

CONTAGIOUS FAITH

CLEAN SLATE SERIES

Nehemiah 2:10-20 // Craig Smith

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CRAIG: If you've got a bible, why don't you turn to Nehemiah 2 with me? And I like to say as you're turning there again, you'll find that about a third away through the Old Testament right after the book of Ezra, which is right after the book of Chronicles. So if you see Chronicles just keep going a little bit and you'll find your way. This is the third day or the third week in our series on clean slate and what we've been saying for the last few weeks, is that we all have a lot of these kinds of words written pretty large in our heart. Typically for most of us, there's one or two that we immediately sort of go yeah, that's me.

That's taken up lot of space and what we've been saying is Jesus is enough to deal with those things. But often times the way Jesus really begins to deal with those things is not what we sometimes expect. It's not that we huddle in our room somewhere and go, "Jesus come and fix me and then I can do things for you." But rather to ask the question, "Jesus, what do you wanna do through me? What plans do you have to use me in my family and in my community, in the world?" As we follow Jesus on the missions that He calls us to, as we respond to the visions that He lays in our hearts for how we're supposed to be difference makers, that kind of stuff really finds itself being taken care of by the Holy Spirit as we move forward.

So we come to the second chapter of Nehemiah and the second half of that this morning. And really what we're getting to see this morning is some very practical teaching on what it looks like to begin, not only to move forward in the visions that God lays upon our hearts. But what it looks like to act in such a way that other people begin to catch site of the vision that God lay, and become part of it. So we're gonna be beginning this morning in chapter 2 verse 10.

Let me just sort remind us that what we've seen at this point is two important things. Number one, God always provides provisions alongside of passion. He always stirs up provision as he's stirring up passion. God will never give you a vision for something that he's calling you to without also providing the means to follow through on it. So when we find ourselves realizing, God's calling me to something and we immediately go, "I don't think I have what it takes." What we need to do is step back and go, "God, what have you already given me that will allow me to respond to this vision that you're laying in my heart?"

The second thing that we've seen and we saw it last week, is that God calls us to care for courage and courageous fate. But courageous fate aligns us with God. It doesn't promise everything is gonna be easy. It doesn't promise everything is just gonna go smoothly. But courageous faith always aligns us with God and there is no better place to be. So as we face the future and we sometimes... We go, "I don't know if I can move in response to what God's calling me to, it's too frightening." Understand that it's far more frightening to hold back and not go with God wherever he calls us, because being with God is the safest place to be, no matter what the future holds.

So what we've seen Nehemiah demonstrate is recognition that God had stirred up provision alongside passion. His position as the cub-bearer gave Him an opportunity to ask of King Artaxerxes, the Persian Emperor something that nobody else could have asked for. So God had provided that as an answer to this passion that He'd been stirring up at Him and He did it. He was courageous and now we get to see the response to His courageous faith. It doesn't start off good. When Sanballat, this is verse 10, when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, that is what the King had said, to allow him to go, they were very much disturbed.

They were disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites. Which kind of feels like a downer note. I mean, Nehemiah has finally come to the point, where he's reckon that God's given the opportunity. He step forward with courageous faith and the King has responded by going, "Yeah, you can go and in fact I'll give you the letters of protection that



you've asked for. And I'll even give you the royal timber that you've asked for, and of my own initiative I'm gonna send some soldiers with you to protect you." That's fantastic. Now Nehemiah is going out and the first note we get is about opposition.

Here's the thing. Pursuing the visions that God lays in you inevitably leads to opposition. Just get used to it. More importantly, get ready for it. When God lays a vision in your heart, whether it's a big grand vision or a vision that's just about what I need to do in my family or my community at work. When God gives a vision and you begin to respond to it, opposition is inevitable. So you just need to go ahead and prepare for it. Let me give you three things from Nehemiah I think that are clear ways that we deal with opposition too. That are kind of way we get ready for it and one, how we respond to it when it comes.

