

Nehemiah 2

King James Version (KJV)

2 And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. (Nisan is another name for the first month of the year <Abib> – our April)

² Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, (The king was intimidating by the fact that he wielded the power of life and death over the people. People were expected to be of good cheer before the king)

³ And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? (Let the king live for ever – is a greeting of respect to the king. He is explaining why he is sad – because of the present state of Jerusalem)

⁴ Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. (Always a good idea – ask God before you speak – especially before the king)

⁵ And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. (Rebuild and repair the city and the walls and the many gates)

⁶ And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. (This queen may have been Ester – of the Book of Ester, but it is not known for sure. Ester was a heathen queen of the time. She was not of Israel)

⁷ Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah; (Written permission from the king would give Nehemiah credentials before the people of the region)

⁸ And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the

house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me. (Nehemiah will need the king's resources to repair Jerusalem. It had been greatly damaged by Babylon)

⁹Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me. (This was a dangerous area to travel at that time. Nehemiah was escorted by the king's guard. The king had respect for him)

¹⁰When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. (Sanballat was a Moabite of Horon, appointed as governor of Samaria by the king. Moab and Ammon did not want to see Jerusalem rebuilt. They would do everything they could to delay or stop it)

¹¹So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. (The journey took 3 to 4 months on foot. He rested 3 days when he got there)

¹²And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.

¹³And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. (He secretly surveyed the damage to the city before announcing his plan to rebuild it) (The dragon well = the well of Gihon)

(Today, this is also good advice to Christians in a world that is mostly anti-Christian. If you have plans to help in God's Word, keep it to yourself until you are ready to execute your plan; or Satan will try to undo it before you can even start)

¹⁴Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. (There was too much debris for the animal to pass)

¹⁵Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned.

¹⁶ And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.

¹⁷ Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. (A reproach to the surrounding cities and tribes; Jerusalem was a broken down, polluted slum) Jeremiah-24:9

(Under King David, Jerusalem was the pride of Israel. After centuries of perversion and idolatry, without God's blessings, it became a warning to other people and a reproach to all who saw it)

¹⁸ Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. (A letter from the king went a long way in motivating the people. It also put the surrounding people on notice that the king had approved this)

¹⁹ But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? (These are heathen people that had moved into Samaria after the Assyrians destroyed it. They had no faith in God, nor did they care. They were trying to stir up trouble and division)

²⁰ Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem. (Never back down to bullies and nay-sayers. Be proud to serve God)