

## **NEHEMIAH: PATTERN FOR LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE IN HARD TIMES**

### **Part II: Godly Leadership's Forethought To Take Advantage Of Advancement Opportunities (Nehemiah 2:1-20)**

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. One of the challenges in life is that of not recognizing opportunities so as to take advantage of them once they come our way. "Hindsight is 20/20 vision!" goes the call! "Oh, what **might have been!**" is another!
- B. However, God's ministry for God's leaders is different! To a degree, we know what God wants to accomplish as He has prophetically laid it out in Scripture. If leaders are wise, they can grapple with that revealed will and make plans that equip them to make the most of opportunities God sends along.
- C. Nehemiah 2:1-20 illustrates this fact for us in the life of godly leader, Nehemiah.

#### **II. Godly Leadership's Forethought To Take Advantage Of Advancement Opportunities, Neh. 2:1-20.**

- A. Between Nehemiah's learning of the downtrodden state of Jerusalem's exiles and the events of Nehemiah 2, four months had elapsed, Bib. Know. Com., O.T., p. 675. (Neh. 1:1 with 2:1a)
- B. During that time, Nehemiah had been able to get his wits together, focusing on God's will:
  1. From his prayer, we know that Nehemiah realized that his influence with the King of Persia could be an opening God might want to use to change the circumstances in Jerusalem, Neh. 1:11.
  2. He also would have known of Daniel's then 95-year-old prophecy that the city of Jerusalem **with its protective wall** needed to be rebuilt, cf. Dan. 9:25, Ibid., p. 676. **God wanted the wall rebuilt!**
  3. However, Nehemiah also knew that Artaxerxes I had become entangled in a political quagmire regarding the rebuilding of Jerusalem, making an effort to rebuild its wall perilous:
    - a. A few years before, Artaxerxes I had been influenced by Gentile opponents of the returned Jewish exiles to issue a decree stopping the rebuilding of Jerusalem, cf. Ezra 4:21, Ibid., p. 675.
    - b. Nehemiah thus knew that he needed to stay away from using the word "Jerusalem" in his request to improve its physical features in the King's presence or risk losing his life as a rebel!
- C. Thus, he took time to make careful plans on what he would say if the King asked his opinion on the issue:
  1. Nehemiah prayed for an opening with the King, depending on God to work in his behalf, Neh. 1:11.
  2. Then, he obviously made extensive plans as to what he would say were the King to speak with him: we know from the fact that Nehemiah made an extensive request when suddenly asked by the King about his goal for "the city of his fathers" that Nehemiah had **planned ahead** of time **what he would say were he ever to get the chance**, Neh. 1:3-4,5ff.
  3. **How** Nehemiah had given meticulous **forethought** becomes apparent in our dissecting his petition:
    - a. Though afraid upon being noticed that his face was sad, a capital offense, Nehemiah seized the opportunity to state his concern of the distraught state of his "fathers' sepulchers" **without using the politically explosive word, "Jerusalem,"** Neh. 1:3. This kept the King **open** to Nehemiah!
    - b. When the King asked Nehemiah his petition to resolve his concerns, Nehemiah quickly prayed, asking God's help to get his oft-planned petition "right" and to open the King's heart, v. 4b.
    - c. In the petition, Nehemiah showed forethought in addressing the King politely and humbly, v. 5a,b.
    - d. Again, Nehemiah omitted **naming** the politically-explosive city of Jerusalem, asking only to rebuild the "city of my father's sepulchers." This phrasing would also have raised the King's pity, v. 5.
    - e. When the King asked him for a time frame, Nehemiah gave one, showing that he had considered the **entire length of time** needed for the **wall reconstruction project** to be **completed**, Neh. 2:6!
    - f. Additionally, Nehemiah asked for letters of passage and letters of permission to use the King's forest for construction and to counter enemies Nehemiah knew would oppose his effort, Neh. 2:7-9!
    - g. When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem and saw the opposition from the Gentiles, he made a **private evaluation** of the conditions of the wall before approaching even his exile comrades to make sure that he minimized any dangerous surprises from his enemies, Neh. 2:10, 11-18.
    - h. When opposition to Nehemiah's revealed plans arose from these men, Nehemiah was ready, 19-20!

***Lesson: Those who lead God's people at church, at home and in marital unions must (1) understand God's Biblical will so as to (2) make all possible contingency plans (3) SO THAT WHEN GOD PROVIDES THE OPPORTUNITY FOR ADVANCEMENT, they can proceed with effective success!***