



## The Power of God Working Through Us



### *Something to Plant*

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly  
above all that we ask or think,  
according to the power that works in us.

—Ephesians 3:20

Read: Nehemiah 2:1-8

### **Pouring out Joy, Grieving with Purpose**

Imagine standing in the presence of a king, where every detail of your performance could mean the difference between favor and punishment. This is where Chapter 2 begins, with Nehemiah bringing wine to King Artaxerxes. This detail is rich with symbolism, as throughout Scripture we see that wine is often synonymous with joy and celebration.

As Nehemiah poured out the wine to serve the king, we catch a reflection of the Holy Spirit, who pours out the joy of the Lord into our hearts and sustains us through difficult seasons. Even Nehemiah himself was ordinarily joyful—a picture of the Holy Spirit, whose presence brings joy and peace. On this particular day, however, Nehemiah was grieving over the broken state of Jerusalem and the suffering of his people.

Just as the Holy Spirit intercedes for the burdens of our hearts (Romans 8:26), Nehemiah’s sadness reflects how the Spirit grieves over brokenness and moves us toward restoration. His countenance, typically marked by joy, revealed the depth of his burden and how God had placed this concern in his heart. This moment sets the stage for Nehemiah’s courageous request and reminds us that even in times of sorrow, the Spirit equips and leads us to fulfill God’s greater plan.



Joy and grief often co-exist in the life of a believer. According to Psalm 28:7, how does trusting in God bring strength and joy—even in seasons of sorrow?

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### **Courage is Acting Despite Our Fear**

Have you ever felt that lump in your throat when God nudges you to take a step of faith? It might be speaking up when it’s easier to stay quiet or taking on a challenge that feels far beyond your abilities. That’s fear talking. But here’s the truth: fear doesn’t have the final say—faith does.

Nehemiah’s actions in this chapter are a beautiful reminder of what courageous faith looks like. It’s about trusting God when everything in you wants to run the other way. Scripture tells us that Nehemiah was “very much

afraid,” but here’s the thing—he spoke to the king anyway. He pushed fear aside, stepped out in faith, and let God take it from there.

If you’re thinking that his role as a cupbearer to the king opened the door for Nehemiah to speak his mind, let me tell you—it didn’t. He was trusted to protect the king, but stepping outside of his duties to make a personal request could have cost him everything. His fear wasn’t irrational—it was real. The Persian court was not a place where one could speak freely without the risk of severe consequences. It took incredible courage, faith, and complete reliance on God to do what Nehemiah did.



What does Esther 4:11 reveal about the danger of approaching the king without being summoned?

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This chapter challenges us to reflect on the role fear plays in our lives and ask ourselves if it’s holding us back. Whether we live in a palace or a one story bungalow, we struggle with feelings of fear just the same. It tries to convince us that we’re not enough—that we’ll fail, get rejected, fall short, or get hurt. It bids us to step back when God is calling us to step forward. But, here’s the good news: while fear might shout the loudest, it doesn’t have the final word. Nehemiah’s decision to trust God reminds us of that. It teaches

us that faith has the power to silence our fear and give us the courage to press on despite how we might feel.

Let's remember, Nehemiah's story isn't just about rebuilding walls; it's about saying "yes" to God as He transforms us into the image of Christ. This process may not be easy—it takes strength to surrender old habits, patience to endure difficult trials, and courage to trust God when the road ahead is uncertain.

But if you don't step out in faith—if you don't take that bold step to say "yes" to God, to give up what He's asking of you, or to obey His Word even when it doesn't make sense—you're closing the door to His provision and power.



Can you think of a time when fear held you back from doing the right thing? What might it look like to trust God with that kind of situation today?

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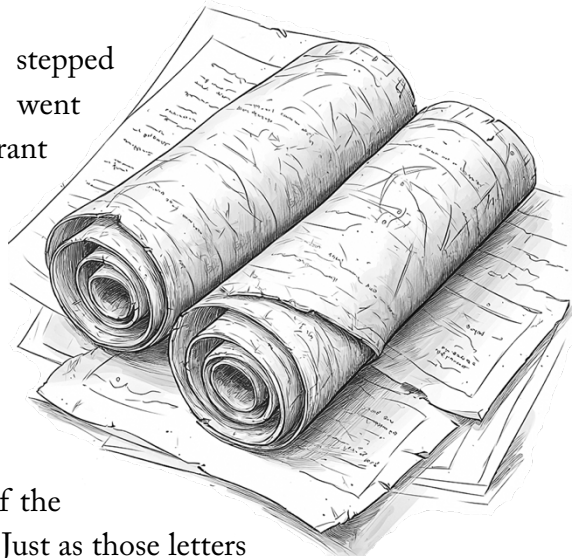


## *Something to Ponder*

Courage is not the absence of fear but the decision to trust God in the middle of it. Like Nehemiah, we're invited to act in faith—even when the outcome is uncertain and the cost feels high.

