spiritual Leader." It's a great piece and in it he begins by saying that the first mark is "that others might come to glorify God, that is, might so feel and think and act as to magnify the true character of God." Zeal for God's name and glory is what drives Nehemiah. It began with prayer and it leads to action.

Nehemiah is zealous for God's glory.

I am not talking about fanaticism. Zeal is different than being a fanatic;

"it is not wildness; it is not irresponsible enthusiasm; it is not any form of pushy egoism. It is, rather, a humble, reverent, businesslike, single-minded commitment to the hallowing of God's name and the doing of his will."<sup>1</sup>

[slide 9 – Nehemiah's Call, cont.]

In J.C. Ryle's "Practical Religion" he says it this way:

A zealous man in religion is pre-eminently a man of one thing. It is not enough to say that he is earnest, hearty, uncompromising, thoroughgoing, whole-hearted, and fervent in spirit. **He only sees one thing, he cares for one thing, he lives for one thing, he is swallowed up in one thing; and that one thing is to please God.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Packer, J.I., A Passion for Faithfulness (Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL: 2001), p. 33.

Whether he lives, or whether he dies – whether he has health, or whether he has sickness – whether he is rich, or whether he is poor – whether he pleases men, or whether he gives offence – whether he is thought wise, or whether he is thought foolish – whether he gets honor, or whether he gets shame – for all this the zealous man cares nothing at all. He burns for one thing; and that one thing is, to please God, and to advance God’s glory.”

[slide 10 – Nehemiah’s Call, cont.]

Nehemiah’s call to this work is:

Rooted in Humble Dependence upon God

1. Word based.
2. Indwelling Spirit Led – Union with Christ, Equipping Class
3. Community Affirmed.

“Our self-judgement as to whether we are fit and able for ministry roles that attract us is not to be trusted; again and again our own self-assessments prove inaccurate.”<sup>2</sup>

“Self-judgements have to be judged and checked by others. When God calls, he equips; when the equipment is lacking, and the potential for role fulfillment is simply not there, God’s call is not to what the candidate had in mind, but to something else.”<sup>3</sup>

4. Opportunity to serve exists.

WILCO – Will comply.

[slide 11 – Nehemiah 2:9-12]

From Call to calling...

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 57.



<sup>9</sup> 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.** <sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days. <sup>12</sup> 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.

Whether or not Nehemiah asked for the military escort, we don't know. We at least know he didn't turn them down.

I'm not sure what this says about his political philosophy, whether he supports federal assistance programs and government spending or whether he is pro-small government. I can't say.

What we can say is that he is happy to use all means at his disposal to accomplish the calling God has given him.

Verse 10 is important as it gives us a glimpse of some of the drama to come.

Verses 11-12

- Nehemiah begins his work.

[slide 12 – Nehemiah 2:13-16]

<sup>13</sup> **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. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> **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.***

Ok, now let's get technical. The wall was two and a half miles long, had been 22 feet wide and 25 feet high. [pull out my tape measure.

[slide 13 – Map of the wall]

Let's look at the wall for a minute.

[slide 14 – Fulfilling one's calling]

Great leadership requires:

- Work – he is working while everyone else is sleeping. He will not ask of others what he himself is has not done, or will not do.

This is a word that shows up a lot in Nehemiah. 2:16, 18; 3:5; 4:11, 15, 16-17, 19, 21; 5:16; 6:3, 9, 16.

This is a big part of Nehemiah. When we read the word "work" in the scriptures it is more than simply what we do or did to make money. J.I. Packer has this great little pithy statement that in the Bible work, "means any exertion of effort that aims at producing a new state of affairs...work in the Bible is always goal-oriented; it is action with an end in view."<sup>4</sup>

We have been created to work.

[slide 15 – Fulfilling one's calling]

Packer goes on to note:

"If...we should become work-shy and give ourselves to pursuing leisure and amusement instead, we should sentence ourselves to deep-level dissatisfaction with life. No form of work can guarantee

---

<sup>4</sup> J.I. Packer, p. 73.

that virtue, love, and joy will become ours, but we need not expect that virtue, love, and joy will ever mark us out if our lives have in them no form of work.”<sup>5</sup>

Verse 18 will call this “good work.” What makes it good is its intrinsic character, it must be something that is morally/biblically right. It also must be motivated out of a love for God and man, advancing God’s glory and plan.

Work is a blessing. It is good

Work in heaven...which means a season this side of heaven in which we are not engaged in our calling is contrary to how we have been created. Revelation 22:3-5 we will work

Let me stop here and drill down. Our calling is not contingent upon our age.

[slide 16 – Fulfilling one’s calling]

John White makes the following observation:

“Remember the verse, ‘Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might’ (Eccl 9:10). You will be surprised how enjoyable a task becomes when you master it. Make it your aim to do your daily job superbly, and you will turn drudgery into a craft and a craft into an art. Nothing is so boring as sloppy work.”<sup>6</sup>

[slide 17 – Fulfilling one’s calling]

- Wisdom – He tells us many times that he didn’t tell anyone what he was doing.

