

Prayer, Planning, and Providence

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Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. going to pick it up in chapter 2, verse 1, and read down through verse 8. I'll invite you, now that you are nice and comfortable, to please stand as we honor the reading of God's Word. Nehemiah, chapter 2, beginning in verse 1. In the month of Nisan, the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when the wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now, I had not been sad in his presence. And the king said to me, why is your face sad, seeing that you're not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart. And then I was very much afraid. So I said to the king, let the king live forever. I mean, why should not my face be sad when the city, the place of my father's graves, lies in ruins and its gates have been destroyed by fire? The king said to me, what are you requesting?

[3 : 3 2] So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, if it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my father's graves, that I may rebuild it. And the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, how long will you be gone?

And when will you return? So it pleased the king to send me when I'd given him a time. And I said to the king, if it pleases the king, let letters be given to me, the governors of the province beyond the river, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah. And the letters of Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy. And the king granted me what I asked for the good hand of my God was upon me. Would you pray with me tonight? Father, thank you for this time to study your word and not just study it and understand what the text means, but understand what this means for our own life. And so Holy Spirit, I pray that you would come and lead us, convict us, that Lord, even as I speak, that you would be clearly speaking to your people, whatever it is that you want to say to us tonight. And we just pray that this would honor the name of Jesus. And I pray it in his name and God's people said, amen. Amen. You can be seated. That guy just died. Those were the chilling words captured on video of a group of teenagers that stood by and watched a man drown. Jamal Dunn was 32 years old. He was a disabled man who decided to go swimming in a retention pond in Cocoa, Florida.

When he realized that he had drifted a little bit too far, he started crying out for help. A group of teenagers standing on the shore not only did not respond to him, they mocked him. They laughed at him all the while recording his final moments on their cell phone. Jamal's body was found three days later. No one even knew about the whole situation with the teenagers until a video surfaced on social media, which caused public outrage. And that led to a police investigation.

The police said this, quote, the kids were at the park and did see the man walk into the water. When he started to scream for help, they just laughed. They didn't call the police. They didn't call 911. They didn't tell anybody. They just stood there. Close quote. And what's even more crazy is that while their response is morally reprehensible, it's actually perfectly legal. There's a famous case that goes back to the 1920s where a man fell off a pier and was drowning while a sunbather was watching him, and that person did nothing about it. The individual that died, their family sued the other person, but the state declared that they were, quote, under no obligation to act. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy in a 2012 case said this, quote, you don't have the duty to rescue someone if that person is in danger. If a blind man is walking in front of a car, you do not have the duty to stop him.

While there may be severe moral criticisms, that's the law. When the mayor of Cocoa, Florida was asked about Jamal's death, this is what he said, quote, never in my life would I have thought we would need a law to make someone take action. You know, unfortunately, Faith Family, those kinds of responses happen all the time, right? I mean, there's not just the story of Jamal's, there's also the story of a woman by the name of Kitty Genovese. Back in 1964, this was a very famous murder case in New York City where she was stabbed and she began to cry out for help, which made the criminal run away. But when the criminal realized that no one was actually helping her, the criminal came back and completed the murder.

[8 : 22] Just even recently, I'm sure you saw on the news, the Ukrainian woman in Charlotte, right? Who was stabbed on the train and no one did anything to help her. These stories bother us, right? Don't they bother you? And why is it that it bothers us? Why is it that deep down we know that's not right? Well, notice what the scripture says here in James 4, 7. Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. Now, let's be honest. Let's be honest tonight. Every single one of us falls short in this area. Amen? Anybody ever known you should do something but didn't do it? Anybody need to testify tonight? Yeah. We've all done that. We've all known the right thing to do and yet failed to act.

Maybe for you, I mean, it probably wasn't intervening necessarily in a drowning. It could be something simple like you knew it was right for you to get a job, but you made all the excuses in the world why you wouldn't do it. You knew you needed to have that conversation. You need to encourage that person who was down and yet you came up with all these reasons why you didn't have time. How many of you on the weekends, you know you should be at church? Hypothetically speaking, right? You know you should be at church, but you know you're really, really busy. Every one of us has known we should do something but failed to act. But let me take this even a little deeper. Here's the thing, faith family, and this is true even of me, is oftentimes, are you listening? Say yes.

