

It's On You

WORSHIP & WORD • A SERMON COMPANION

The responsibility is on you. The power comes from God.

Pastor Rich Saunders Jr. | Echo Church | October 25, 2026

Nehemiah 1:11; 2:5, 8, 13, 20 NKJV

ABOUT TODAY

We are still building. Last week we learned to build from conviction instead of for recognition. Today the message turns the camera around and points it at us, because before Nehemiah ever lifted a stone, God was dealing with the man. Here is the honest thing about most of us: we spend a lot of energy asking God to fix what is broken while quietly waiting for someone else to do something about it. We pray over the marriage, the family, the city, the ministry, and we wait. *But what happens when the God you are praying to has already handed you the position, the influence, and the resources to be part of the answer?* The responsibility is on you. But you were never asked to carry it without Him.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURES (NKJV)

Nehemiah 1:11 (Primary Text)

"O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer."

Nehemiah 2:5

"And I said to the king, If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."

Nehemiah 2:8

"...and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy. And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me."

Nehemiah 2:13

"And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire."

Nehemiah 2:20

"So I answered them, and said to them, The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."

Supporting: Nehemiah 1:3 through 4; 2:4, 12, 17 through 19

The responsibility is on you. The power to accomplish it comes from God.

God will not always remove the burden, because sometimes the burden is what moves us toward the responsibility.

INTRODUCTION: THE BURDEN BEFORE THE BUILDING

Nehemiah's story does not begin with construction. It begins with a conversation. He gets word that Jerusalem's walls are broken down and its gates burned, and that the people are living in distress and disgrace. And his first response is not excitement about a project. It is grief over the condition of the people. We often ask God to show us our purpose while overlooking the very things He has already allowed to trouble our hearts. Sometimes the thing that keeps bothering you is not something God wants you to complain about. It may be something He is inviting you to confront.

We must be very careful, because every burden is not automatically a divine assignment. What sets Nehemiah apart is that he brings his burden before God in sustained prayer, submits it to God's covenant promises, and only then takes responsible action. He does not rebuild independent of God, and he does not use his dependence on God as an excuse to do nothing. *You can spend your entire life asking God to change something He has already given you the responsibility to address.* Nehemiah never receives a recorded command from Heaven that says, go rebuild Jerusalem's wall. He receives information, he experiences grief, he prays, he recognizes an opportunity, and he acts. He later calls it the work God had put in his heart. A burden became the occasion for prayerful discernment and obedient responsibility. That is the journey these four moments trace.

MOVEMENT ONE: YOU ARE ALREADY POSITIONED

Nehemiah 1:11 NKJV

"...and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer."

Nehemiah's occupation is not introduced at the start of the chapter. It shows up at the end, after the prayer. And it changes everything, because we learn that this grieving, praying man already holds a trusted position right next to King Artaxerxes. The cupbearer did far more than serve drinks. He tasted the king's cup to guard against poison, which means he was trusted with the king's very life, and he stood in the king's presence with the king's ear. That access would become the key to rebuilding Jerusalem. God's providence was already operating through the circumstances Nehemiah was standing in.

Nehemiah was in Persia, but his heart was in Jerusalem. *His location did not cancel his responsibility, and his employment did not prevent him from pursuing God's purpose.* The very position that could have made him comfortable gave him access to help people who were suffering. Your current position may be providing the resources for a responsibility that is bigger than that position. God uses ordinary roles for extraordinary purposes. But being positioned is not the same as being obedient. Nehemiah still had to open his mouth and act.

You keep asking God to change your position. Have you considered what He wants to accomplish through the position you are already in?

Position is not permission to be passive. What if the reason God has not moved you from where you are is that He still has something He wants to move through you? Stop confusing an uncomfortable position with an unnecessary one. Your placement may be connected to somebody else's deliverance.

MOVEMENT TWO: YOU HAVE TO PARTICIPATE

Nehemiah 2:5 and 8 NKJV

"...I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it... And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me."

Nehemiah moves from private prayer to a specific request, and look at what he asks. He does not simply ask the king to do something about Jerusalem. He asks to be sent there himself. That I may rebuild it. Then he goes further and requests the documents for safe passage and the timber for the construction. That is significant, because Nehemiah shows both willingness and practical awareness of what the job will actually require. He knows where he needs to go, why he needs to go, and what it will take to get it done. Months of quiet preparation are standing behind that one bold request.

