



Message **Transcript** God-Given Vision

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Pastor Jeff:

Father in heaven, I just thank you so much for your church, for a group of people who have gathered here today to give your son, Jesus Christ, the Lord, all the glory that is rightly due His name and for your Holy Spirit who indwells all of us who believe and who convicts us of sin, righteous and judgment of the coming kingdom.

Father, we give you praise, glory and honor for who you are and we ask Lord, for you right now to speak because we, as a people, believe that every time your word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed, that you are indeed speaking. Our prayer of this morning, Lord, is speak for we are ready to hear what you have to say.

Now, for all those who have gathered who desire to hear the Lord Jesus Christ speak directly to you, who will believe what he tells you, and who will by faith put into practice what he shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word, amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Amen. This morning, I want to talk to you about seeing clearly, about seeing clearly. It's important that we see clearly. I grew up in the Midwest and very often, when I would drive to school in the mornings, in the wintertime when it was snowy or iced over and I was parked outside, I learned to have to start my car about five minutes early and it was good if you waited until the windshield was warm and could

scrape it all off, but not me. I would wait until I got a couple half moons and I could just barely see out and that would give me all I needed to be able to make it to school on time.

I feel like, for many of us, that's how we see when it comes to the things of the Lord, that we wait and we wait, but we're not seeing clearly. We're not letting the Lord unfog the window, so to speak, so that we can see clearly out the windshield of where the Lord is taking us and what he wants us to do. It's so important that we get that message because Jesus Christ is the creator of your life. He's the creator of your soul. He's the one who sustains you and gives you life. He wants to be in relationship with you through his death on the cross, through his resurrection of the dead.

As you repent and believe in Christ, you become a new creation, but he doesn't leave you there. His desire is that you would live for Him. His desire is to speak clearly to your heart about the ways in which He's designed you and formed you and fashioned you so that you would be put on mission for His service and yet, a majority of the Christians that I meet would tell me, "I have no idea exactly what I'm supposed to be doing. I hope I'm doing it right. I hope I'm doing the right thing. I hope that Jesus is pleased with me," and yet for all of us, we know that we're going to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ to give an account for our lives.

Wouldn't it be good to know that you're living on mission? Wouldn't it be good to know that you're seeing clearly? Wouldn't it be good to know that you're taking the steps of faith that he wants you to take so that when you do see him, you hear these

words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Today, as we talk about God-given vision, I want to talk to you about five truths about God-given vision, how he gives it, and what you can expect when God gives you vision or clarity for what he wants you to do. To look at that topic this morning, we're going to be in Nehemiah, the Book of Nehemiah chapter two.

If you're joining us, we're in this series called, Built to Last and how God creates what He creates not only for this life, but for the life to come. God is building things in and through you that will stand the test of time where through your life, you will give him glory for the way in which you live. For those who lived righteous, your righteous will shine like the stars. For those who lived unrighteous, God will still get His glory in your life by showing that He, indeed, is the Lord of the universe.

As we look in chapter one, we learned that Nehemiah got a message. He got it in the month of Chislew, which is really November, December timeframe, that the walls of Jerusalem had been burned down, that the people of God were a disgrace to all the other nations and it burdened him so much that he sat down, that he wept, that he mourned, that he prayed and he fasted.

As he began to ask the Lord to remember his word, he said, "Lord, your word tells us that if we were disobedient, you would drive us away. That's what you did, but your word also said, that if we'll return to you in repentance, that you will bring us back into the land. Would you please be gracious to us?"

Then, we learned that Nehemiah was the cup-bearer to the king, which means he

served a very important position in that kingdom. He's the chief of staff. He's the head administrator of everything that the king would want. That's where our story picks up here today in chapter two.

Notice what it says, "And it came about in the month Nisan in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now, I had not been sad in his presence. So the king said to me, 'Why is your face sad though you are not sick? There is nothing but sadness in your heart. Then, I was very much afraid.'" I want to give you the first truth about God-given vision. God-given vision starts with an all consuming prayerful burden that can't stay hidden. God-given vision always starts with an all consuming, prayerful burden that can't stay hidden.

Now, in chapter two, we're in the month of Nisan, that's four months later, that's springtime, that's March, April, so for four months, what's Nehemiah been doing? For four months, he's been doing his duties with diligence. We talked about living a life of excellence. He's still been chief of staff. He's still been running the whole house for Artaxerxes.

He's been doing everything that the king wants, but in the morning when he wakes up, and when he has time away from the king and when he's departing to go to bed in the evening, what's he been doing? He's been weeping and mourning and lamenting the fact that what God wants to see from His people is not getting done and it's burdened his heart.

God sized vision and God-given vision always starts in prayer and it always starts when you begin to see the world the way that God sees the world. When you have a vision for what you want to see done, that's different than when you link arms with what God sees and what God wants to get done. It's a burden. It becomes this weight in your life. It's interesting because in that month of Nisan, when he sets the wine before the king, which was his job to be the wine taster, making sure all the food was properly tested so that the king couldn't get poisoned.

Nehemiah says of himself, "Now, I had not been sad in his presence." From Nehemiah's perspective, I'm doing my duties. I'm happy. I'm joyful. The reason this is important is his job was to keep the king happy. His job was to make sure the king was really pleased with everything he did and everybody that he tasked to do. From his perspective, I haven't been sad in his presence, but notice from the king's perspective what he says, "The king said to me, Why is your face sad though you're not sick? This is nothing but sadness in your heart.' Then, I was very much afraid."

