

We are going to see God's plans worked out with utter precision, God often acts when man least expects it, God usually acts on that which is the greatest and most urgent. We see that human co-operation is required.

Nehemiah is stirred by the Lord to ask the king for special authority to go to Judah and to Jerusalem, because he has been so grieved to hear about the continuing tragedy in Jerusalem. The temple has been reconstructed but is not currently in very good use. Most of the buildings in the city are still in a poor state, and the wall has been demolished for years and years. So, the people are in a tragic condition, and the Samaritans and the nations roundabout have by various means brought the population very low, and the work of God has been discontinued for years. So, Nehemiah is moved to seek office to go and to rebuild Jerusalem.

He has been spending much time in prayer and even fasting about Jerusalem, He has been praying for an opportunity to speak to the King. Now we are going to see the results of His prayer. It was no small matter the King was not a kind and sympathetic man; he was not a man open to suggestions. He was vicious, unpredictable, could change his mind any time, and very proud. The king had absolute power, nobody withstood them or offended them.

Would The king see his request as an act of betrayal or find it insulting.

Nehemiah is fearful not only for himself, but perhaps more so for the Jews. If the king was upset by his request, it would greatly endanger the Jews, but he is convinced God wants and has stirred Him to do this. And ask the king for favour.

V2 The king sees Nehemiah's sad Constance and asks the reason for this sadness. – and says you are not sick this is nothing but sadness of heart.

Nehemiah was sore afraid. He knows what he is requesting is very sensitive. He knows the king well and knows what makes him angry. To the proud king of Persia what could be more important than serving him. Now Nehemiah will ask and show that he has other interests; something else is more important to him than the king's business. Also the thought is in the back of his mind as to how the king will interpret him wanting to help Jerusalem. If he strengthens Jerusalem will they not rise up as an independent nation, out of the control of Persia. Will this inspire other nations follow their example? Is the king going to agree to this? Also, this is another religion, it's not the Persian religion, He is siding with the Jews. Will this not anger the king. **But in spite of all this;** it is God who has

inspired Nehemiah to do this, **He can only draw courage from God and do it in faith**, yet he is a human being, he is still very anxious.

We put ourselves in Nehemiah's position. As a servant of God we may be, and are often called to do things that will place us in great danger, or make us unpopular at the least. But we must go forward by faith and obey the Lord. Like Nehemiah we must go forth in wisdom and boldness.

he is very wise in how He presents it to the King. V3. He shows courtesy and respect to the King. He speaks of the tragedy of his people that he is a Jew and an Israelite all his forefathers are in that city in tragic condition. He presents it in this way softening matters. **He is bold, yet He is careful and polite.** He gives the king opportunity to see it from His perspective. His whole background and past life.

V4 the King knows he is being asked for something. And almost says, come to the point what do you want? Tell me straight, what is it you are asking for? He is still a little afraid, we read- **So I prayed to the God of heaven.** This was an emergency prayer from the heart, or as some call it a spontaneous prayer. He could have never prayed aloud in the presence of the king. So it was most likely **A very quick appeal for the goodness of God.** Remember this was not his only prayer. **He had spent much time in prayer.** But this brief prayer from the depths of his heart. **He is stating His trust in the Lord.** He wants Gods direction and help. He has a split second to answer the question. He prays for the right answer. We too can and should pray like Nehemiah, both long prayers at set times but also short emergency prayers from our hearts. We don't rely only on quick short spontaneous prayer. We also spent time in set prayer. Yet these short prayers are valuable and effective. In all our activities, if we are witnessing and asked a question. In a split second ask for an answer. Or in decisions we daily make or in journeys we make, make it a habit to prayer before you take it. We may hear of someone's difficult situation or hardship, offer up an emergency prayer. You might notice something during the day, look out of the window and see the golden sun on the trees very beautiful. Give thanks for it. Anything that moves us or stirs us, always thank Him always praise Him, turn it into a heartfelt prayer.

So when asked what is it you want- there is a quick brief but very sincere prayer shot up to heaven – he answers -

v5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, **and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight**, that you would send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.

If I have found favour in your sight. If my work has been pleasing to you, and you trust me. If Nehemiah had not done his work well, if he had been lazy and had a wrong attitude, he would have never found favour with the King. **His good testimony and diligence found favour.**

We can ask ourselves a question- does my testimony in my place of work cause me to have favour with my colleagues? We cannot have a testimony of upsetting people one moment, or letting them down, not being faithful one moment- then in the next moment hoping to testify to them.

Nehemiah with a clear conscience could say, 'If it please the king, and if your servant has found favour in thy sight, that you would send me unto Judah.'

And he was sent to Judah as governor of Judah, where he remained for twelve years,

V 6 Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), "How long will your journey be? And when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

It was not usual for the queen to be sitting with the king, perhaps Gods providence arranged this, and used the queen to grant this kindness and favour. Its suggested that the queen forwarded and supported His request.

The king must have respected **Nehemiah for we see he was eager to know when he would be back. He was a valued servant.** What a good testimony he had. **They did not wish to part with him.** This should be our testimony – If we are gone we will be missed. So, Nehemiah set a time. Whether it was the 12 years or a shorter time we are not told. It may be since, the wall was finished in 52 days- and possibly not very long after that returned to the king. Who may have sent him a second time with a fuller commission, for the king's service, and the government of that part of his dominions.