### **To Guide Protect and Equip**

Nehemiah prayed, prepared, and stepped forward in obedience—and God went before him. Not only did the king grant his request, but he also gave him letters that secured safe passage, protection, and access to the resources needed to rebuild. These letters weren't just formalities—they were visible signs of favor, authority, and provision.



In many ways, they remind us of the role Scripture plays in our own lives. Just as those letters equipped Nehemiah for the journey ahead, the Word of God equips us for every good work. It is our source of truth and confidence, inspired by the Spirit and given to guide, protect, and empower us to walk in His will (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).

But notice how Nehemiah didn't attribute his success to planning or persuasion. In verse 8 he says, "Because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests." His courage rested on this truth—God was with him, paving the way.

That same truth applies to us. When we align our steps with God's will, He is able to do far more than we can imagine. Fear may whisper that we're not ready, not strong enough, or not qualified—but fear has no power where

God is present. “The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

When God calls us to move, He goes before us. He prepares the way, softens hearts, and equips us with everything we need. We may not have royal letters in our hands, but we have something even greater: the presence of the Holy Spirit and the promises of God.

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*Fear may try its best to hold us back,  
but it's powerless in the presence of  
God.*

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Look up each of the following verses. Under each one, write down what they reveal about fear, courage, and God's presence.

- Joshua 1:9
- Deuteronomy 31:6
- Isaiah 41:10
- Psalm 27:1

- 2 Timothy 1:7
- Romans 8:31

Read: Nehemiah 2:9-20

### Prayer is Energized by the Power of God

As Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem, let's remember, his journey didn't begin with strategy or strength—it began with prayer. Matthew Henry compares Nehemiah to Jacob, noting that just as Jacob wrestled with God and prevailed (Genesis 32:22-31), Nehemiah wrestled in prayer before prevailing before men. He didn't rush ahead with plans or assume success was guaranteed. Instead, he mourned, fasted, and prayed for days, seeking God's guidance and favor. "For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven" (Nehemiah 1:4).

Nehemiah's prayer wasn't quick or convenient—it was persistent and sacrificial. Fasting often accompanies this kind of prayer throughout Scripture. It's a way of humbling ourselves before God, setting aside physical comfort to pursue spiritual clarity. Fasting reminds us that our deepest need isn't food, control, or solutions—it's God Himself.



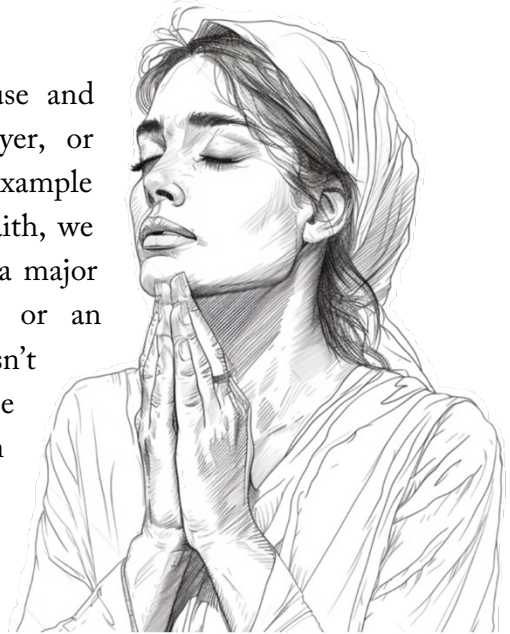
Look up the verses below. For each one, note:

Who fasted? How long did they fast? Why did they fast?

- Exodus 34:28
- 2 Samuel 12:16–18

- Esther 4:16
- Matthew 4:1–2
- Acts 13:2–3

Nehemiah’s story challenges us to pause and consider: Are we beginning with prayer, or rushing ahead in our own strength? His example reminds us that before we step out in faith, we must first kneel in prayer. Whether it’s a major life decision, a ministry opportunity, or an important meeting, our strength doesn’t come from our own wisdom but from time spent with God. Wrestling with God in prayer is more than a quick five-minute devotion—it’s seeking Him earnestly, surrendering our plans, and trusting Him to prepare the way for us.