Nehemiah says, "I was happy in his presence. I didn't let on at all that I was burdened. He never saw anything because I'm just doing my job, but the king, the one who's not a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, noticed in him sadness." Now here's what happens when you get a God-given burden, when you begin to see the world the way God sees it, there are two emotions that you can almost certainly sense that you're going to feel when you begin to look at the world God's way.

When you begin to look at the world God's way and say, "God, what are you

pleased with? Lord, is there anything in this world that disappoints you? Is there anything that grieves your heart? Is there anything that saddens you? Is there anything that upsets you? And Lord, let me have your heart for something that you created me for."

Two things are going to come to your heart as you pray over and over a period of time. One, is either sadness or number two, could be anger because you have to realize that when God looks at the world, the world is the Lord's and everything in it. This is God's world, even though the enemy and all the media want to tell you that it's not God's world, it's our world to do with whatever we want. We need to know there's not one square millimeter on this planet that doesn't belong to the Lord Jesus Christ that he doesn't care about.

When you begin to look at the world and you begin to look at it through a biblical theological lens and say, "All right, God, from your perspective right now, how do you feel about," and we begin to fill in the blank, you're going to get very saddened about some things or you may get very angry about some things that you see and it's everywhere in our culture.

I mean, unless our culture was completely living for the Lord Jesus Christ, in which case you wouldn't feel any of that, because even when we pray the Lord's prayer, what do we pray? Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Lord, you are holy. I'm coming before you because you're the perfect God. You're the one that created all things. You're the one that sustains all life. Then, what do we pray? Let your kingdom come, your divine rule the way you want things to happen, let that come

to the Earth in the same way it's being done in heaven.

Lord, here's my prayer, "Lord, we want to see Earth as a reflection of Your perfect holiness and goodness and we want to live the way You want us to live until You come and redeem this place and we see You face to face." When you begin to pray that way, you'll realize there's some things in this world that are out of alignment with what God wants. Did you hear what I said?

There's not a sector of our society where you could look, where you wouldn't see some things out of alignment with what God wants. When you get into the presence of the Lord and say, "God, give me a burden for what you created me for," He will burden your heart with something so strong you won't be able to hide it. You won't be able to suppress it. It's that analogy of the beach ball under the water. You can try to hold it down for so long, it's coming up.

Nehemiah, in his mind, was like, "I'm happy before the king. I'm just serving the king." The king looks at him, is like, "What's all with the sadness? All I see in you is sadness. Why in the world are you so sad?" Then, he was afraid. Do you know why? Because his job was to keep the king happy at the very risk of his life. Now, he's afraid because the one that has authority over his life realizes that he's sad.

There's a time in life where you got to realize, who's your authority? Is that the authority of the king over you or is it the authority of the king over you? Do you see what I'm saying? This is where Nehemiah was coming to a place where he was beginning to pray about what he saw broken down and what he saw broken down in

his generation was the wall back in Jerusalem that it physically was torn down, that the people were a reproach when God had chosen Israel to be a light to all the nations and now, they're a reproach among all the nations and it burdened his heart because it's not what God intended for Israel and it's not what God wanted and he's got to do something about it.

It always is going to start with an all consuming peripheral burden that can't stay hidden. If you pray this way, there's going to come a time in your life where you're like, "I know this is needed, but who am I? Why me?" Sometimes, when people begin to get that burden from the Lord, they get upset with other Christians because they try to bring it to the attention of others that somebody needs to do something about this.

Pastor, the church needs to do something about this. Friend, you need to do something about this and they get frustrated because not everybody's as passionate as they are. Do you know why? Because God gave you the burden, because God wants you to take a step of faith to fix it, and you can't put what God's put in your heart on somebody else.

For me, when I was 18 years old, I came to know the Lord Jesus Christ in a personal real way because somebody shared the gospel with me. I tell you that they shared the gospel with me because when they shared the gospel with me, I told them I already know this. Then, they said, "I don't think you do." Then, they begin to share with me what the gospel really was, which totally offended me because I said, "If what you're saying is true, that means not only am I going to hell, but everybody I hang out with is going to hell." They said, "Then, you heard it right."

I was mad because I was a good person and I went to church and I did the right things, but through the truth that I was told, it was that week that I repented of my sin and placed my faith and trust in Jesus. I've been eternally grateful. I'm totally thankful for that because I know it changed my entire eternity. Then, I begin to pray.

When I was in college and God was moving in my life and I wanted to do different things, these burdens begin to burden in my heart for the lost. How many other people don't know that truth? How many other people that go to church are on their way to hell just like you were? How many other people think that when they meet Jesus Christ, they're going to hear, "Hey, welcome in. I love you so much. You came to church. You got baptized. You gave money. You joined a small group. You served in kids. You did all this, so therefore I'm going to let you in."

That's what I thought. I didn't realize that until I repented of my sin and wanted to turn from it and made Jesus Christ the Lord of my life, that I wasn't a Christian regardless of what I called myself, and I began to get burdened because as I looked around and would talk to friends and talk to people that went to church, there are a lot of people that even go to church, let alone those outside the church that don't know the Lord. Then, the Lord would take me to scriptures like broad is the way and wide is the road that leads to destruction and many are on it, but narrow is the road and small is the gate that leads to life and few people find it.

