

# Nehemiah 2:11-20

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Nehemiah chapter 2 starting in verse 11.! He had the opportunity to lay out before the king what was weighing on his heart and his mind.

And the Lord saw fit not only to bless him with favor to be able to go, but also to bless him with letters of protection and letters of provision and all these matters. So he came into Jerusalem. That's where to pick it up. And if you remember when he came that there were two, Sambalat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite, who were upset because someone had shown up to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel.

So, again, keeping that in mind that Nehemiah is so much more than a wall builder. God uses him to reconstruct the wall, but the walls are really built by the people.

It tells us later on that they had a heart to work. So Nehemiah is a government official that God uses to move his people, really to complete a task that's in front of them, to do something that has been lingering and staying now for 70 plus years.

[ 1 : 28 ] Actually, it's probably more close to 90 years by this time, if you figure in the 70 years of Babylonian captivity, and you figure in the number of years that it has been since King Cyrus has issued the decree for the remnant to return.

And now the time that has transpired since Ezra has returned. The temple has been completed. We've had a lot going on. So by this time, we're nearly a century beyond when the wall was torn down by Nebuchadnezzar and Nebuchadnezzar.

So some time has transpired. And Nehemiah is a man that God uses to move the people. So now we're going to kind of get into that. So starting in verse 11, it says, And the king's pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass.

So I went up at night by the ravine and inspected the wall. Then I entered the valley gate again and returned. And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done, nor had I as yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the rest who did the work.

Then I said to them, You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach.

[ 3 : 11 ] I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me. Then I said, Let us arise and build. So they put their hands to the good work.

But when Sambalat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem, the Arab heard it, they mocked us and despised us and said, What is this thing you are doing?

Are you rebelling against the king? So I answered them and said to them, The God of heaven will give us success. Therefore we his servants will arise and build.

But you have no portion, rite or memorial in Jerusalem. Nehemiah 2 verses 11 through 20. I want you to see this evening establishing an attitude of change. What it looks like to establish an attitude of change.

And Nehemiah is an instrument of change in Jerusalem. He is the one that God uses to lead his people in the direction that they should go.

[ 4 : 12 ] God's working with his people, if we look even throughout scripture, is never in haste. God is patient. His long suffering endures forever.

It tells us that his mercies are new every morning. God operates on a divine timetable, but yet his time is not rushed. One character attribute that we find of Christ is that Christ is never in a hurry. Yet he's always on time. He's never rushed, nor pressed, nor is he bothered by distractions or disturbances. Yet we see God interacting in his way.

When we read it in scripture, it seems like these things happen rather quickly. Whether it would be God's deliverance of his people out of Egypt or his formation of Abraham into the man Abraham and into the nation of Israel.

Yet we know these things transpire over a number of years. And that God is working out his plans and portions. And he is changing and molding individuals. Even in his calling of the disciples in the early pages of the New Testament.

[ 5 : 21 ] We've looked at it before. The temptation to read in the Gospel of Mark. When we read that word immediately or straight away or right away. We have this temptation to think that the moment Christ called, people responded in just complete and absolute obedience.

But yet when we reconcile that with the rest of the Gospels, we know that some were standing beside John the Baptist. When John the Baptist said, Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.

And they follow Christ. And they listen to Christ. And then they go to a wedding with Christ. And they see him turn to water and to wine. And then they go back to fishing in their boats. And then Jesus shows up one day after a bad night of fishing and takes them out there.

And he begins to preach from the boat. And he tells Peter to cast his net to the other side. He brings up a load of fish and he says, Now follow me. So that immediately he left his nets and followed him. Was something that had happened over a number of days and possibly even weeks.

He had seen Christ. He had met Christ. He had heard the testimony of John the Baptist concerning Christ. Because change is a hard thing. Even in the life of the believer.

[ 6 : 25 ] We are saved in an instant. We are sanctified over time. But God has these instruments of change. These attitudes that appear in our life. Nehemiah is one such man.

Something needs to change in the city of Jerusalem. Sure, the temple has been rebuilt. We have the reconstruction of that during the days of Ezra.

And it's not what it used to be, but it is there. The altar is there. The sacrificial system has been going, has been reestablished. The smoke ascends to the testimony.

