



**Title:** Drawing Battle Lines (Nehemiah: week 3)

**Text:** Nehemiah 2:9-20

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### **Intro:**

The reality is that God inspired visions will bring opposition. This week we study Nehemiah's reaction to the first round of challenges he will face as he sets out to rebuild the walls of the city.

Nehemiah has received favor and permission from Artaxerxes to return to Jerusalem and begin his mission of rebuilding the city. As he sets out on his mission, he faces opposition early and often. In Nehemiah 2:9-20 we see this young leader rise to the occasion as he rallies his people and draws the battle line in front of his enemies.

As an aside, it is striking that even though God is sovereign and is in control he still permits hardships in the journey of his people. By his decree God has guaranteed that this city will be rebuilt and that his people will succeed and he has done an incredible amount of arranging in order to bring it about in his providence. Yet, he still allows some 2-bit punks like Sanballat and Tobiah to pester his man Nehemiah.

### **Nehemiah 2:9-20**

*9 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.*

#### **1. Being on mission brings discomfort.**

It's one thing to have a burden, it's another to actually act on it. Nehemiah left the comfort of the palace and his good job and went. He could have been content with what he had, avoided apostasy, lamented about the state of his people, and rode into the sunset. But he didn't. He left the way things were to pursue making things the way they should be. And, as we'll see, it was a struggle. Regrettably, a perverted view of the gospel in our time presents prosperity, favor, and blessing as certain markers of being in God's will. Certainly God blesses us, but more often than not the biblical example of people who were on a mission for God is one of struggle, opposition, and perseverance as they labor for a cause far bigger than their own success.

*10 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.*

#### **2. Being on mission brings opposition.**

One of the first things Nehemiah encounters on his mission is opposition. Likewise, a Christian who is living a life focused on pleasing Jesus will be the object of ridicule and opposition. Sometimes this opposition comes from insecurity of others, spiritual forces of wickedness, or a host of other ways. But, we must remember that God is providentially in control of all things and intends to use even our opposition to refine us for greater usefulness.

*11 So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days.*

#### **3. Being on mission requires Sabbath rest.**

We're terrible at this in America. We're overworked, over-connected, and under-rested. It is striking that the first thing Nehemiah does when he gets to the city is to take a three day weekend.

12 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. 13 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.

14 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. 15 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. 16 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.

17 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." 18 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.

19 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?" 20 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."

#### **4. Being on mission forces us to draw battle lines.**

Nehemiah went public with his mission and what he was all about. He stood in the face of his enemies with all the people looking on and stated clearly what he was there to do. Likewise, we must draw battle lines in our day and declare what we are all about—serving Jesus in our city.

#### **3 Questions:**

1. What is our mission as a church?
2. What is your mission as a follower of Jesus that is part of a church?
3. Have you drawn your battle lines?