

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE

BIBLE TEXT : Nehemiah 1:1-11; 2:1-8; 9:1-38.

LESSON 445 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"(James 5:16).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

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

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Nehemiah's Prayer

1. Sad tidings came from Judah, Nehemiah 1:1-3,

1 Samuel 4:12-17

¹² And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.

¹³ And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told *it*, all the city cried out.

¹⁴ And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What *meaneth* the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli.

¹⁵ Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see.

¹⁶ And the man said unto Eli, I *am* he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son?

¹⁷ And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.

2. Nehemiah mourns, fasts, and prays for the Children of Israel, Nehemiah 1:4-6;

Exodus 32:11-13

¹¹ And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

¹² Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit *it* for ever.

Ezra 8:23

²³ So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.

Daniel 9:4

⁴ And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;

Luke 18:1

¹ And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

Ephesians 6:18

¹⁸ Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

3. Confession of sin is made, Nehemiah 1:6, 7;

Exodus 32:31-32

³¹ And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

³² Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

2 Samuel 12:13

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 2:1-8

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.

¹³ And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

2 Samuel 24:10

¹⁰ And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

Psalms 51:1-4

¹ Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

² Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

³ For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

⁴ Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.

Proverbs 28:13

¹³ He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whose confesseth and forsaketh *them* shall have mercy.

Mark 1:5

⁵ And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

James 5:16

¹⁶ Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

4. Nehemiah reminds God of His promises of mercy, Nehemiah 1:8-11

Leviticus 26:40-45

⁴⁰ If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me;

⁴¹ And *that* I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity:

⁴² Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

⁴³ The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes.

⁴⁴ And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I *am* the LORD their God.

⁴⁵ But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I *am* the LORD.

2 Chronicles 7:14

¹⁴ If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 30:9

⁹ For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children *shall find* compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God *is* gracious and merciful, and will not turn away *his* face from you, if ye return unto him.

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.

Nehemiah 9:1-38

¹ Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them.

² And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.

³ And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God *one* fourth part of the day; and *another* fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God.

⁴ Then stood up upon the stairs, of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, *and* Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God.

⁵ Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah,

II Prayer Answered

1. Nehemiah comes before the king and his countenance betrays sorrow of heart, Nehemiah 2:1, 2.
2. Nehemiah reveals the cause of his sorrow and makes requests for the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah 2:3-8.
3. The king is moved by God to grant the request, Nehemiah 2:8;

Esther 7:2

² And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, *even* to the half of the kingdom.

III Prayer of the People and the Levites

1. After completion of the walls, the Israelites assembled to hear the Law read and to make confession of their sins, Nehemiah 9:1-3;

Deuteronomy 31:11-13

¹¹ When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing.

¹² Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law:

¹³ And *that* their children, which have not known *any thing*, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.

2 Chronicles 34:29-33

²⁹ Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.

³⁰ And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD.

³¹ And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.

³² And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand *to it*. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

³³ And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that *pertained* to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, *even* to serve the LORD their God. *And* all his days they departed not from following the LORD, the God of their fathers.

2. The Levites prayed, rehearsing the history of Israel -- God's mercy and goodness in keeping His covenants, and Israel's sin and failure of keeping their covenant, Nehemiah 9:4-37.
3. A new covenant is made to God on behalf of the people, Nehemiah 9:38;.

Hebrews 8:8-12

⁸ For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

⁹ Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will

Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.

⁶ Thou, *even* thou, *art* LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all *things* that *are* therein, the seas, and all that *is* therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

⁷ Thou *art* the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham;

⁸ And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give *it*, *I say*, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou *art* righteous:

⁹ And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea;

¹⁰ And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as *it is* this day.

¹¹ And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters.

¹² Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go.

¹³ Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with

be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

¹¹ And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

NOTES:

From this historic lesson in the account of God's chosen people, we realize that the way back to re-establishment in the Promised Land was not easy. The Jews brought much suffering upon themselves because of their disobedience and sin against God. They had been amply warned that sin would cause separation from God, and the loss of their homeland. True to what had been prophesied, the Jews had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, and the City of Jerusalem had been destroyed and the Temple had been burned by their enemies.

The Medes and the Persians had taken the empire from Belshazzar; and in the very first year of Cyrus their king, the Lord Himself moved upon the king's heart to make proclamation that the house of the Lord should be rebuilt in Jerusalem. Any who wished to go back were allowed to do so. (**Ezra 1:1-3** ¹ Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying, ² Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah. ³ Who *is there* among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (*he is the God,*) which *is* in Jerusalem.) This no doubt was glad news to many of God's chosen people. After 70 years of captivity, many of the Jews returned and began rebuilding the Temple.

However, due to much opposition round about Judea and a change in kingship in the capital of Persia, the work was stopped shortly after the foundations were laid, and for sixteen years the work on the Temple progressed no further. Finally Zerubbabel, the governor of Judea, with the help of Joshua the high priest, again started the work on the Temple; and though there was much opposition, the Temple building was completed.

But even after the Temple was completed the walls of Jerusalem, the gates, and a great deal of the city itself still remained in ruins for many years. In fact, 91 years had elapsed from the beginning of the rebuilding of the Temple until Nehemiah was permitted to undertake the task of rebuilding the walls and the city.

Nehemiah's Burden

Many of the Jews did not return to Jerusalem when the 70 years of captivity ended. Some who had secured good positions and comfortable homes chose to remain in the foreign land. Nehemiah must have been a son or possibly a grandson of those who remained in the foreign country, for in telling the king of his concern for Jerusalem he refers to it not as his birthplace or home town, but as "the place of my fathers' sepulchres." He was not to be considered a captive, but rather he had a much coveted and influential position in the king's household -- known as the king's cupbearer. But his heart was burdened for his own country and his own people.

