

The Humility of a Godly Leader

Nehemiah 2: 1-8

In the previous chapter, Nehemiah was made aware of the desperate situation in Jerusalem. While he was far removed from the city and the difficulties facing the remnant who had returned, Nehemiah was deeply burdened for the needs of the city and the people of Judah.

In our text today, some time had passed since Nehemiah heard the news from Jerusalem. Nehemiah's burden for the city had grown stronger and he is determined to personally address the need. His prayer unto the Lord had not fallen on deaf ears or gone unheeded. God was about to present Nehemiah with the opportunity to return to Jerusalem and carry out the work He had placed within his heart.

As we will discover within the text, there were still a couple of hurdles that Nehemiah must overcome in order to return to Jerusalem and begin the restoration of the walls. The hurdles before him would require humility, patience, and tact. Nehemiah was certain of the burden God had given for Jerusalem, but he also realized he must approach the situation carefully in order to be granted permission to return.

While the situations before us are different, godly leaders must possess humility, patience, and tact, just like Nehemiah. How we approach any situation, and the attitude we possess, will greatly affect our ability to lead and enjoy success. As we examine the [commitments of Nehemiah](#), I want to consider: [The Humility of a Godly Leader](#).

I. He is Patient (1) – [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.](#) If you recall, the book of Nehemiah began in the month of Chis-leu, during the twentieth year of Artaxerxes' reign. It is now the month, Nisan, of the same year. Some four months have passed since Nehemiah first got the news of the devastation in Jerusalem. During this time, although unable to return to Jerusalem, Nehemiah was not idle. No doubt, he continued to pray about the great need and waited patiently for the Lord to open the door for his return.

- The text reveals that Nehemiah had taken the wine to set before the king. Many scholars argue that there would have been several cupbearers in service to Artaxerxes. Nehemiah was well aware of the customs and procedures within the palace. It would not have been wise to have entered the king's presence uninvited or during a time when he was not scheduled to serve the king. During those four months, Nehemiah remained patient, knowing the Lord had burdened his heart for Jerusalem and that He would orchestrate his return in His sovereign time and will.

➤ Godly leaders who serve with humility must learn patience in order to be effective. Many times, the Lord provides the burden in advance of engaging in the task. Effective godly leaders will learn to patiently wait upon the Lord and His timing, rather than rushing into the task unprepared, getting ahead of the Lord. We must learn to trust the Lord, waiting for Him to open the door to begin the task He has called us to, while using that time to pray and prepare our hearts for the work. [Ecc.7:8 – Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.](#) [Col.1:10-11 – That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;](#) ¹¹ [Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.](#)

II. He is Persistent (2-4) – Once Nehemiah got the chance to serve the king again, he was faced with a dilemma that could have resulted in a difficult and dangerous situation. The cupbearer was a trusted servant, one who sampled the king's meals prior to serving the king. To come before the king with a sad or unusual countenance raised suspicion, causing concern for the king. Although afraid, Nehemiah knew he had to present his request to the king. He boldly asked, "Why should my countenance not be sad when the city where his fathers are buried lays in ruin?"

➤ Nehemiah could have abandoned his request before even mentioning it to the king once he realized the king was aware of his emotional state. However, Nehemiah was burdened for Jerusalem and he was persistent in fulfilling the task God had given him. We too must be committed to fulfilling the work we have received. If you notice, when confronted by the king, Nehemiah prayed to the God of heaven. He trusted the Lord and walked by faith. Many of God's choice servants needed persistence in their walk with Him – Abraham, Moses, David, Jeremiah, etc. We too must walk by faith, trusting the Lord to provide for us, equipping us to perform the work He has called us to engage.

III. He is Prudent (5, 7) – Twice in these verses, we find Nehemiah saying, "[If it please the king.](#)" Nehemiah was wise and humble as he dealt with the king. Although he was confident of the Lord's call and provision, Nehemiah also realized the benefit of appeasing the suspicion and uneasiness of the king. He did not come before the king with a list of demands, expecting the king to provide without question. He was tactful in his approach and conversation with the king. God was more than able to provide for Nehemiah, but it is clear that God had chosen to use Artaxerxes to provide the credentials and resources Nehemiah needed to be successful.