But yet, Jerusalem is uninhabited primarily. There's a few there. The walls are in shambles. The gates are burned. And it is not a glorious place to be at all.

Much like, if we were to read the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, we know that the majority of the people live outside of Jerusalem. Their houses are established. Their homes are paneled. Their farms are probably making it pretty well.

[ 7 : 21 ] Yet, Jerusalem still lies desolate. And so, something needs to happen. And Nehemiah is that man that God will use to change those circumstances.

In each and every one of our lives, I think there are times when we face change. There are things that need to happen. And I remember, even when I came here as pastor, as a congregation, so patient, so easy with me, and so loving to me.

And there were things, sure, that I thought, I'm not what used to be here. Things are different because I'm a different pastor. Every time there's a change in pastorates at any church, there is this one word that is so hard for people.

It's called change. That's not the way we've done it. That's not the way it's always been. It's not all this other stuff. And I remember early on, I think I was in about year five, year six, somewhere in there. Maybe I was year five.

Someone, they're no longer here now. And they didn't leave on bad terms. They actually left on good terms. And they came to me and said, Pastor, I thought all this, laying out all this stuff, thought all this stuff was going to change. And I looked at them, I said, hey, when a ship's been going the same direction for 150 years, you don't turn it on a dime.

[ 8 : 26 ] You kind of lean into it, right? And let it kind of, if it needs to change course, it changes course over time. It's not saying that nothing dramatic needed to happen. It's just, I wasn't going to come in.

Why? Because I, as a church member, had been a part of a church where a pastor came in and changed everything overnight. And it was horrifying to the body.

I was a deacon and a youth leader in that church. And thankfully, I missed most of the tensions moments because I had a wife that was going into labor with Kylie. So we were in and out of the hospital a lot.

And so on one of the grand nights that it was just, it all kind of, we say, blew up. Thankfully, at that meeting, Carrie looked at me and said, I think I'm having contractions. So we went to the hospital. She didn't have Kylie that night. But it kept me out of that meeting as a deacon. And I got to go to the hospital and said, I had a good reason to leave. But I came back the next morning. That was a Saturday. So I came back the next morning to church.

[ 9 : 25 ] And I walked into a church building where the night before, things had went so south. The pastor had come in, destroyed the pastor's office, walked out, never showed up again.

And there were four of us deacons sitting there going, now what do we do? And it was all over change. You know, I ended up being the pastor of that church.

You know, the sad thing is, is everything he was trying to do, we eventually ended up doing. In eight years. Not eight weeks. And change is a hard thing.

I didn't disagree with all of his concepts. I disagreed with his method. I disagreed with the way he was doing it. He's still pastoring in this area. That's why I'll never mention his name.

And I think very highly of his pastoring. He does great. And he preaches expositionally. And he does wonderful things. But change is so hard.

[ 10 : 28 ] But Nehemiah did it. So how do we come to this attitude of change? How do we establish that? First of all, we see in Nehemiah, there has to be an informed decision.

It has to be established on informed decisions. It says, so I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. One thing we notice about Nehemiah over and over again is his patience.

That's not a word we like to speak of very often. Remember when Nehemiah heard of the concerns and the problems that were going, he was still. He waited before the Lord. He tore his clothes. He fastened. He prayed for a number of days.

He gets to Jerusalem. He finally gets there and he has the commissioning of the king. He has the authoritative backing of the king. He even has letters to the forest keepers. And he has the means of the king and the riches at his disposal.

And yet when he gets there, he does nothing for three days. He waits. And even when he does something for the first time, he doesn't do it publicly.

[ 11 : 28 ] He said, I was there for three days. And I rose in the night. So he did it not to be seen. He did it not so that he would capture notice. As a matter of fact, he did it to be unnoticed. I rose in the night and a few men that were with me.

If you remember, he traveled. Unlike Ezra, he traveled with a royal guard because he was a royal official. So these men were with him. And I love this, by the way, because change never happens in isolation.

It's never one individual that's bringing about change. God had a few men. And these men were around him. And whether or not these men knew exactly everything that was on Nehemiah's heart, we don't know. But we do know that they were with him.

And so change never happens in isolation. If I'm going to change in my heart, I have to have other people with me. I have to have other people around me. And we need that because we cannot isolate nor separate ourselves.

