

## TOUR OF DUTY

NEHEMIAH 2:9-16 | Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. <sup>10</sup> But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel. <sup>11</sup> So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days. <sup>12</sup> Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There was no animal with me but the one on which I rode. <sup>13</sup> I went out by night by the Valley Gate to the Dragon Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire. <sup>14</sup> Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass. <sup>15</sup> Then I went up in the night by the valley and inspected the wall, and I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. <sup>16</sup> And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, and I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest who were to do the work.

PSALM 102:13-14 | You will arise and have pity on Zion; it is the time to favor her; the appointed time has come. <sup>14</sup> For your servants hold her stones dear and have pity on her dust.

**T**he battle begins before Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem. Governor Sanballat of Samaria and Governor Tobiah of Ammon don't like what they see in Nehemiah's letters. Both are control freaks who have been exploiting a power vacuum in Judah. They loathe the fact that someone has come to seek the welfare of Israel. When Nehemiah reaches Jerusalem, he wisely keeps his mission a secret: *I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem.*

*To build the future is to think the present* (SAINT-EXUPÉRY). Nehemiah spends three days thinking before touring the devastation that has grieved his heart for the past several months. All who sincerely love and pray for Jerusalem can identify with

Nehemiah on his night ride. His emotions must have clashed violently. From the trauma of Lamentations to the thrill of hope in Ezekiel 37, where the dry bones of the valley rattle to life.

Nehemiah is not a hired contractor sketching out a blueprint for a wall. He is an intercessor and a nation-builder with a broken heart for the City of God and its citizens. A city without walls, exposed to shame and disgrace. Every fallen stone is priceless. Every burned gate has meaning. Not just for what they once were, but for what they will become. *'I will set your stones in antimony,'* says the LORD. *'I will make...your gates of carbuncles, and all your wall of precious stones'* (ISA 54:11-12).

Do you feel as passionately for Singapore as Nehemiah feels for Jerusalem? He didn't come to build a picket fence, but to establish a City on a Hill that is destined to be *a praise in all the earth* (ISA 62:7). In building the wall, Nehemiah empowers the men and women of his generation to open a new chapter in the history of Israel.

Before going halfway around the city, he has seen enough. He has counted the cost. Now's the time to awaken the sleeping city and set them to building the future from the ground up.

## WALL OF DUTY

■ We love the Church. One Family under God. In the new normal, what has God put in your heart to do for your local church? Your denomination? Your bible school, mission agency, ministry organisation, community service? Your good idea may well be a God-idea. But learn from Nehemiah. Let the vision incubate deep in your spirit, soul, mind, and heart. Don't hastily blast it on social media. *Keep it secret. Keep it safe* (JRR TOLKIEN). *There is a time for every matter under heaven... A time to keep silence and a time to speak* (ECC 3:1, 7). A time to watch and wait patiently. A time to pitch and push decisively.

■ We love Singapore. One Nation. One Singapore. Our Founding Father was an extraordinary nation-builder. Approaching the end, he could look back and say:

*I have no regrets. I have spent my life, so much of it, building up this country. There's nothing more that I need to do. At the end of the day, what have I got? A successful Singapore. What have I given up? My life* (LEE KUAN YEW). Will we follow Mr Lee's selfless example? Will we give our all for the shalom of Singapore? Eighty-two percent are without Christ. A growing proportion are shunning religion. From 17% in 2010 to 20% in 2020. This is especially true among higher-educated, younger Chinese (CENSUS 2020). Pray. Persevere with faith, hope, and love.

■ We love Singapore. One People. One Family. We can all be nation-builders *from the knees up*. Tour your neighbourhood. Make every step a prayer. Ask God to infuse your mind with his dreams for Singapore. Ask him to flood your soul with his longings. He is *not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance* (2 PET 3:9). Ask him to do a new thing both in you and in his Church, making us a people for his name and turning Singapore Godward. Pray for:

- New hearts to love the lost
- New eyes to see their lostness
- New ears to hear their cry
- New burden to pray for them
- New desire to befriend them
- New urgency to reach them
- New boldness to witness to them
- New joy to go the second mile
- New anointing to sow and reap
- New mind to discern the battle

■ We love God. By loving our Neighbour. Pray: In Christ alone we find our hope. We resolve to win the battle for the soul of Singapore. We dare believe that, in the new normal, Singapore can be both an economic powerhouse and a spiritual epicentre to serve God's global purpose. Come what may, we will not cower. Opposition confirms that we are on the right track and making progress. Lord, unite this generation to awaken our city to your love and to build our shalom future together.