One way that we get ready for is what we saw last week, that we have to give the vision that God's laid upon us time to mature. If we leap into action too quickly, often what happens is opposition it burns us out. We find ourselves broken down by it, because we don't have what it takes to really drive us through it. That's why we've been talking about consistently this pattern that we see in Nehemiah, that interest is allowed to deepen into concern and then God matures that concern into a passion. This passion is important, because interest, they come and go.

Concerns, they ebb and flow. It's passion that burns brightly enough to drive us through opposition. It's a little bit like building a fire when you're camping. Anybody ever had that experience? I'm the man in the family so I feel it's my sacred duty to be in charge of the fire when we go camping, and I'm always disturbed by how hard it is to get a fire going. And sometimes I'll be honest, I cheat. I pour like camp stove fuel on there or something and then I hit the match and it's awesome. But it inevitably flames out really quickly too, and then I have to pretend like that was the plan all along. Like, "Yeah. I was just clearing out the debris. It's the [inaudible 00:06:26] pit. We don't wanna be dangerous." Then I have to settle down with the hard work of really getting the right pieces in place, the small enough pieces.

But here is the interesting thing, is that there is a certain point when you're building a fire at which that the effort shifts. There is a point when you're building a fire where it suddenly becomes harder to put the fire out than it does to keep it burning. In fact if you know what I'm talking about, you know that in the evening when you're ready to actually go to sleep, sometimes what you have to do, you got to go get buckets of water to pour on this thing because it keeps flaming up. See, that's a fire that's burning hot and that's like passion.

Passion burns bright. It's harder to put the passion out, than it is to keep it stoked at a certain point. But that takes time. The second thing that we do in addition to giving that vision time to mature and grow into that flowing passion. The second thing we do is we have to just wait for God's timing and it's part of that passion. But there is more to it than that too. We wait for God's time and as we've said last week, we just don't wait passively. We don't just go, "I'll just hang out." No, no.

We're supposed to experience or practice what we call active waiting, which does three things: first off, it's faithful where God's planted us. It does what God has called us to do in the place that he's put us to be. Then secondly it expects God to provide the right opportunity. So it looks for that opportunity, but then third it prepares for that opportunity. It prepares so that we're ready to seize it when God provides it. And the third thing that we do to deal with oppositions, we pay very careful attention to its source and its motive. Where does it come from and why is it coming?

Because the reality is not all opposition is from the enemy, not all opposition is a bad thing. Sometimes opposition can be red flags that indicate to us, maybe I haven't fully understood God's vision. Or maybe I haven't waited for God's timing. I had a guy in a church previously that I think he read an article about the refugee situation in Thailand. He was immediately seized by what he thought was a passion to deal with that, and so he announced to the elders of our congregation, "I am going, I'm moving to Thailand and I'm gonna be there for a year to three years and I'm gonna be working on this thing that God's leading me to do."

In the course of his talking, there was part of us that was like, "That's really exciting." And then there was sort of a little



disquieting note. And finally one of the elder said, you keep talking about you moving. Is your wife going with you? And he said, “No, she’s not. She didn’t have any interest in this.” We went, okay. Red flag. You’re one flesh. Seriously, you’re just gonna leave your wife for a year to three years? I don’t think that’s biblical. We’re not convinced that this is what God’s calling you to do at this time, at this place.

Maybe you need to give it sometime and maybe your wife needs sometime to come on board with that. He really struggled with that. But he understand that the opposition that was coming to him, it came from a good source. It came from Godly men and it came from good motives, which is a concern for his marriage and from glorifying God and all things that he was doing. So I wouldn’t consider all opposition necessarily a bad thing. Sometimes opposition is an important indicator, an important way that God leads us to understand what the vision is and what the timing is.

