

Defeating Discouragement

Nehemiah 2:1-8

Nehemiah 2:1-8 (NASB)

¹“And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine *was* before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence.

²So the king said to me, “Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart.” Then I was very much afraid.

³I said to the king, “Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?”

⁴Then the king said to me, “What would you request?” So, I prayed to the God of heaven.

⁵I said to the king, “If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it.”

⁶Then the king said to me, 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.

⁷And I said to the king, “If it please the king, let letters be given me for the governors *of the provinces* beyond the River, that they may allow me to 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 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.”

Discouragement can rob peace, joy, and contentment. But I have great news if you feel disheartened: You need not be stuck!

I've known people who appeared to be in impossible situations. A few years later, however, they were in a terrific place, either in terms of their circumstances or their emotions. The reason? They never gave up. Instead of sulking in self-pity, they chose to believe God and step out in faith. In that way, they did not remain entrenched in an emotional pit.

Nehemiah is a good example. He had every reason to feel defeated, because his people were in trouble. After receiving news that the city wall had been destroyed, this man of God acknowledged profound disappointment and grieved. Yet doing so was risky, because sadness in the presence of royalty was punishable by death.

Though pain flooded his soul, Nehemiah didn't allow himself to stay in that low place. Instead, he cried out to God for direction. And the Lord answered with amazing power, prompting the king to notice his servant's sad countenance and then to ask what he could do to help. This miracle led to the rebuilding of the wall and the redemption of God's people.

The Lord can take an impossible situation—no matter what it is—and move in ways mightier than you can imagine. Do you live in eager expectation of what the Lord will do? Or have you chosen to linger in the depths of despair? Like Nehemiah, turn your disappointment into a petition for God's help. He can restore your hope and prevent negative emotions from gaining a stranglehold on your life.