

- *Read 2:1-20 and 3:1-12, 28-32*

## Background

- Nehemiah has a burden for God's glory, encapsulated in the walls of Jerusalem
  - but what will that look like in practise?
  - he's prayed - lots - but what will the answer look like?

## A door opens (2:1-10)

- A tiny crack in a huge defence...
  - an apparently insignificant detail - sad in the presence of the King
  - (scholars are divided over whether this was a tactic or a result of the deep sense of passion and concern Nehemiah was feeling)
- More pertinent is the first word in v.3: **BUT!**
  - afraid... but I said...
  - choice to pursue...
  - to speak, to ask, to pray, to go...
- Calls for us to be alert!
  - encouragement that the **arrow prayer** of v.4 is answered... not just with immediate, but with abundant favour!
- *There will be trouble (2:10)*
  - but not beyond God's protection (2:9)
- **What openings will God allow you to see and pursue this week?**

## The task surveyed (2:11-16)

- Got on with the job with all the skill and ability he had:
  - acted quickly (three days)
  - acted prudently and sensitively (night) - no hobnail boots; picked up on the concerns and questions and fears people had...
  - clear implication is that Nehemiah is thinking, planning - for the people part of the job even more so than the logistics part
- Intentionality, purpose, rather than mere reaction
- Obviously for a congregation: how will we reach Fintry, how will we make disciples, how will we introduce the children to Christ, etc
  - but also true for individuals or smaller groups...
  - how can I reach my friends? (me, or me and my friends together)
  - how can I resist temptation in a particular area?
  - how can I support XXX?
- *There will be trouble (2:14)*
  - difficulties, but not things that are insurmountable with God's help (2:15)
- **What Kingdom work needs done?**

## The vision cast (2:17-20)

- There is an articulation of that task that Nehemiah has carried now to others, inviting them to join with him
  - what is the key word in 2:17? we/us
  - and there is a pointing to God for resources and ability - 2:18
- *There will be trouble (2:19)*
  - but not beyond God's protection (2:20)
- **What vision do you need to cast or take on?**

## The work begun (3:1-32)

- Chapter is a description of who worked on what parts of the wall, working anti-clockwise round Jerusalem.
- Large number of people involved - 30-40 named individuals, c.dozen groups.
- Not merely numbers - named individuals. Each person's contribution is important, valued, recorded - so we know, >2000 years later, who did what!
- God deals with us as individuals, not as a faceless mass!
- Everybody mucked in - priests, secular leaders, normal punters, craftsmen, merchants - whoever! Worked alongside each other on a common task.
- (True community!!) Groups seemed to have formed naturally - family, profession, area...
- Only jarring note is in v.5 - the nobles from Tekoa, whose petty pride marks them out from other nobles and leaders elsewhere on the wall.  
- (even in best we can do for God, there will never be perfection.)
- Note too Baruch in v.20, "zealously" - can just do it since we feel we ought to, but best is when we are zealous - and our zeal is God-directed.
- One of main reasons for success is in the attitude/motivation displayed by the priests from the start: v.1, they "dedicated" or consecrated what they were doing - not for their own benefit, but to honour God and follow his ways.
- Their work was as much spiritual as it was physical.
- Nehemiah makes use of people's own interest - you are more likely to be motivated to build the wall directly outside your own door, even though the city would just as unsafe with any gap. Gives ownership. In delegating, makes use of interests, locality - common sense!
- *There will be trouble (3:5)*  
- do we suffer the 20% of people do 80% of the work syndrome? Burnout? And how do we do more than shifting 20% to 30%?  
- and there is outright opposition coming in *chp.4!*  
- but here is something of a snapshot of God's people working together for his glory!
- Will we work together for the glory of God's name, getting stuck in to your own area to see the whole built?

## Summary

- We seem to see here in the first chapters of Nehemiah a blueprint for the natural progression God often uses to do a work among his people to build up His Kingdom:
  - prayer (chp.1)
  - openings (2:1-10)
  - strategy and vision (2:11-20) - including surveying of task, vision casting, unity amongst God's people...
  - doing the work (chp.3)