But sometimes the opposition comes from sources. You go, “You don’t have God’s interest in mind. You don’t have my interest at heart.” In fact you’re jealous, or you’re just afraid that it’s gonna somehow diminish your power or something like that. And in Nehemiah’s case, he was able to look at the enemies of God’s people. These people that were indicated. They were the people that surrounded Jerusalem. They’d had a long history of knocking down the walls when the Israelites tried to build them back up because they were afraid that if Jerusalem became a power center again, it would weaken them. And so he was able to go, the source and the motives here are not things that should dissuade me. They are not things that should push me away from this vision. And he was able to push forward.

So he says I went to Jerusalem and after staying there for three days. I set out during the night with a few others. I’d not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. They were no mounts with me, except the one I was riding on. By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had broken down on its gates, which had been destroyed by fire.

Then I moved on towards the Fountain Gate and the King’s Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through, there were so much rubble. That’s partly because the walls had been built up and knocked down multiple times over the last few centuries. So I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and I reentered through the Valley Gate. The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing. Because as yet, I had said nothing to the Jews or the priest or the nobles or officials or any others, who would be doing this work.

More than anything else, what we’ve seen Nehemiah doing here is continuing to practice. So then we talked about last week, which was careful courage. He’s practicing careful courage. As we said sometimes those seem like oxymorons, but they are not. To be courageous means to move forward in spite of opposition, in spite of danger. But to be careful means to move forward, choosing the path that’s most likely to get us successfully through that. That’s not a lack of faith God actually calls us to do that. Jesus said, consider the cost before you begin building the tower.

He said, be wise as serpents, even as you’re innocent as doves. Being thoughtful about the way we proceed is a good thing, and what we’ve seen Nehemiah doing here is recognizing that careful courage isn’t just something we engage in at the beginning of our obedience to what God lays in our hearts. God actually calls us to careful courage everyday as we follow him. Everyday that we follow Jesus, requires us to practice careful courage. For example, it could be that tomorrow morning. You go into work and you’re told by your boss to do something that you realize it’s unethical.

I can’t do it. I can’t follow Jesus and do this thing my boss asked me to do. Which means that you’re gonna have to be courageous. You’re gonna have to stand up to your boss. But there is a couple of different options for the way you do that. He could ask you to do something unethical and you could look at him and go, “There is no way I’m doing that, you big fat loser.” Okay, that’s courageous. But it’s not careful courage. Careful courage might in that sense go, “I respect you and I realize that I think you probably choosing the path that you think we have to go down because you don’t see a lot of other options. But I gotta tell you in my conscience, I’m not comfortable with this thing you’re asking me to do, and I respect you and I wanna honor you as



my employer, as my boss but I can't do that."

That's a very different response than calling him a big fat loser. They're both courageous, but one of them is careful courage. It's moving forward in the way that God call us. You realize I might still lose my job, but I've gotta do what Jesus calls me to do here. But it helps to navigate the danger ahead in a way that is wise and Jesus calls to do that everyday. Everyday. And that's what Nehemiah is doing.

He's come back and he hasn't immediately announced his plans. He spent sometime getting to know the people, let them get to know him a little bit. He's gone out at night, when nobody else is aware of what's happening and he's surveyed the situation. He wants to know if his plan even makes sense in the reality of the circumstances he's looking at, with where the wall is. He's being careful, he's being wise. But at the end of it, he comes back and he says it's time to act. So then I said to them, that is the Jews and the nobles and the officials and the priest and all the others.

Then I said to them, you see the trouble we're in. Jerusalem lies in ruins and its gates had been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and we will no longer be in disgrace. I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. In many ways, this is the pivotal moment in the book of Nehemiah. The vision that God has laid upon Nehemiah is far too big for him to accomplish on his own. If Nehemiah tried to do this on his own at best, he would have built a new pile of stones in a corner of Jerusalem. The work is gigantic. The work is massive. He's got to have other people on board with him.

This moment, where he speaks to the people is the moment where we're gonna get to see whether or not God brings people around him, to share in the work that God has laid upon him. As such, the speech is incredibly important. We're probably being given a summary, I suspect that he spoke for more than the 10 seconds that it took to say these particular words. But the summary is important, because what it tells us to do or seeing is the most important parts of it. There is no throw away bits in these words that God gives us.

