

Topic	Man of Action and Man of Prayer
Reference	Nehemiah 2
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We are going to take you back to the beginning of Nehemiah where the context is a terrible time where Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and the people were exiled thousands of miles away to Babylon and then later that was captured by the Persian Kingdom and Nehemiah is now in Suzza. The scene starts off well way back in Ezra chapter 1

Ezra 1:1-2 (ESV)

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing:

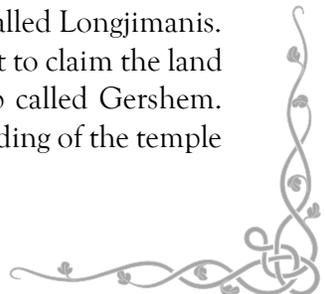
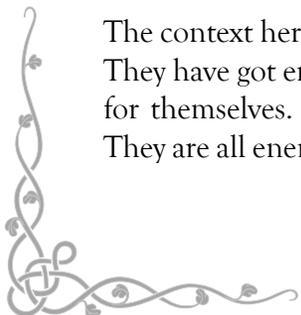
So here you Cyrus, a king, a non-Christian king as well, nothing to do with the Israelites. And God out of the blue, this is what we call a miracle, out of the blue puts upon this heart. The other person we see in the Bible like this is Nebuchadnezzar, but he had the benefit of Daniel being there. But here you the Cyrus, out of the blue

2 *“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.*

Of all the things that he would be interested in, he wants you to build in a backwater town, in a desolate place called Jerusalem, he wants it rebuilt. So this only be how God works in a non-Christian’s heart and the whole episode of about return from exile, how the people of Israel returned from exile. Some modern day politicians liken themselves to be like Cyrus. When they move the US Embassy back to Jerusalem, so that’s why you have this little coin, the trump thing is like Cyrus. But the Jews go back in three different waves.

The first wave is by a prince called Zerubbabel. 535 BC and they built back the temple and its foundations in Ezra 1-6. 47000 Jews go back. But this temple which they rebuilt never regained its formal glory. You don’t see the Shekinah glory come down onto this temple, the second temple as it were the first temple. Something was missing about it. Then the work was stopped and then again in Ezra, is a priest, fulltime worker now and he is in 458 BC, years years later on, he goes back about 5000 Jews to reestablish the worshipping community there and the primacy of the word of God there. That then falls back into period of quiescent. There is nothing happening and then you have got Nehemiah 445 and it goes back to build the walls and the city gates. So that’s the three prom approach when you go back.

The context here is a Persian king, Artaxerxes I and he basically has a nickname for him called Longjimanis. They have got enemies in Judah, they don’t like you building back again because they want to claim the land for themselves. The governor of Samaria, Sanballat, Ammonites Tobiah and the Arab called Gershem. They are all enemies. They actually cause the disruption of the return of exile and the building of the temple



last time. They caused all this, they spread rumours to actually prevent the return and the date of the first bad news in Nehemiah was in the month of November-December called Chislev and they came back with news to Nehemiah

Nehemiah 1:3

And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire."

The difference between a village and a city is basically a wall. So basically here you don't have a wall. If you don't have a wall marauders will come in, they will take things by force, they will attack you, they will take the women away and then slave you, so they were in a really bad situation because although the temple was built up again there was no wall and his main gates were already destroyed. Now their gates are not like automatic gate, you press button and it opens. The gate is a place, it is called the CBD. It is a huge huge complex, so therefore there is no real commercial activity going on there.

Nehemiah 1:4

As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

When this word comes to Nehemiah, it really strikes him because this is his people who are actually suffering in the holy land and you must understand the mind of a Jew. The mind of Jews stems from the promise God gave to Abraham

Hebrews 11:8-10 (ESV)

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

All of God's promises and hopes of the future are actually encapsulated in that one single city where people would worship, people would go and have festivals and that city is Jerusalem. There is supposed to be a place where its founder and designer is actually God himself. So in the mind of every Jew that is what he looks forward to. If the walls are broken that vision, that passion, that dream is broken. The walls of Jerusalem represents the future Messianic king who would come. It represents God's presence in a new temple. It represents God's kingdom from Jerusalem through all the world. All the nations would stream to Jerusalem to worship God. That is at the heart of every single Jew and that is if you go to Israel today, that is still their hope and dream. So if that wall is in disarray it means that vision is broken, that their dream is dissipated. Now let's go back to our chapter today. His specific prayer,

Nehemiah 1:11 (ESV)

O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

Now I was cupbearer to the king.