We spiritualize our lack of action. We'll say things like this, well, I prayed about it, and nothing happened. Or we'll even get really theological and we'll say, if God is sovereign, well, he'll just do whatever he wants done. That mindset couldn't be more unbiblical. In fact, this is something that is so important. It's something that we really need to understand tonight, and it's this, that God accomplishes his work through our work. God accomplishes his work through our work. Now, do not misunderstand because there are some of you that will take this out of context. I'm not suggesting that God does not at times intervene in supernatural ways. Of course he does. Amen? Of course God does that sometimes. Nor am I suggesting that God in any way needs us.

Oh, Paul makes very clear in Acts chapter 17 that God is not served with human hands as though he needed anything. I'm not suggesting God doesn't intervene at times in supernatural ways. I'm not suggesting that God suggesting that God needs us. Here's what I am saying. Here it is. The normal way God exercises his sovereignty is through our daily activity. Is everybody with me? I'm going to say that again. This is really important. The normal way, the normal way that God exercises his sovereignty is through our daily activity is through our daily activity. It is God's sovereignty and our responsibility.

Oh, one of my theologians of the faith, a man by the name of Charles Spurgeon, Charles Spurgeon said this, I never have to reconcile friends. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility have never had a falling out with each other. I do not need to reconcile what God has joined together. Where these two truths meet, I don't fully know. I don't completely understand, nor do I want to know. They do not puzzle me since I have given up my mind to be leaving them both. And all God's people should say, amen. God is completely sovereign. That was a good place for an amen. All right. At least get that one right.

[12 : 51] And we are responsible to act. We are responsible to do the things we know we're supposed to do. Listen, listen. The Bible teaches this. Look at Philippians chapter 2 verse 12.

Therefore, beloved, listen, listen, if you've always obeyed, so now not only is in my presence, but much more in my absence, say this with me, work out your own salvation. So who's the one active there? You work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Verse 13 for it is. Come on, come on.

It is God who works in you. So here's the question. Is it God's sovereignty or your activity? Yes, that's exactly right. You are working and you are working for God is at work in you. Do you see?

James, look at James chapter 2 verse 15. If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warmed and filled without giving them the things needed for the body. What good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. In other words, faith, and we hear this, hear this, notice it on the screen. Faith in God's sovereignty is never an excuse for our inactivity. Oh man, I'm loving this. I don't know about you.

This is good stuff. This is so important. We can never justify our inactivity based on God's sovereignty. Well, God is sovereign, so I don't have to do anything. No, those two things go together.

[14 : 45] Listen, that is exactly what we see here in Nehemiah chapter 2. Now let's remind us what happened in Nehemiah chapter 1, how that chapter ends, because we can't really understand chapter 2 if we don't see its connection to chapter 1. Now, in Nehemiah chapter 1, he gets the report that Jerusalem is still in ruin, the walls are still down, the city is still in some level of devastation, and it breaks his heart. Do you remember what was Nehemiah's response? He did what? He wept and mourned and prayed and fasted for days. It broke his heart. And why did it break his heart?

Because it was a disgrace to God. That Israel was to be a holy nation. They were to be a city on a hill, so to speak, a nation that reflected the glory of God. And so to know that everything is still devastated, breaks his heart because God's glory is on the line here. And so Nehemiah ends chapter 1 with this. Remember? We went through his prayer last week. And he ends his prayer by saying, O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. Now, who's this man?

It's not Jesus, okay? Jesus! No, it's not appropriate at this particular question, right? No, it's Artaxerxes, right? He knows he's going to go before the king, right? He's going to go before the king, and he's asking God, would you grant me favor when I go before the king? Would you grant your servant this request? Well, then, five months later, because remember, we go from about November to March, about five months later after praying and fasting and seeking the Lord, you have this moment where Nehemiah goes before the king. Let's pick it up, verse 1. In the month of Nisan, so here's March, this 20th year of King Artaxerxes. See, I told you it wasn't Jesus yet. We'll get to Jesus, okay? We always do. When wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. So stop real quick.