So he had a few men with him. And I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem. And there was no animal with me. So then he just goes around the walls. He goes around the gates. Why? Because in Susa, Nehemiah had heard about the problem.

[ 12 : 28 ] In Susa, Nehemiah was made aware of the problem. But he could not speak to the problem until he knew firsthand of the problem.

It's easy to declare what ought to happen in situations we hear about. It is totally different to be there and to be present and to be looking at it and to have an informed decision as to how it ought to be.

We can look into the life and individual of any church or any person or anyone that we know. And we can look externally. And we can look and say they should do this. This is what needs to happen. That is totally different than being in it. And to take in our time to acclimate ourselves with what is going on and to go around the issue, if you will.

He physically went around all of the walls of old Jerusalem. I love the fact that there is a well called Dragon's Well, by the way. Some of your translation may say Serpent's Well. But it's Dragon's Well.

[ 13 : 29 ] I love that. Scripture tells us about all these grand beasts because God is the creator of it. And I like how it says it. I mean, this is just me. These are the things in Scripture, by the way, that

kind of show my personality.

I like how it says it just so casually. Like, oh, there's the Dragon's Well. He went by it. If I told you I had a well at my house that was the Dragon's Well, that's where the dragons went and drank, you'd be like, what? But it's just a Dragon's Well, right?

One of my favorite parts, and my wife knows that we're reading through the book of Revelations. I love when John sees the vision in Revelations. And he said, there's all these. And you think, what's your favorite part of Revelations?

You're probably thinking it's like all these glorious things. When he sees the one who has the stars in his hand and all the angels around him and see Christ in the land. All those are wonderful and glorious. But the thing that excites me every time I get to it is when John sees the angel who has a foot on the earth and a foot in the ocean.

And the angel has a book. You remember that, right? And he's standing with a foot on the ocean and a foot on the earth. And the angel's holding a book in his hand. And the angel tells him, the Spirit says, go to the angel and take the book from his hand and eat it.

[14:33] You remember that part? I love that because in my mind it goes like this. Here's this wonderfully magnificent angel who's standing on the ocean and the earth. And John walks up to him and goes, hey, buddy, give me the book.

I just love that. And this angel has all the power and authority. And the angel gives it to him. Why? Because that's what he's been commissioned to do. He just says, give it to me.

I'm going to eat your book. Okay? Just give it to me right now. But what we see is this wonderful truth in Scripture that things are just so real. But he goes around and he identifies.

He even starts talking about all the gates and the wells and all the places. And if you were to trace it around old Jerusalem, you know that he identified with all or he acclimated himself with all of the problem.

He went all the way around the wall. But he didn't do it for show. Nobody knew he was doing it. Nobody understood what was going on. But before Nehemiah told a soul what they should do, he made sure he knew where they really were.

[15:42] He made an informed decision. It is easy, all too easy, for us to look in the lives of other people and say this is what they ought to change.

But until we live in that situation with them and we understand them and we walk with them, we really haven't earned the right to say this is what needs to change.

Because before we can create a heart of change, we have to make sure we have informed decisions. The Romans used to refer to it as a *sitis in limbum*, the situation in life.

Until we know the life situations, we don't have the right to declare the life change. We don't know. We don't know how the enemies worked. We don't know the attacks that have went on. We don't know any of that. This is why we have to do life together and this is why I'm so thankful. Nehemiah took his time. He was patient. He didn't make a show of it.

[16:42] And he just went around the walls and he looked at how terrible it was. He says, and then, only then can change take place. Now he takes time to realize this.

Secondly, not only do we have to have an informed decision, secondly, we have to identify with the people that comes along with the informed decision. We have to identify with the people. If there was a difference in individuals other than Ezra, because we know that Ezra was present, Nehemiah was starkly different than anyone else around him.

Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king. He was the one who was accustomed to standing in the royal palace advising the king of the land. He is one of the ones, evidently, of the tribe of Judah for his fathers were buried in Jerusalem.

And probably followed in that lineage of Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. You remember those royal ones that were brought into the courts of King Nebuchadnezzar and raised up.

When the Babylonians came in and ransacked Jerusalem and the southern kingdom of Judah, they took the upper crust of society and put them in the court, much like they did everyone else that they would conquer.

