

THE KING'S CUPBEARER

Nehemiah 1:1-11; Nehemiah 2:1-20; Nehemiah 4:1-23.

LESSON 91 -- Primary Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Rejoice evermore, Pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:16, 17).

BIBLE TEXTS

Nehemiah 1:1-11

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace,

2 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.

3 And they said unto me, 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.

4 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,

5 And said, 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:

6 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 servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we

have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.

7 We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.

8 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations:

9 But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.

10 Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

11 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 2:1-20

1 And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence.

2 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,

3 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?

4 Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.

5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if 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.

6 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.

7 Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah;

8 And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.

9 Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

10 When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

11 So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days.

12 And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.

13 And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung

port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire.

14 Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass.

15 Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned.

16 And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.

17 Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

18 Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?

20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 4:1-23.

1 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.

2 And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What 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?

3 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.

4 Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity:

5 And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders.

6 So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

7 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,

8 And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.

9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you.

13 Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

16 And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah.

17 They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.

18 For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.

19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another.

20 In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.

21 So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.

22 Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day.

23 So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing.

NOTES

A Message from Judah

In the palace of a king over in the land of Persia lived a man whose name was Nehemiah. He served the king and was called the “cupbearer.” One day some men from the land of Judah, where Nehemiah’s people lived, came to see him. Nehemiah asked them about the City of Jerusalem that he loved, and about the people there. The men told him that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, the gates burned, and the people left there were sad and in trouble.

Nehemiah's Sorrow

The news about Jerusalem made Nehemiah very sad and he sat down and wept. He felt so very bad because of what he had heard that he even went without food for a time and prayed to God night and day. He confessed his sins to God, and confessed the sins of his people, the Jews. He told God that he knew the reason the people had been scattered and driven away from Jerusalem was that they had not kept the commandments which God had told them to keep, many years before. He also asked the Lord to remember that He had promised them if they would turn back to Him and again keep the commandments, they should again be brought back home.

In our lesson last Sunday, we learned that the people who were carried away to Babylon were again permitted to return to Jerusalem. The Temple was rebuilt, but the walls of the city were still lying in ruins, although it had been about 100 years since the people returned. The walls were for the purpose of keeping enemies out of the city. Now Nehemiah wanted to go to Jerusalem and build up the walls, so the city would be protected from the people who might come to fight against the people there.

Permission to Go

Nehemiah was so sorrowful about Jerusalem that even his face showed the sadness of his heart. One day the king asked Nehemiah why he was so sad. Nehemiah became afraid, for he knew the king had guessed that something was troubling him, and Nehemiah did not know what the king might say. He said he was sad because the City of Jerusalem, the place of his old home, had been destroyed. Then the king asked him, "For what dost thou make request?" Right away, Nehemiah looked to God in prayer. A Christian may turn his heart to God any moment of the day or night, and God is ready to hear and help him. If Nehemiah had not prayed to God it would have been hard to ask a great man like the King of Persia to let him go away. We must remember that, although Nehemiah loved the Lord, he was a servant to the king – and he must do just as the king told him to do.

There in the palace that day sat the king and queen; Nehemiah was serving them. The king asked, "For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return?" How happy this humble servant must have been! The prayer that he sent up to God had been heard in Heaven, and now the king seemed willing to let him go! Nehemiah told him when he would be back, and also asked the king to give him letters to show to people on the way – we might call them "letters of introduction." He also asked for a letter to the man who had a forest, so that he might get wood with which to build. The king was very kind; he gave him the letters he needed, and also sent captains of the army and some horsemen with Nehemiah to help him and protect him on the way.

Arrival at Jerusalem

After a long journey, Nehemiah and his men came to Jerusalem. The evening of the third day after reaching Jerusalem he went to bed as usual – but he could not sleep. His heart no doubt was sad when he thought about the city with no walls and no gates.

So he arose during the night, took a few men with him, and mounted his horse. Shall we follow this brave young man as he rides around the City of Jerusalem that night? Perhaps the moon is looking down from above upon us as we slowly march through the gate of the valley, down by what is called the dragon well. Have you ever seen a fountain with the figure of a dragon through whose mouth the water falls? Perhaps this was such a fountain. Here we stop to view the broken-down walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah has not as yet told anyone what God has put into his heart to do; thus far it is a secret between him and his God. Perhaps even now, as he views the heaps of ashes and piles of stones, he is praying to God for help to do the work he has to do.