When Nehemiah hears this bad news and he suddenly daunt upon him that he is in a position, he is a cupbearer. A politician, of all people God will use politician. Here we actually have a politician, a cup bearer. A cup bearer is next to the king himself. If anybody gives a poison drink to the king, he is the first one, the hero, he will drink it. If he dies then the king will not drink. If he doesn't die, the king will drink. But the fact that he was there protects the king and he is also the ear of the king. He is in a very-very strategic position to do something.

Now we are going to look at his prayer life. He prayed in chapter 1 and in chapter 2 we are looking at the results of the prayer.

1. Prayer creates a space in which God can act
2. Prayer produces opportunities
3. Prayer overcomes fear
4. Prayer is where planning starts
5. Prayer ultimately produces action

1. PRAYER CREATES A SPACE IN WHICH GOD CAN ACT

Nehemiah 2:1 (ESV)

*In the **month of Nisan, in the twentieth year** of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence.*

Look at the time, this is where he first start, November-December, it is Chislev and now is Nisan, which means it is four months. From actually chapter 1 and chapter 2 it is four months. You must not fail to notice the difference. What was he doing in the four months? He was praying. He was creating a space in which God can act and one of the most irritating things that you will find in Christian service or in prayer is that you always got to wait for God. God never answers your prayer straightaway. If you look:

- Abraham and Sarah. They waited for one baby and it took 25 years.
- Moses before he is used for Exodus has to wait for 40 years at the backside of a desert looking after cows and goats
- David was chosen as a king in his young age but had to fight for years, hiding away from the real king which was King Saul.
- Jacob had to wait for 14 years to marry the girl whom he loved which was Rachel.

So why do you have to wait such a long time. There are some people who misunderstand this waiting period. They think you pray hard enough then God is obligated to basically answer your prayer. This is called the law of accumulation.

Revelation 5:8 (ESV)

And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

So here you have a vision in heaven, which John tells us about and we got an apostle called Maldonado Guillermo who was here in Kelana Jaya about two years ago. He had a rally there and this is what he says

Have you prayed for certain things that you still haven't seen manifested? If you have offered prayers that were to be fulfilled in the future, they have accumulated in one of these heavenly bowls; as in a bank account, they are "earning interest" and growing. And they are about to be poured out! even though they may not manifest until the prayer bowl is full. It may be that there is not enough "spiritual matter" accumulated to give shape to your miracle in the natural realm. Therefore, continue depositing prayers, making offerings, and fasting, until the time is fulfilled and your bowl is ready to be poured out.

Isn't it interesting, how many of you have been filling your bowls more than the beef noodle outside.

If you want to bring heaven to earth, that's not how it will happen. When your faith and prayers have sufficiently accumulated, the manifestation will take place easily.

Then he says

For instance, the resurrection of the dead is a powerful miracle that characterizes King Jesus Ministry. However, it was not something that happened overnight. In my daily prayers, the Holy Spirit showed me that this was the next level of power I would receive in ministry. From that moment, I started to accumulate prayers in that direction and to look for the power of the resurrection. When I had accumulated enough prayers, the bowl overflowed and resurrections began to take place. It was glorious! But it took a lot of prayer time to reach that new level.

Sounds like Amway, you reach the pearl, diamond, so in spiritual thing if you spend enough time, you reach the kind of level and then God basically is obligated to listen to you, why, because you reach diamond level. **Is that how prayer works?** Sometimes we think, the problem with that kind of theology is that you are actually controlling God. That means your prayer bowl is full then God is obligated to answer you and that's not how it works. We have a lot of people who prayed. Abraham prayed for years but he died without receiving the promise. Many of the saints died without receiving the promise.