[17:56] And put them in the court of the king because the king tried to surround himself with wise men. When the Medo-Persian Empire came in and took over the Babylonian Empire, they would have continued this.

And the Persian Empire, the same. So we can assume that Nehemiah is very different than anyone that is living in Jerusalem. Because, in contrast, those that were left behind were the poorest of the poor just to maintain the land.

They were actually so poor and so low in society that the Babylonians didn't even want them in their city. They were just there. These are the people that were living in the land and these are the people that Nehemiah has now come to.

But notice what it says. Verse 17. Then I said to them, you see the bad situation? Notice what he doesn't say, though. He doesn't say, you see how bad it is for you? Look at what he says.

You see the bad situation we are in. One little word there is he identified with the people. See the bad situation we are in.

[ 19 : 04 ] This situation is not your problem. It's now our problem. So we can see the shift in philosophy. He's not saying you need to change.

He's saying we need to change. And that's different. That is so different.

Because honestly, as a pastor, what I have found, the greatest change that needs to take place at any moment in my pastorate has always been the change in my own heart.

And the change in my own ministry. And the change in my own life. And any time I work with an individual, I find the greatest change needs to happen with us collectively, not just in that individual's life.

And he begins to identify with them. He says, you see the bad situation we're in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates are burned by fire. Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we, notice here, he continuously identifies with the people.

[ 20 : 04 ] He has completely immersed himself in their life. And he's completely immersed himself in their problem, by the way. He could have stayed in Susa, but he didn't.

He said, now we're in a mess. And he is identifying with them, not just because he's present, but he is identifying with them nationally and individually.

And he says, this is our problem. And we have this shame. We have this reproach. And we have all of this. We need to do something. So let us rebuild this. And that's really different than someone standing over there saying, you have a problem.

You need to change. And you need to take care of this. Notice the difference in that. Notice the difference. When I was much younger, I coached a lot of sports.

And this is probably the reason I don't coach anymore. Somebody's asked me, well, I don't coach Braden in sports. And this will probably be the reason. Not many people know this. Carrie knows this, but not many people. You say, well, kids are different. Well, sure.

[ 21 : 09 ] Yeah, I'm different too. So when I coach sports, and Ethan can testify to this, when I asked the kids to run, I would run with them. And when I did this, I would, I mean, I coached in my 20s.

So it was okay. And I would always, as Hunter was going up until a certain age, I would race the kids and do all this other stuff. And the reason I did that is not because I was trying to do anything. It's because when I played sports, I wasn't the best athlete.

But one thing that irked me to no end was to have a very unconditioned coach stand on the sideline telling me everything I need to do. That was just my personal peeve.

And I was like, well, so I decided I wasn't going to be that guy, right? I was going to do it. So when I couldn't run with them anymore, I decided I didn't need to coach them. So I was like, why don't you coach Braden? I was like, because I can't run with him anymore.

I'm just not going to do that. So now I'll let somebody else tell me what he ought to do. But it's not going to be me. But, no, it's the same concept. Is we have to be careful when we come beside someone and say, well, you need to do this, you need to do that, you need to do that.

[ 22 : 12 ] No, they identified. He identified with the people. And he was accepting their problem, their mess, much like Christ does with us, right? He identified with us. He came to his own.

His own received him not, it tells us there in the Gospel of John. And he took our shame, our burdens, our concerns. He bore our misery so that the change could take place.

And so before we establish this attitude of change, we have to identify with the people. Number four, number three, not four, we'll get to four in just a minute. So in a formed decision, identify with the people. Number three, an incentive to work.

There has to be a reason behind it. And we notice this. This is why it's so important, by the way. You say, well, there should be a great incentive because the incentive is the walls are torn down and the gates are burned with fire and it looks terrible.

Well, have you ever noticed how comfortable we can all get in our own messes? I mean, these people have been living in Jerusalem that whole time like that and that was normal. Right?

[ 23 : 15 ] We have this tendency, we just do as mankind, to get accustomed to our problems. Be it physically or internally.

We just get comfortable with it. And we, as long as we surround ourselves, I read something this week that says, if all the people you put around you, if all your quote unquote friends that you have around you never challenge you, correct you, or rebuke you, then they're not friends.