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*Before we step out in faith,  
we must first kneel in prayer.*

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Use the space on the next page to write a personal prayer about something going on in your life right now. Maybe it’s a decision you’re facing, a burden you’re carrying, or a praise that’s been on your heart. Whatever it is, bring it before the Lord and trust Him to meet you there.



James 5:16 tells us, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." The phrase "powerful and effective" in this verse relates directly to the word *energeó*, which emphasizes the active, dynamic power of prayer. It comes from the same root word as "energy," which refers to an active force in our life. The same word is often used to describe God's active power at work in believers. For example, in Philippians 2:13, we read, "For it is God who works (*energeó*) in you to will and to act according to His good purpose." Think of it as a windmill powered by a strong and steady wind. On its own, the windmill is motionless, but when the wind blows, its blades turn, generating enough electricity to light an entire community. In the same way, prayer is energized by the power of God.



Can you think of a time when you rushed ahead instead of beginning with prayer? Or on the flip side of that—can you think of a time when you prayed first and saw God’s hand at work? What did you learn from either experience?

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## Examine Yourself, Test Yourself

Just as Nehemiah carefully examined the broken walls of Jerusalem, we are called to examine areas of brokenness in our lives, seeking God's wisdom and direction for restoration. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves." This self-examination is about aligning our hearts and actions with God's will. It invites us to look closely at where we've fallen short and to seek God's guidance to rebuild our lives on the foundation of His truth.

Nehemiah's inspection of Jerusalem's walls reflects the journey of spiritual renewal. We're going to talk about the symbolism behind these gates a little more in the next chapter, but before we get there, I want you to notice something important here. In verse 14, Nehemiah says, "Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through."

- **The Fountain Gate** can be seen as a symbol of the work of the Holy Spirit. Just as a fountain provides fresh, life-giving water, the Holy Spirit refreshes and renews us, empowering us to live godly lives (John 7:38-39). This gate's significance reminds us of our need to rely on the Spirit's work in us, rather than our own strength.
- **The King's Pool** symbolizes God's authority and blessing. Water often represents abundance and provision in Scripture, and as the King's Pool was likely a reservoir for sustaining the city, it points to God as the ultimate source of provision and the One who reigns over our lives.

These areas were inaccessible—not because they weren't there, but because something was in the way. His inability to move forward emphasizes the importance of repentance as we turn away from the sin that hinders our walk with God and the flow of the Holy Spirit within us. Sin obstructs the pathways of renewal and blessing, and it is only through repentance that we make room for God's Spirit to move freely in our lives.



• This idea of restoration connects beautifully with 2  
• Corinthians 13:11, where Paul encourages believers to  
• “*strive for restoration,*”

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*Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice!  
Strive for full restoration, encourage one another,  
be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of  
love and peace will be with you.*

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• And Hebrews 12:1, which exhorts us to “throw off  
• everything that hinders” and sin that entangles us,

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*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a  
great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off  
everything that hinders and the sin that so easily  
entangles. And let us run with perseverance the  
race marked out for us.*

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• Restoration isn’t passive—it requires intentional effort,  
• humility, and dependence on God. In our personal  
• lives, striving for restoration might look like:

- Addressing conflict with a loved one
- Seeking forgiveness where we’ve hurt others
- Renewing a spiritual practice we’ve allowed to lapse

• In our ministries, it could involve:

- Reestablishing unity
- Rekindling passion for service
- Refocusing on God’s mission

• Through God’s wisdom and grace, what is broken can  
• be rebuilt.



After David sinned with Bathsheba, he cried out to God. According to Psalm 51:10–12, what three things did he ask for?

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Is there an area of brokenness in your life that you feel God is calling you to rebuild? What are some steps you can take toward restoration?

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If the world  
**HATES** you  
keep in mind that  
it hated me first...

AS IT IS, YOU DO NOT BELONG  
TO THE WORLD, BUT I HAVE  
**CHOSEN**  
you out of the world.  
THAT IS WHY THE WORLD  
HATES YOU.

-John 15:18-19

## Opposition is an Opportunity to Grow

Have you ever felt like you were under attack for your faith, your convictions, or your work for the Lord? If so, you're not alone. Nehemiah faced immediate opposition from Sanballat, Tobiah, and others as he stepped out in faith to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. The Bible tells us,

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*"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you" -John 15:18-19*

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It's no coincidence that the enemy rises against us the moment we step out in faith. When Jesus began His ministry, He was immediately tempted in the wilderness. When Moses confronted Pharaoh to lead Israel out of slavery, resistance only intensified. After Paul was converted, he faced persecution from the very people he once stood among. And once again, we see the enemy working against the Lord's plans as the Jews are mocked and ridiculed by Sanballat and Tobiah.