I'm gonna give credit where credit is due, that the best interpretation that I have ever seen in this passage comes from Andy Stanley in a book of his called Visioneering, which I wanna recommend. It's an incredibly good resource if you're wrestling with, "What is God calling me to do?" How do I know that God's calling me to do and what does it look like to begin to engage this thing. Visioneering is a good book, but particularly his interpretation of this passage. I just think is spot on and so I'm gonna borrow it from him.

Because what he says here I think is absolutely accurate. It rightly interprets the word of God. I also think that it's very powerful and it's powerful, because it's practical. I understand that it identifies four things in this speech that we need to pay attention to. Basically what happens in this speech is that Nehemiah identifies the problem, the solution. The reason something has to be done and the reason something has to be done now. This is actually such a powerful way of thinking through vision casting, and talking to others about what God's calling is to, that I find myself using it, even this past week I've used it multiple times in leadership here. But also in my family and other relationships.

It's really powerful so I don't wanna walk through each one of these ingredients. The first thing that Nehemiah does is he states the problem. He says, "Jerusalem lies in ruins and its gates have been burned with fire." The interesting thing about that is that it's not exactly new information. It's not like he said, "Hey. I've got surprising news for everybody. The walls have been knocked down," and people went, "What are you talking? Oh my goodness! We had no idea."

Obviously what he's stating there is obvious, in fact he identifies that. He says you see the trouble we were in and literary the Hebrew there it's kind of an ongoing word. He says, you are the ones who are seeing. In other words, you've been living with this. I know I'm a new comer, you've been living with it day in and day out for decades so you're aware of this. So if it's not new information. Why bother to state the obvious? And the answer is because it's surprisingly easy to get to the place that people



have accepted the unacceptable.

It happens slowly and gradually. It happens in ways that we're not always aware of, and sometimes it requires somebody kind of stepping into scene and going. This is the issue and we see it with fresh eyes because we've come to live with it as we've said a couple of times over the last few weeks. Sometimes it's not that we like the circumstances we're in, it's just that we've gotten comfortable with them. Sometimes we're more comfortable in bad circumstances, than we're willing to move into better ones because they're gonna require uncomfortable steps.

So Nehemiah begins with a very simple statement of the problem, the walls have been knocked down. I think there is tremendous power even in the way that he does this. It's short and it's sweet, it's to the point. This is the core issue. He identifies the heartbeat of the issue. I get a lot of people who come to me and have over the years, to basically say, "Hey. Here is a problem and I feel like we gotta do something about it." And my first question is always, "Well, help me understand what exactly is the problem?" And unfortunately, more often than not what I get at that point is a 10 to 15 to 20 minute ramble.

I'll be honest, it's not that I don't think the issue that they're talking about is important. It's just that I kind of lose track. On the other hand I've had people who sat down and said, "Here is the issue." I have this experience just this past week. A guy was in my office and saying, "I'm looking to do this." I said, "What's the problem you're looking to address?" And he had five seconds. He said it's this and I went, "Whoa! Okay." That's a problem and I actually saw it in a new way. So the first step sometimes in getting people to wake up out of their apathy, is to be able to state the problem in very clear terms.

I think that's true about big world changing visions. But it's also true about the small, everyday and critically important visions about, "How do we parent our kids? What are we doing in our marriage? What's going on in my job?" I wanna get really practical this morning. I wanna ask you to wrestle with this question. Not even wrestle with it, I just want you to let the whole experience speak, and acknowledge what it is it says to you. What problem am I facing? I want you to ask yourself that question. What problem I'm I facing? What problem am I facing in my home, at work, in my church, in my neighborhood, in the world?