They're enablers. You need to surround yourself with people that will confront you in your issues, that will challenge you at times in your behavior and your practices, because they're true friends, right?

I have this same conversation with our kids. I correct you because I love you. The word of God doesn't always make me feel good, but I know. What does it say in the book of Hebrews?

There's the father that loves his children, disciplines his children. And it's out of love that the father brings that correction and conviction and tells me where I have done things wrong, because if he has not told me what I've done wrong, then he cannot tell me how I can be made right.

[ 24 : 27 ] And because we have just this innate ability to get very comfortable in our mess. We just do. You ever drove by somewhere and say, how in the world can anybody live there?

Well, that's what it was like in Jerusalem. How could anybody live there? Well, they'd been living there ever since Nebuchadnezzar had come in and torn the walls down, and the people that were left behind, that was home. So the incentive to work is not, hey, let's clean up this mess, because that mess was comfortable.

Most of them had been born into that mess, and that was normal. And don't disrupt the normal, because then it becomes abnormal, and we all get uncomfortable with that.

And so what incentive does Nehemiah give them? He tells them, he said, you see this bad situation we're in, that Jerusalem is blessed on its gates, burn and fire, that should be enough, but it was not. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem.

Okay, why? Why should I rebuild the wall? Here's the incentive. So that we will no longer be a reproach. See, now, the condition of the walls has become more than just a bad situation.

[ 25 : 40 ] Now it has become a bad testimony. Now the walls are a reproach not just to them. What does God declare?

That even before they go into the land, he declares it to Moses, and he declares it over and over again. Even in the book of Joshua, he declares it that when you go in, you'll have these cities, and I will establish you, and I will build you, and the people who look upon you, and I'm paraphrasing a little bit, will show the favor of the Lord God, because your animals will give birth, your fields will produce crops, it will not fail to rain, and your whole life will be a testimony.

But if you walk in disobedience, because that is the only, the Old Testament, the covenant of the law, is the only conditional covenant that we find, one of the conditional covenants we find in the Old Testament, but if you disobey me, then I will take you out of the land, I will remove you from this land, and people will walk by the temple, and they will wag their heads, and they will shake their hand, and say this is what happens when the people disobey the Lord, and they will see your city in shambles, and they will say this is what happens when the people disobey the Lord, and it becomes a reproach.

What should have been a blessing to the nations, now becomes a reproach, because what is being declared to the nations, is this is what it looks like to disobey the Lord. And so the walls are reproached, because the walls are representative of their failures, they are not a representative of God's faithfulness, because by this time God has been faithful, he is restoring the nation, he is calling the land back to themselves, as he had said in the book of Jeremiah, as Daniel realized when he studied Jeremiah, as he says even in Isaiah, that I will call you out of the land, I will reestablish you in this city, I will rebuild you, as he has said, as much as he prophesied their destruction, he also led the prophets to speak of their restoration, but they were still living in destruction mode, right?

So they were still testifying, that this is what it looks like, to be disfavored by the Lord, instead of living representative, as those who are favored by the Lord.

[ 27 : 49 ] Why do we change ourselves in our own actions? Why when we come to Christ, and all things are made new, why do we need to look different externally? It's not because we're uncomfortable in the mess, we used to have some things, conviction comes, and there are things that I need to change, and there are matters that should be removed from our life, and God is really good about that, but one of the major reasons, is because I don't want my life to be reflective, of my faithlessness, rather I want my life to be reflective, of his favor and faithfulness, and I don't want to be a reproach, to the Lord God, and the incentive to change, and the incentive to change, is not because, I need to clean my mess up, the incentive to change is, my mess is a bad testimony, my mess, isn't testifying to how good God is to me, my mess isn't declaring, that God's favor rests upon me, there's a, often quoted verse of scripture, that's really not in scripture at all, cleanliness is next to godliness, that's not scriptural by the way,