In Genesis chapter 22, you have got Abraham and he has got this knife and he is putting onto the neck of his son Isaac. Now if you look at the faith of Abraham, was his faith entirely focused on the promise God gave him. If the whole promise of giving him, you know he look up in the sky and then God say, you know, your descendants will be like the stars. It all starts with one son. If he actually believe that God would give him, he believe God only for the promise, why do you think he put his son down here with the knife. It is a bit odd. You are going to extinguish your only promise there. He wasn't rooted, his faith was not rooted in the promise of the descendant. With 25 years his faith had been so transformed. It may have been initially rooted on the fact that he is going to get a son, but after 25 years of waiting, it is now rooted on the promiser, the one who gave him the promise. It is not the outcome, it is actually the promise.

God makes us wait because if we don't wait, if we get it straightaway then our faith is that he would fulfil his promise and we are only out to get his promise. By making us wait, it is a process that is important. He transfers our faith from the promise itself to the one who gives the promise. That is what prayer is about.

Wasting Time With God is a remarkable book written by a theologian in the United States called Klaus Issler. He actually has a point. You know, when you go for prayer and if you go to ICU. Many patients in there are in critical condition. The attendant there is just sitting the whole day and not talking. It is

like wasting time. They could be at work, earning money but when your loved one is sick, you just sit in the ICU and you are wasting time. It is not wasting time because when you spend time with the one you love, it is not what you do, it is actually being present. You never ask, what did you achieve. When you are sitting there next to the one you love that is what prayer is about.

Look at Mary and Martha, the two ladies who were with Jesus. One was busy cooking biryani rice, the other running around like a chick without a head, the other was just wasting time. Just sitting in front of Jesus Christ and Jesus telling story. That is actually what prayer is about and I think that's the hardest thing for someone like me to know and learn because I am a very action orientated person and I can never sit still. I cannot sit there and waste time and I think Klaus Issler teaches me that prayer is just sitting with the one you love in ICU and just spending time with one you love and you see here you a situation where

Nehemiah 2:1-2 (ESV)

...I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. 2 And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid.

Here we have Henry Nouwen who has written many books on spirituality. He is a catholic theologian who actually taught in Notre Dame, Harvard and Yale for about 20 years. I was reading about how his approach to prayer is and I noticed, he says

'Without prayer I become irritable, tired, heavy of heart, and I lose the Spirit who directs my attention to the needs of others instead of my own. Without prayer, my attention moves to my own preoccupation. I become cranky and spiteful and often I experience resentment and a desire for revenge.'

And I reflect that is exactly what I am like when I am actually not praying and then when he is praying he describes it

"that his hour a day in a chapel was full of distractions, restlessness, sleepiness, confusion and boredom."

Describes my prayer life and yet the next sentence he writes

'But he noticed in retrospect that the days and weeks were different, positively different, when he prayed: without this one hour a day for God, my life loses its coherency and I start experiencing my days as a series of random incidents and accidents.'

You see, only when you look back to the weeks and the days in which you had your prayer, very subtle. The days in which you didn't have your prayer, life becomes like a series of accidents an incidents all randomly stringed together and you react against it, but the days in which you actually had your prayer although you don't remember particularly much about it, it was like struggling with boredom and all that, it actually is a calming effect in your entire life. So like prayer, spending time with God is actually a struggle because if you look in Psalm 13:1-2

Psalms 13:1-2 (ESV)

*How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?
2 How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?*

Why was Nehemiah depressed after four months in prayer? I thought praying for four months he should be jumping up there, but he is more depressed. Because every time he gets in prayer and God doesn't answer his prayer, he is saying how long, how long, how long and then at the end of the Psalm he writes

Psalms 13:5-6 (ESV)

But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. 6 I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

In between the first verse and the last verse

Psalms 13:3-4 (ESV)

Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,4 lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

Can you see the dynamics of prayer? When you are praying, I am trusting God for the best but at the same time I am preparing for the worst. There is a struggling in your feelings of struggling all the time and if you think you are a terrible Christian because you struggle, join the club, because the Psalmist feels that, when he sits down he feels like God is impotent, God cannot act, God is so slow, He is not listening and at the end he encourages himself, I trust in you and he basically beseeches God. He is trusting God for the best and at the same time he is preparing for the worst. He is going through the ruminations in his heart.

