

WITH PATIENCE

“And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests.” —NEHEMIAH 2:8

The starting point of any meaningful response to something tragic is that we are broken by it. In Nehemiah’s tears and mourning over the city of Jerusalem left in ruins, he was letting go of the guard around his heart and allowing the truth to tap into the deepest core of his being. Compelled to take action, there were two things he did first; he aligned himself with God and waited upon Him.

Nehemiah wasn’t in full time ministry. In fact, most of the leading characters of the Old Testament simply lived in an intimate relationship with God. Though Nehemiah held the important position of cupbearer to the King of Susa, the capital of Persia, he identifies with his people in Jerusalem, and says, “For some days, I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven” (Nehemiah 1:4).

When we carry a burden, it needs time to either grow or die, and time to discern whether it is from God. At first, we are caught up in all the emotion of what has taken place, but have not allowed God to take it deep within our hearts. When we do, He will either intensify the burden or remove it. Four months had lapsed since Nehemiah had first heard the news about Jerusalem left in ruins. In that time of prayer and mourning, he had aligned himself with God, and in doing so, the burden had deepened for him.

When Nehemiah approached the king, he says, “I was very much afraid,” but he discovered the king already knew something was amiss.

“Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill?” he asked. “This can be nothing but sadness of the heart.” To show any signs of melancholy around the king would have been unforgivable as they were shielded against anything unpleasant. But a burden that grows is a burden that shows, despite the risk.

In his patient prayer and waiting, Nehemiah was not only prepared to go before the king, but the timing was good as the king was prepared to hear him with an open heart. Nehemiah musters the courage and not only seeks permission to leave, but safe passage to Jerusalem and the materials needed to rebuild the city walls. He says, “Because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests.”

Though it may be high risk, aligning ourselves with God and waiting upon His timing and direction will lead to courageous obedience, and the consequences of our obedience will then rest in God’s hands.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, when I feel compelled to take action, grant me the patience to wait upon You. Make my will aligned with yours and help me to step out in faith.

TO REFLECT UPON: Do I rush into rectifying situations myself or am I patiently waiting upon the Lord?