Nehemiah, as you know, is the cupbearer to the king. He's got such an important role. He's in an authoritative position. Like, he is literally the one who is responsible for the king's life. And so he is such in a great position here with Artaxerxes. Now, I had been sad in his presence. Show of hands, how many of you have ever been around somebody and you knew right away something was wrong? Anybody?

Yeah, yeah. They just, they have that look about him. They have that expression. And so Nehemiah, he hadn't been sad in his presence, but the king is going to notice that something's wrong.

[17 : 56] The king said to me, why is your face sad? I mean, you're not sick, so this must be sadness of heart. Your heart must be broken. Something must be going on within you. And then I was very much afraid. Now, why would Nehemiah be afraid? The reason why Nehemiah would be afraid is because in the ancient Near East, you can't, listen, you can't be sad in the presence of the king. Even if you are sad, you've got to hide it because it's a sign of honor. When the king walks in and everybody's like, it's great to see you. Everybody's happy. That honors the king. If everybody's like, okay, you know, we wish you'd leave. No, you don't do that in the ancient Near East. You dishonor the king by your sadness and you may be put to death. Keep going. And I said to the king, notice what Nehemiah does because he's afraid. He reinforces his love and honor to the king. Let the king live forever. Listen, listen, whatever I'm dealing with has nothing to do with you, king. Long live the king. Honor the king.

But why should not my face be sad? I mean, after all, the city, the place of my father's graves is in ruins and its gates have been destroyed by fire. Oh my. And then like the cinema is building here.

The king says to me, what are you requesting? And if this is a movie at this moment, like we got to have background. Like this is, this is building. I mean, this has been four or five months that Nehemiah has been waiting for this and his knees are shaking, his hands are shaking, his heart's pounding. This is his moment. This is his opportunity. And what does he do? Now I woke you all up. All right, so here we go.

The first thing, this is his moment. This is what he's been praying for. This is the request that he ended chapter one with. And what's the first thing he does? He prays. He prays right there in that moment. Before I'm about to say what I've been waiting to say, he prays to the God of heaven.

And then once he feels that, that this is the moment, this is the moment that I've, I've been praying for. Yes, God is leading me now to say what's on my heart. He says to the king, if it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in your sight, would you send me to Judah?

[20 : 44] And it's like, we, we, we don't, we're so far removed from the ancient Near East. Like we, we, we don't understand at all the, the, the risky request that Nehemiah just gave it. The very man who is responsible for the king's life has just been asked if he could be relieved from his position to go somewhere else. And the king's going to say, hey, go to the next verse. The king is going to ask him, well, how long are you going to be gone? And do you know how long Nehemiah is going to be gone?

About 12 years. So just try it. Go to your boss Monday morning. Okay. Get your eyes, you know, running and watery and they say, what's the matter?

I need to go back to my hometown. And I was just curious if I could have 12 years off. Okay. And see what their response is. And by the way, not only do I want 12 years off, not only do I want to leave of absence from my position of great authority that is even an honor to even have in the first place, the very person that is responsible for the king's life. But I want you to give me letters, giving me the authority to do so, so that when I travel through all the provinces beyond the river that I can pass safely to Judah, but I'm not even done asking. By the way, would you give me your own personal stash of lumber? Could I get from your own warehouse all the things I'm going to need to rebuild the city as well as rebuild the wall? And so get your mind in this.

Like, like this, this is what Nehemiah asked. He's like, I want time away. Oh, and by the way, Nehemiah is asking Artaxerxes, we'll see this in just a moment, to overturn a decree that he's already given. So is everybody seeing like, this is a crazy request. There's no way in the world King Artaxerxes is going to say yes, which is why you should be really shocked when you read, the king granted me what I asked. You were supposed to go, what? Are you crazy? The king said yes to that?