I think we depend too much on feelings. If you look at Screwtape Letters. This is a series of letters written by the chief devil to the under devil. Chief devil is Screwtape and under devil is called wormwood and they are discussing how to attack Christians and their biggest enemy is God. So he writes

Whenever they are attending to the Enemy Himself we are defeated, but there are ways of preventing them from doing so. The simplest is to turn their gaze away from Him towards themselves. Keep them watching their own minds and trying to produce feelings there by the action of their own wills. When they meant to ask Him for charity, let them, instead, start trying to manufacture charitable feelings for themselves and not notice that this is what they are doing. When they meant to pray for courage, let them really be trying to feel brave. When they say they are praying for forgiveness, let them be trying to feel forgiven.

Teach them to estimate the value of each prayer by their success in producing the desired feeling; and never let them suspect how much success or failure of that kind depends on whether they are well or ill, fresh or tired, at the moment.

So the devil makes you think your prayer is successful or effective by generating feelings.

2. PRAYER PRODUCES OPPORTUNITIES

Nehemiah 2:2 (ESV)

And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid.

After about four months then the king noticed this. So, this is an opportunity. I was reading this paper some time ago, these two ladies. One of them was actually given away at birth and she started looking for her sister. For the last seven years trying to find out my long lost sister, where is she because I was given away for adoption. You know where she was all the time, her neighbour, right next to her. The postman happen to deliver a parcel and then they saw a common name down there. It goes to show that you never talk to your neighbour and she found that her sister is living next to her.

What we learn from this is that prayer produces opportunities. We often want God to produce miracles. When we get down and we are praying, I am sure Nehemiah was saying to God, Lord look the walls are terrible, can you just zap the wall, I will write the check. That is what all we all to do. We want a miracle. But you don't understand that God actually produces miracles by producing opportunities in which we can partner and work together with him. Opportunity is for us to cease it, to sow and speak into the lives of the people around us. I mean how many of you would like your children to grow up as people of spirit and character. I am sure all of us want. But that is not how it works. God doesn't do that. Did you know that God gives you opportunities. They don't become fantastic Christians overnight. Becoming a spiritual person requires trials and tribulations, ups and downs and side paths that you take off and then you get back to the right place and he will give you opportunities to speak into their lives, to sow into your life. If you want your mother to know Christ or your father to know Christ, it did not come in one day. There will be an opportunity here and there where your father, your son or your spouse will some interest then you take them to this particular thing. Prayer gives opportunities and we have got to see it, we got to seize it.

Nehemiah 2:2-3 (ESV)

And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid. 3 I said to the king, "Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"

3. PRAYER OVERCOMES FEAR

So he seizes the opportunity. He brings out his city and his father's graves. Now prayer overcomes fear and once the king talks to him, he basically was very afraid, either he does not like your sour face or the problem is this letter from King Artaxerxes. It was this king himself who actually stopped the building of the completion of the temple in Jerusalem

Ezra 4:19-22 (ESV)

And I made a decree, and search has been made, and it has been found that this city from of old has risen against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made in it. 20 And mighty kings have been over Jerusalem, who ruled over the whole province Beyond the River, to whom tribute, custom, and toll were paid. 21 Therefore make a decree that these men be made to cease, and that this city be not rebuilt, until a decree is made by me. 22 And take care not to be slack in this matter. Why should damage grow to the hurt of the king?"

Now if you were a king over a vast land and empire, the first thing that you will be very sensitive to is rebellion and this place has a history of rebellion. So the people, Sanballat, the Anbon and Gershem, send back rumors and because of these rumors the king was threatened and he said stop. Now the fear

was, if you bring this up again then you will be under the Sosma Act or the Sedition Act and you will be put in jail. That was what Nehemiah was afraid of. Henry writes

So I am praying while not knowing how to pray. I am resting while feeling restless, at peace while tempted, safe while still anxious, surrounded by a cloud of light while still in darkness, in love while still doubting.'