Everywhere I begin to read the Bible, I begin to see that not many people know Jesus. Even though in church we say, everybody goes to church knows Jesus, and

even those that don't go to church, he's a loving God. He'll probably take them too.

When I would read my Bible, I was burdened by the fact that so comparably few knew Jesus and all eternity started weighing on my shoulders. Somebody's got to do something about this.

All along, the Lord was pointing to me and I was thinking, "Not me." I mean, I'm going to live my life because here's what we like to do when it comes to vision, we like to build our fortune. We like to build our fortress. We like to build our relationships. We like to build our job security, our relationship security, our family security, our marriages, our homes, our political affiliations.

Let's build all that and then, if there's still room for Jesus in the center, we love Him, if you can squeeze in, it's great. Just don't mess up my fortress and that's why we don't see clearly because until we hold our lives with open hands and say, "Everything I have is yours and all that I am is for you and you created me, and so Lord, I want to love what you love and I want to hate what you hate, and I want to burden for what you put me on this world to do, and since you're my designer and you're the author and you're the creator of my life, I want to be able to stand before you and be able to say, with all authenticity to the best of my ability, knowing I failed multiple times, but to the best of my ability, I know that I tried to live my life in a way that was pleasing for you."

That's where most of us get it wrong. Most of us think that vision is something that's out there. Vision is something that's in here and it's been part of you really from when you were conceived. It's how God made you. If I spent time with you, I could probably figure out what it is because you're going to start speaking about it because

that's what happens next.

I mean, notice what Nehemiah does. It starts with this all consuming prayerful burden that can't stay hidden. He's not going to tell the king. He's not going to tell anybody, but notice the second part of God-given vision. It grows by publicly sharing what you believe God wants to do through you. God-given vision grows by publicly sharing what you believe God wants you to do, what I believe God wants me to do.

When he was terrified, he said, "I said to the king," he was respectful, he said, "Let the king live forever. I honor your kingship, but there's another king in my life I'm going to honor more because when I'm about ready to say may go against what you want to hear. Let the king live forever." He said, "Why should my faith not be sad when the city, the place of my father's tomb, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire? Why wouldn't I be sad where I come from, all my ancestry, all my heritage, the gates are broken down. It's horrible there. I'm completely saddened by it."

Then, the king said to me, "What would you request? What do you want?" Notice what it says, "So I prayed to the God of heaven." Now, keep in mind when he says, "So I prayed to the God of heaven," this is not the first time he prayed. Most people miss this. If God's got a vision for my life and when it's time, I'll pray. No, no. He's praying because he realizes by saying what he's about to say, he might lose his very life by saying it. He's breathing a breath prayer to God, "We've been praying for four months. You're the one that put this burden on my heart. Lord, here it's about to come

out. Just protect me, God." I mean, that's basically what he's praying.

It's not his first prayer. He's been ongoing praying for a period of time and now he's going to pray to the God of heaven saying, "All right, here it comes. Let these words be truthful. Let me say it the way you want them said. He says this again respectfully, "So I pray to the God of heaven, and I said to the king, 'If it please the king, and if your servant, that's Nehemiah, that's me, has found favor before you,'" what's he say? "Send me to Judah to the city of my father's tombs that I may rebuild it."

What's he saying? I'll do it. What do you want me to do? He doesn't say send a group of dispatch soldiers to build the army for my friends because I love them. He doesn't say, use your resources to go help somebody else. He says here, if you would be so kind and if you would really be willing, just let me go and do this because the burden is so strong on my heart, I just can't take it any more.

Here's the truth, once you start speaking about what God's doing on the inside, it just gets bigger and bigger. It just begins to mushroom. It just begins to balloon. It's one thing to keep it down. I remember in college, when I would go hear people speak and I would be sitting there and I tried to get up front so I could hear clear because back there, it's tougher to hear than it is right here.

I would get close and I want to hear, but I didn't understand how the word of the Lord worked because I didn't grow up in a church that taught the word of the Lord and I wasn't told that the word of the Lord speaks to you because the word of the Lord is

living and active. All I remember thinking is when I was sitting there, "Who told them about me?" That's what I remember thinking. Did my campus Crusade for Christ director go tell them, "Go talk to Jeff, he's going to be sitting right down there," because it felt like they were looking at me talking to. I didn't know how the word of God worked.

All I knew is every time I was hearing it proclaimed, it was, "Jeff, go share the gospel. Jeff, give your life to me. Jeff, go share the gospel. Jeff, this is your calling." I didn't know what that even meant. It was just consuming and building. Then, I started to talk about it.

When I began to talk about it, friends of mine and people in ministry of mine would say, "Well, that's the Lord. He's calling you to preach. He's calling you to... I'm like, "I didn't even know what a calling to preach was. I never even heard anything like that." I'm like, "What do you mean by that like on a Sunday school or something? I'm going to go do my job and then I come to church on the weekends and," "No, he's telling you your whole life needs to be that."

Now, I don't know how you think, but I know how I used to think, because I grew up going to a Lutheran grade school and I went to a Methodist church, so I was kind of doubly protected. At the Lutheran grade school I was at, they used to have people come from the time I was in kindergarten at the age of five and there were missionaries and they would talk about what they did.

