

Nehemiah

Rebuilds the Wall of Jerusalem

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Overview

NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALL OF JERUSALEM

Nehemiah's story is told in the book of Nehemiah

God is in the business of working through his people to accomplish seemingly impossible tasks. God often shapes people with personality characteristics, experiences, and training that prepare them for his purpose, and usually the people have no idea what God has in store for them. God prepared and positioned Nehemiah to accomplish one of the Bibles "impossible" tasks.

Nehemiah was a common man in a unique position. He was secure and successful as cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes. Nehemiah had little power, but he had great influence. He was trusted by the king. He was also a man of God, concerned about the fate of Jerusalem.

Seventy years earlier, Zerubbabel had managed to rebuild Gods temple. Thirteen years had passed since Ezra had returned to Jerusalem and helped the people with their spiritual needs. Now Nehemiah was needed. Jerusalem's wall was still in ruins, and the news broke his heart.

As he talked to God, a plan began to take form in Nehemiah's mind about his own role in the rebuilding of the city walls. He willingly left the security of his home and job in Persia to follow God on an "impossible" mission. And the rest is history.

From beginning to end, Nehemiah prayed for God's help. He never hesitated to ask God to remember him, closing his autobiography with these words: "Remember me with favor, O my God." Throughout the "impossible" task, Nehemiah displayed unusual leadership.

The wall around Jerusalem was rebuilt in record time, despite resistance. Even Israel's enemies grudgingly and fearfully admitted that God was with these builders.

Not only that, but God worked through Nehemiah to bring about a spiritual awakening among the people of Judah.

Son of Hachaliah

Nehemiah

Chapter 1

Nehemiah was the Persian king's cup-bearer. When God has work to do, he will never want instruments to do it with. Nehemiah lived at ease, and in honour, but does not forget that he is an Israelite, and that his brethren are in distress.

He was ready to do them all the good offices he could; and that he might know how best to do them a kindness, he makes inquiries about them. We should inquire especially concerning the state of the church and religion.

Every Jerusalem on this side the heavenly one will have some defect, which will require the help and services of its friends. Nehemiah's first application was to God, that he might have the fuller confidence in his application to the king.

Our best pleas in prayer are taken from the promise of God, the word on which he has caused us to hope. Other means must be used, but the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails most.

Communion with God will best prepare us for our dealings with men. When we have entrusted our concerns to God, the mind is set at liberty; it feels satisfaction and composure, and difficulties vanish.

We know that if the affair be hurtful, he can easily hinder it; and if it be good for us, he can as easily forward it.

Nehemiah's Request to the King

Nehemiah 2:1-8

Our prayers must be seconded with serious endeavours, else we mock God. We are not limited to certain moments in our addresses to the King of kings, but have liberty to go to him at all times; approaches to the throne of grace are never out of season.

But the sense of God's displeasure and the afflictions of his people, are causes of sorrow to the children of God, under which no earthly delights can comfort. The king encouraged Nehemiah to tell his mind.

This gave him boldness to speak; much more may the invitation Christ has given us to pray, and the promise that we shall speed, encourage us to come boldly to the throne of grace.

Nehemiah prayed to the God of heaven, as infinitely above even this mighty monarch. He lifted up his heart to that God who understands the language of the heart.

Nor should we ever engage in any pursuit in which it would be wrong for us thus to seek and expect the Divine direction, assistance, and blessing. There was an immediate answer to his prayer; for the seed of Jacob never sought the God of Jacob in vain.

Nehemiah Comes to Jerusalem

Nehemiah 2:9-18

When Nehemiah had considered the matter, he told the Jews that God had put it into his heart to build the wall of Jerusalem.

He does not undertake to do it without them. By stirring up ourselves and one another to that which is good, we strengthen ourselves and one another for it. We are weak in our duty, when we are cold and careless.

Rebuilds Jerusalem

Opposition of Sanballat and Others

Nehemiah 4:1-6

Many a good work has been looked upon with contempt by proud and haughty scorners.

Those who disagree in almost every thing, will unite in persecution. Nehemiah did not answer these fools according to their folly, but looked up to God by prayer.

God's people have often been a despised people, but he hears all the slights that are put upon them, and it is their comfort that he does so. Nehemiah had reason to think that the hearts of those sinners were desperately hardened, else he would not have prayed that their sins might never be blotted out.