So prayer isn't one homogenous feeling, it is you are trusting and yet doubting in the dark and yet in light and that's absolutely true. Each of us through prayer, we struggle with our fear. When we have fear the first thing you do, we pray against the fear. But the problem is when you do that, you are actually giving fear room in your life. You are giving credence to the fear. If you are running away from the thing which you are fearful about, you actually give it more power in your life. Psychologist will tell you, if you have got something you are afraid of you should turn around and you should face the fear. So the more you turn around and face the fear, the less your response to it will be physiological. Now if you look here, this is what he prayed

Nehemiah 2:4 (ESV)

4 Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" So I prayed to the God of heaven.

Then you look in chapter 1

Nehemiah 1:5 (ESV)

And I said, "O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments,

He prays to the Lord of heaven. Now if you look some years ago there was this snowboarder, Chloe Kim, 17 years of age. She was a real rags to riches kind of story where her parents immigrated to the United States when they were very young. She grew up and the father keep on taking her to the snowfields and competitions. From age of 4 years old they have been taking into competitions until she became very good, difficult life, ups and downs. At the age of 8, the father gave up his career in order to be her coach full time and this is what he writes,

"I was very stressed because everyone was saying Chloe was going to win gold but no one knows the result -- that I cannot control,"

Do you know, when you have children your hearts are joined to your children hearts. If they hurt like that, you also hurt like that and you wish you would take their place. Anybody who is a parent will tell you that. The most difficult part about being a parent is that you cannot control the events. You can love the child but you cannot control the events and when you pray you will find that Nehemiah is different, his father is also the king

Nehemiah 1:5 (ESV)

And I said, "O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments,

Henry says

Ultimately he placed his trust in a God 'who holds me, who loved me long before I came into life [and] will love me long after I have died.'

When we pray to God it is not like Chloe Kim's father who loves the daughter but cannot control the events. We pray to a God of heaven. Nehemiah talks about the God of heaven all the time because heaven is the highest authority in the universe and he is my father and he is my king. So we are driven to this God.

Fear also drives you to his power. If you look in Acts chapter 4. This is the fledgling first church who was just born in chapter 2 where thousands of people came to know Christ and then this is the first persecution that actually happened. The people were persecuted, put in jail and this is the response

Acts 4:24-26 (ESV)

And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,

It is exactly like Nehemiah. Nehemiah prays to the God of heaven. They are praying to the God who made the heaven.

25 who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? 26 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed"—

Psalm 2 they quote because Psalm 2 tells us that the people who are the gentiles rebel against God and his Messiah. They see the world through the prism of the Word of God when they are frightened because fear drives you to his words and then they interpret, they use the word and they interpret their circumstances

Acts 4:27-31 (ESV)

for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

So whatever happen to Jesus is already predestined.

29 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,

So whatever happens is already planned.

30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

This is how you respond to fear, you go back to the Word of God and the Word of God reassures you that your father is the king.

Fear drives you to His beauty as well. If you look at Psalm 27, which is David being fearful of Saul coming after him and he writes,

Psalms 27:1-4 (ESV)

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

So he is struggling with his fear. He tells himself

The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? 2 When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. 3 Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident. 4 One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

Fear should drive us to his beauty. If you look fear in the eye and you are always asking God to take the fear away then you actually miss the whole point. Fear is meant to drive you towards God's power, towards God's beauty. Don't pray that God will take the fear away, pray that through the fear it will drive you to his beauty, it will drive you to his power.

Jonathan Edwards who was response full much to the revival in North America was deadly afraid of thunderstorms. He was always terrified by it but he became a Christian he recognized that the same thunder was the voice of God and he actually lost his fear because the thunder was the sweet contemplation of my great and glorious God. What have become a terror had been turned into a thing of beauty because he had known the one behind the thunder.