Well, these missionaries were from New Guinea and they would come and it was

long before the days of PowerPoint, remember those overhead projectors with slides and stuff like that, and then they had slides that they put up on the screen and they would show these slides and these different things. It was all of these people that I thought were very poorly dressed, like the missionaries themselves, very poor, I mean, even as a five-year-old, I'm like, "I don't want to be like them." Then, they were outside around a campfire and I don't like outdoors and they were cooking iguana and they were talking about how great it was.

Isn't it interesting that even as a five-year-old, I knew this, Jesus good, just don't get too close or you may end up wearing weird clothes in New Guinea, eat iguana around a fire. Isn't that the heart of many of us as Christians? I love God and I want what he wants. I just don't want to go all in with God because If I go all in with God, then I'm going to have to become this false idea of what I see in somebody else. Here's the truth, God just wants you to be you and go all in with him and he'll design your whole life the way he's designed you to be. That's the joy.

As Nehemiah starts speaking about this, that's why God put Nehemiah on the planet was to go back and rebuild the wall. That's what he was there for. That's what he was doing. That was his God given appointment because he was so burdened by it, he couldn't stop.

Now, I know my wife well enough because I've spent more time talking to her than anybody else, her burden is for children that can't speak up for themselves. Whether it's the unborn or a young kid that gets abused, drives my wife up a wall. It's her burden. She can't help but just spend all day praying for kids. It's what she does.

It's her burden.

For me, it was the gospel, but I'll tell you this, the more it became the gospel, then it got broader than the gospel. It wasn't just the gospel, then it was church because the more I started speaking about the gospel, the more I began to think about, "Well, why didn't I learn this in church?" I'm not saying that it wasn't taught. I'm saying I never heard it. I'm saying I never heard an invitation for the gospel.

I was never challenged in my sin to repent and trust Jesus. I was just told I was great, which is nice to hear except when it's not true because my Sunday school teachers told me I was great and the pastor said that I was great, and my parents thought I was great, and had I died at that time, the only person that wouldn't have thought I was great was Jesus because I never repented and trusted him and it burdened me.

Then, I started to thinking about the church and God began to show me over the course of 15 years as I was having this love-hate relationship with the church and served on different church staffs and could articulate and point out all the things that are wrong with church. Can I just tell you this, it's easy to point out from a distance what's wrong with anything. You can point out what's wrong with church. You can point out what's wrong with your favorite sports teams. You can point out what's wrong with politics. You can point out what's wrong with education.

Anybody can point out anything. It's more difficult to say, "Therefore, I'm going to get in and fix it. I'm going to be part of the solution rather than just run my mouth." Over

15 years, is what I realized as it came to the end of myself, was not like I hate church. It was this burden God was putting on my heart. I don't hate church. I love church and I'm burdened by the fact that so many people that go to church don't get to see the Lord Jesus Christ celebrate. Don't get to worship his name. Don't get to hear the word of God preach. Don't get the true gospel.

How many people go to church for their whole life and falsely believe that they're converted when they're not converted only to meet Jesus and hear these horrible, sickening words depart from me, worker of iniquity for I never knew you.

That pains me. Well, Pastor Jeff, you talk about hell all the time. I don't talk about hell all the time. I talk about hell because it's a real place where real people go every single day. If you haven't repented of your sin and come to Christ, that's where you're going to spend your eternity. I love you so much to tell you that Jesus Christ did not create you for hell. He created hell for the devil and his angels and for any wicked human being that refused to repent and trust him, and yet so often in churches, so often, nobody tells people about their sin. Nobody tells people to repent.

People say, "Well, you just need to trust Jesus. Keep your sin. Do all your same sinful lifestyle, just trust Jesus. Friends, the devil believes in Jesus. The demons believe in Jesus and they shudder. It's not about you giving cognitive, mental ascent to the fact that you believe Jesus died on the cross, it's turning from your sin and giving your very life to him in every way. That's salvation.

I mean, I read this to you last week and I felt like I needed to read it again. In

case you weren't here last week, this Bible verse is an equal opportunity offender, but I don't hear people teach this way and it bothers me in my soul, not because I want to make you feel bad, because I don't want to make you feel bad, but if I were a doctor and you had cancer, I wouldn't be a good doctor if you had cancer, and I didn't tell you, you had cancer.

If you had a deadly disease and I didn't tell you because I didn't want to hurt your feelings, I wouldn't be good at what I did, and I wouldn't be a good pastor if I didn't tell you that if you have sin, you're going to die in your sin and go to hell. I mean, hear this from one Corinthians chapter six starting in verse nine, "Or do you not know?" Friends, are you not aware of this? I mean, you need to make note of this, that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Unrighteous people don't inherit it. I've been to so many funerals of officiated many from pagan, unrighteous people, and everybody thinks their pagan unrighteous friend is going to heaven. "Oh, he is up in heaven right now probably having a cocktail. Oh, he's probably playing golf." No, he's in hell all by himself wishing he had repented and trusted Christ.

That's reality. Don't be deceived. Unrighteous people don't enter the kingdom of heaven. Then, he goes and gives a list. It's not exhaustive. He just highlights a few sins or do you not know neither fornicators. If you're living together and you're not marrying, you're not Christian.