What problem am I facing? Maybe even take a moment right now to just jot it down. What problem are you facing? Don't over think it, but the Holy Spirit prompts you with, "Here is the issue." Then ask the question, "Could I state that in a way that other people would understand?" Sometimes we feel this. My marriage is not what it's supposed to be. But we can't say, "But here is the problem." If you've ever been the recipient of somebody come and you go, "We're not doing this way we should. This is not everything that it could be," and you go, "What exactly is the problem?" "Well, I don't know. It's not everything."

Then I feel guilty, but I don't know what to do, because I don't even know where the issue really lies. So that's the first question, can I state the problem in clear terms? Second thing that Nehemiah gives is the solution. He says, the problem is the walls have been knocked down. So the solution, let's build them back up. Again, which is not exactly of genius level insight. It's not like people looked at him and went, "Wow. Mind blown. How did you ever come up with that?" But here is the important thing. I see this over and over again and I want you to grab a hold of this reality.

Great problems often have surprisingly simple solutions. Huge problems, often have surprisingly simple solutions. We think Compassion International, the child's sponsorship organization. How many of you by the way sponsor Compassion International? Yeah. That's what I thought, a lot of you. Compassion International is a great example of this. Compassion looked around and said, "Here is the problem. Children are starving to death everyday and not getting to hear the gospel. Solution? Let's have family sponsor individual children so that they're fed and they're cared for, and they hear the gospel of Jesus Christ."

That's not rocket science. It's not like wow, you needed a team of Einsteins to come up with that. It's a simple solution to a huge problem. I'll turn to this pregnancy center. That they looked around and they said, here is the problem. A lot of abortions are happening because women don't have any alternatives in front of them. Solution? Let's provide alternatives. Let's raise the money and pay for the alternatives, for those women who don't have access to the resources to be able to take advantage of any



of these alternatives. So let's put them in front of them. Let's give them alternatives and let's pay for them.

That's simple. It's profound. Or, this is totally un-spiritual. But it also hit the point really well. Anybody remember when ketchup came in glass bottles, with that thin little neck up at the top? Do you remember that when you decided to pour a little bit of ketchup on your burger, you had to engage in an exercise routine. You had to get that lid off, often you had to hit it with a knife or something to get that thing off. Then you turn it over and then you... I'm convinced that there were a lot of heart attacks that had nothing to do with the burger diet. They had to with trying to get ketchup out of those stupid bottles.

At some point, somebody, and I so wish I was in this [inaudible 00:22:46]. Somebody at the ketchup factory kind of looked around and said, "Hey. Why don't we put the lid on the bottom and make it out of plastic, so you can squeeze it? The rest of the team looked at him and went, "You're so fired." They looked at him and went, "Yeah, let's do that." Here is the thing, most problems don't require brilliance. They require courage. You hear me? Most problems from child starvation around the world, to our marriage is not what it should be to, "You know what? I don't know if I'm parenting my kids in the way God calls me to."

Most problems don't require brilliance, they require courage. Courage to point out the problem. Courage to say, I think this might be the solution even though it feels awfully simple. Listen, God doesn't need complicated to work. God just needs things to be put in his hands. Do you remember when you were a kid? I don't know if you had this experience, but I did. When we would go walking with our kids, especially when they were really little. The fun thing they would do is they would walk between Colette and I and we'd have each one on a hand. They would take like a little step and then we would swing them. You remember this?

I think it's like that with God a lot. God loves to go, "Just come on, take a step and see how far it takes you when you're in my arms." Problems don't need genius solutions. They don't brilliance. They need the courage to point the problems out and go, "I know this seem simple but I think we could make a difference with this." So what's God calling me to do to solve the problem? That's the next question. What's God calling me to do to solve this problem? Whatever it is that God laid on your heart. Whatever immediately came to your mind when I asked what the problem you're facing is, the next question is, "What I'm I gonna do?" What's God calling me to do? Because you notice, Nehemiah didn't say, "You guys need to rebuild the walls." Nehemiah said, let us rebuild the walls. That's courage. So he was all in. He was part of the solution. He wasn't speaking into it from the outside, he was getting into the middle of it. He was willing to make a commitment to it. So what is God calling me to do, as a solution to this problem?