How in the world would the king possibly say yes to that? I'll tell you the hand of my God was upon me and all God's people said, amen. Listen, listen, faith family, God answers prayers, big prayers, impossible prayers, prayers that there's no way it should happen. No way they should say yes. I mean, King Artaxerxes is saying, yeah, I'll overturn a decree I've already made. I'll let you leave your position. I'll give you everything that you need, including my credit card to pay for everything. I'll even give you my very authority to go wherever you want to go. And so yeah, Nehemiah, go right ahead. And Nehemiah is like, there's only one possible explanation for why the king would grant me that request. God's hand was in this. God's hand was upon me. So let's see here, first of all, the prayer and the sovereignty of God. Prayer and the sovereignty of God. Nehemiah is fully aware there is no way this prayer gets answered outside of the sovereign hand of God. Let's be clear. It is not Nehemiah's persuasion skills. It's not his personality. In fact, Nehemiah even lets you in on the fact that he is scared out of his mind. Faith family, this doesn't just happen. Certainly not with a

[24 : 57] Persian king. How many of you, how many of you be honest, how many of you have ever had something happen in your life and the only reasonable, the only logical explanation was God did that.

God did that. There's no other way to explain it. And this actually teaches us something really, really important about prayer. Here it is. Here it is. Pray for things only God can do.

So when it happens, you know it was God who did it. Pray for things that you know only God could do that.

The government couldn't do that. My parents couldn't do that. My friends couldn't do that. Only God can answer this request so that when he answers it, you know it was only because of the hand of God.

And this is just the latest sign of God's sovereignty that has been all throughout the exile story. Now put your seatbelt on because I'm going to go fast. So hang with me. Remember that I told you the whole reason why Israel is in exile is because of their disobedience. Remember, they broke God's covenant.

[26 : 15] In fact, if you go back just to Nehemiah's prayer in Nehemiah chapter one, he confesses such a thing. We're in this shape because we broke your law. We didn't obey your servant Moses. We broke the covenant. In fact, the exile was prophesied by a man by the name of Jeremiah some 20 years before it ever happened. Look at Jeremiah 15 verse eight. Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, because you've not obeyed my words, behold, I will send all the tribes of the north, declares the Lord. And for Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant. This is a pagan, unbelieving king, and God calls him his servant.

I will bring them against the land and its inhabitants against all the surrounding nations. Well, God fulfilled that, right? God sends them into exile, even though it was prophesied years before. God fulfilled his word. Now, how did God fulfill his word? If you've zoned out, what do you do?

Zone back in. All right. How did God fulfill his word? Did Nebuchadnezzar become a Christian? Nope. Was Nebuchadnezzar one day reading Jeremiah 25 and thinking, you know, I really need to fulfill the prophecy of God? No, no. Nebuchadnezzar simply wants to take over another nation.

Nebuchadnezzar, driven by his own desires, is used by God to accomplish the purposes of God. In other words, the only reason the exile happened was because of the sovereign hand of God. And not only did Jeremiah prophesy about the exile before the exile, he also prophesied how long the exile would last. Look at Jeremiah 29 verse 10. For thus says the Lord, when 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you. I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you. This is the verse we often quote out of context. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil to give you a future and a hope. And do you know how that would be fulfilled? Are you still with me? Some hundred and fifty years before it happened. A hundred and fifty years before the exiles are brought back, a prophet by the name of

Isaiah, who prophesied to the northern kingdom, said this about the southern kingdom. Isaiah 44, 28, who says of, say it, Cyrus. So now we're not talking about Nebuchadnezzar, but Cyrus, he is my shepherd.

[29 : 04] Nebuchadnezzar, pagan king, was used as a servant. Cyrus, pagan king, was used as a shepherd. And he shall fulfill all my purpose, saying, Jerusalem, she shall be what? Built. And of the temple your foundation is laid. And so what do you think happened when Cyrus became the emperor?

We'll look at Ezra chapter one, verse one. In the first year, Cyrus, the king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled. The Lord stirred up in the spirit of Cyrus, the king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing. Thus says Cyrus, the king of Persia, the Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build a house at Jerusalem, which is Judah. And so what led Cyrus to make that decree? Remember, it was prophesied 150 years before Cyrus. Cyrus becomes king. And why does he issue that decree? Because the Lord stirred it in his heart.