4. PRAYER IS WHERE PLANNING STARTS

Nehemiah 2:4-5 (ESV)

Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" So I prayed to the God of heaven.

They call this an airplane, straightaway you are praying. Paul tells us to be always praying without ceasing. So your soul is in a posture of prayer. It is easy for you just to have a prayer to God straightaway and I think most of us have this sort of prayer when we are looking for parking.

5 And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it."

If you look very carefully from verses 2 to 5, he is always mentioning my fathers' graves lies in ruins, send me back to the city of my fathers' grave. He doesn't mention my people, Judah, the temple there, all that you know, he mentions. As far as the king is concerned he is sending him back to his fathers' grave, he is very smart, because the Persian kings were very-very superstitious. If you are saying, you are going there to look after your fathers' grave they will let you go because they are very-very superstitious and Nehemiah is very smart.

Nehemiah 2:6 (ESV)

And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), "How long will you be gone, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time.

The king was worried because who is going to drink his poison. In those days going to the governor of Jerusalem is like 12 years. For them, it is a short time. So the king said yes.

Nehemiah 2:7-8 (ESV)

And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah, 8 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 of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy."

He is very specific. This man has done his research. Before you send me, I need passport, I need letters, so the people who guard all this provinces will allow me to pass, number one and number two letter to Asaph. He even knows the guy who look after the forest. He has done his research. Sometimes we think Christians have naïve idea, they will pray to the Lord and everything will fall from the sky. You actually have to pray as well as plan. Prayer is where planning starts. It is not a substitute for competence or leadership and planning. The he asks for timber. No point going all the way to Jerusalem and you forgot to take your timber with you. He has planned everything down to a tea

Nehemiah 2: 8b

And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.

Now this is the result of four months of prayer. Four months of prayer and it finally comes together and he realized that he is very excited, God is now working in his life and he find the term, the good hand of my God was upon me, because when you know God's hand is on you, you better move. Now you look at Ezra who was the priest. Same thing happened to Ezra

Ezra 7:9-10 (ESV)

For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him. 10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

You can't have God's hand on you unless you are looking at his word. He is looking at his word, so therefore God's hand is on him.

Ezra 7:28 (ESV)

... I took courage, for the hand of the Lord my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

Proverbs 21:1 (ESV)

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.

So the heart of the king is nothing, it is like a stream and God controls it.

5. PRAYER ULTIMATELY PRODUCES ACTION

Nehemiah 2:9-11 (ESV)

Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen.

These are bonus. He never asked for protection and yet the King gave him a military

10 But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel. 11 So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days.

So the enemies were upset. He arrived in Jerusalem and he sits there for three whole days. What do you think he was doing for three whole days. He was praying. This is guy would most probably be wasting time with God for three days. He goes to Jerusalem and waste time with God for three days before he does anything else, quite typical

Nehemiah 2:12 (ESV)

Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There was no animal with me but the one on which I rode.

He is very-very clever. He doesn't make a big hoo and haa and show about it because he is the new governor. He doesn't show all these official letters. He goes there in the middle of a night when nobody know so that he could check which walls were down, which walls were up, what he had to do because if he were to come there with a whole bunch of people, you know, like those people breaking ground with a song, cutting ribbon. When you do all that, the enemies will be upraised of this and then they will come and stop you. So again a man of action who actually thinks that he goes and looks at all the walls. Then when all of this is down he goes to the people. He said to them

Nehemiah 2:17-18 (ESV)

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." 18 And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work

So here he challenges the people. We are down, we are in trouble but God is working. People get excited when they understand that God is working because they want to join God. They want to be in the winning team. When God is with you, you are in the winning team. So therefore when they hear about the Nehemiah's story up till coming here, then they suddenly understand, wow, it is all coming to provision. God's hand is on this guy. So when God is doing something, they responded. Let us rise up and let us build. Then there is opposition.

Nehemiah 2:19-20 (ESV)

But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, “What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?”