You're not going to heaven, according to the Bible, not me, I take into my

kingdom, nor idolaters people that put somebody ahead of the Lord Jesus Christ, nor a feminine, nor homosexuals, practicing lesbian, homosexual, bisexual, gay, queer, name the alphabet soup that you want to name, anybody that's practicing sex in a way that God didn't design, they're not entering the kingdom of heaven. Neither thieves people that rob each other, or the covetous people that are hedonists, pleasure seekers always involved in materialism, nor drunkards, nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Now, why doesn't this get preached? Because people might not come back to your church, but that's not necessarily a bad thing because what is a good thing is the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment and even if you leave church, say, I'm never coming back here again, the Holy Spirit will continue to pound on your heart saying, "That's you. That's you. That's you. That's you."

You can lie to yourself and say, "I'm going to heaven," because here's the deal, I saw this little tweet this week. I shouldn't have seen it, but I did, about some woman in politics that was talking about Christians and saying, "Well, there's difference between Christians and Christian nationalists, which there's not," but she was saying, Christian nationalists believe, and it's really dangerous to believe that all authority, Christian nationalists believe all their authority and moral authority and everything comes from an almighty God through his word and nothing else. I said, "Amen. Then, I guess I'm a Christian nationalist."

There's only one kind of Christian that's born again that has repented of their sin and trusted Jesus Christ. They've left their sin and they've come to him and they

believe in the authority and are interested in the word of God, and if that's not you, you can plaster whatever name you want to call yourself, but you're not Christian. Don't be deceived. Nobody like this enters the kingdom of heaven.

"Why Jeff, I'm mad at you that you wouldn't let people in." I'm not standing at the gate you all. I'm not setting the rules of salvation. I'm just proclaiming and telling you the truth that nobody like that gets in, but notice this, if you're a believer, you'll see your name in those texts because he says such were some of you, I see me in those texts. I mean, Jesus said do not murder, but you've heard Him said, do not murder, but if I tell you, if you speak ill of your brother, you've committed murder in your heart. Jesus said, don't commit adultery. I tell you if you look lustfully upon a woman, you've committed adultery in your heart.

I mean, Jesus points out the commandments in such a way that all of us are sinful and fallen short. Such were some of you, but what happened? But you were washed, you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the spirit of our God. That's salvation. Salvation doesn't get mad. The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. It's a stumbling block. It angers them, but to those of us who are being saved, it's the power of God.

Praise God that he showed me my sin. Praise God that he showed me I was dead. Praise God that he showed me it wasn't my good works. Praise God, he showed me it's not about my morality. Praise God, he showed me I needed Jesus Christ as my Lord. Praise God. I'm not offended by the gospel. I'm proud of the

gospel. Amen?

This is what was being birthed in Nehemiah's heart. He had spent four months in the presence of God. He had had a burden for the wall being burned down for God's people being a mockery and it's one thing when something in the world bothers you. It's another thing when it bothers you because it bothers God. You say, "Who's my king?" The more you speak about it, the more real it becomes.

Once you speak about it, then you get to number three when it becomes that real and that's this, God-given vision invites help. It invites help by clearly articulating your needs to accomplish his purposes. It invites help by clearly articulating your needs to accomplish his purposes. Once you've spent time with the Lord, if it's really a God-given vision or dream or he's birthing something in your heart, then you know, this is what I must do and this is what I'm going to need. Anytime it's a God-given vision, you can't do it by yourself. You just can't. There's no way.

By the way, I don't want to paint the wrong picture here that there's one person that gets a vision, and you get a vision, and you get a vision and you... Sometimes there's certain people God uses to birth a vision, and then there's hundreds or hundreds of thousands that come along and say, "That's my heart too and I'm in." You don't have to sit there and be like, "What's the vision?" It's okay. What's burdening you and where do you get involved with where you see God at work doing that thing? This is what happens. Nehemiah is now going to tell the king what he's actually going to need to get help because he's not just praying. He's ready. He's like, "If this happens, if the opportunity presents, I'll give my life to this." I'll go do this.

Notice what he says in verse six, "Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, so it was king and the queen together, 'How long will your journey be and when will you return?' It pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time, and I said to the king, 'If it pleases the king, let letters be given me for the governors of all the provinces beyond the river, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah, and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress, which is by the temple for the wall of the city and for the house, which I will go.'"

What's he tell the king? He's like, "Hey, if you let me go, I'll go." He's like, "Well, what do you need? How long are you going to be gone?" Nehemiah is like, "This is how long I'm going to be gone. I'm going to need this much time." What he's ask the king for? Time. This is how much time I'm going to need. How long is this going to take? It's going to take this long. He's thought about how long it's going to take, but he doesn't stop there.

He's like, "And if it pleases you," okay, I mean, this would be great, "If you could write letters so that when I travel through all these foreign areas and countries, I would have your authority to go through without being stopped. That'd be great, and oh, by the way, because we're going to be building a wall and rebuilding the whole city, if it'd be okay for you to tap Asaph on the shoulder and tell him we need timber, we need all the wood so that we can go do that, that'd be cool too." What's he not afraid to do? He's not afraid to ask. Many times when God burdens us, we're afraid to ask because

we don't want to bother anybody else.

