

## SEEING THE NEED AND TAKING ACTION

TEXT: (Nehemiah 2:1-9, TLB)

<sup>1</sup> One day in April, four months later, as I was serving the king his wine <sup>2</sup> he asked me, “Why so sad? You aren’t sick, are you? You look like a man with deep troubles.” (For until then I had always been cheerful when I was with him.) I was badly frightened, <sup>3</sup> but I replied, “Sir, why shouldn’t I be sad? For the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins, and the gates have been burned down.”

<sup>4</sup> “Well, what should be done?” the king asked.

With a quick prayer to the God of heaven, <sup>5</sup> I replied, “If it please Your Majesty and if you look upon me with your royal favor, send me to Judah to rebuild the city of my fathers!”

<sup>6</sup> The king replied, with the queen sitting beside him, “How long will you be gone? When will you return?”

So it was agreed! And I set a time for my departure!

<sup>7</sup> Then I added this to my request: “If it please the king, give me letters to the governors west of the Euphrates River instructing them to let me travel through their countries on my way to Judah; <sup>8</sup> also a letter to Asaph, the manager of the king’s forest, instructing him to give me timber for the beams and for the gates of the fortress near the Temple, and for the city walls, and for a house for myself.”

And the king granted these requests, for God was being gracious to me.

<sup>9</sup> When I arrived in the provinces west of the Euphrates River, I delivered the king’s letters to the governors there. (The king, I should add, had sent along army officers and troops to protect me!)

## INTRODUCTION

1. “One of my fellow Jews named Hanani came to visit me with some men who had arrived from Judah. I took the opportunity to inquire about how things were going in Jerusalem.

‘How are they getting along—,’ I asked, ‘the Jews who returned to Jerusalem from their exile here?’

‘Well,’ they replied, ‘things are not good; the wall of Jerusalem is still torn down, and the gates are burned’” (Nehemiah 1:2-3, TLB).

2. “When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven” (Nehemiah 1:4, NIV).

## I. UNDERSTANDING THE NEED

## A. The Affliction of the People

1. "They said to me, 'Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire'" (Nehemiah 1:3, NIV).

## B. Taking Responsibility

1. "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:14-17, NIV).
2. "Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few'" (Matthew 9:37, NIV).

3. "Buy from me medicine to put on your eyes so you can truly see" (Revelation 3:18, NCV).
4. "You have a saying, 'Four more months till harvest.' But I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields ready for harvest now" (John 4:35, NCV).
5. "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:11-12, NIV).

#### C. The Walls of God's Kingdom Had to Be Built

1. "As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:4-5, NIV).
2. Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. ... Next to them, the people of Jericho built part of the wall, and Zaccur son of Imri built next to them.  
The sons of Hassenaah rebuilt the Fish Gate, laying its boards and setting its doors, bolts, and bars in place. Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, made repairs next to them. Meshullam son of Berekiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs next to Meremoth. And Zadok son of Baana made repairs next to Meshullam. The people from Tekoa made repairs next to them" (Nehemiah 3:1-5, NIV).

## II. WAITING ON GOD

### A. By Prayer and Fasting

1. "When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven" (Nehemiah 1:4, NIV).
2. "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31, KJV).
3. "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?... Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I" (Isaiah 58:7-9, NIV).

### B. For Time and Direction

1. "In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before; so the king asked me, 'Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart'" (Nehemiah 2:1-2, NIV).
2. "The king said to me, 'What is it you want?'" (Nehemiah 2:4, NIV).
3. "I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut" (Revelation 3:8, NIV).

## C. The Value of Waiting

1. "For the rest of you who are in mixed marriages—Christian married to non-Christian—we have no explicit command from the Master. So this is what you must do. If you are a man with a wife who is not a believer but who still wants to live with you, hold on to her. If you are a woman with a husband who is not a believer but he wants to live with you, hold on to him. The unbelieving husband shares to an extent in the holiness of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is likewise touched by the holiness of her husband. Otherwise, your children would be left out; as it is, they also are included in the spiritual purposes of God" (I Corinthians 7:12-14, MSG).

## III. ORGANIZING FOR WORK

## A. A Careful Survey of the Task

1. "By 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. Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the Valley Gate" (Nehemiah 2:13-15, NIV).

## B. Nehemiah Cast a Vision

1. "I 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" (Nehemiah 2:18, NIV).

## CONCLUSION:

1. "Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (John 4:35, NIV).

## Questions:

1. Where are you spiritually, both individually and as a family?
2. Has complacency set in your life, your thinking, and/or your behaving?
3. What kind of a revival would you like to see in your life, the life of your family, and in your church?
4. Would you be willing to set aside some time just for prayer and fasting?
5. Talk with your family, what is one thing you can do to move in the direction of renewal and revival?