➤ Effective godly leaders are wise in their approach and dealings with others. Those in positions of leadership may have the authority to demand certain things, but they realize the benefit of cooperation and teamwork. One trait is always true of leaders – they have followers. In order to be the type of leader others are willing to follow, the leader must deal wisely with those they lead.

Respect, compassion, and dignity are needed if one is to convince others to follow their lead. Godly leaders are more concerned with the work being accomplished for the glory of God than their recognition in leadership. Effective godly leaders will make those they lead feel needed and affirm their contributions to the task at hand.

IV. He is Confident (6-8a) – Following his prayer unto the Lord for favor with Artaxerxes, Nehemiah possessed a bold confidence. He must have been convinced the Lord was at work in the heart of the king and Nehemiah requested all the credentials and resources he would need for the journey and the task ahead. It was certainly no coincidence that Nehemiah had served all those years as the king's cupbearer. Long before the Lord revealed His plan to Nehemiah, God was preparing Nehemiah for the task at hand. His service to the king would provide the social and political wisdom needed for such a task in Jerusalem. Nehemiah was not arrogant about his position and calling, but he was boldly confident in the Lord and in His ability to provide.

➤ There is no greater task than that which the church has received. We are called to take the gospel of Christ to the world. The Lord could have chosen any other means, and yet he chose to use mankind, those redeemed and added to the body of Christ to fulfill His great commission. While the task before us is enormous, we can face it with bold confidence in the Lord. He has called and He will provide all we need to serve at His leisure.

➤ For those God has chosen to lead others, (and by definition – leaders are those who influence others,) most within the church are leaders, and we can lead with confidence in the Lord's calling and His provision for the task ahead. That doesn't mean that we are arrogant or degrading toward others, but that we lead with a bold confidence that reveals our faith in the Lord. We serve one who owns it all and has the power to sway the hearts and minds of men. We can face the task before us with confidence, leading those who follow with the assurance of God's provision. [Psalms 20:7 – Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.](#) [2 Cor.3:5 – Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.](#) [Phil.1:6 – Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.](#)

V. He is Reverent (8b) – [And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.](#) This statement sums up everything we have discussed today. Nehemiah declared that the king granted all his request because of the good hand of God upon him. While Nehemiah had become a trusted, loyal servant of the king, the provision he had received was not because of Nehemiah or his loyalty – this was all accomplished through the sovereign provision of God. Nehemiah acknowledged the hand of God in his life. Were it not for the Lord, the king would not have granted Nehemiah's request and Jerusalem would remain in disarray.

➤ I am certainly thankful for good, godly leaders who have impacted my life. They have enjoyed great success in ministry. Some have experienced enormous growth that is evident for others to see, while some have served without the visual evidence and yet made a tremendous impact on others. Regardless, all of the success one finds in ministry is due to the good hand of God. Great leaders are effective because of God's hand upon their lives. If you or I see any accomplishment in the work we are engaged, it is always because of the grace and provision of God. He alone is worthy of the praise and the glory. He chooses to work through vessels of clay, but it is He who accomplishes the work through these vessels of clay. Effective godly leaders are aware of the good hand of God in their lives and are quick to acknowledge His grace and provision. [Gal.2:20 – I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.](#)

Conclusion: I hope you see the benefit of being committed to the cause of Christ and developing effective godly leaders. These will be those who lead in humility. We have been called to a great task, and yet if we walk with the Lord, we are assured of His good hand upon us. Are there needs in your life today? Are you trying to serve the Lord within your own strength? Maybe you need to come and seek His wisdom as you walk among the world while striving to influence others for Christ.

Do you know Christ as your personal Savior? He presented the greatest example of humble leadership in all of Scripture. He equipped others to lead in His absence, following His death on the cross for our sin. Come to Him today in repentance and faith if you are yet unsaved!