---

<sup>5</sup> J.I. Packer, p. 76.

<sup>6</sup> John White, Excellence in Leadership, p. 60.

[slide 18 – Nehemiah 2:17-20]

<sup>17</sup> 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.”

<sup>18</sup> 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**. <sup>19</sup> 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?” <sup>20</sup> 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.**”

[slide 19 – Fulfilling one’s calling]

Living out our calling means we:

1. Identify with the work we are called to. (the people and the plan)
2. Identifying whose work it really is.

[slide 20 – Nehemiah 3:1-5]

Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brothers the priests, and they built the Sheep Gate. They consecrated it and set its doors. They consecrated it as far as the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Tower of Hananel. <sup>2</sup> And next to him the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.

<sup>3</sup> The sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate. They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. <sup>4</sup> And next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz repaired. And next to them Meshullam the son of Berechiah, son of Meshezabel repaired. And next to them Zadok the son of Baana repaired. <sup>5</sup> And

***next to them the Tekoites repaired, but their nobles would not stoop to serve their Lord***

He breaks the work down. 40-42 teams each covering about 100 meters of wall. Think a football field.

[slide 21 – Nehemiah 3:6-10]

<sup>6</sup>Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Gate of Yeshanah.<sup>[c]</sup> They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. <sup>7</sup>And next to them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, the seat of the governor of the province Beyond the River. <sup>8</sup>Next to them Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, goldsmiths, repaired. Next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, repaired, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. <sup>9</sup>Next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired. <sup>10</sup>***Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph repaired opposite his house.*** And next to him Hattush the son of Hashabneiah repaired.

[slide 22 – Nehemiah 3:11-15]

<sup>11</sup>Malchijah the son of Harim and Hasshub the son of Pahath-moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens. <sup>12</sup>Next to him Shallum the son of Hallohesh, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired, he and his daughters.

<sup>13</sup>Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They rebuilt it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars, and repaired a thousand cubits of the wall, as far as the Dung Gate.

<sup>14</sup>Malchijah the son of Rechab, ruler of the district of Beth-haccherem, repaired the Dung Gate. He rebuilt it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. <sup>15</sup>And Shallum the son of Col-hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate. He rebuilt it and covered it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. And he built the wall of the Pool of Shelah of the king's garden, as far as the stairs that go down from the city of David.

[slide 23 – Nehemiah 3:16-22]

<sup>16</sup> After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, ruler of half the district of Beth-zur, repaired to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool, and as far as the house of the mighty men. <sup>17</sup> After him the Levites repaired: Rehum the son of Bani. Next to him Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, repaired for his district. <sup>18</sup> After him their brothers repaired: Bawvai the son of Henadad, ruler of half the district of Keilah. <sup>19</sup> Next to him Ezer the son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section opposite the ascent to the armory at the buttress. <sup>20</sup> After him Baruch the son of Zabbai repaired another section from the buttress to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. <sup>21</sup> After him Meremoth the son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz repaired another section from the door of the house of Eliashib to the end of the house of Eliashib.

[slide 24 – Nehemiah 3:23-27]

<sup>22</sup> After him the priests, the men of the surrounding area, repaired. <sup>23</sup> **After them Benjamin and Hasshub repaired opposite their house.** After them Azariah the son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah repaired beside his own house. <sup>24</sup> After him Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah to the buttress and to the corner. <sup>25</sup> Palal the son of Uzai repaired opposite the buttress and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king at the court of the guard. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh <sup>26</sup> and the temple servants living on Ophel repaired to a point opposite the Water Gate on the east and the projecting tower. <sup>27</sup> After him the Tekoites repaired another section opposite the great projecting tower as far as the wall of Ophel.

[slide 25 – Nehemiah 3:28-32]

<sup>28</sup> Above the Horse Gate the priests repaired, each one opposite his own house. <sup>29</sup> After them Zadok the son of Immer repaired opposite his own house. After him Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, repaired.<sup>30</sup> After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah repaired opposite his chamber. <sup>31</sup> After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired as far as the house of the temple servants and of the merchants, opposite the Muster Gate,<sup>[h]</sup> and to the upper chamber of the corner. <sup>32</sup> And between the upper chamber of the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and the merchants repaired.

[slide 26 – Reflections for the week]

1. How is Nehemiah's speech (2:17-18) so critical in motivating the people?
2. How might you emulate Nehemiah's posture and words to motivate people around you to serve Christ?
3. Rubble in our work can take many forms: procrastination, discouragement, fear, unbelief, boredom, or just plain dislike for the work. What rubble do you need to clear away before you can get on with the task God has given you?