



BECOMING A PERSON OF EXTRAORDINARY INFLUENCE

By David Schnittger



We have recently been reminded of the power of one in the life of Nigel Farage. Mr. Farage, until recently was the president of the Independence Party in the United Kingdom. For 25 years, he has been a Eurosceptic and rallied the people of England to vote for Brexit on June 23. What an extraordinary influence Nigel Farage has had on the United Kingdom. Nigel's tireless efforts have not only delivered England from E.U. tyranny, but may also be the first brick out of the wall for the toppling of the E.U. entirely!

We live in extraordinary times, and such times call for Christians of extraordinary influence in pursuit of their callings. We are told in Galatians 6:10, in regard to this calling, "As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good unto all, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." God calls each of us as believers to live for God and for the good of others.

My challenge for you, dear friend in Christ, is that you would seek to become a person of exceptional influence. Seek to have an influence that is disproportionate. Do not settle for a life of mediocrity, a life of self-pleasing. 2 Corinthians 5:15 states, "And he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." We live in *extraordinary*

times, when the forces of evil and deception are coming to a climax as we are propelled toward the end of the church age and the soon coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver His Church from the horrors of the Tribulation. These are *extraordinary times* that cry out for *extraordinary people*.

I would like to examine the *character traits* that comprise a life of extraordinary influence, based on the life of Nehemiah, as seen primarily in Nehemiah chapters one and two.

Commitment

Nehemiah was committed to God and to God's people. He was part of the remnant of Judah that survived the Babylonian captivity and was now serving as cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia. Nehemiah's commitment to the remnant in Judah is apparent in the question he asked: "That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem" (Neh 1:2). If he had not cared, he would not have asked. This *commitment* led to a *crisis*.

Crisis

The crisis came when word arrived from Judah that the remnant that had returned to Jerusalem were in great affliction and reproach because the wall was broken down and the gates were burned. These conditions presented a *danger* to God's people and a *reproach* to God's honor! Listen to the report that was brought to Nehemiah by Hanani, one of his brethren:

The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire (Neh 1:3)

Commitment to God and His people will inevitably lead to a crisis. You can either ignore it or use it to motivate you to action. If you respond positively, you now have a *cause*.

Cause

Notice how Nehemiah responds to the news: "And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven" (Neh 1:4). Nehemiah responded to the crisis God's people were experiencing with weeping, mourning, fasting and praying for DAYS! He did not ignore the crisis, or sceptically reject the accuracy of the report. He did not think that he was powerless to affect the crisis, either by his prayers or his actions. This cause can be a **need** to be met or an **injustice** that needs to be corrected. In Nehemiah's case, it was both. This *cause* generated in Nehemiah a *conviction*.

Conviction

As Nehemiah prayed, day and night, about the plight of his brethren, this cause became a *conviction*. God convicted Nehemiah that he must offer *himself* to be part of God's answer. We see this in his extended prayer of Nehemiah 1:5-11. Let me quote selectively from these verses:

. . . I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments. Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servant, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned . . . O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

Nehemiah was asking that God would grant him favor in the sight of Artaxerxes, king of Persia and the most powerful man in the world. This conviction, that God would hear and answer his prayer, generated *courage*.

Courage

As conviction grew in Nehemiah's heart that he should offer himself to meet the need, he prayed for *courage* to approach the world's most powerful ruler with an audacious plan.

After months of praying and planning, God gave Nehemiah the opportunity to present his plan to his boss, King Artaxerxes. One day, Artaxerxes noticed that the normally happy Nehemiah was uncharacteristically sad:

Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what doth thou make request? So I

prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, If it please the king and thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? And when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

God miraculously granted the request and Nehemiah travelled to Jerusalem with the necessary supplies for rebuilding. However, Nehemiah needed one more character trait in order to have an *extraordinary influence* in his day: *Constancy*



Constancy

As we read the following chapters in the book of Nehemiah, we see that he often experienced the need for constancy, because of challenges within and without. For example, when the Judeans began to make progress on the rebuilding, opposition from surrounding tribes sprang up. We read of that in Nehemiah 4:1-3:

But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, Who do these feeble Jews? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.