Prayer does not eliminate the responsibility to prepare. Faith is not the absence of a plan, and having a plan does not mean you lack faith. Nehemiah credits the whole favorable outcome to the good hand of God upon him, and in the same breath he speaks, requests, organizes, and travels. Divine favor did not make human effort unnecessary. A burden moves toward responsibility the moment you become willing to participate in the solution, and preparation is simply how you steward the opportunity. If you want to rebuild trust in a relationship, what is the plan? If you want to restore your spiritual life, which practices are actually going to change? If you want healthier finances, what habit starts this week?

Do not just ask God to bless what you are building. Prepare yourself to steward what you are asking Him to bless.

Prayer does not replace participation. We have to stop using prayer as a spiritual excuse for personal procrastination, because sometimes the answer to what you have been praying about is waiting on the action you have been avoiding. Faith does not just believe God can do it. Faith makes you available for what God wants to do.

MOVEMENT THREE: YOU MUST CONFRONT WHAT IS BROKEN

Nehemiah 2:13 NKJV

"And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire."

Nehemiah had already heard the report back in chapter 1. He knew the walls were down. But now he goes out at night and personally examines the actual condition of them. The Hebrew allows the sense of examined for the word translated viewed; this was a careful, deliberate nighttime assessment. And in the very next verse the rubble is so deep that his animal cannot even get through. He could not develop a responsible plan to rebuild until he understood the true condition of what needed rebuilding.

You cannot responsibly restore what you refuse to examine. There are believers who genuinely want change but will not confront the damage that change requires. We want stronger marriages without examining how we communicate. We want healthier relationships without examining our own habits. We want deeper spiritual maturity without confronting the places where we have quietly neglected obedience. Nehemiah shows us that leadership takes more than inspiration. It takes an accurate understanding of reality. *Inspection is not condemnation.* Nehemiah examined those walls because he intended to rebuild them, not because he wanted to shame anyone. A clear-eyed look at the damage is not unbelief. It is preparation for faithful action.

You cannot rebuild what you keep pretending is not broken.

Hearing about a problem and examining it are two different responsibilities. Inspection may expose damage greater than you expected, and that is still better than denial.

MOVEMENT FOUR: YOU HAVE TO RISE AND BUILD

Nehemiah 2:20 NKJV

“So I answered them, and said to them, The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem.”

Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem mock the rebuilding and accuse the people of rebellion. And Nehemiah answers, not with insults, but with confidence in God. What makes this moment so powerful is the way it ties back to chapter 1. In 1:11 Nehemiah prayed, let Your servant prosper. Here in 2:20 he declares, the God of heaven Himself will prosper us. The private petition has become a public confession. In chapter 1 it was Your servant, singular. By chapter 2 it is we His servants. *What began as a burden in one man's heart has become a shared mission for a whole community.*

Opposition does not automatically mean you are outside of God's will. Your confidence has to rest in God, not merely in your resources, and you have to learn whose voices actually carry authority over your assignment. Everybody who has something to say about your building does not have the authority to decide whether you build. Nehemiah does not promise the critics it will be easy. He simply refuses to let their ridicule set the mission. We His servants will arise and build.

Everybody who has something to say about your building does not have the authority to decide whether you build.

Opposition cannot become your excuse for disobedience. Rise and build anyway.

THE FOUR MOMENTS WORKING TOGETHER

- Position. God can use where you are. Nehemiah 1:11.
- Participation. Take responsibility for the work. Nehemiah 2:5, 8.
- Inspection. Confront what needs restoration. Nehemiah 2:13.
- Conviction. Move forward despite opposition. Nehemiah 2:20.

Position leads to Participation, Participation to Inspection, Inspection to Conviction. That is how God develops a willing builder.

CLOSING

Nehemiah did not actually rebuild the wall in chapters 1 and 2. He prayed. He requested. He prepared. He inspected. He gathered the people. He declared their intention to build. The construction itself does not begin until chapter 3. That matters, because God was developing the builder before the wall was ever rebuilt. The wall was not rebuilt when Nehemiah started praying. It was not rebuilt when the king gave permission. It was not rebuilt when he inspected the damage. But every one of those moments was necessary for the work that followed. Do not despise what God is developing in you while you are waiting to see what He is going to accomplish through you.

So do not walk out of here feeling like everything depends on you. That is not the point. The burden was on Nehemiah's heart. The responsibility required Nehemiah's participation. But the good hand of God was upon Nehemiah, and the work ultimately belonged to God and included the whole community. You do have a responsibility you can no longer keep avoiding. And you have a God you do not have to accomplish it without.

A CLOSING WORD

You cannot keep asking God to rebuild what you are unwilling to confront. At some point, your desire for restoration has to become a decision to participate. Because God's hand being on your life does not remove the responsibility of putting your hands to work.

God's hand was upon Nehemiah, but Nehemiah still had to put his hands to the work. God's hand upon your life is not an excuse to keep yours in your pockets.