

*Series: Rebuild; Sermon: Take Courage*  
*delivered by Josh Moody, senior pastor, on October 25, 2020*

***Bible text explored: Nehemiah 2:1–8***

<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>And 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. <sup>3</sup>I 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?” <sup>4</sup>Then the king said to me, “What are you requesting?” So I prayed to the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup>And 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.” <sup>6</sup>And 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. <sup>7</sup>And 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, <sup>8</sup>and 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. [ESV]

***Review and application:***

*Nehemiah had learned of Jerusalem’s precarious situation early in the winter, and prayed “day and night” for some four months for divine intervention and guidance. Then, summoned to fill his cupbearer role, he gained personal access to King Artaxerxes and his queen.*

1. Given this opportunity (*verses 1-2*), why would the king’s question have terrified Nehemiah?  
Without denying his agitation, how (*verse 3*) does Nehemiah affirm his loyalty? (See *Daniel 2:4*.)  
How does he describe the source of his grief in terms with which a pagan monarch could identify?
2. Consider the advice of former Wheaton College president V. Raymond Edman: “Never doubt in the dark what God has told you in the light.”  
Am I listening to truth about God rather than listening to my fears?
3. Why (*verse 4*) does Nehemiah shoot an “arrow prayer” up to God after the king’s initially sympathetic response?  
Why might the king well oppose the plan he was about to propose? (See *Ezra 4:17-22*.)
4. What does the king’s response (*verse 6*) tell you about the power of Nehemiah’s “arrow prayer”?  
The time-frame Nehemiah proposed isn’t disclosed, but how long did his new vocation take before he returned to Persia? (See *Nehemiah 5:14*.)
5. What prudent plans (*verses 7-8a*) had Nehemiah prepared . . .  
. . . for passage through hostile areas of the province Beyond the River?  
. . . for essential construction materials?

6. What did Nehemiah credit for the king's willingness to revoke his own previous decree?

Am I praying for God's hand of blessing to be on Christians serving in the government or armed forces in our state and nation?