Nehemiah's story is a powerful reminder that when we step out in obedience to God, we can expect opposition. The enemy tries to discourage, distract, and dissuade us when we're pursuing God's will.

But here's the thing—opposition can be viewed in one of two ways: either as an obstacle that stands in our way, or as an opportunity to trust God more deeply. The way we choose to see it shapes how we respond—and how we grow. Like Nehemiah, we're called to stand firm in faith, trusting that God is with us in the battle. And remember, opposition might actually be confirmation that you're walking in step with God's will.

Joseph understood this truth when he told his brothers, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good" (Genesis 50:20). What man meant for evil, God used for good to accomplish His purposes. In the same way, God can use opposition as a means to refine our faith, giving us the

chance to depend on Him more fully and to witness His sovereign power work through us.



According to James 1:2–4, what do trials produce in us? And what is the result for those who endure them through faith?

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Nehemiah’s response to opposition is a beautiful testament to his faith and clarity of mission. He doesn’t argue, compromise, or allow the ridicule of his enemies to distract him. Instead, he points to the God of heaven as the source of success. This response reminds us that our confidence should never rest in our abilities, but in God’s power to accomplish His plans through us.



### *Something to Pray*

*Lord, help me to trust You more than I trust my fears. Give me the courage to step forward even when I feel unqualified or unsure.*

*Remind me that Your presence goes before me, that Your Word equips me, and that prayer is my greatest preparation.*

*Strengthen me to walk in faith today.*



## CHAPTER TWO

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**Joy and grief often co-exist in the life of a believer. According to Psalm 28:7, how does trusting in God bring strength and joy—even in seasons of sorrow?**

Trusting in God brings strength because He protects and supports us like a shield in battle; joy follows as we rest in His care.

**What does Esther 4:11 reveal about the danger of approaching the king without being summoned?**

Anyone who approached the king without being summoned could be put to death unless the king extended his gold scepter.

**Can you think of a time when fear held you back from doing the right thing? What might it look like to trust God with that kind of situation today?**

This answer will be different for everyone.

**Look up each of the following verses. Under each one, write down what they reveal about fear, courage, and God's presence:**

- **Joshua 1:9**  
God commands us to be strong and courageous because He is with us wherever we go.
- **Deuteronomy 31:6**  
We don't need to fear, because God will never leave or forsake us.
- **Isaiah 41:10**  
God strengthens, helps, and upholds us—so we don't have to be afraid.
- **Psalm 27:1**  
The Lord is our light and salvation, so we have no reason to fear.
- **2 Timothy 1:7**  
God gives us power, love, and self-discipline—not a spirit of fear.

- **Romans 8:31**

If God is for us, no one can stand against us.

Look up the verses below. For each one, note:

Who fasted? How long did they fast? Why did they fast?

- **Exodus 34:28**

*Who:* Moses

*How long:* 40 days and nights

*Why:* While receiving the words of the covenant from God

- **2 Samuel 12:16–18**

*Who:* David

*How long:* Several days

*Why:* He pleaded with God for his child's life

- **Esther 4:16**

*Who:* Esther and the Jews in Susa

*How long:* 3 days and nights

*Why:* Before Esther approached the king to plead for her people

- **Matthew 4:1–2**

*Who:* Jesus

*How long:* 40 days and nights

*Why:* As part of His preparation before beginning His public ministry

- **Acts 13:2–3**

*Who:* Church leaders in Antioch

*How long:* Not specified

*Why:* Seeking God's direction before sending out Barnabas and Saul

Can you think of a time when you rushed ahead instead of beginning with prayer? Or on the flip side of that—can you think of a time when you prayed first and saw God's hand at work? What did you learn from either experience?

This answer will be different for everyone.

After David sinned with Bathsheba, he cried out to God. According to Psalm 51:10–12, what three things did he ask for?

He asked God to:

1. Create a pure heart in him
2. Renew a steadfast spirit within him
3. Restore the joy of his salvation

Is there an area of brokenness in your life that you feel God is calling you to rebuild? What are some steps you can take toward restoration?

This answer will be different for everyone.

According to James 1:2–4, what do trials produce in us? And what is the result for those who endure them through faith?

Trials produce perseverance.

Those who endure become mature and complete, not lacking anything.