Good work goes on well, when people have a mind to it. The reproaches of enemies should quicken us to our duty, not drive us from it.

The Designs of the Adversaries

Nehemiah 4:7-15

The hindering good work is what bad men aim at, and promise themselves success in; but good work is God's work, and it shall prosper.

God has many ways of bringing to light, and so of bringing to nought, the devices and designs of his church's enemies. If our enemies cannot frighten us from duty, or deceive us into sin, they cannot hurt us.

Nehemiah put himself and his cause under the Divine protection. It was the way of this good man, and should be our way. All his cares, all his griefs, all his fears, he spread before God.

Before he used any means, he made his prayer to God. Having prayed, he set a watch against the enemy. If we think to secure ourselves by prayer, without watchfulness, we are slothful, and tempt God; if by watchfulness, without prayer, we are proud, and slight God: either way, we forfeit his protection.

God's care of our safety, should engage and encourage us to go on with vigor in our duty. As soon as a danger is over, let us return to our work, and trust God another time.

Nehemiah's Precautions

Nehemiah 4:16-23

We must watch always against spiritual enemies, and not expect that our warfare will be over till our work is ended. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit, which we ought to have always at hand, and never to have to seek for it, either in our labours, or in our conflicts, as Christians.

Every true Christian is both a labourer and a soldier, working with one hand, and fighting with the other. Good work is likely to go on with success, when those who labour in it, make a business of it.

And Satan fears to assault the watchful Christian; or, if attacked, the Lord fights for him. Thus must we wait to the close of life, never putting off our armour till our work and warfare are ended; then we shall be welcomed to the rest and joy of our Lord.

The Jews Complain of Grievances

Nehemiah 5:1-5

Men prey upon their fellow-creatures: by despising the poor they reproach their Maker. Such conduct is a disgrace to any, but who can sufficiently abhor it when adopted by professing Christians?

With compassion for the oppressed, we should lament the hardships which many in the world are groaning under; putting our souls into their souls' stead, and remembering in our prayers and succours those who are burdened.

But let those who show no mercy, expect judgment without mercy.

Nehemiah Redresses the Grievances

Nehemiah 5:6-13

Nehemiah knew that, if he built Jerusalem's walls ever so high, so thick, or so strong, the city could not be safe while there were abuses.

The right way to reform men's lives, is to convince their consciences. If you walk in the fear of God, you will not be either covetous of worldly gain, or cruel toward your brethren.

Nothing exposes religion more to reproach, than the worldliness and hard-heartedness of the professors of it. Those that rigorously insist upon their right, with a very ill grace try to persuade others to give up theirs.

In reasoning with selfish people, it is good to contrast their conduct with that of others who are liberal; but it is best to point to His example, who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich, 2Co 8:9.

They did according to promise. Good promises are good things, but good performances are better.

Nehemiah's Forbearance

Nehemiah 5:14-19

Those who truly fear God, will not dare to do anything cruel or unjust. Let all who are in public places remember that they are so placed to do good, not to enrich themselves.

Nehemiah mentions it to God in prayer, not as if he had merited any favour from God, but to show that he depended upon God only, to make up to him what he had lost and laid out for his honour.

Nehemiah evidently spake and acted as one that knew himself to be a sinner. He did not mean to claim a reward as of debt, but in the manner that the Lord rewards a cup of cold water given to a disciple for his sake.

The fear and love of God in the heart, and true love of the brethren, will lead to every good work.

These are proper evidences of justifying faith; and our reconciled God will look upon persons of this character for good, according to all they have done for his people.

Sanballat's Plot to Hinder Nehemiah

Nehemiah 6:1-9

Let those who are tempted to idle merry meetings by vain companions, thus answer the temptation, we have work to do, and must not neglect it. We must never suffer ourselves to be overcome, by repeated urgency, to do anything sinful or imprudent; but when attacked with the same temptation, must resist it with the same reason and resolution.

It is common for that which is desired only by the malicious, to be falsely represented by them as desired by the many. But Nehemiah knew at what they aimed, he not only denied that such things were true, but that they were reported; he was better known than to be thus suspected.

We must never omit any known duty for fear it should be misconstrued; but, while we keep a good conscience, let us trust God with our good name. God's people, though loaded with reproach, are not really fallen so low in reputation as some would have them thought to be.