I remember when I was in college and God was burdening my heart with ministry. Even after college, I started working for an insurance company, and as I was working for that insurance company, there came a day where it was overwhelming to me. I can't do this anymore. I can't be in the life insurance business because God's calling me to the life assurance business, and I care more about who's going to meet Jesus alive than I do about how to give money to those who are surviving. Great career, but it wasn't for me because my three best appointments I ever had was when we put the life insurance aside and we started talking about Jesus. I'm like, "I could do this every day."

I remember the day that I quit, because I sat down with my supervisor and we were in his office, and I remember praying before I went in because I'd been praying for months and I was to a place where I'd run out of money, because I'd been kind of waiting to have this conversation. I was telling him, "Lord, don't let him turn the tables on me." I was only 24 I think at the time, and I just didn't know if I was going to have the right words and just let me say what I need to say.

I remember going in and he got this stack of books. He's like, "You ready? Ready to make a run for number one?" I said, "What do you mean?" He's like, "Well, right now you're number two in our company for salesmen, and if you up your game just a little bit, you could be the number one salesman in our company by the end of the sales year." I said, "Oh, that's cool." I said, "But before we talk about that, I'm quitting today."

We sat down and began this conversation, and I remember just telling him very clearly, "I can't be a Christian anymore and not do what Christ is telling me to do, and Christ is telling me that I need to go tell people about him." He asked a question, he's like, "How are you going to fund that?" I said, "I don't know." This was 1993. He said, "Do you realize that in five years, you'll be making 250 to \$500,000 a year?" I said, "Yeah, but I'll be just as miserable as I am right now if I don't go do what Jesus is calling me to do." He's like, "How are you going to get funded?" "I don't know." He's like, "Where are you going to go?" "I don't know that either, but it feels really, really good for me to tell you that today."

That was it. I was done. I still know that guy. We're still friends, but here's what I knew, there was a burden in my heart that was so big that I couldn't keep doing what I was doing and get to where God wanted me to go. We had to have that conversation. For some of us, we've been burdened for a long time by the Lord, but we've built our life with all these bricks and all these different things that now there's no way.

Now, here's the truth, if you follow the Lord and go all in with Jesus, he will give you the most abundant life that you can possibly have. Then, you begin to ask people for what you need. Now, I had to ask people for what I needed because now, money had run out in the bank and now, I'm going into ministry and now, the rubber's meeting the road, and I remember I had to raise to go to this training I needed. I needed \$3,500. At the time, it may have well have been a million. I was about \$3,300 shy of the 3,500. I have \$200 in my bank account.

I began to talk to some people in ministry and they encouraged me. They said, "Well, Jeff, just write a letter to the Christian people that you know, tell them what you're doing, tell them why you feel compelled to do it, ask them to give to you. I remember thinking, "I ain't doing that. There's no way I'm going to ask them to fund me. I'll go work for them. I'll go earn it. I'm not going to do that." They said, "Well, that's your pride." I said, "Pride?" I said, "I want to work for it. That's pride. Why don't you humble yourself?"

If God's really calling, why don't you ask God's saints to invest in it, because two things will happen, number one, it'll be a blessing for them to see what God's calling you to do, and number two, it'll be a blessing to you to see if God's really in it, that they're going to fund what you're doing.

Begrudgingly, I wrote a letter, got addresses of my parents' friends and some of my friends, and sent this thing off. Even as I was dropping it in the mailbox praying, I was kind of gulping deep, "This is embarrassing," and sent it off. Well, wouldn't you know, the week before I was ready to go, I was \$200 shy. All this money had come in. It blew me away, writing thank you notes and telling everybody, I can't believe that you would do this, \$25, \$10, \$50, \$100. It all came in and I was down to \$200. I had two guys in my Bible study that promised me they would give me \$100 each. I'm like, I'm home.

I drove down to the Bible study, which was at the campus that I was at, 90 miles away at the University of Illinois for my final one with them. I got there that night and

wouldn't you know it, one of the two guys that promised me \$100 didn't show up. I'm like, "Do I call them, and be like, "Hey, are you coming?" I was like, "I don't know." The Bible study ended. The Bible study leader wrote me a check for \$100, and then my friend called and he was like, "Hey, I forgot to come." He goes, "I got to get you that money." I'm like, "Yeah, don't worry about it." He's, "No, no, no, I'm coming."

He comes over, he writes a check, and I remember I took both checks, put it in my pocket, got in the car, was backing out, and I'm like, okay, this is a 90-mile trip. Those of you don't know me. I'm not a detailed person at all. I better check and make sure there's signatures, dates, all that kind of thing. I pulled out the checks and I looked at it \$100. I flipped it over and I'm like \$1,000. I'm like, "Whoa, whoa, wait, a thousand?"

I put the car back in park and went back in the house and I'm like, "Hey, hey, hey, I only needed 100 bucks." He's like, "I know." He goes, "But I believe so much in what you're doing. I believe God's going to have something for you. You're going to find somewhere to use that. Just take it. It doesn't mean anything to me. Just take the money and go." I was like, "You got to be kidding me right now." God did over an abundant, and I've seen him do that over and over and over and over and over and over again.

Now, here's why God does that, God does it when you're rightly related to him, when you're rightly related to him, when you've oriented your life around him, when you said, "God, give me a burden for what you want to do," and when you're asking God to bless, not so that you can receive, but so that you can be a blessing to others.

