

WEEK TWO

The King's Court: Faith & Risk

Nehemiah 2:1-10

The Scholar's Corner: Artaxerxes I Longimanus was the son of Xerxes (the King from the book of Esther). Rebuilding a city wall could be interpreted as a move toward rebellion against the empire, making Nehemiah's request a delicate political maneuver.

The Heart of the Matter: God uses the intersection of our "holy discontent" and our "vocation" to bring about change.

1. The Burden Revealed (vv. 1-3)

Four months of prayer culminate in a single moment. Royal etiquette demanded a cheerful face, so Nehemiah's sadness was a massive risk. He is "very much afraid" but proceeds with holy boldness.

2. The Arrow Prayer (v. 4)

When the King asks for his request, Nehemiah offers a split-second "arrow prayer." This shows that his season of fasting created a reflex of dependency on God.

3. The Prepared Plan (vv. 5-8)

Nehemiah's waiting was not passive. He had a logistics plan ready, requesting letters of safe conduct and a requisition for timber from the King's forest.

4. The Response (vv. 9-10)

God's "good hand" is evident as the King grants the requests. However, the arrival of a leader seeking the "welfare" (*tobah*) of Israel immediately causes Sanballat and Tobiah to become "displeased."

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Discussion Questions:

1. How do we handle the "waiting room" of God when answers don't come immediately?
2. How do we distinguish between fear that stops us and fear we must push through?
3. What is an "arrow prayer" you can use in your workplace this week?
4. How does being prepared show faith rather than a lack of it?
5. Why does seeking the "welfare" of God's people often invite opposition?