Is everybody with me? God used Nebuchadnezzar to fulfill his purposes, and God used Cyrus to fulfill his purposes, because all of this is happening under the hand of God. But I'm not done yet. In time, the temple gets rebuilt, but Israel is suffering spiritually. The building is there, but they don't know how to worship God. It's been a long time since they've been a part of temple worship. So God raises up another unbelieving ruler. Look at chapter 7, verse 21. This is Ezra. And I, now we're talking about not Nebuchadnezzar, not Cyrus, but Jesus. No, I'm kidding. Artaxerxes. Artaxerxes, the king, make a decree to all the treasures in the province beyond the river, whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of God of heaven requires of you, let it be done with all diligence. Now watch who Ezra ascribes this to. Like what would make Artaxerxes give such a decree? We'll keep reading in verse 27.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king to beautify the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem, who has extended to me his steadfast love before the king and his counselors and before all the king's mighty officers. I took courage. Now, have you ever heard this phrase before? For the hand of the Lord my God was on me. In other words, why are all of these unbelieving rulers? Why is Nebuchadnezzar taking over Jerusalem? Why is Cyrus issuing a decree to return? Why is Artaxerxes issuing a decree to start rebuilding? Which, by the way, Artaxerxes will eventually be convinced to stop the rebuilding effort because he'll be convinced that Israel is somehow going to turn on him. That's why when the news gets to Nehemiah that it's still in ruin, that the project has not been happening, that it's still devastated. He's so brokenhearted. And then he takes his prayer. He takes his request to the king. And what is now we're full circle, Nehemiah 2 verse 8, the king granted me what I ask for the good hand of my God was upon me. Everybody take a deep breath. Ready?

Do you see what I'm laying out there? God's sovereign hand is over all of the exile story.

[33 : 17] From beginning to end. From prophesying the exile would happen, to how long it would happen, to raising up different rulers to make sure it would happen. All of this happens according to the sovereign hand of God. Faith family, listen to me. Both in times of devastation and in times of restoration, God's sovereign hand is on your story. I'm going to bring that home again.

Whether it is times of devastation, whether it is times of restoration, God's sovereign hand is on your story. Are you without work? Are you single and want to marry? Are you dealing with a health crisis? Knowing that God is sovereign will enable you to live by faith in no matter what season you're in.

Amen? And so listen, listen, I take the time to give you all that biblical background because I want you to see what Nehemiah knows. Nehemiah knows after the king says, yes, I'm granting you everything you ask for. Nehemiah knows what Ezra knows. And Ezra knows what Daniel knows. And Daniel knows what Jeremiah knows. And that is God's sovereign hand is always over his people. And so Nehemiah can pray knowing that God is absolutely sovereign. That in fact, if anything, what encourages us to pray, amen, is knowing that God is sovereign. But notice, come on, come on, notice that even with all of this emphasis on the sovereignty of God, are you ready? It doesn't stop Nehemiah from acting, from obeying, from doing what

Nehemiah needs to do. If you go back to verse six and seven, like, look, so it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time. In other words, do you realize that throughout these four to five months that Nehemiah has been praying? Not only has he been praying, but he's then been thinking about, here's how long I'm going to need to be gone. And here's the letters that I'm going to need to have the authority to travel. And then go to the next verse. Notice, not only letters, but I'm going to have to ask for the supplies that I'm going to need. So he's already calculated to some degree exactly what's going to be needed to even accomplish this project. In other words, listen, listen, listen, listen.

Nehemiah starts with prayer, chapter one, but by the time we get to chapter two, he has a plan. He starts with prayer, but then he begins to plan. In other words, knowing God is sovereign is no substitute for diligent planning. Amen. Oh, come on, come on. I'm going to come out here and kick you. Let's go. Let's go. This is so important. Knowing that God is sovereign in all of this does not take my responsibility away to plan. Again, in Nehemiah 2, he knows how long he's going to be gone, the supplies that he's going to need, the travel necessities that he's going to have to have.

[37 : 08] In other words, he's done his homework. Faith family, I confess to you my impatience with people who think that living by faith means irresponsible planning or no planning at all.