I know it's a great saying, but it's not scripture, but I do know where it's rooted, it's rooted in the reality, that all of our lives, should be reflective, of his favor upon us, I want the church grounds, to be the cleanest church grounds, in the town of Wartreys, I want the church building, to be the most well maintained building, in all of Wartreys, why, because, like it or not, as people view our building, it is reflective of our view, of the Lord God we serve, it just is, and we don't want to be a reproach, I've driven by churches at times, and I'm not, and it's not judgmental, but I've driven by churches at times, and my heart break, over the condition of the building, not because, there's a building in disrepair, but because there are people, who don't concern themselves enough, to give, to reflect, their love for the Lord, that's just a reality, and so the incentive to work, is not because, we got to get our stuff taken care of, it's because, what we're doing, and how we're living, and how we're behaving, is bringing reproach, to the name of the Lord God Almighty, rather than bringing glory, to his name, so this is what Nehemiah gives them, and they respond to it, so they said, okay, let us arise and build,

I love that, they said, think about this, this one incentive, changed everything, because for all of their life, they've been living like this, and now someone shows up, and said, let us rebuild the wall, so that we will no longer, be a reproach, and the wording there is, so they said, let us do it right now, let us do it right now, think about, none of them, had ever come to that realization, that these walls, are a reproach, to the name of the Lord God, but as soon as someone, highlighted that, see, the moment you find, a new believer, or a young believer, or maybe even, someone has been a believer, for a long time, and you see these, just like we all do, we have these things, in our life, that need to change, and we have these things, that we ought to give up, and we have these, these people have these questions, all the time, I have people come to me, all the time, and say, pastor should I do this, or pastor should I do that, or pastor do I need to give this up, or can I do this, and I love those questions, because those same questions, I had when I was a young believer, or young in the faith, and I always get the same answer, that I was given, by my mentor, and people say, can I do this, all I have to say is, can you do that with Christ, and does that bring glory, to his name, and that's not what I asked you,

I asked you could you do, we're not seeking the limits, of how far we can go, on ourselves, rather we're trying, to establish, how much glory, does he get when I do it, or I don't do it, and it's a totally, different incentive, because what we would like to know, in the flesh, every one of us, how far can I go, and get away with it, but what scripture tells us, as Paul said it this way, how much glory, does he get, when I do or don't, big difference, big difference, if it's neutral, then it's neutral, and that's really, the only way, we can look at any matter, in our hearts, now we have, an informed decision, identified, with the people, an incentive to work, fourth and finally, how do we establish, an attitude of change, we understand this, this is something, we must be aware of, there is always, increased opposition, the situation, the situation, in Jerusalem, is about to change, and we need, to understand this, even in our own lives, when change, becomes a reality, and something, we need to do, someone comes to Christ,

I've encouraged you, over the years, and I continue, to encourage you, if you are, happen to be present, when someone gives their life, to Christ, and they are professing, Jesus is their Lord, and Savior, I always tell you, do not do them, the disfavor, of telling them, that everything is going, to be great, from now on, be honest with them, let them know, this is wonderful news, you have secured, eternity in his presence, and glory awaits you, on the other side, but for the remainder, of this life, you're going to have to fight, and you're going to have to battle, because now, you have entered, the greatest battle, of your life, if you thought, the battle was hard, when you were an unbeliever,

wait until you decide, you need to change something, that's the greatest thing, we can, because we have, misled, a, vast generation, of individuals, by telling them, if you give your life, to Christ, everything will be better, and they try it out, and what they find out, is it becomes more difficult, it becomes hard, it becomes tiresome,

[ 33 : 51 ] There's a battle that's facing, and they were promised it would be better when Jesus says, you will have trials and tribulations and persecution in this life. But yet we've said, we don't want to tell them that.

You don't want to say something, give your life to Christ and you're going to be persecuted. But what does he say? The moment that attitude, that heart of change comes in, the opposition will always increase.

Notice this, if we go back just a couple of verses, we'll find that Semba the Hornite and Tobiah the Ammonite were upset, right? Because they heard that someone was coming. Notice this subtlety here.

It says in verse 18, so they put their hands to do the good work. I love that. So they just said, all right, let's do it. So they put their hands to do the good work. We'll get to the workers in chapter 3, which is, by the way, a great chapter, even though it's just a bunch of listing of names.

Awesome chapter. Look at verse 19. But when Semba the Hornite and Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab, wait a minute, we've added one. Where did Geshem come from?

[ 35 : 00 ] You know where he came from? They started doing it. A couple of people were upset because they showed up. Now three people are upset because they're doing something. Later, more people show up.