The prosperity gospel is wrong because the prosperity gospel ends with you. It's a close-fisted deal. I'm going to give to God so that God gives to me, but a prospering God says, "I'm going to give to God so that God resources me so I can be a greater resource to other people." It's not about me. That's a huge, huge difference.

This is what you see in Nehemiah, he's not afraid to ask. This is where God's taking me. This is what I'm doing. I'm speaking on behalf of my king. If you take my life, I'm okay with that because I know I'm doing what Jesus wanted me to do, but if you don't, here's what I need help with, would you help me? Notice this, the King grants his request.

I mean, here's what you'll find as we've already begun to allude to, God-given vision surprises the faithful with unexpected and abundant blessings. God-given vision always surprises the faithful with unexpected and abundant blessings. He wanted time. He wanted authority. He wanted resources. He's going to get it all. Notice this, "And the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me."

In the Old Testament, you'll read words like this, "And the Lord was with him, and the Lord was with him, and the Lord was with him." It doesn't just mean that he stood right there because the Lord is everywhere. The Lord in some ways with us all, but when it says the Lord was with him, it means the Lord favor was on him because why? Because he was submitting himself to the Lordship of Christ.

He was saying, "Lord, I want to do whatever you want me to do, and wherever you take me and wherever it goes and however it leads, as long as I'm doing it your

way, I want what you want." When people do that, then God can pour out his resources. When churches do that, then God can pour out his resources. That's what God is looking for.

He's looking for a group of people that would say, "Lord, we just want to be about you. We don't have the solutions, but you do and we want to submit ourselves to you because we want to see you change our world. Let your kingdom come, let your will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven. Give me a burden that's so strong I can't hold it in. Let me talk about that burden. Let me step into faith with that burden, and let me expect your supernatural blessings for that burden."

If I had time this morning and I don't, I could stand up here literally, literally easy for the next two hours and tell you story, upon story, upon story, upon story, upon story, upon story, upon story of God's blessing in my life since letting him lead my life. Friends, the enemy will lie to you and tell you these lies. If you go all in with Jesus, he's going to rob you of that. You'll never get married, you'll never have friends, you'll never have money. You'll never enjoy your life. You'll never, no.

If you go all in with Jesus, not only will he resource you with what you need, he'll give you over abundant blessings of giving you little touches to say, "See, I saw you. I know you like that. I know you like that. I'm blessing you." When you hold it with open hands, you know it's not for you. It's just to enjoy as it passes through. I love my life because I love my God, and I want to do whatever my God wants me to do...

Congregation:

Amen. Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

... and I pray I always will because it's not stagnant, it's dynamic. Notice this, not only does he get the time he asked for and the authority of the letters he asked for, and the resources of timber he asked for, but notice verse nine, "Then, I came to the governors of the provinces beyond the river and gave them the King's letters."

He gave them the letters. "Now, the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen." Not only did he get time, not only did he get authority, not only did he get resources, he got a cavalry. He got armed guards going with him. He didn't ask for that. He got over, above and beyond what he asked to make sure that he arrived safely to where he was going. That's God's good hand in the life of a believer to make sure that you get where you need to go. That's who our God is. That's what our God does.

It's good that we know this because so often we want to do this in reverse order. If God takes me to the place I need to go and he resources me with everything I need and I feel really good about it and other people are helping me, then, I will step out in faith. Friends, that's not faith. That's not faith. You step when you're burdened. You speak when you're burdened. You go when you're burdened and God is the one who brings it all together. It never gets easier. It never gets easier because we can't see what God can see.

All we can feel is what God can feel, and we can read in His word what God is

about, but we don't get to see the finished product. I remember Kim and I having several discussions when we were leaving our ministry, when we were going around preaching around the world to come to Denver to plant a church and questions that came up like this, "How's God going to provide? Where's our building going to be? Who are the people that are going to come?" All these different things.

My answer was always so clear, "I don't know. God does." I just don't know, but I'm so burdened by this that if we don't move to Denver, we're being disobedient to the Lord. Even if we move and it fails, I'm totally fine with that because then, God's trying to build something else in our hearts that we don't know anything about, and he's going to take us in a different place, but we got to go. We just got to go. I know we got to go. I don't know why.

Now, I look back over my shoulders 13 years ago, I'm like, "How could we not have come?" Because I see all the miraculous blessings that God's done, from meeting in an apartment building to then getting enough resources, to meet at a school and have an office, to then being able to buy our South campus, and now our North campus, and now the one in Westminster, and now down in Colorado Springs, and now to start a school, which by the way, just so you know, the hand of the Lord is all over the school because I've watched Him start the church and I'm watching Him start the school and the hand of God is all over Brave Academy. It's awesome. Yeah. Praise the Lord for that.

He's doing stuff with our messaging through the radio, and he's doing stuff as we, because he's in it and there's been other things we've tried to do. He's not in it. We've

learned as does it seem to be what he's doing. That's okay. That's how we learn. Don't be afraid to take a step of faith for the Lord. He will let you know if he's in it or not. You'll sense his peace. You'll sense his joy. You'll sense all those things.

I could tell you about my time in seminary. I could tell you about my time in ministry churches. I could spend all day on this, but you'll be surprised how faithful God is with unexpected and abundant blessings when you do it his way, when you're not looking for it. You're not saying, "You owe me." It's just God, the fact you would even use me to do this, praise your name. I would do it no matter what.