People that don't understand this, that God's sovereignty is no excuse for inactivity. This story is all about the sovereignty of God and the actions of Nehemiah. That Nehemiah, knowing that God is sovereign, does something. He puts together a plan. This mindset reminds me of an old Lark news. You don't really hear as much of that anymore, but it was an old kind of fiction, kind of like the Babylon Bee today, you know, that'll have fiction stories that are kind of meant to be funny. And there was one that went like this. And it's so true. It's so true.

I mean, the story's not true, but the point it makes is true. Walter Houston, described by family members as a devoted Christian, died Monday after waiting 70 years for God to give him clear direction about what to do with his life. His wife, Ruby said, quote, Walter hung around the house and prayed a lot, but he never got confirmation. She went on to add, sometimes he thought he heard God's voice, but then he wouldn't be sure. And so he just start the process all over again.

She says he never really figured out what his life was about, but he felt content to pray continuously about what he might do for the Lord. Whenever he was about to take action, he'd pull back because, quote, he didn't want to disappoint God or go against him in any way. Ruby says, quote, he was very sensitive to always remain in God's will. Now that's sarcastic, but isn't that true?

Isn't that how a lot of Christians think? And yet that is such a flawed and unbiblical view of how God accomplishes his purposes. Listen, are you without a job? Listen to me. Pray and send out your resume. Are you single and you want to be married? Pray and put yourself in social circles to meet people. Are you in a health crisis? Pray and go see a doctor. Do you want to teach a Bible study?

[39 : 39] Pray and get your nose in this book until you understand the text. Amen? Pray, trust the sovereignty of God and do something. Don't just sit there and use the sovereignty of God as an excuse to do nothing.

This story is all about the sovereignty of God. And Nehemiah fully believing and trusting in the sovereignty of God takes action. He puts himself out there in front of the king. He makes the request.

He has the conversation. He's put together the plan. Reminds me of a story I read about a man that approached his pastor after the service and asked the pastor, if you were stranded, listen, if you were stranded on an island and you could only take one book, what would it be? The pastor said because he wanted to be spiritual. Well, the Bible, of course. I mean, it would give me spiritual strength to get through. And then the pastor decided he'd ask the same question to this man, expecting that he'd give the same answer. Instead, this man said with a smile on his face, I would want a book entitled How to Build a Boat. Think about that. Now, it's kind of cheesy, but it makes a point. Most of us, if we were like, you know, if I were stranded on an island, I would just want my Bible. No, you would want a book telling you how to get off the island, right?

And this is what we over-spiritualize everything and yet fail to see that it's in the practical things of the daily activity of our life that the sovereignty of God happens. Amen? You with me?

So, I think I've lost half of you, but all right, here we go. Let's apply this. That's what I think the text is about. Let's apply this. First, we've been looking at this in terms of application in two ways. First has been congregationally and the other has been personally. So, let me start congregationally. I asked you last week, did you give the question any thought this week?

[42 : 04] Do you remember what the question was? What breaks your heart? What breaks your heart? Like Nehemiah, what breaks your heart? What is it in the city? What is it in your community? What is it in your neighborhood? What is it in this church? What is it with your children? What is it in this nation that breaks your heart? What breaks your heart? And I told you that if nothing makes your heart break, it may not have a beat. I mean, with all the devastation and ruin and brokenness that we see around us, you're telling me nothing breaks your heart? I mean, how can we be a follower of Jesus and not be brokenhearted at the things we see in this world? Amen? So, what breaks your heart? That was last week's question, and I told you I encourage you to do what Nehemiah did first. The first thing he did was not action. That came later. We just looked at that. He prayed. And all I asked you to do last week was to pray. Here's the question I'm asking you this week. You still with me? What are you going to do about what breaks your heart? What are you going to do about what breaks your heart? Wait for God to write a plan in the sky? Hope he just drops it in your lap? Pray and only pray so that you feel spiritual about doing something? Or are you going to maybe think that God has put that on your heart?

Here's an idea. To do something about it. Amen. To get involved in that person's life. To make a difference in your neighbor.

