

THE REBUILDING OF THE WALL

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

LESSON 446 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9 10).

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 which *appertained* to the house,

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Nehemiah at Jerusalem

1. Nehemiah journeys to Jerusalem with the Persian guard, Nehemiah 2:9, 10.
2. He secretly views the condition of the walls, Nehemiah 2:11-16.
3. The Jews are told of Nehemiah's plan and heartily support it, Nehemiah 2: 17, 18.
4. The leaders of neighbouring countries try to thwart the work but are steadfastly resisted by Nehemiah, Nehemiah 2:19, 20; 4:1-5.

II Building the Wall

1. "The people had a mind to work," Nehemiah 4:6;

2 Kings 10:16

¹⁶ And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD. So they made him ride in his chariot.

2. The enemies conspired to fight, Nehemiah 4:7, 8, 10-12;

Zechariah 3:1

¹ And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

3. The Jews prayed and established an armed watch, Nehemiah 4:9, 13, 14;

2 Chronicles 18:31

³¹ And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It is the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him; and God moved them to *depart* from him.

Psalms 55:16-18

¹⁶ As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me.

¹⁷ Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

¹⁸ He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle *that was* against me: for there were many with me.

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;

4. The building continues with workmen holding a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other hand, Nehemiah 4:15-23.

5. The enemies try rumours and lies to stop the building, Nehemiah 6:1, 2, 4-7, 10;

Ezra 4:4-5

⁴ Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,

⁵ And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

6. Nehemiah steadfastly resists the tricks of the enemy and prays for God's help, Nehemiah 6:3, 8, 9, 11-14,

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

James

4:7

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

7. The wall is finished in 52 days and the credit given to God, Nehemiah 6:15, 16;

Psalm

118:23

²³ This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.

Psalm

126:3

³ The LORD hath done great things for us; *whereof* we are glad.

NOTES:

Nehemiah

How thankful to God we should be for the examples we have in God's Word of outstanding men of faith and courage, such as the man Nehemiah about whom we are studying. Nehemiah himself may never have lived in Jerusalem. No doubt Nehemiah's parents or grandparents were among those who had chosen to stay in the Persian kingdom after the captivity. But Nehemiah had learned to love the city upon which God had chosen to let His blessing rest, and there must have been a deep longing in his heart to see that city rebuilt.

From reading Nehemiah 5, verses 14 through 19, we can deduct that Nehemiah must have been a man of great wealth. While he was in Jerusalem he neither received any salary as governor nor did he allow his food to be paid for by the Jews. Rather, all the expenses for himself and for the 150 Jews who gathered at his table, plus the visitors, were fully paid out of his own finances for the period of 12 years. These qualities of character in Nehemiah certainly cause us to admire him, but he had even more sterling qualities. As we see from our lesson, when great difficulties beset the work, he had the indomitable faith that God would see him through, and he had the personal courage to stay with the work until the wall was completed.

Nehemiah's Project

The king graciously gave Nehemiah letters of safe conduct to the governors through whose land he would journey, and also supplied him with a guard of soldiers from his army. But the enemies that Nehemiah was to meet were far more subtle than could be handled by the armed Persian soldiers.

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah showed his God-given tact and wisdom in the methods that he used in surveying the work and acquainting himself with the problem that confronted him. With a few select men he went out by night to view the condition of the wall. Remember, Nehemiah had not seen the wall and knew of its condition only by verbal description given him by those who had journeyed back to Persia.

Picture, if you can, the piles of rubbish and debris, which marked the location of the wall that had been reduced to rubble about 160 years before. The sight must have been such that would have surely discouraged anyone except a man of Nehemiah's calibre. There was one place that the beast on which he rode could not get through, but after three nights of surveying, Nehemiah's courage was still undaunted. He had the wisdom to keep his counsel to himself until he had a plan formulated. He then called the Jews, the priests, the nobles, and the rulers together and laid out the proposed plan. He was very careful to explain to all of them that the "hand of God was good" upon him and also that this project was backed by the king. How his heart must have rejoiced when he heard the response from these people: "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

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.

The Construction Plan

A wall to completely surround the City of Jerusalem, timbers to be hewn and gates to be built was no small undertaking for a man whose occupation had been confined to the king's palace. Nowhere are we told that Nehemiah had any previous experience in civil engineering, in heavy construction work, or even in directing men as a foreman; but we are told that he was a man of prayer and faith. In the 3rd chapter of Nehemiah, we see that Nehemiah divided the wall into sections and assigned the sections by families so that the work could progress rapidly. Everyone was expected to work, for this was the Lord's work. Even the high priest and the other priests were assigned a section. They could start assembling the stones for the wall where foundations existed, but where the foundations had been destroyed they first had to be rebuilt; but, thank God, the people had a mind to work.