The third ingredient that Nehemiah gives here is he answers the question why. He answers the question, "What's at stake here? What's to be gained by doing something? What's to be lost if we don't?" The way he does that is he says, "Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and we will no longer be in disgrace." The word there for disgrace is also the word for embarrassment. So in effect what Nehemiah says is, "Let us rebuild the wall so that we will no longer be an embarrassment. So the nations all around, they're looking at this and they're laughing at us, we're a joke. But here is the thing, Israel is the people of God which means then that the people of God are a joke to everyone around them. It's really God's reputation that's at stake.

So he says, "Let's rebuild the walls ultimately in order that we would not be an embarrassment to our great God." He asked the question, "Why does this matter?" So I think the question that we wrestle with is, "What's at stake if I don't address this problem? What's at stake if we don't do something about this? What's to be gained? What's to be lost?" It's very often at this point, I think that people begin to understand why this thing matters. And it's at that point that the passion God's built in us, begins to spill over into other people and they begin to go, yeah. I see it. That's significant. That counts for something.

When a wife or a husband realizes, that's what at stake if we don't invest in our marriage. That's what at stake in my job if I don't figure out how to do this. That's at stake in my community. What's at stake? Then the fourth ingredient that Nehemiah introduces is, "Why now?" Why does something have to be done now? How do you know that it's God's time? We've talked a lot about waiting for God's timing. How do we know that now is the moment? What Nehemiah does is he says I told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me.



In other words he said, the reason that we have to do it now is because God is at work. God has put his hand upon me and his gracious hand has moved the king to provide us this opportunity. Now is the time. Because God is at work. Because God is moving. That's why we can't wait, because we don't wanna be standing behind the wave as it moves on and go, "Boy, I really wish I had caught that wave." We don't wanna be standing at a distance saying, "Yeah, God was moving. I didn't get on board." He says, "Now is the time because God is at work."

What he's really doing is he's talking about something that I call confluence. Which I think is a powerful way to understand God's will for us. It's asking two questions, one is, "What is God doing in me? What's God doing inside me?" It's kind of like a cog? The other question is, "What's God doing around me? What's God doing in my circumstances in the world around me? What's God doing in me and what's God doing around me?" And the world come together, we go, "Yeah, God's at work here." God's moving, God's doing something. And that becomes the answer to the question, "Why do we need to do something about it now?"

So I think we need to wrestle with the question, "What signs can I point to that God is moving right here, right now?" Because I don't know about you but for me when somebody says, here is the problem. It's clear. Here is what we need to do. I go, okay. I get that and then they go, "And here is why it matters." I go, "Okay. I'm almost there. And then when somebody is able to say, "And here is why I know it's the right time because this is what God has done," then I'm like, "Okay. I'm with you." That seems to be exactly what happened for his people. Because they replied to Nehemiah, "Let us start rebuilding," and so they began this good work.

They're onboard. The people who had been languishing in apathy, at this moment are galvanized into action. Of course, as I said earlier, pursuing the visions that God lays in us inevitably produces opposition and that happens. But When Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, we've already heard both of those names and now we add a third, because the opposition is heating up and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. "What is this you're doing?" they asked, "Are you rebelling against the king?"

The interesting thing is they know that he's not rebelling against the king. They know about the official edicts that had been handed out. They know they can't oppose the work directly. So what they do is they work to undermine it by discouragement and doubt. The discouragement, when they say, "What is this you're doing?" Really, the rough intention of that passage in the Hebrew was kind of like. Why are you bothering with this? What's all this work that you're about? In other words, they're kind of saying, "Do you really think you're gonna make a difference here? You understand this problem has been around for a long time. People have tried to rebuild these walls and look at the state they are in. What makes you think you can do anything? What makes you think you can actually make a difference here? You're just wasting your time."

