

A MAN IN THE BACK OF THE ROOM (Nehemiah)

NARRATION

Forgive me. I've been sitting in the back this whole time.
(Nehemiah appears on screen but Polaris room background)

I know none of you recognize me. I've never been on the cover of a magazine. If someone made a film of my life, it would be four months of masonry and a great deal of paperwork.

But you know my name. And Marvin has been quoting me all morning – correctly, which I appreciate.

I was a cupbearer to a king. My job, if you want to know, was to drink his wine first. In case someone had poisoned it.

Excellent pay. The job security was theoretical.

Then word came: the wall of my city was broken down, the gates burned with fire.

And I sat down and wept – and then I went, and rode out alone at night, running my hand along stones that used to be a city.

We finished in fifty-two days. And when it was done, we held no ceremony for the wall.

We opened the book.

Ezra read the Scriptures aloud at the Water Gate, and the people wept as they listened.

Marvin told you the walls were not the mission. He is right. The stones were only so that we could hear.

Now. What I saw in your work.

A lumberyard worker teaching one sailor. That sailor bringing him a friend – and your Dawson refusing to do it for him. *You teach him.*

That is not a strategy. That is a wall going up in a man's hands.

That was nineteen thirty-three. You have been at this nearly a hundred years. I knew kingdoms that did not last a century.

And he told you how you mean to carry it forward. Place. Technology. Community.

I know those three. I built with them.

Place gives people somewhere to gather and be sent. Technology is whatever tool your generation happens to hold – mine was a trowel. And community is the only reason anything ever got finished: every family repaired the section in front of their own house.

So. A woman at a folding table on a campus in August, learning the names of freshmen. That is a section.

A sailor on deployment with a worn Bible in his bunk – the way one was read on a battleship ninety years ago. Section.

A pastor on a canyon path with nothing left, who finds something anyway. A nine-year-old at a camp in Colorado, hearing the name of Jesus this week for the first time.

Every one a section. And not one of them building the whole wall.

I lived five hundred years before He came. Then one day He sat down with me and told me what I'd missed. He is easier to talk to than you would expect.

He told me about a widow.

She came into the treasury with two small copper coins. There were wealthy men giving large amounts, and He said you could hear it – metal ringing in the chests.

He said her coins made no sound at all.

He said no one in that courtyard turned their head.

But He did.

And then He said something I have carried ever since.

> *Nehemiah. You rebuilt a wall in fifty-two days, and the nations were afraid. She gave two coins, and no one heard it but me.*

>

> *I have not forgotten either one of you.*

I know there are many needs in this world, and many good works with His name on them. No one is asking you to carry them all.

But you are here. This morning. In this room. I do not believe you came by accident. I never believed anyone did.

You are being invited to take a section of the wall.

So do not decide this quickly. Pray about it. Take it home, take it to Him, and ask what your section is.

He answers that question. He has never once been vague with me about it.

And then give until it changes something in your own life. That is the only generosity I have ever seen God honor.

The wall we built is gone. Every stone of it. You are not building something that lasts – you are building *someone* who does.

And most of you will never see it. Not here.

But one day we will sit down over coffee. And I will say – *do you remember that morning, when you decided to take part in what the Navigators were doing?*

And you will say yes.

And I will say: well. Do I have some stories for you.

So. Come, let us rebuild.

Imagine what the Lord might do.

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SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

| Cupbearer to the king (Artaxerxes, in Susa) | Nehemiah 1:11b, 2:1 |

| Word of the broken wall and burned gates; he weeps | Nehemiah 1:2-4
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Riding out alone at night to inspect the ruins	Nehemiah 2:11-16
"Come, let us rebuild"	Nehemiah 2:17-18
Nobles of Tekoa *(optional C)*	Nehemiah 3:5
Each repairing opposite his own house	Nehemiah 3:23, 3:28
Building with one hand, weapon in the other *(optional B)*	
Nehemiah 4:16-18	
Wall finished in fifty-two days; the nations afraid	Nehemiah 6:15-
16	
Ezra reading at the Water Gate; the people weeping	Nehemiah 8:1-9
"Remember me, O my God, for good"	Nehemiah 13:31
The widow's two copper coins	Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4