



Revolutionary Faith

Nehemiah 2:1-9

Have you ever been about to do or say something that you knew was right, but were still afraid?

Doing what's right does not mean we won't have fear. In fact, if we step out in **revolutionary faith** like Jesus has called us to, we will most probably find ourselves in a fearful situation.

The Oxford dictionary defines "**revolutionary**" as "**involving or causing a complete or dramatic change.**" This seems to describe the kind of faith that Jesus calls His followers to and it is the kind of faith that will lead to scary situations.

Look at the first couple of verses from Neh. 2:

¹And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before.

²Therefore the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart." So I became dreadfully afraid,

I love that statement, "**So I became dreadfully afraid.**"

Here is something that I can relate to.

Nehemiah had good reason to be afraid. He was one frown away from having a very bad day. Why? It was the goal of every person, especially the wine taster, to make the king happy. It was a ruthless time history. On a whim, people were executed. The king's disinterest or displeasure often meant instant for anyone who dared to complicate the king's life.

Second, he was about to ask the monarch of the Persian Empire to reverse a written policy he had made several years earlier about Jerusalem's reconstruction. This edict was recorded in **Ezra 4:21**:

²¹Now give the command to make these men cease, that this city may not be built until the command is given by me.

Nehemiah knew it would take the power of God to get Artaxerxes to change his mind. I think I'd be afraid too.

Revolutionary faith means that you are willing to act despite your fears.

It's natural to be afraid. But notice what Nehemiah did about this fear. He acted. Revolutionary faith doesn't mean that you are not afraid. Revolutionary faith just means that you are willing to act despite your fears.

So Nehemiah, fears and all, spoke up. Notice that Nehemiah answered the question with a short, clear answer expressed as another question. He respectfully asks the king to step into his shoes or heart for a moment.

³and said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?"

The king opens the door with his reply.

⁴Then the king said to me, "What do you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven.

Nehemiah had spent 4 months preparing in prayer for this moment (and he is still even praying as he is speaking to the king). So he responded.

⁵And 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's request provokes yet another question, perhaps inspired by a look between the king and the queen. The queen could have been concerned over how long her husband was going to be in danger by the cupbearer's absence!

⁶Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), "How long will your journey be? And when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."

--Martin Luther King Jr.

Even though Nehemiah was afraid, he was also prepared. He had prayerfully prepared for this moment. He immediately laid out a plan for the king to be able to follow.

⁷Furthermore I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, ⁸and 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.

⁹Then I went to the governors in the region beyond the River, and gave them the king’s letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

Nehemiah had prayed. He knew what kind of God he served. He was prepared AND he was afraid. But he acted. He stepped out in revolutionary faith. And the result so far: Not only permission, but resources! And not only resources, but protection by the king’s word and by his men.

When God’s people live out revolutionary faith, God does the seemingly impossible. And therefore, He gets the glory--not us.

BIBLICAL FAITH

Many people confuse faith with believing something without any facts or reason. The Bible has a clear definition of faith in **Hebrews 11:**

¹Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Faith is not having some type of emotional experiences or mystical experiences. Faith is not achieved by endlessly repeating, “I want to believe. I want to believe. I want to believe.” Faith is not believing in something that is not real.

If there’s no object of your faith, it’s just faith in faith, or faith in your emotions, or faith in your experiences. That’s not biblical faith.

Without faith it is impossible to please [God].

Biblical faith believes in a very specific God with very specific character Who has made very specific promises. Biblical faith is believing to the point of action.

In fact, the Bible says without faith, we cannot please God.

Hebrews 11:6

⁶But without faith it is impossible to please Him...

Read through any of the gospels and you will find the number one priority of Jesus with His disciples was that they would trust Him.

The only time He ever rebuked them was for their unbelief. You will never read where Jesus said, “Hey, Peter, quit cussing!” Or “James, get control of that anger problem!” Now, I’m sure Peter and James both had spiritual problems, because they were just like us. But the only time the Scriptures record Jesus rebuking them was for their unbelief.

In **Luke 9:23 - 10:37** Jesus outlines His specific strategy for teaching His disciples how to live by faith.

He asked them, **“Who do people say that I am?”**

They responded, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**

Immediately after that Jesus turned to a crowd and said in **Luke 9,**

²³... “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

Jesus is saying, “Crucify your agenda and your will and take up My will and My agenda.” This requires trusting Jesus.

Then He spoke of real revolutionary faith in **Luke 9:24:**

²⁴For whoever desires to save his life [do his own thing, his own way] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake [revolutionary faith] will save it.

APPLICATION

Revolutionary faith honestly shares with God about wishes, fears, and desires, but revolutionary faith never gives ultimatums or conditions to God. Revolutionary faith doesn’t say to God, “I’ll serve you with reckless abandon and complete commitment as long as I can set the conditions and values of my service.”

When was the last time you took a revolutionary step of faith? When was the last time you took a risk for God with your time, or a relationship, or with your money, or at work, etc.?

