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Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas

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The Restoring Builder Nehemiah 2:11-20

Lesson Background and Introduction

Nehemiah received news from his brother, Hanani, of the sad state of affairs back home in Jerusalem: Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire (Nehemiah 1:3). Deeply troubled over such disheartening conditions, Nehemiah responded with tears, fasting, and fervent prayer (1:4). He confessed his own sins and the sins of his fellow Jews and begged the Lord to honor his promise to bless his people if they turned from their sinful ways (1:5-10). Nehemiah then asked the Lord that he might receive favor from the king (Nehemiah 1:11). That involved Artaxerxes's granting permission to Nehemiah to travel to his homeland of Judah and lead an effort to repair the wall and the gates of his beloved city of Jerusalem (2:1-9). As a story goes, a father watched through the kitchen window as his small son tried to move a large rock in the yard. The boy couldn't get quite enough leverage to tip the rock over. At one point the father came outside and asked the boy, "Can't you lift the rock?" "No, Dad, I just can't do it." "Are you using all the strength you have?" The boy responded, "Yes, but I just can't move it." The father replied, "No, you're not using all the strength you have because you haven't asked me to help." Nehemiah was going to have, not just one rock, but a whole pile of rocks and rubble to move in order to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. But heavenly and earthly hands would give him more than enough help. Nehemiah could have sung, as a precursor to the old hymn, "He's got the whole wall in his hands." Like a little boy, our efforts matter, but they will not succeed all on their own. If we ask our Father for help, he has us and every task he gives us in his hands as well. Fervent prayer on the part of Nehemiah played a vital part (Nehemiah 1:4-6, 11; 2:4; 4:9; 6:14).

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

The Call - Nehemiah received permission from the king of Persia to return to Jerusalem to repair Jerusalem's wall. The people living there took note of Nehemiah, but he did not discuss his God-commissioned assignment or start any work immediately. First, he traveled around the city at night, inspecting the burned wall and gates. Then, he met with the Jewish leaders and called their attention to the situation. When talking to the leaders, he used the terms "we" and "us," indicating this was a project for everyone together. Nehemiah pointed out the necessity of a wall and the shame, poverty, insecurity, and fear that came with not having one. Then he said this was God's project, and it had the support of the king as well. The men responded positively and agreed to partner with Nehemiah in repairing the wall.

The Opposition - Whenever God's work moves forward, the enemy always steps in to attempt to thwart and even stop the Lord's plans. When those in the surrounding area found out what God's people started to do, they laughed and mocked. The passage explicitly names three leaders of the opposition: Sanballat the Horonite, Tobias the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arab. They jeered at Nehemiah and his workers, attempting to make him feel foolish for even endeavoring such a vast undertaking, and they accused Nehemiah of defying the king of Persia, which was false.

The Power - Nehemiah boldly answered that God would give the project success, He had put His stamp of approval on this project. If they didn't want to be a part of what God was doing, they should get out of the way. Jesus faced opposition when He walked their earth, and He said His followers would face it as well. Satan does not want God to establish His kingdom, and just as in Nehemiah's time, our enemies mock and discourage God's children. But the Holy Spirit empowers believers to stay in the fight, knowing this is God's plan, and it will succeed.

(Adapted from the Echoes Commentary)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

God is lovingly working toward restoration and joy in and through the pain of our lives

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

Lord, when our struggles feel bigger than what we can handle, help us to find comfort and strength in how You've carried us before

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:

For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning (Ps 30:5 NKJV)

(from "Our Daily Bread", Sept 08, 2017)

Series: Prophets Faithful to God's Covenant

UNIT 2: Prophets of Restoration

NEXT WEEK

A Plea for Restoration (Lamentations 5:1-22)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

A Restorer who Plans (Neh 2:11-16)

Planning through investing time (11)

Investing time because God's time is vastly different from ours (2 Peter 3:8-9)

Investing time because God's timing is Divine and beyond our comprehension (Isa 55:8)

Investing time because God blesses us with time so that we may use it wisely (Eph 5:15-16)

Investing time because God blesses us with time so that we may know that the end is near (1 Cor 7:29,31)

Investing time because God blesses us with time so that we will number our days (Ps 90:12)

Investing time because there is a time for everything (Eccl 3:1)

Investing time by putting on the armor of God because the time is near (Rom 13:12)

Planning through meditation time with God (12)

Meditation on God's works (Ps 77:12)

Meditation of the heart (Ps 19:14)

Meditation on God's unfailing love (Ps 48:9)

Meditation on God's wonders (Ps 119:27)

Meditation on God's Word, as well as listening, brings insight and understanding (Ps 119:99)

Planning through appraisal (13-14)

Appraisal of the cost to ensure completion (Luke 14:28-32)

Appraisal to ensure to be well-advised (Prov 20:18)

Appraisal to find out God's will (James 4:13-16)

Appraisal to check for danger and evil (Prov 22:3)

Appraisal to be watchful and alert (1 Thess 5:6)

Appraisal to be prepared to act based on God's Word (Heb 11:7)

Planning how to secure helpers (15-16)

Helpers to share the load (Exodus 18:13-23)

Helpers to share the responsibility (Acts 6:3)

Helpers to ensure everywhere is reached (Acts 1:21-26)

Helpers called out by God (Acts 13:2-3)

Helpers because two are better than one (Eccl 4:9-12)

Helpers because sometimes the burden is too heavy for one (Num 11:14-17)

A Restorer Who Has the Ability to Lead (Neh 2:17-20)

Leading by challenging (17)

A challenge to be worthy (2 Thess 1:11)

A challenge that could require the giving up of treasures (Matt 19:21-22)

A challenge that must be carefully considered (Luke 14:25-33)

A challenge that could cost one's life (Matt 20:20-23)

A challenge that may be like being sent out as lambs among wolves (Luke 10:1-3)

Leading by giving God the glory (18)

Give God the glory through thanksgiving (2 Cor 4:15)

Give God the glory because in all things God should be praised (1 Peter 4:11)

Give God the glory because we are owned by Him (1 Cor 6:20)

Give God the glory because we are to give God the glory in all things that we do (1 Cor 10:31)

God is glorified when we are in unity with the Holy Spirit and follow the example of Jesus (Rom 15:5-6)

God is glorified when we live a good life before others (1 Peter 2:12)

Leading by dealing with opposition (19-20)

Opposition that is never too large for God (Judges 7:4-7)

Opposition where God helps the powerless against the mighty (2 Chron 14:9-12)

Opposition that cannot be overcome by strength and size (Ps 33:16-19)

Opposition that may seem to be overbearing, but reliance on God will always bring deliverance (2 Cor 1:8-10)