Why? Because the moment we begin to do something, the opposition always increases. The moment we say, I am being led of the Lord.

God has put these people around me. And this is something that I need to change for his glory. Then mark the word of God, not my word, but mark the word of God that the moment we say, well, then I'm going to put my hand to it.

The enemy shows up. And he starts showing up in a greater way each and every time. The first mentioning of these two, they were upset.

They didn't say anything. They were just upset. Now we've added a third individual and they begin to talk. It says, and they mocked us and despised us and said, what is this thing you're doing?

[ 35 : 59 ] Are you rebelling against the king? The moment we begin to walk in obedience and the moment we begin to change the things in our life that needs to change, the enemy will show up. The mockings and the scorn and the ridicule, all those things come.

Each and every one of them. They came in the life of our Savior. They came in the life of every one of those disciples and apostles that followed him. And they'll come in our life as well. Sometimes it's a gentle whisper sitting on our shoulder, mocking us.

Sometimes it comes verbalized through other individuals that say, what in the world is going on with you? And they begin to ridicule and all these things that begin to happen in our life. Well, how do we respond to that? I love Nehemiah's response, by the way, all throughout the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah doesn't argue with the enemy. He doesn't defend himself. He just declares what he's doing. And it is reminding himself and reminding those with him that what the enemy says really doesn't matter.

Right? They said, are you opposing the king? He doesn't answer that. They ask a question he never answered. Are you rebelling against the king? Listen, all he had to do was pull out, I have the papers from the king that say I could do this.

[ 37 : 09 ] He could have justified that, right? Nehemiah could have said, look, what are you talking about? I'm a royal official. I have permission to be here. I even have permission. He doesn't do that. Why? Don't argue with the enemy. Because the moment we enter into an argument, the moment we're distracted from doing what we're supposed to do.

The enemy doesn't care if he wins the argument. The enemy doesn't care if he changes your mind. All the enemy is concerned about is stopping what you're doing.

And if Nehemiah had begun to argue there, then the work would have stopped. But he doesn't. He just makes this blunt statement.

So I answered them and said to them, the God of heaven will give us success. Therefore, we, his servants, will arise and build. How do you argue the doubts and the enemies? I'm doing what God

told me to do.

And in his power, I will succeed. That's it. I'm doing what God asked me to do. And by his power, I will succeed. This is something I had to learn.

[ 38 : 16 ] You don't have to explain everything. You don't have to justify everything. You just have to declare some things. And then you remind the enemy that they really have no reason to be in there. But you have no portion, right, or memorial in Jerusalem.

Says, and as far as you go, eh, I don't care what you say because you don't belong here. When the Lord redeems us and transforms us and calls us to himself, and he begins to lead us to do a great change in our lives, where he begins to lead us to identify with people and walk with them in a season of change, and any time there is this attitude that something has to change, and we're walking through it, then we need this realization that when the enemy shows up, number one, we declare what we're doing is of the Lord, so we will succeed for it's his work.

And number two, the enemy has no right to be there, and that's enough said. If he has no right to be there, then don't talk to him while he's there. That's not his realm.

He's content to leave us sitting in our mess, and he's content to leave us in our shambles. He says, but you have no portion or right or memorial here, so we're just going to keep going because this isn't your realm.

This is his. Nehemiah is the man that God used to establish an attitude of change in the hearts and lives of these individuals. We'll see a listing of these individuals in the next chapter.

[ 39 : 40 ] Quite often, God puts people in our lives and helps us to establish an attitude of change as well. So may we respond the same way Nehemiah did, realizing that it's for the glory of the Lord alone as he leads and guides us as we follow him.

Let's pray. We'll be dismissed. Father, we thank you so much for this day. We thank you for your goodness. We thank you for your mercy.

We thank you for enabling us to build together, together to look at your word, and we thank you for the word of God, which it challenges us. Lord, it molds us.

We pray that we would be surrendered to it. May you be glorified, O Lord, in the way you move in your people. Lord, these next few days as we draw close to that Christmas event, may our hearts be fixed upon the coming of Emmanuel.

May you be glorified in all that we do. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, guys. I really appreciate your time. Amen.

[ 40 : 45 ] Amen. Amen.