

WILLING SERVICE

Nehemiah 2:5-20

(1:1-4) Last week we discovered the kind of person Nehemiah was. He cultivated his heart for God. When he heard about the condition of Jerusalem, he cried, he mourned, he fasted, and he prayed for days.

He was a man of prayer. He spent months in prayer about one thing: Jerusalem. In his prayers he settled the issue of God—very important later on when things are not going well.

(2:1-4) Nehemiah was willing to risk everything for God's purposes. When King Artaxerxes asked Nehemiah what he wanted; Nehemiah said a quick prayer to God.

Though he had prayed at every available opportunity during the past four months, he could not face this critical moment without once more looking to God to meet his needs.

He knew that the destiny of thousands of fellow-Israelites might turn on the way he spoke in the next few minutes.

It is a good reminder to us that at any moment we can talk to God. There and then, standing in the presence of King Artaxerxes, Nehemiah was at the very footstool of heaven—trusting God to guide his words and meet his needs.

Nehemiah is a great example of what God wants in all of us—a heart for Him, people of prayer, and willingness to serve Him in whatever He asks.

Nehemiah was willing. When he shared with the king his desire for time off to repair the walls of Jerusalem he risked his very life.

With a finger-snap the king could have ordered the execution of Nehemiah. When the king asked what the problem was, Nehemiah gulped, said his silent prayer, and trusted God.

I. Nehemiah trusted God to provide:

1. Time.

Nehemiah 2:5-6(NIV) 5and I answered the king, “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it.” 6Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, “How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?” It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.

Nehemiah was valuable to the king. He was one of the most trusted and reliable in the king’s court. The king needed him. Yet he asked for time off to do the Lord’s work.

Time is the most valuable thing we have. Each of us is given all the time necessary to do the work God has for us.

There isn’t enough time to do all that we want to do. But when you cultivate your heart for God, and are willing to doing what He asks, He will take care of your time problem.

So stop being frantic and frazzled over your perceived lack of time. Put it in God’s hands. Time is a gift. Use it wisely. Someday there will be no more time.

In John 17, Jesus, just before He was arrested, prayed, “Father, the time has come . . . I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.”

Wouldn’t it be great to be able to say to God, “Father, in Your time I brought you glory. I completed the work you gave me.” We bring glory to God when we wisely use our time.

Commit your time to Him—you will discover: you will have time to earn a living, time for your family, for recreation, for rest, time to serve him, and even time to smell the roses.

2. Authority.

Nehemiah 2:7(NIV) I also said to him, “If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah?”

The audacity of this guy—first he asks for time off, then for letters for safe conduct as he travels to Jerusalem. When you are doing the Lord’s business, you can be boldly audacious.

Paul said, 2 Cor. 5:20, “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.”

As Christ’s ambassadors, we have the authority of God himself. Our Christian life comes from the cross of Jesus Christ.

Our message is the cross of Jesus Christ. Our commission comes from the living Savior. Do you see!—our authority is because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 28:18-20(NIV) 18Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

No ambassador would act in a way or say anything that would bring shame to his country? In the same way we are ambassadors under the authority of Jesus—let’s not abuse it or bring shame to His kingdom.

3. Resources.

Nehemiah 2:8(NIV) And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king’s forest, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?” And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests.

This guy just doesn’t know when to quit. The king is giving him time off; he’s given him kingly authority. Now he wants King Artaxerxes to provide the lumber to rebuild the gates--and to build Nehemiah a house.

There is a spiritual lesson here. When God gives us a job to do, whether as a church or in our personal lives, He will supply the resources to get the job done.

You might say, “Wait a minute. Nehemiah is doing everything. What do you mean God is supplying?” This is a common mistake.

Nehemiah himself said, “And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests” (v. 8b).

Nehemiah knew that he was simply God’s instrument. Even the king was God’s instrument, though he didn’t know it. Nehemiah put his life on the line for God. He went all the way—he didn’t hold anything back.

He didn't ask for just a little time off—he asked for the time needed to rebuild the walls, for authority, and resources—and trusted God for them.

Here's the key: God gives to every church the time, authority, and resources to accomplish His purposes. The question is what are we going to do with them?

II. Nehemiah trusted God to show the need.

Nehemiah 2:11-16(NIV) 11I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days 12I set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on. 13By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. 14Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; 15so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the Valley Gate. 16The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.

1. Nehemiah sees the ruins.

It's several months later. On the way to Jerusalem Nehemiah has ordered the lumber for the gates. Now he quietly comes to Jerusalem. He's never been there. He doesn't know what to expect. He hasn't told anyone why he's there.

Wisely, after resting three days, he sets out to see the ruins for himself. He goes on a nighttime inspection of the walls. He wants to see the ruins for himself.

Nehemiah's heart was broken again over the ruins of brick and mortar. It was important because Jerusalem was the place Jews came to worship God. It should be a place the world looked to with respect.

Our facilities should also demonstrate to our community how important our worship and Bible study are to us. What we do with our property is very important. It's important because of hurting people around us.

2. See hurting people.

Nehemiah's ruins were bricks. Our ruins are people who do not know Jesus Christ as their Savior; people who are hurting; people who need help in their difficulties.

Nehemiah was heart broken over the broken Holy City. God's heart is broken over lost and hurting people. Our hearts should reflect His.

God wants an obedient church willing to do whatever it takes to put people's ruined lives back together. God wants a church that understands its primary purpose is to proclaim the Gospel of the cross of Jesus Christ.

There are churches today that are more concerned about their image than they are in reaching their community for Christ. They simply see church as a place for social functions, and to marry and bury their own.

Nehemiah's drastic action teaches us that it matters what others think of us and of our faith. My prayer is that with the very best facilities that we possibly can have it will be a joy to come to and a joy to bring our guests.

III. Nehemiah took appropriate action.

Nehemiah 2:17-18(NIV) 17Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." 18I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.

The people of Jerusalem had lived with the ruins for over 100 years but had not really seen them. They lived with the ruins every single day, but had gotten used to them.

Nehemiah comes along and says, "Look, the condition of our city breaks God's heart. The Holy City is not very holy. It doesn't glorify God. Let's do something about it. God will give us success."

Our ruins are people. Do you see people who need Jesus Christ? You may think, "Well, most people I know seem to have it all together, at least as well as my family."

But the fact is, without Jesus Christ, no matter how together they seem they are lost. This is what God asks of us—to see the ruins and to do something about it.

The people of Jerusalem listened. Through Nehemiah's eyes they finally saw the ruins for themselves. In v. 18b their answer is, "Let us start rebuilding.' So they began this good work."

According to 6:15, "The wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days." Our walls are not falling. But we are surrounded by hurting and lost people.

We are all about Jesus—Jesus—Jesus.

Application:

Jesus has given us the time, the authority, and the resources. He wants us to see hurting people in our city and say, "Let's start building." The secret of success in Jesus' eyes is to trust and obey Him as we unite together to remodel our facility.