

## RESTORATION Nehemiah 2

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." I was very much afraid, but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"

The king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and 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." Then 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. 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? 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. So I went to the governors of Trans-euphrates and gave them the king's letters... I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days I 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.

By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem... Finally, I turned back and reentered through the Valley Gate. The 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.

Then 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." 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.

## Questions for further study...

1. Spend some time talking about when you have felt God leading you very clearly. Try and think about how you knew that it was God leading. Read John 10:27- how does this work out in practice?
2. Read Psalm 27:14, 37:7, 38:15 and Isaiah 30:18. What do these verses tell us about waiting? We will often have periods where we are waiting before God. What can we learn from the story of Nehemiah about waiting? Are any of you waiting for something specific at the moment?
3. Nehemiah was deeply moved when he heard the news about Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:4). Often our passions give us a clue about the areas God wants us to serve in. We are all different (1 Corinthians 12:14), spend some time reflecting on your gifts and passions. You might want to share these thoughts with others or ask others what they think your gifts are.
4. Nehemiah had a time of *appraising the situation* before he came up with a detailed plan of restoration (Nehemiah 2:11-16). As we look at sharing the good news in the Totton area, how can we *appraise the surrounding area* as a church / small group / individual?
5. Look at Nehemiah 2:17-18. The reaction of the inhabitants of Jerusalem was to 'Go for it'! Now look at Numbers 13:26-33- the reaction of some of those who surveyed the scene in Canaan was very different! What has your reaction been to the vision of doubling here at church (it might be somewhere in between!)?
6. Vision is often described as a seed that needs to be nurtured before it becomes a fully grown fruit-producing tree. Look at 1 Corinthians 3:6-7. Spend some time in prayer for each other, your small group and the wider church as we look to God to 'make things grow'.

**Have a great week!**