Nehemiah's heart was sad about those broken walls. Some 470 years later, one day as Jesus was nearing the same City of Jerusalem He wept over it (Luke 19:41). He was sad too – not because of the broken walls of the city but because of the sins of the people there. He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

(Matthew 23:37). Jesus had come to be their Saviour, but they would not receive Him. We remember the sad story: instead of loving Jesus and receiving Him, they had Him put to death.

But we must go on our way around the city with Nehemiah. We go to the gate of the fountain and to the king's pool. Here we find so much rubbish that Nehemiah's horse cannot even pass. Here was much work to be done. We go to the brook, perhaps the brook Cedron that Jesus afterwards crossed when He went to a garden to pray. This was the brook Jesus crossed when He went with His disciples to pray that sad night when the wicked men came to take Jesus and crucify Him. Everywhere we see broken walls. Our journey is ended – no one has known what we were doing. As yet no one has learned about Nehemiah's plans to rebuild the walls. He has received his orders from the Lord, and with His help he will carry them out in every way.

Rebuilding the Walls

Nehemiah made plans for beginning the work at once. The people were called together and he said to them, "Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem." He told them what God wanted him to do and that the king had been willing to let him come. The men of the city were all ready to help do what they could. They answered Nehemiah, "Let us rise up and build."

When God tells us to do something, we must rise and do it immediately. God wants those who say that they love Him to prove it by obeying His voice quickly when He speaks. Children prove their love for their parents by quickly and gladly obeying.

Certain ones built the sheep gate. This was probably the gate through which the sheep were brought to the Temple to be sacrificed. Perhaps that is the reason that when it was completed, it was sanctified. The doors, the locks, and the bars to the many gates must be fixed so the city would be safe from enemy attacks. The task was very great, but the people were willing to work, and the work was being done: "Many hands make light work." Some people built the wall in front of their house; even the women helped with the work. What a busy group of people! No doubt they were very happy doing the work God wanted them to do.

The Work Hindered

But the work was not without trouble; two enemies named Sanballat and Tobiah became angry when they heard that the walls were being built. They hated the Jews and their God, and did not want to see Jerusalem become strong as it once was. At first they thought they could stop the work by making fun of the workers. They called them the "feeble Jews," and said that even a fox could break down the walls. But the people kept right on with the work. The enemy sent letters to Nehemiah telling lies about him. They tried to get him to leave the work; they even planned to come against the city and fight the people. But Nehemiah prayed to God and was ready for them, should an army come. This is what he did: he set guards to watch for the enemy, day and night. He gave the people swords, spears, and bows. Half the people worked, and half held the spears. Those who worked on the wall worked with one hand and held a weapon with the other. Each of the builders had a sword by his side.

During the time of war the bugler has a very important part of the work to do. He awakens the soldiers in the morning; he calls them to their meals. He tells them when the enemy is coming, and the soldiers take their right places. Nehemiah planned it that way. He told them that when they heard the sound of the trumpet they should gather for battle in the place the trumpet sounded. He told them not to be afraid; he said, "Our God shall fight for us." And God did fight for them. The work was done. We are glad that God's power is always greater than the wicked people's power.

God still has men like Nehemiah who will go right ahead with God's work no matter how many people like Sanballat and Tobiah may try to stop them. We read in God's Word: "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

QUESTIONS

1. What was the condition of Jerusalem at this time? Nehemiah 1:3.
2. What did Nehemiah plan to do? Nehemiah 2:5.
3. Tell of his journey around the city of Jerusalem. Nehemiah 2:12-15.
4. Who hindered the building of the walls? Nehemiah 4:1-3.
5. Tell how the workers guarded the city. Nehemiah 4:9-20.

LESSON RESOURCES

TITLE

THE KING'S
CUPBEARER

Lesson 91

Nehemiah 1:1-11; 2:1-20; 4:1-23

There Is Victory For Me

WATCH AND PRAY 34



d` ; r` , m` : s : t : r` : d` :-:

m` ; f` , s` : m` : d` : m` : r` :-:

s` ; f` , m` : m` : r` : d` : l : f` :-

d` ; r` , m` : s` : t : r` : d` :-:

s` : s` :-: f` : m` :-: m` : m` :-: r` : d` :-:

d` ; d` , r` : d` : t : l : s : d` :

s` : f` : m` :- r` :- d` :-:

There Is Victory For Me

There is Vic-to-ry for me,

There is Vic-to-ry for me,

In the blood of Christ my Saviour,

There is Vic-to-ry for me.

For me, yes me,

For me, yes me,

In the blood of Christ my Saviour

There is Vic-to-ry.

PICTURE 1



PICTURE 2



PICTURE 3

