

Resilient Rebuilders 3: Seeking God When the Walls are Down

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Intro

Nehemiah 2:1-11 NASB 2020

And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine *was* before him, and I picked up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. So the king said to me, “Why is your face sad, though you are not ill? This is nothing but sadness of heart.” Then I was very much afraid. And I said to the king, “May the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the site of my fathers’ tombs, is desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?” Then the king said to me, “What would you request?” So I prayed to the God of heaven. Then I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, *I request* that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.” Then the king said to me, with the queen sitting beside him, “How long will your journey be, and when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time. And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, let letters be given me for the governors *of the provinces* beyond the River, so that they will allow me to pass through until I come to Judah, and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, so that he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the

citadel which is by the temple, for the wall of the city, and for the house to which I will go.” And the king granted *them* to me because the good hand of my God *was* on me.

Then I came to the governors *of the provinces* beyond the *Euphrates* River and gave them the king’s letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. And when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard *about it*, it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel.

So I came to Jerusalem and was there for three days. When George Mueller started his orphanage, he had no idea how he was going to feed the children. He relied on donations, and those can often be fickle as we know. But God wanted to teach George that it was not his donors whom he was beholden to, but rather to a good God who had lead him to this place. The first night in which George had ran out of funds and had nothing to feed the kids, he resolved to go to God in prayer and it is not long after he had gone to the Lord in prayer that there was a knock at the door and someone there whom the Lord had prompted to deliver food to the orphanage.

God answers the prayers of His beloved children. He loves to do so but do we act as if He does? Some of us are far too quick to give up, as if we don’t really believe that God comes through for His children. Others of us are far too

content with where we are, so we don't ask God for anything. Others take God for granted and act as spoiled children rather than seeking after His will in prayer. What we need to know for certain today, is that God answers the prayers of His children in His timing and in His way, but really prayer is more about shaping us and our character than it is about us moving God. The Lord will always accomplish His will, so why would He wait for us to get on board with Him before moving on something? The only reason I see, is that our Father delights in bringing us into His work and so He calls us to join Him in prayer so that our hearts will be in concert with His. If we are to rebuild what is broken in our times, it starts with us being a people of prayer seeking to restore the ground around us which has been tainted or lost.

Truth

I. Resilient rebuilders have learned to wait on the Lord.

Nehemiah 2:1-3 NASB 2020

And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine *was* before him, and I picked up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. So the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, though you are not ill? This is nothing but sadness of heart." Then I was very much afraid. And I said

to the king, “May the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the site of my fathers’ tombs, is desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?”

- Nehemiah waited four months for the Lord to answer.
- He began fasting and praying in Chislev, and received his answer in Nisan.
- When was the last time you prayed for an extended period of time for something you believe the Lord wanted to do?
- James we don’t have because we don’t ask, so why do we give up so easily or pray weak prayers?
- To be sure, God loves us and is moved by His
- Some scholars believe that this month in the Jewish calendar corresponded with the season of the Persian New Year which would have made this a festive time for bringing out the best of wines.
- Nehemiah was afraid for a variety of reasons.
- One, it was not a good idea for a court official to be sad at the King’s party.
- Remember how quickly a previous King had banished his wife simply because she refused to come? Persian kings did not mess around.
- Two, Nehemiah knew that he was about to make a huge request before the king which could easily have been refused, and he could have been punished if the king was in a sour mood.
- The Lord always answers our prayers which are aligned with His will, but He does so in His timing, not ours.

- Resiliency shows up in prayer, when we trust in God, continue to seek His will even when we don't seem to hear from Him, and when we don't give up.
- There are many Christians who have weak prayer lives simply because they give up far too easily and they expect far too little from God.
- These are signs of weak faith, but strong faith endures in all circumstances. Remember the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18.

1 John 5:14–15 NASB 2020

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us *in* whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

Isaiah 40:31 NASB 2020

Yet those who wait for the LORD

Will gain new strength;

They will mount up *with* wings like eagles,

They will run and not get tired,

They will walk and not become weary.

II. Resilient rebuilders know to pray at all times.

Nehemiah 2:4 NASB 2020

Then the king said to me, “What would you request?” So I prayed to the God of heaven.

- What is our natural response to various events throughout a day?
- Some fret, some dismiss them and try to forget, resilient rebuilders pray.
- It is in our daily concert of prayer and our practice of being engaged with the Lord at all times, where we learn to respond quickly to prayer when adversity, fear, or doubt arises.

Ephesians 6:18 NASB 2020

With every prayer and request, pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be alert with all perseverance and every request for all the saints,

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 NASB 2020

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

III. Resilient rebuilders are bold because their faith is in God.

Nehemiah 2:5–8 NASB 2020

Then I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, *I request* that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.” Then the king said to me, with the queen sitting beside him, “How long will your journey be, and when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time. And I said to the king, “If it pleases the

king, let letters be given me for the governors *of the provinces* beyond the River, so that they will allow me to pass through until I come to Judah, and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, so that he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which is by the temple, for the wall of the city, and for the house to which I will go." And the king granted *them* to me because the good hand of my God *was* on me.

- To be effective Christians in this broken world we must know that it is God who will bring about any god result for us.
- Some out there have fallen into a worldly mindset, that it is somehow our effort, or level of faith as if faith were some sort of force like in star wars which moves God.
- We do not move God so much as God moves us into alignment with Him, and then He acts through us.
- To be sure, God loves us and His heart is moved by His love for us, but in His love for us He moves us towards Him for our good and His glory.
- The best good for us, is that we will be moved towards the heart of God in all things in our lives.
- When we are certain that a prayer we pray is according to God's will and purpose, we can pray with a great deal of boldness. We can always be certain that God will bring about His will.
- Nehemiah was quick to acknowledge God, because He knew the answered prayer and favor from the king was absolutely the hand of God.

IV. Resilient rebuilders are opposed by those who are in opposition to God.

Nehemiah 2:9–11 NASB 2020

Then I came to the governors *of the provinces* beyond the *Euphrates* River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. And when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard *about it*, it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel.

So I came to Jerusalem and was there for three days.

- Men have always resisted the will of God because worldly people who are born of Adam feel that their own sovereignty is threatened by the presence of a Sovereign God.
- Men resist us not because they don't like us, but because we are with God and they are threatened by Him.
- We would do well to remember that opposition to us does not always mean that we are barking up the wrong tree but often it means we are barking up precisely the right tree.
- Of course as Peter wrote, we want to be sure that we are persecuted for doing good and not for participating with evil.
- Some Christians act like jerks and then call it persecution when they are resisted. Rather than bowing up, they need

to repent and return to Christ.

2 Timothy 3:12 NASB 2020

Indeed, all who want to live in a godly way in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Luke 12:49–53 NASB 2020

“I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished! Do you think that I came to provide peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division; for from now on five *members* in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

John 3:18–21 NASB 2020

The one who believes in Him is not judged; the one who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light, so that his deeds will not be exposed. But the one who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds will be revealed as having been performed in God.”

Gospel Application

Because God is good and because He loves us, we can be certain that He is indeed waiting to answer every good prayer that we pray. We are His children whom He sent Christ to die for. If He did not spare His only son but crushed Him in our place, how will He not now care for our every need?

We have confidence in prayer not because of who we are but because of Who God is and who we are now in Him.

So what do you want God to do for you?

What do we want God to do for our church?

What do we want God to do in our world?

I think that God wants to rebuild what is broken in the house of God in our times, but it starts with His people coming to Him in bold, faith oriented prayer.