Now, we are going to report you to the sedition act, because you are trying to formant the building of wall to formant rebellion. What does Nehemiah do? He actually doesn't show them the king's letters. He says

20 Then I replied to them, “The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.”

He is very bold. He doesn't fall back to the authority or the credentials which the king gave him. He falls back on the one who is really in charge, God. In the face of opposition and in the face of fear he turns back to the authority of God.

CHALLENGE

The challenge to us is these few verses.

Nehemiah 2:18 (ESV)

And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good,

Brothers and sisters, is the hand of God on you. You see, when Nehemiah hear a dislocated heart, when his brother came in and told him that the walls are broken down, this is how he responded.

Nehemiah 1:3 (ESV)

And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.”

He is a cupbearer to the king. That mean he is in the palace. He is standing up right next to the king of kings. In a lap of luxury every day he has five star hotel dinner, who cares about somebody in the village. Why would you bother? But yet he was upset, he was sad, he had a dislocated heart. He was standing next to the king and yet his heart was thousands of miles in Jerusalem.

The hand of God is on all of us as well. Our hopes are not very much different from the hopes of the Jews. The Jews are hoping for a Messianic King. We actually have seen the Messianic King come, his name is Jesus. He came and he died on the cross to buy us freedom. Because of his blood, we are saved. Don't tell me today when you are sitting down there that God's hand is not on you. Everybody here who has the blood of Christ on your hands, the hand of God is on you. The hand of God has saved you. This hand of God has prepared you for a mission in life. So Messianic King has come and in fact the Messianic King is coming again.

The second point is God's presence is now here. We are not like the Jews waiting for his presence, trying to build a silly little wall. God's presence is already here. Where is God's presence in you, in the church of Jesus Christ.

The third point is God's kingdom is going to be all over the nations. We are not looking at how big this church is, we are looking to redeem the people outside. The walls no longer have to be built anymore, the walls are broken down. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, the curtain is torn from top to bottom. We are now in the presence of God. God is now spirit is moving out pass this church to the rest of this world. This is what God has done. God has put his hand on every single one of us today.

If you look in this church, the government gave us 99 years on this land. So are you just going to clap? It says, let us rise up and build and I am not talking about building buildings. We have to do the kind of work that is important outside the church, not to spend money and build more castles and that is just a terrible waste. We don't need the walls anymore. We need to build God's kingdom outside.

Brothers and sisters we have to repent. We need to pray for three things

1. A request for grace to confess sins and humble ourselves. Because we are too comfortable in this church. If they are going to tell us about the non-Christian outside, we don't have a dislocated heart. In fact our heart is fairly happy. We don't have the same kind of sadness and vision in our hearts when they tell us about people who are suffering outside and for that to occur, you can't force it, you got to pray for the grace to confess our sin and humble ourselves. That we have not been thinking of the kingdom, we have been thinking of ourselves and that applies to every single one of us this day.
2. Compassion and zeal for the flourishing of His church. It is not my church or your church, it is His church. The body of Jesus Christ.
3. Yearning to know God, to see his face, to see his glory. Only when you see his face and his glory in your life. when you start wasting time with God, to hang around and God really zapping you and you really feel how beautiful it is. You have seen every thunder strike, the voice of God and then only you will have the power to go out and conquer whole worlds for lord Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, don't look any further. The hand of God is on every single one here because of the blood of Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

PRAYER

Father Lord, we are so odd. We are in a situation so much better than Nehemiah. Nehemiah was called and he wasn't a pastor, he wasn't royalty, he was just a normal politician and when he heard the call and he realized your hand was upon his life he responded. He repented of his sin. He yearned to see your face. He stepped out in courage. He spent time in prayer, a desperate frontline earnest urgent prayer. Father Lord, we pray that every single one in this church will be like a Nehemiah. We are not fulltime workers, we are not pastors, we are not leaders but we are people like cupbearers in a particular place, in a particular occupation, in a particular business where we could share the love of Jesus Christ. I pray O'Lord we as a church would feel this calling, we feel the hand of God heavy upon our hearts. We feel this burden and this burden will be transformed into great joy as we share his love. We ask for Jesus sake. Amen