And then doubt. "Are you rebelling against the king?" They know that's not the case. But they're trying to get Nehemiah to doubt the reality of God's work in the midst of this. They want him to begin to go, "I told the king what I was gonna do. But did he really understand it? Maybe I wasn't clear enough or maybe he'll change his mind. Or maybe when he hears what we're really doing, he'll go, 'Hey, that's not what I thought you were about.'" He's trying to introduce doubt.

Nehemiah pushes through the doubt and the discouragement and he answered them by saying, "The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding. But as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it." Nehemiah pushes through the doubt and he does so by relying on three things: the person of God, the promises of God and the provision of God. He starts with the person of God. He says, "The God of Heaven will give us success." He says, "It's not that he's not the God of Jerusalem. He's not the God of this wall. He's the God of all things. He's the God of the very heavens itself. He was moving back when I was in Persia. He's moving to protect me getting here. He's moving in the midst of this. You guys are in the wrong side of this fight. You're standing up against the God of all things." He's relying on the person of God.

He also relies on the promises of God. When he talks about these enemies not having any historic right, what he's making a reference to is Jerusalem is the city of God's people, and God had given a promise to His people, that as long as they were



obedient and He would protect them in the land. They were disobedient, they had been scattered but now there is repentance and they're coming back. He says, "God Himself has promised that He would keep us safe as long as we're obeying his commands and that's what we're doing." So he's trusting in God's promises. Of course he's trusting in God's provision because he recognizes, God's the one that got him to this point. God's the one who stirred the king to allow him to come and gave him the resources, and gave him the protection.

So he pushes through opposition and we're supposed to do the same thing, and we're supposed to do it daily. We push through opposition by depending, by trusting in God's person, His promises and His provisions. Here is a great thing, Nehemiah is not alone anymore. He came to this city alone, he had protection, but he came as the only one who was willing to pour himself into this vision. But that's not what's true now. Now you have a whole city of people going, "We're with you. We're behind you. Let's do this thing that God's led us to."

Opposition comes, Nehemiah pushes through it and the people are with him. Now here's the thing, and you got to understand, this is not a health, wealth gospel kind of church where we say, "If you just have enough faith everything is gonna work out perfectly." No, no. As the book of Nehemiah continues, they have set backs and they have obstacles and they have struggles. But they're aligned with God and there is no better place to be. And Nehemiah is not alone. It maybe more than anything else, what we walk away from this is understanding this truth.

Courageous faith is contagious. Courageous faith is contagious. That when we follow Nehemiah's example and we respond to God's urgings and the visions that God lays upon us, and we engage in the work with courage that he's called us to. That courageous faith is contagious and it draws others around us. So I don't know what it is that's on your mind right now. I don't know what it is that God's laid in your heart. But I know that God has work for you. That if you follow Jesus, you follow Him into mission. There is work that God wants to do. Not just in you, He wants to do it through you.

So as you wrestle with that, just a quick recap of those four questions that I think help us to zero in on. Number one: What problem I'm I facing? What is it? Number two: What's God calling me to do, to solve the problem? Number three: Why does this matter? Why is this important? What's at stake if we don't address this? And number four: What signs can I point to that God is moving right here, right now and it's my job to get on board? I realize that some of you as soon as I say that, you're like "Oh. This is scary." Yeah. I get that. I know it.

But if you're at that moment, where you're at the edge of the roller-coaster and you know what God's calling you to do in your marriage, in your family, at work, in your neighborhood, in this church, in our country, in the world, man, don't shrink back from it. God will use you in incredible ways, if you just act with courageous faith. And that courageous will be contagious.

We're gonna sing a last song here and [inaudible 00:34:43], go ahead and stand up. Let's stand before our God and let's ask for boldness and courage. God, would you please pour courage into us so that we might act courageously. In our response to the visions that you lay upon us so that we might be your hands and feet and do your work in the world. In Jesus name, amen.

