

THE REBUILDING OF THE WALL

BIBLE TEXT : Nehemiah 2 :9-20; 4 :1-23; 6 :1-16.

LESSON 446 **Junior Course**

MEMORY VERSE: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

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

BIBLE REFERENCES:

Notes:

Return to Jerusalem

At last Nehemiah reached Jerusalem, the city, which God had chosen as a place of worship for His people. We remember that Nehemiah had prayed about this city, and God had answered his prayer by allowing him to return. The king had given Nehemiah an escort of horses and soldiers. He had used the letters of the king, which gave him permission to cross the lands beyond the river.

We know little of Nehemiah's journey, but we do know that when one has the work of the Lord on his heart, the strain and tiredness of a long trip seem to be forgotten. Nehemiah had a purpose in his heart to do a definite work for the Lord. No doubt, he was excited as his caravan came into sight of Jerusalem and the new Temple, which had been built since the Jews had been taken captive.

A Night Trip

After three days Nehemiah set about on his mission. At night, with a few friends, he rode out on a secret trip to see for himself the condition of the city walls. Usually the gates to the city were closed at night, but now the walls were broken down and the gates burned.

Nehemiah left the city by the gate of the valley and rode around the city. He found it as reported. In one place, at the Gihon pool, there was so much rubbish that there was not room to ride. Before returning to the city, Nehemiah rode across the brook Kidron and from the hill looked over the walls of Jerusalem. No doubt the view caused Nehemiah to be sad. Many years later Jesus, too, stopped on a hill and looked over the city. Jesus wept over the people of the city because they had rejected Him and His salvation (**Luke 19:41-44** ⁴¹ And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, ⁴² Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. ⁴³ For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, ⁴⁴ And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.). Jesus had told the people that the city would be desolate. He said: "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). It was over this same brook Kidron that Jesus and His disciples later crossed on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was betrayed (**John 18:1** ¹ When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.).

Cooperation

None of the rulers knew of Nehemiah's plan or his night mission. He gathered the Jewish leaders together. He reminded them of the ruins and the distress they were in. Nehemiah also inspired them to work. He said "Come, and let us build up the wall

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

of Jerusalem." This was work for more than one man. Nehemiah told them how God had been with him and how the king had given his permission and help. The people caught the spirit of Nehemiah and were willing to cooperate with him. They said, "Let us rise up and build."

Rubbish

Sometimes it is a good thing to look over one's life and realize his condition. A sinner must first recognise his sinful state before he sees the need to call upon God for forgiveness. If one does not feel that his spiritual walls are in ruin and his life is full of rubbish, how can he even know his need of a clean, holy way of living? Have you looked over your spiritual walls? Has sin and neglect broken them down and let rubbish collect? If so may these words of God's people cause you to do something about it "Let us rise up and build."

First of all, things that hinder must be put out of the way: sin, hate, hard feelings, lies, pride, self-righteousness, and anything else which will keep you from God. As one prays, repents and confesses his sins, the Blood of Jesus will blot out the rubbish. When one has made restitution and straightened up his past wrongs, the building has already started.

Opposition

When God's people begin a good work, Satan tries to hinder them. This time, when the children of Israel began to rebuild the wall, Sanballat and Tobiah led the opposition. At first they were grieved that anyone should try to help the children of Israel. They made fun of them with scoffs and insults. They said, "What do these feeble Jews?" They mocked the Jews and said that the wall was so weak, if a fox ran against it he could break it.

Working Together

The Children of Israel kept on building the wall, saying, "The God of heaven, he will prosper us." Each family was assigned to a portion of the wall to build. They worked hard, and soon half the wall was joined together, "for the people had a mind to work."

In building for eternity the people of God must work together and help each other. They must have a purpose in view, and a mind to work. Paul taught that we are "workers together" with the Lord (**2 Corinthians 6:1** ¹ We then, *as workers together with him*, beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.). He explained that all are members of one body, and one part cannot say there is no need for another part (**1 Corinthians 12:18-21** ¹⁸ But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where *were* the body? ²⁰ But now *are they* many members, yet but one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.). Paul, using an illustration of working together, with the Word of God as seed, said, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (I Corinthians 3:6).

To Watch and Pray

The ridicule of the enemy did not hinder God's work. Sanballat and Tobiah began to plan how they could oppose the children of Israel by fighting. But the children of Israel prayed and "set a watch." They not only prayed for God's help but they also did their part.

Jesus told His disciples to watch and pray lest they enter into temptation (**Matthew 26:41** ⁴¹ Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.). The Apostle Paul warned the people to "continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2). God's people are told, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (I Corinthians 16:13).

Encouragement

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.

Some of the people became discouraged. They heard the enemies' plan. They were tired as they looked at all the work: the rubbish to carry away and the building to be done. Their neighbours encouraged them saying, "Be not ye afraid . . . remember the Lord." Many times we can speak a word to encourage our neighbours. We can use the Word of God to help them. God promised, "Fear thou not; . . . I will strengthen thee" (Isaiah 41:10) and, "I will be with thee" (Isaiah 43:2).

The people of God worked long hours, "from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared." They worked together, some watching, prepared to fight, while others built the wall. Those who carried materials and those who built worked together. "Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon." They said, "Our God shall fight for us," and He did.

Completed

The wall was finished in 52 days, in spite of the opposition of Sanballat and Tobiah and their sneaky ways. God helped the children of Israel and their leaders. They all worked together for one purpose – God's work. They finished what they had started and the people "perceived that this work was wrought of our God."

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Nehemiah want to return to Jerusalem?
2. What sights did he see as he rode around the city?
3. Why did Nehemiah ask the people to help?
4. Before building the wall, what had to be done?
5. What two men were leaders in opposing Nehemiah?
6. How did they try to discourage the Children of Israel?
7. Why did the Children of Israel "set a watch",
8. Who fought for the Children of Israel?
9. How long did it take to build the wall?
10. Name three reasons why the Children of Israel were successful in building the wall.