Then, it leads us to the fifth one. You got to get this one. We'll talk about it next week because when you hear this, it's like, "All right, I'm in. Let's go. What's so hard about this?" Number five. God-given vision always faces immediate and ongoing opposition. It faces immediate and ongoing opposition. Notice this, "When Sanballat the Horonite," unfortunately named, "and Tobiah the Ammonite, heard about it. It was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel."

What was it that displeased them? What displeased them is what God wanted to get done in the world, they didn't want to see happen. When we say it displeased them, it means it angered them, because when God wants to get something done in the world, Satan will always have a group of people rise that don't want to see get done, what God wants to get done in this world, always.

Name the issue. God is for life on both sides. He's for life in utero and he's for life at the end. You stand for that and you watch who rises up against it. It's not that

they're rising up against you, they're rising up against the God that wants that done, right? I mean, you could pick any issue, pick the gender issue of two genders, male and female, and people rise up. They're not rising up against you. They're rising up against the God that created two genders, a male and female.

I mean, there will always be opposition both inside and outside so the church, and boy, I wish I could tell you it's way more painful with those outside. It's always more painful with those inside. Some of you, when you step out in your vision, you're going to experience opposition from your family, from your spouse, from your kid. Jesus said, "I did not come to bring peace. I came to bring a sword." Why are you so surprised?

If I had another two hours, I could stand up here and tell you about all the opposition I've faced over the last 34 years, both inside and outside the church, and those inside have always been more painful, always, but just don't be surprised as though something strange is happening to you, because not everybody wants to see God's work get done.

Here's the truth, God will prevail. He will. He will. The enemy lies and said, "That's never going to happen." The enemy's going to lie to that Nehemiah and tell him, "You're never going to get that wall built." "Oh, he's going to do it in 52 days." The enemy's going to lie to you and say, "Well, they'll never change the abortion issue. They'll never change the gender thing.

I mean, look at our college campuses. Look at all, it's never going to... Says

who? Not God. Who you listening to? Well, the church of Jesus Christ. Can't really change in nature. Says who? Friends, I believe with my whole heart, if the church of Jesus Christ rises up and does what it's supposed to do, the nation will be changed. I do.

Here's what burdens me. Here's what burdens me. There's too many people in church that don't want Jesus, that just want entertainment. I saw some videos this last week. I mean, you talk about having a passion or an anger or sadness all the same time. It was, I mean, watching some church on Super Bowl Sunday, take a Bible that had a football case, which is fine, by the way, but then put that case down on the ground and watch pastors kick the Bible in church? Are you kidding me right now? That's not Christian. That's blasphemous.

Congregation:

Yes.

Pastor Jeff:

It's the word of God. What are we doing? Why do we have to succumb to the lowest base denominator to trick people to come in, to give them Jesus instead of just giving them the full glory of Jesus Christ and let him experience his grace? We don't need to do it any other way. Whatever your burden is going to come out. You can't hide it. God is faithful.

He's been building something in your life, all your life to either have you lead it or participate with a group of people that are leading it or to join forces to see it done,

because no matter what it is, and this is the thing about vision, it's hard to articulate sometimes, because it's like, I don't know. I just feel that I need to help with... I can't even, I don't need, it's okay. That's vision.

I don't see it clearly yet, but something's got to be done about that. I know something's got to be done about that, and the reason I feel that is because put that burden in my heart and it aligns with his word. When you have that, don't you ever let go of that because that's what you're going to stand before him someday and give an account for with your life.

There's nothing wrong with being in the financial service industry. Some of my best friends are in the financial service industry. There would have been something wrong with me being in the financial service industry because it's not what I was created for. There's myriads of opportunities that you can have.

Women, can I just say something to you real quick, because I heard this from one of my daughter's friends recently, I said this, "I just want to stay home and be a mom someday." I'm like, "Just? What are you talking about just? There's no greater calling in the world for you than being a wife and a mother and be it, right? Go for it. I'm championing that."

Whatever's burdened in your heart, that's what God's championing in you to be the fullness. When you stand before him, you'll never stand before him perfect on your own, you'll stand before him perfect because of the blood of Jesus that covered you. Then, to the best of your ability, you'll say, "Lord, with what little you gave me, whether

there was one talent, two talent, five, I tried my best under your authority to give them all back to you so that when I stood in your presence, I would hear these words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

God's not asking you to figure out your life. He's wondering if you'll submit your life to His and let Him lead your life. That's it. If you'll submit your life to Him and let him lead your life, He'll use you for greatness. Amen. Amen. Would you stand with me?

Father in heaven, we come before you because you're a good God. Lord, I know there's some here today that might say, as I'm listening to the word, I don't know that I'm a Christian because I'm steeped in my sin and I don't have any conviction of it. Lord, if that's anybody that's listening to my voice today, convict them of their sin, show them that they're not yours. Show them that they're dead, and give them the grace to believe that you're the son of God. If that's you here today, you can confess your sin.

Say, Lord, I know I'm a sinner, but I believe you're the Lord. I confess you as my Lord and Savior. Come into my life. I want to turn from my sin and turn to you. If you are a believer, would you let the Lord percolate, marinate, stimulate the things going on in your heart so that what he's created you for, would be done for his glory? Lord, we give you all the glory, all the honor and all the praise for all you're going to do, and it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen and amen. Can we give God praise for his work this morning?