

# Nehemiah Returns to Jerusalem

**Key Verse:** *“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.”*  
—**Nehemiah 2:17,**  
*English Standard Version*

**Selected Scripture:**  
**Nehemiah 2:1-20**

the wall, mustering their confidence and hope.

The lesson is one that we will greatly benefit from if we put it into practice. Berating and accusation are not successful motivators. The best leaders are those who lead from the front and acknowledge the value of those that follow them. Morale is lifted and hearts are warmed when a true leader affirms, “We are in this together. Working collectively, we can accomplish our goal.”

Prior to this meeting with the officials of the city, Nehemiah did not reveal the purpose of his visit. Having

## **OUR KEY VERSE ECHOES**

the theme put forth in the previous lesson about Ezra. With masterful statesmanship Nehemiah addressed the leaders of Jerusalem: “You see the trouble we are in.” He did not lay accusations upon them, holding them alone as being responsible for the failure to secure Jerusalem by repairing the city wall. Rather, Nehemiah used inclusive language that ameliorated any guilt on the leaders’ part, showing instead an attitude of compassion. He also reassured them that, together, they could build

been sent with the blessing of Persian king Artaxerxes to repair Jerusalem's defenses, he was a model of discretion in his conduct. Note his testimony: "I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem. ... And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. ... I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work."—Neh. 2:11-16, *New King James Version*

Nehemiah went out to examine Jerusalem's ruined condition in the nighttime. He was accompanied by just a few men. He told no one what his intentions were. The lesson we take from this is characterized by the admonition that we should not thrust others' failures into their faces by making a public scandal of them. We are not to lay bare the problems of our countrymen, our family, or our brethren for all to see.

Perhaps the noble-minded Nehemiah treasured this proverb, "By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, But it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked. He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor, But a man of understanding holds his peace. A talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter." (Prov. 11:11-13, *NKJV*) The mouths of the wicked love to speak evil, and to be talebearers who say things that should not be said, which degrade their neighbor. Nehemiah did none of these things. He knew that a man of understanding must be discreet in his speech. He believed that one who has a faithful spirit should wisely conceal such matters. May we follow the noble principles exemplified by Nehemiah in assisting God's people out of their difficulties.■