Hindrances

As noble as was the work that Nehemiah was called to do, it still was certainly not without hindrances. In fact, in anything that is attempted for the Lord in His service, we find Satan comes also. Satan is a diabolical enemy of every good cause, and he has many emissaries here in this earth, many times in key positions, to do all they can to thwart the work of the Lord.

Nehemiah's hindrances came in the form of leaders, perhaps governors, of the countries round about Jerusalem. The people of these countries had been lifelong enemies of Israel, and during the time of captivity and desolation they had no doubt occupied much of this land for their own pasture land. To see the defences of Jerusalem and the nation itself rebuilt was the last thing those people wanted. They were concerned for their own selfish interests. Their first attempt was to belittle the project and laugh and ridicule the effort, but when they observed that the work was going forward in spite of them, they became exceedingly angry and made secret plans to fight against the Jews. Many of the Jews were living round about Jerusalem and they became aware of these plans and reported them to Nehemiah.

Nehemiah did not consider means of arbitration, or some way of making a cease-fire, or a compromise with these people; but he, first of all, took the matter to the Lord in prayer. Acting then on what no doubt he felt led of God to do, he set a watch over the work by day and by night. Everyone who participated in the work was to lodge within Jerusalem for better mutual protection and then half of them were to stand guard while the other half worked. Even those who worked were to be armed so that they worked with one hand holding a tool, the other hand holding a weapon. There was, of course, the possibility of a concentrated attack by the enemy in which the defences would be too thin. A plan was made that in the event of an attack they were to sound a trumpet and those from other parts of the wall were to come to the defence where the attack was centred.

Encouragement

Words of encouragement were passed on by Nehemiah. "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." And Nehemiah, faithful to his part, said that neither he nor his brethren, nor his servants, nor the men of the guard, which followed him put off their clothes except for washing. In other words, even when they would take a few moments for sleep they would not take time to go to their homes, nor remove their clothing, but slept near at hand to the work and to the danger, that the work of the Lord might go forward.

No armed attack is recorded against God's people at this time.

QUESTIONS

1. In what condition did Nehemiah find the wall and gates?
2. What was the reaction of the Jewish leaders to Nehemiah's plan?
3. How was the work of building divided among the Jews?
4. In what way was an attempt made to stop the building of the wall?
5. What did Nehemiah do about these hindrances?
6. How long did it take to accomplish this tremendous building feat?

No doubt the enemies heard of the preparation work and gave up this plan. But their next plan was to try to entice Nehemiah to negotiate with them because they had started false rumours that Nehemiah was re-arming Jerusalem in order to set himself up as king and thus to rebel against the Persians. They had even hired a man within Jerusalem to try to implant fear in Nehemiah's heart and get him to flee into the Temple and lock himself there. But Nehemiah, faithful to his God, carried these things before the Lord in prayer and said, "Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands." He perceived that God had not sent this false prophet, and answered, "Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." Not that the Temple was not a sacred place for Nehemiah, but he saw this plan was a trick to try to get him to stop the supervision of the work, which would make the hearts of the people faint if He locked himself in the Temple for his own protection.

Wall Finished

All the tactics of the enemy proved futile, for the God of Heaven was behind this project and behind His servant Nehemiah. The people worked with such vigour and so untiringly, and the work was so well planned, that this tremendous feat of construction was accomplished in 52 days. So remarkable was this that even the enemy perceived that this was wrought of God.

Present-Day Application

Many are the lessons, which we may learn from this account to apply to our own lives today. First of all, any project undertaken must be well established that it is in the purpose of God and that His blessing is upon it. Then as the work, or the call of God for the work, progresses we must continually seek God for His blessing, guidance, and help. Moses, so many years before, though specifically called to the great work of leading the Children of Israel out of Egypt, found many times that he had to go on his face before the Lord for further help, instruction, and encouragement.

Hindrances will surely come to any endeavour. If our endeavour is for personal, selfish reasons no doubt the Lord Himself will hinder our proposed plan. It is essential that we know we are doing what the Lord wants us to do so that when the hindrances come we will not condemn ourselves and feel that we are out of the will of the Lord. Rather, we can know that the enemy is trying to hinder that which we are doing in the Lord's work. After all, no matter how noble the cause may be, the devil is certainly there to try to stop it. It has been well said, "If the work that you are doing for the Lord is without hindrances, it is work of no consequence." But thanks be to God, we can, by His help and grace, be as Nehemiah and stand fast for that which God has called us to do in the work of the Lord in spite of all the devils in hell.

In the New Testament, Paul the Apostle likens the Christian life to a warfare and he admonishes us to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. May God raise up more Nehemiahs even in our day who are willing to lay aside their wealth, their influential positions, their homes, their security, to labour in the Lord's cause in places of danger, hardships, and self-denial. Oh, what a wonderful reward awaits such a one in eternity!