To serve at your church. I don't know. I don't know what broke your heart or what breaks your heart. But I don't think God breaks your heart for you to just sit there and do nothing about it. Amen?

Because let me remind you of this. Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it for him, it is sin. I want us to learn from Nehemiah and take our brokenheartedness and put it into action.

To direct it towards something. Listen, listen. Come here, come here, come here. I can't answer this for you. I'm asking right now that the Holy Spirit would make this clear for you in your life. There's something in your life, something in someone's life around you, something in the neighborhood you live in that is broken and in ruin. And God broke your heart over that, listen, for the purpose of helping it be restored. So what are you going to do about what breaks your heart? The second application is more personal. In this, it's not been that you're Nehemiah, it's that you're Jerusalem. That is, your heart is broken, not over something. Your heart is just broken. Your life has gone through a time of brokenness and devastation. And remember, I told you last week this, that restoration starts with rest. Nehemiah didn't jump into action, right? He took time to pray. He spent time with the Lord.

[45 : 45] And if you're going through a time where your life has been devastated and broken, you may need just a time of rest and a time to be in the Lord's presence and begin that process of healing. But listen, eventually, you got to start putting one foot in front of the other.

And I just, I don't know what, if it's the spirit or what, but like, I just got this impression that I'm talking to somebody here, that the Lord's talking to somebody here. And you know what, in six years, I don't ever hardly say anything like that. Like, like there's just some of you in this room that like, you got to start moving forward. I know you're broken hearted. I know you're devastated. I get it.

But you just can't sit there and be broken forever. And if you want to be healed, if you want to be restored, you're going to have to, even if slowly, start moving in that direction. Amen? Because listen, here's what the story of Nehemiah teaches us.

Here it is. Listen, God will rebuild your walls through work. And I don't mean work here in terms of a vocation. I mean, starting to do the things you need to do.

To get out there again. To date again. To work again. To trust again. To serve again. If you want to see the walls restored, you're going to have to take some action.

[47 : 35] And the sovereign hand of God will be upon you, leading you to a place of restoration.

Are you with me? So, so that's my word to you is what breaks your heart and what are you going to do about it? And if your heart is broken, you need to at some point. And maybe now is not the time. Maybe you're still in that four to five month period that Nehemiah was in before chapter two.

But at some point, you've got to start doing something. Nehemiah chapter two, I believe, shows us that nothing happens outside of the sovereign plan of God.

God's sovereignty comes about in our life is through activity. And those two things do not contradict. And nothing makes this clearer. I close with this than the cross of Jesus.

Look, look at how Jesus talked about the will of God for his life. John 6, 38. For I have chosen for I have come down rather from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. That is the will of the father. And this is the will of him who sent me that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of God.

[49 : 08] This is the will of my father that everyone who looks on the son and believes in him should have eternal life. And I will raise him up on the last day. Listen to me, faith family. No one was more consumed in the will of God than Jesus. Amen. No one here has wanted to do the will of God and be in the will of God and be obedient to the will of God more than Jesus. He even called doing the will of God his food. But notice that Jesus didn't see the will of God, the will of the father as something the father would accomplish as he sat there and did nothing. Jesus in John 6 says, I came to do the will of the father. Or let me ask it this way. How did the father accomplish his will of giving you eternal life?

Are you with me? How did God accomplish his sovereign will of giving you eternal life? Here's the answer through Jesus's work on the cross.

The father accomplished his sovereign will through what Jesus did. The sovereignty of God and the obedience of Jesus is not a contradiction. They're one in the same.

So faith family, yes, we are bothered. We are bothered by stories like Jamal's for lots of reasons. And one of those reasons is because of how people can know the right thing to do and yet do nothing.

But let us be careful that we don't do the same thing spiritually. That God has put something on our hearts to do. And like Nehemiah, it's an opportunity to bring restoration in a world of destruction.

[51 : 19] And yet, unlike Nehemiah, we do nothing. Let us be reminded that we are followers of a man who prayed earnestly. Jesus prayed so intensely, he sweat drops of blood. And what did he pray for? Not my will, but yours.

He wanted the will of God done in his life. And then he got up and took action.