It does not seem possible that Nehemiah could have been totally ignorant of the fact that the city was still in a great deal of desolation. Thirteen years before this time, King Artaxerxes had granted that Ezra and a company of chief men go back to

them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments:

¹⁴ And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant:

¹⁵ And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them.

¹⁶ But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments,

¹⁷ And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou *art* a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.

¹⁸ Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This *is* thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations;

¹⁹ Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go.

²⁰ Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldst not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst.

²¹ Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, *so that* they lacked nothing; their

Jerusalem for the purpose of teaching the Law, appointing magistrates and judges, and encouraging the worship in the Lord's house in Jerusalem. Communications of course were extremely slow in those days, and no doubt Nehemiah's heart was very much concerned about how things were progressing since Ezra's return to Jerusalem. The Lord's blessing had certainly been with Ezra, the prophet priest. Still the news Nehemiah received from the men returning from Jerusalem was extremely discouraging, for nothing had been done to rebuild the city itself and the Jews were in great reproach from the neighbouring people. Nehemiah felt the need for rebuilding the walls as a means of protection for the Temple of God, the homes of the people, and the people themselves. This burden was so heavy upon Nehemiah that he wept and mourned.

Nehemiah's Prayer

Nehemiah, realizing the condition in his homeland and feeling the burden upon his heart, did not proceed with action on his own. But he did that which godly men have done down through the ages: he took it to the Lord in prayer and fasting. This problem was far too big for Nehemiah to solve in his own wisdom or to accomplish by his own strength, but he knew a God in Heaven who was able to do all things. Indeed, this was no trivial prayer on Nehemiah's part. He continued to pray for four months. His prayer, a brief summary of which is given in our text, was a prayer which God heard.

Solomon prayed at the dedication of the first Temple that if Israel would be taken captive due to their sin, God would forgive them if they met certain conditions. These conditions were:

"Yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly;

"If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name:

"Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee" (II Chronicles 6:37-39).

At the conclusion of Solomon's prayer, God had promised:

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (II Chronicles 7 :14).

Nehemiah prayed in this very manner, confessing the sins of his people. He also reminded God of His promises to His servant Moses, that though because of transgression God would scatter His people among the nations, if they would turn unto Him and keep His commandments and do them, God would gather them back and would bring them into the place where He had chosen to set His name. Oh, the effectiveness of such praying! It reminds us of Paul's message to the Romans that the Spirit itself would make intercession for us when we know not what we should pray for as we ought.

The Answer

clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not.

²² Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan.

²³ Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess *it*.

²⁴ So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would.

²⁵ And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness.

²⁶ Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations.

²⁷ Therefore thou deliverdest them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest *them* from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies.

²⁸ But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had

God in His own way moved upon the king to tender his heart toward Nehemiah and to bring up the subject which Nehemiah knew not how to bring before the king. In the 4th verse of the 2nd chapter we see that Nehemiah, faithful to his God, even after the king had asked what his request was, said: "So I prayed to the God of heaven." Every detail of his request was granted and Nehemiah was very careful to return and give credit where credit belonged. He said, "The king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me."

Spiritual Application

Perhaps we today may wonder why we do not see all our prayers answered. An examination of ourselves in the light of this lesson may be helpful. Do we approach God in the true humility that Nehemiah had? Are we willing to confess our own faults or sins before Him; and then in intercession remind Him of His promises, with faith that He will do His part? Then, last of all, are we willing to importune in prayer as Nehemiah did? God is the same yesterday, today and forever; if we come to Him as Nehemiah did we shall receive the same results. (**James 5:16** ¹⁶ Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.)

Can we not see in the history of God's people a spiritual application for ourselves today? No doubt we can observe some who once lived holy lives for God, lives that were rich in spiritual blessing to themselves and an inspiration to others. But now, due to turning back to sin, all this is lost and their lives are in ruins and veritable deserts to all that is holy. Perhaps the enemy of their soul told them that if they lost out spiritually it would not be hard to be saved again; the way back would be easy. We are indeed thankful that there is a way back for the backslider and that God is merciful to restore such a one, but the hard part is for the backslider to come to that place where he will repent and return. Many times it takes years of suffering and sorrow to bring the backslider to humility and repentance. How much better it would be not to believe the lies of the devil and always be true to our wonderful Saviour. How different the entire history of Israel would have been had they always kept the Lord's commandments and walked according to His precepts! Oh, the sufferings and sorrows they would have spared themselves!

The backslider today need not continue in his hopeless suffering for God is merciful and there is a way back if one will take the way outlined in God's Word, that Nehemiah pursued. God will answer his prayers. The walls against sin will be rebuilt. The beauty of holiness may be restored though it may take much humility and endeavour. God will never fail to do His part.

QUESTIONS

1. What was Nehemiah's nationality? Where was he living, and what was his occupation?
2. What was the message that caused Nehemiah to pray and fast?
3. In what attitude did Nehemiah approach God in prayer?
4. Upon what grounds did Nehemiah have a right to expect God to answer his prayers?
5. How was Nehemiah able to bring his request before the king?
6. To whom did Nehemiah give the credit for the favour the king granted?
7. What is the main theme of the prayer of the Levites and the people recorded in the 9th chapter of Nehemiah?

the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest *them* from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies;

²⁹ And testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them;) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear.

³⁰ Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands.

³¹ Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou *art* a gracious and merciful God.

³² Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day.

³³ Howbeit thou *art* just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly:

³⁴ Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them.

³⁵ For they have not served thee

in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works.

³⁶ Behold, we *are* servants this day, and *for* the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we *are* servants in it:

³⁷ And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we *are* in great distress.

³⁸ And because of all this we make a sure *covenant*, and write *it*, and our princes, Levites, *and* priests, seal *unto it*.