

**Let Us Arise and Build**  
**Heavenly help—Waiting for God’s blessing**  
**(Nehemiah 2:1-10)**

**Intro:** In our past three studies of Nehemiah we’ve seen three important features of those who are effective builders for the Lord—they carry a burden for God’s work, they rely upon the Lord for His help, and they are willing to make the hard choices to commit to the work.

But when we read the story of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the walls we need to see not only what Nehemiah did, but what the Lord did with Nehemiah. This book offers a profound insight into the providence of God. Think about what we have considered so far. It all began with a man who loved enough to care, cared enough to cry, cried enough to pray, and prayed enough to commit. But right here is where we see the hand of God at work. Here’s where God and His people meet in partnership. When God’s people act in faith, God starts to work and provides His helping hand.

**So this morning let’s talk about “Heavenly help—waiting on God.”**

**Let us read once more Nehemiah’s account of his encounter with King Artaxerxes, this time with an emphasis not on Nehemiah, but rather the unseen God to whom Nehemiah had prayed.**

*“AND it came about in the month Nisan (early spring), in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes (444 BC), that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. So the king said to me, “Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart.” Then I was very much afraid. And I said to the king, “Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?” Then the king said to me, “What would you request?” So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, “If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.” Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, “How long will your journey be, and when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time. And I said to the king, “If it please the king, let letters be given me for the governors of the provinces beyond the River, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah, and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, for the wall of the city, and for the house to which I will go.” And the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me.” (Nehemiah 2:1–10, NASB)*

**Through the ages, various terms have come to describe the phenomenon of God’s helping hand.**

*Some prefer to use the word “providence” derived from the Latin “providentia” meaning “to foresee.” The term providence is derived from God’s ability to foresee the end from the beginning and to so construct the world by laws that would work for the success of His cause. There are those who see all divine action in terms of the laws that God created and upholds in the world. Hence prayers are answered in keeping with laws God has already set into motion. But I am more inclined to see God’s work in more than the creation of the laws themselves, but in the use of them behind the scenes to bring about His purposes. I believe that there is a causality between prayers spoken and prayers answered that rests upon the will and action of God, not only in the past, but now in the present. Nehemiah expressed this divine intervention in this way, “The king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was upon me” (Neh. 2:8).*

**Let’s focus on Nehemiah’s expression, “The good hand of God was upon me”. Nehemiah thought his efforts were successful because God intervened. Let’s drill down into his expression:**

The hand of God

All throughout Scripture we see references to the “hand of God.”

This anthropomorphic expression stands for God’s exertion of His will in the world. Just as humans act through their hands, the hand of God refers to the means by which God’s will and purposes are carried out in this world.

The good hand of my God

God actions toward His people are for good because God is good; thus His hand is good.

This expression reminds us of Paul’s faithful affirmation:  
*God causes all things to work together for good to them who love God and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).*

The good hand of God of my God was upon me!

God’s power can be brought to bear in the life of an individual who believes in Him and is willing to be used by Him.

Mordecai raises this issue with Esther who God used to bring deliverance to the Jews a few years before.

*“For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father’s house will perish. But who knows whether you have not obtained royalty for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).*

***God’s hand is upon those who love Him, who fear Him, who pray to Him, who believe in Him, who are willing to sacrifice for Him, who are willing to change for Him. Nehemiah was such a man and we need to be too!***

**In this account we can see the power of God’s hand, and learn some important lessons about heavenly help.**

***God's help is not a substitute for human faith and action.***

Is there any doubt that God could have sent an angel to miraculously resurrect Jerusalem's broken walls? Yet instead He chose to work through His people.

God's people needed the blessing of believing, working, and building for Him. No faithful effort; no heavenly help.

*"The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps."*

(Proverbs 16:9, NASB)

***God's help makes possible what may be seen as humanly impossible.***

Consider this poem:

Got any rivers you think are uncrossable?

Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?

God specializes in things thought impossible,

He does the things others cannot do. (Swindoll, Charles R.

(1998-10-16). Hand Me Another Brick (p. 28). Thomas

Nelson. Kindle Edition.)

There were certain things Nehemiah couldn't do.

He could not leave the city on his own initiative.

He could not personally finance the trip to Jerusalem

He could not single-handedly build the broken walls.

He needed permission to go. He needed conveyance to travel; he needed people and lumber to build. God provided all of these!

***God's help can shape the most powerful people and forces in this world.***

In order to supply Nehemiah's need God influenced in some way the most powerful man on the earth! No problem for God.

*"THE king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes."* (Proverbs 21:1, NASB)

I talked earlier in this series about God-sized problems. But then we ought to ask, "How big is our God?" You sense when you read the book of Isaiah that a part of his call as a prophet was restore the greatness of the Lord in the eyes of His people. They think that because they are in captivity, subject to a man who worships a pagan god, that it is hopeless for them. Isaiah keeps saying, "Look at how great God is!"

*"Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, And marked off the heavens by the span, And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, And weighed the mountains in a balance, And the hills in a pair of scales?"* (Isaiah 40:12, NASB)

*"Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He who sits above the vault of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. He it is who reduces rulers to nothing, Who makes the judges of the earth meaningless. Scarcely have they been planted, Scarcely have they been sown, Scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, But He merely*

*blows on them, and they wither, And the storm carries them away like stubble. "To whom then will you liken Me That I should be his equal?" says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high And see who has created these stars, The One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power Not one of them is missing."* (Isaiah 40:21–26, NASB)

**This is the God that Nehemiah prayed to and who answered His people!**

***We need not know how God works in order to believe that He works.***

We could venture many guesses as to how the answer to Nehemiah's prayer came about:

We could speculate that the influences of God's word in Nehemiah's life or the changes that came through praying had made him secure the king's favor.

We could speculate that God had influenced the natural order in such a way that the king was happy with the prosperity of His kingdom and more favorable to requests for help.

One aspect of faith is to affirm the mystery of God's providence. We don't have to figure God out to know that He is working!

***We have to learn to pray and wait for God's answer!***

Nehemiah knew God's will in a general way, but not in a specific way. He knew that God had purposed the restoration of the city.

*It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'* (Isaiah 44:28, NASB)

But Nehemiah did not know how and when God intended to accomplish this. This can be the hardest part of all! Nehemiah waited 4 months to see the Lord's answer. So likewise we must learn to wait.

**Conclusion: Who could read this account without seeing from the beginning the blessing of God upon Nehemiah? Are we willing to wait for His answer and His help? Here is the comfort of the church in the daunting task of saving souls:**

*"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Mt. 28:20).*

**When Paul faced personal fears in Corinth God said to him, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent. For I am with you..." (Ac. 18:9-10).**

**Let us labor for the Lord knowing that we are not alone in what we do!**