Nehemiah immediately responded with prayer (Neh 4:4-5). Not only did Nehemiah have to demonstrate constancy against mockery and threats from without but from internal dissension. We read about that in Nehemiah 5:1-6:

And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them: for other men have our lands and vineyards. And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words.

The poor came to him with the complaint that their property had been taken by Jewish moneylenders and even their children had been sold into slavery. Nehemiah quickly put a stop to the usury, which was forbidden by the Mosaic laws and demanded the restoration of that which was taken.

Nehemiah experienced what Christian leaders in every age who have undertaken a vital and needed work for God have repeatedly encountered, both external and internal problems. Nehemiah's constancy and courage are an example to us today, as we seek to have an extraordinary influence for Christ.

As a result of Nehemiah's steadfast constancy, we read this amazing statement in Nehemiah 6:15-16:

So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.

It is an amazing thing when even the enemies of God are forced to admit that a "work was wrought of our God." How did Nehemiah live a life of extraordinary influence? He had a *commitment* that led to a *crisis*, that revealed a *cause*, that bred a *conviction*, that generated *courage* and resulted in *constancy*. These are the character traits that contribute to a life of exceptional influence. You see, when God wants to change the world, he does not form a committee. Instead, he calls an unlikely individual.

- When God wanted to *save* a remnant from the universal flood, he *called* a 600 year old man named Noah.
- When God wanted to *call out* a unique nation, he *tapped* an idolater named Abram.
- When God wanted to *liberate* that nation from bondage, he *lit* a burning bush under tongue-tied Moses.
- When God wanted to *conquer* the land of Canaan, he *recruited* a prostitute named Rahab.
- When God wanted to *topple* the Philistine giant, he *sent out* a shepherd boy name David.
- When God wanted to *extend* the gospel to the Gentiles, he *struck down* a member of the Sanhedrin, a persecutor of the church, named Saul.

Not only during Bible times, but also throughout church history, we see God calling unlikely individuals to have an extraordinary influence for God and for good!

- When God wanted to *reach* the people of Scotland with the Gospel, he *saved* a Catholic priest named John Knox, who said, "Give me Scotland else I die."
- When God wanted to *rescue* America from British tyranny, to become a beacon of liberty to the whole world, he *ignited* a backwoodsman named Patrick Henry who thundered, "Give me *liberty* or give me *death*."
- When God wanted to *end* the scourge of slavery throughout England, he *burdened* William Wilberforce, who labored for 26 years in the British Parliament, to bring this abominable practice to an end.

I have had the privilege of meeting some *modern day Nehemiahs*, who labor with *great courage* and *constancy today* for God and for good.

- Ron Paul - who labours tirelessly for constitutional government and sound monetary policy.
- Alex Jones - always on the front lines for truth in journalism.
- Pastor Chuck Baldwin - an advocate for pro-liberty churches in America.

Dear friend, my prayer for you today is that you will not be content to merely have a happy life. My prayer is that you will not be content to merely raise “nice” children. My prayer is that your *commitment* to God will bring you a *crisis* that will break your hearts and that will pierce the cocoon of self-interest. **Satan’s lie** that the problem is too big or too entrenched for one person or one couple to engage. My prayer is that from this crisis will emerge a *cause* that will lead to a *conviction* that says, “Here am I; send me.” From that conviction, God will grant you the *courage* to make audacious requests and take bold action. Then, when the opposition inevitably comes against you, you will have the *constancy* never to give up until the task is accomplished. That is how to have an extraordinary and disproportionate influence!

My prayer is that God will impress upon you a *cause* that is worth devoting the rest of your life to; a cause that is worth *dying* for; a cause that will be a *heritage* for your children. Do not look to others or wait for others to make the changes that you believe need to be made in this world. By God’s grace, *be the change* that you want to see in this world! Become a person of *exceptional influence* for God and for good!

Reprints of this publication may be obtained from:

Southwest Prophecy Ministries

P.O. Box 58043, Oklahoma City, OK 73157

405-604-5975

5 copies for \$5.00; 25 copies for \$15.00; 100 copies for \$60

You can listen to our weekly radio broadcasts at www.swpm.us