V7&8. The letters were granted to Him and the choice timber from the Kings Forest. The very **choice timber** for the construction of the gates and possibly the wall. And the king granted *them* to me according to **the good hand of my God**

upon me. **This was a real answer to His prayer** - all these events were the Lords doing. How his heart must have rejoiced.

Nehemiah Inspects Jerusalem's Walls. The Kings horseman went with Nehemiah He had a royal escort. It's said that word had spread that he was coming yet no Jews came out to meet Him. **They took little notice of him who was now taking such great notice of them and their condition.** Also, he was met with men who were deeply disturbed that he had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel. Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant the Ammonite.

Nehemiah goes out at night to survey the walls and see what the work is that needs to be done. Perhaps to see if the old foundations could be reused, to see what materials could be reused, to get an idea of the materials that He would need. **If good work is to be done it must be well planned and well considered.** He is thoughtful before he begins this great work. He considers and counts the cost if he can finish. (Luke 14:28-30). It's not just an impulse of excitement that will get this work done. For when the initial excitement is over, we need something far greater to keep us working. Also when we see all that needs to be done it compels us to look to God fully. we realise the only way we can achieve this is with Gods help and with Gods strength. Nehemiah wants to see with His own eyes and not just rely upon a report from someone else. **Those that want to rebuild must know the extent of the ruin.** It's the same for us who desire to see the Walls of the church rebuilt. Do we grasp the ruin and understand what needs repair.

He viewed it quietly by night, and the rulers knew not. He wasn't trying to boast and say look what I've come to do. At this point he hadn't told anyone. Now **in V 17** He says unto them you see the **distress we are in.** you see the waste Jerusalem lies in the gates burned with fire. **Come let us** build up the wall of Jerusalem **that we be no more in reproach.** He includes the people, it isn't going to be a one man work, He doesn't command the people, rather **in brotherly love he says Come let us build.** Then he tells them how the Lord gave Him favour with the King. We take note that -

All the people saw the condition of the walls, saw the gates burned. But didn't do anything about it. Along comes Nehemiah and motivates them. **How a good**

leader can motivate the hands of many. How interest can be stirred, and people encourage one another to put their hands to work.

The response of the Jews was very encouraging. ¹⁸ And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, **“Let us rise up and build.”** Then they set their hands to *this good work*.

While the opposition is almost immediate from those opposed. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, the Arabian, laughed at them scorning and mocking. **‘You will never do it.** These walls have been ruins now for 150 years. What are you going to do, you weak and feeble Israelites, people of Judah. What is this thing that you do? will ye rebel against the king?’ You only want to build those walls, and strengthen your country, so that you can declare independence from Persia, and set up a rebellion.

The opinions of others can never determine our duty. Duty is between us and God; it matters not what man thinks. If God be for us who can be against us. Duty usually comes to us very clearly from Gods word, its usually a strong conviction we have. When we know it's from the Lord, Any sacrifice that needs to be made is made Gladly for Him.

Satan is the accuser of the brethren night and day and is always active when we obey what the Lord puts in our hearts to do. **Nehemiah's answer is the right answer.** - *‘The God of Heaven, He will bless us, and we, His servants, will arise and build. But you have no portion or right or memorial in Jerusalem.’* The Godly motivation was -“The fear of God”; “the love of Christ”; “religious principle”; “conscience”; “the sense of duty”; “the instinct of right,” all these variations of expression of the same motive.

Nehemiah received the help of the King but that was nothing **compared to the grace from God** He received. **His confidence** was in the Lord – yes, he was grateful for the Kings help and provision, but He knew very well the real help and strength must be from the lord. His confidence was in the Lord not in Man. His **motivation was Love for God**, He desired **the Honour of God to be restored**. The desire to do this had been **stirred by Heaven** and he trusted God would help and supply and watch over and bring it to completion.

Like David, he encouraged himself in the Lord. ^{1Sam 30:6}. What he saw when he inspected the walls was not really of any encouragement, the swift opposition from Sanballat and his friends didn't really help. The walls being in utter ruin for so very long. It's the same for us when we survey the walls of the Church the state of things in our age. It seems almost impossible yet in the very short space of fifty-two days, Nehemiah, in the midst of all his discouragements, accomplished his work: for, we are told, "the people had a mind to work ^{Neh 4:6}."

And who can say what Christians might be able to do, if they were **stirred with zeal**, and would **combine their efforts** for the Kingdoms sake and honour. No: we should **encourage ourselves in God** and put forth all our energies in his service.

Often, we think we can't make a difference, often the work starts just like a cloud the size of a man's hand. Often at first there seems to be nothing, but Elijah kept on praying, kept on looking. He sees the cloud just the size of a man's hand - 'Prepare *your chariot*, and go down before the rain stops you.'

Let us take courage in the little we have seen and press forward and engage in the work that is before us; not focused on the difficulties; but having confidence in our God going on in His strength to fulfil His eternal will.