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Rebuilding for Rebirth: The Importance of Staying the Course

A Commentary by Jason Curry



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Americans in general and African-Americans in particular are familiar with the challenging, tedious and painstaking effort associated with rebuilding. For example, Americans helped to rebuild Western Europe after World War II through the Marshall Plan. African-Americans have begun to rebuild communities that were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. A recent document explains how Americans have begun to rebuild the World Trade Center. Through community based organization (CBO's) and non-governmental organizations (NGO's), many African-Americans have also begun to rebuilt communities that have been ravaged by drugs, violence, illiteracy and poverty. The task of rebuilding the infrastructure of our communities and the economy of our nation is arduous at best; however, many people throughout the nation, elected officials and ordinary citizens, are determined to bring about the rebirth of this nation. They have embraced a resolve to look beyond the

cynicism, pessimism and despair that has stifled so many people and communities throughout history so that optimism, goodwill and prosperity will once again be the order of the day.

The goals that we seek both as individuals and as a nation can be identified within the context of the live of one of God's servants or prophets named Nehemiah. Nehemiah was a friend of king Artaxerxes (a cupbearer - Nehemiah 2:1) who eventually became the governor of Judah. When he heard that the walls of Jerusalem had been torn down, he wept (Nehemiah 1:4). He asked for the resources from the king to rebuild the walls because of the significance and sacredness of Jerusalem in the lives of the people of Israel. In short, he wanted the people Jerusalem to turn to God and live once again. The story continues to remain one of the most fascinating examples of human ingenuity and perseverance because Nehemiah overcame many obstacles during and

after and the rebuilding process. His political enemies conspired to kill him, people lied about him by suggesting that he sought to replace the king, and some of the religious figures that were around him had to be removed because of their corruption (Nehemiah 13). Through the process of rebuilding for the rebirth of Jerusalem, Nehemiah remained very close to God. In fact, in the last verse of the last chapter Nehemiah says: "And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good (13:31)."

As we continue to rebuild both personal and professional relationships, rebuild our economy and rebuild our communities, let us remember the importance of God in the rebuilding process. Nehemiah "stayed the course" inasmuch as he kept his hand in God's hand throughout the process. Let us continue to keep our hands in God's hand as we continue to rebuild as well.