

Nehemiah 2:1-8

¹In 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. ²And 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. ³I 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?" ⁴Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵And 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." ⁶And 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. ⁷And 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, ⁸and 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." And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.

1. Nehemiah is patient

- *What is Patience?*
 - Dealing with delay without complaint

- *How does Nehemiah exhibit patience?*
 - The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the capital (Nehemiah 1:1)
 - Chislev – November/December
 - 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. (Nehemiah 2:1)
 - Nisan – March/April
 - Between Nehemiah 1:1 and Nehemiah 2:1 four months have passed.

- *Why is patience so important?*
 - Our timetable and God's timetable often conflict
 - God's timetable is always the one that it is best
 - Many times, what we don't see is that God has a reason for asking us to wait
 - God may ask us to wait as he prepares us
 - God may ask us to wait as he prepares the circumstances
 - And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Hebrews 6:11-12)
 - "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth (Psalm 46:10)
 - But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. (Lamentations 3:21-26)

2. Nehemiah is bold

- *What is Boldness?*
 - Not hesitating in the face of danger/difficulty (courageous)

- *How does Nehemiah exhibit boldness?*
 - Who is Nehemiah?
 - Cupbearer to the king (servant to the king)
 - Who is he asking for help?
 - The king of Persia, Artaxerxes
 - The king has the power of life and death over Nehemiah
 - What is Nehemiah asking for?
 - Send me to Jerusalem
 - Give me authority
 - Give me materials
 - If the king doesn't like what Nehemiah asks, what happens?
 - Death
 - See God's hand working: not only does the king grant Nehemiah's request but also gives him army officers and a cavalry troop (Nehemiah 2:9)

- *Two Misconceptions About Boldness*
 - Boldness is not recklessness
 - There is a difference between being stupid and being bold
 - Nehemiah does not act recklessly
 - Nehemiah waits for the right time
 - Nehemiah lets God set the stage
 - Nehemiah has prepared with prayer
 - Nehemiah has planned with prayer
 - Boldness does not mean being offensive
 - There is a significant difference in being offended by our boldness and being offended by us
 - Being bold may be often be offensive, but boldness doesn't mean you do your best to offend.
 - Look at Nehemiah's words:
 - How does he address the king? With respect, "let the king live forever"
 - How does he refer to his city? Not by name but by emotional attachment, "the place of my father's graves"
 - How does he ask? Respectfully, "if it pleases the king"

- *Why is boldness important in the building of God's city?*
 - What good is it if God opens the door and we refuse to walk through it?
 - Exodus 14 – Crossing of the Red Sea
 - Wait: "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent." (Exodus 14:13-14)
 - The LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. (Exodus 14:15)

The Heart of the Matter

- At the heart of Nehemiah's patience and boldness is a deep seated faith in the "God of heaven"
 - Faith is a commonly used Christian word
 - We often treat faith as if it is another word for agreement. It's not.
 - Faith is agreement in action
 - "Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace. It is so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times." Martin Luther
 - Nehemiah isn't patient or bold because of his goodness and strength but because he has placed his trust in "the God of heaven"
 - Vs. 2 – I was very much afraid
 - Vs. 4 – So I prayed to the God of heaven
 - Vs. 8 – For the good hand of my God was upon me
 - He's not doing this on his own, he's doing these things with the strength God provides
 - And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6)
 - ¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)
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- Nehemiah's faith in God is evidenced by his patience
 - Nehemiah's faith in God is evidenced by his boldness

The Heart of the Matter

- Nehemiah's patience comes from his dependence on God
- Nehemiah's boldness is given by God
 - See verse 4
- Nehemiah's success is attributed to God
 - See verse 8