Nehemiah lifted up his heart to Heaven in a short prayer. When, in our Christian work and warfare, we enter upon any service or conflict, this is a good prayer, I have such a duty to do, such a temptation to grapple with; now, therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.

False Prophets Try to Frighten Nehemiah

Nehemiah 6:10-14

The greatest mischief our enemies can do us, is, to frighten us from our duty, and to lead us to do what is sinful. Let us never decline a good work, never do a bad one.

We ought to try all advice, and to reject what is contrary to the word of God. Every man should study to be consistent. Should I, a professed Christian, called to be a saint, a child of God, a member of Christ, a temple of the Holy Ghost, should I be covetous, sensual, proud, or envious?

Should I yield to impatience, discontent, or anger? Should I be slothful, unbelieving, or unmerciful? What effects will such conduct have upon others?

All that God has done for us, or by us, or given to us, should lead us to watchfulness, self-denial, and diligence. Next to the sinfulness of sin, we should dread the scandal.

The Wall Finished, Treachery of Some among the Jews

Nehemiah 6:15-19

The wall was begun and finished in fifty-two days, though they rested on the Sabbath's. A great deal of work may be done in a little time, if we set about it in earnest, and keep close to it. See the mischief of marrying with strangers.

When men once became akin to Tobiah, they soon became sworn to him. A sinful love leads to a sinful league.

The City Committed to Hananiah

Nehemiah 7:1-4

Nehemiah, having finished the wall, returned to the Persian court, and came to Jerusalem again with a new commission. The public safety depends on every one's care to guard himself and his family against sin.

Register of Those That First Returned

Nehemiah 7:5-73

Nehemiah knew that the safety of a city, under God, depends more upon the inhabitants than upon its walls.

Every good gift and every good work are from above. God gives knowledge, he gives grace; all is of him, and therefore all must be to him. What is done by human prudence, must be ascribed to the direction of Divine Providence.

But woe to those who turn back from the Lord, loving this present world! And happy those who dedicate themselves, and their substance, to his service and glory!

The People Called Upon to Be Joyful

Nehemiah 8:9-12

It was a good sign that their hearts were tender, when they heard the words of the law. The people were to send portions to those for whom nothing was prepared. It is the duty of a religious feast, as well as of a religious fast, to draw out the soul to the hungry; God's bounty should make us bountiful.

We must not only give to those that offer themselves, but send to those out of sight. Their strength consisted in joy in the Lord. The better we understand God's word, the more comfort we find in it; the darkness of trouble arises from the darkness of ignorance.

The Priests and Levites That Returned

Nehemiah 12:1-26

It is a debt we owe to faithful ministers, to remember our guides, who have spoken to us the word of God. It is good to know what our godly predecessors were, that we may learn what we should be.

The Dedication of the Wall

Nehemiah 12:27-43

All our cities, all our houses, must have holiness to the Lord written upon them. The believer should undertake nothing which he does not dedicate to the Lord. We are concerned to cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts, when any work for God is to pass through them.

Those that would be employed to sanctify others, must sanctify themselves, and set themselves apart for God. To those who are sanctified, all their creature-comforts and enjoyments are made holy. The people greatly rejoiced.

All that share in public mercies, ought to join in public thanksgivings.

The Officers of the Temple Settled

Nehemiah 12:44-47

When the solemnities of a thanksgiving day leave such impressions on ministers and people, that both are more careful and cheerful in doing their duty, they are indeed acceptable to the Lord, and turn to good account.

And whatever we do, must be purified by the blood of sprinkling, and by the grace of the Holy Spirit, or it cannot be acceptable to God.

Nehemiah Turns Out the Mixed Multitude

Nehemiah 13:1-9

Israel was a peculiar people, and not to mingle with the nations. See the benefit of publicly reading the word of God; when it is duly attended to, it discovers to us sin and duty, good and evil, and shows wherein we have erred. We profit, when we are thus wrought upon to separate from evil.

Those that would drive sin out of their hearts, the living temples, must throw out its household stuff, and all the provision made for it; and take away all the things that are the food and fuel of lust; this is really to mortify it.

When sin is cast out of the heart by repentance, let the blood of Christ be applied to it by faith, then let it be furnished with the graces of God's Spirit, for every good work.

Nehemiah's Reform in the House of God

Nehemiah 13:10-14

If a sacred character will not keep men from setting an evil example, it must not shelter any one from deserved blame and punishment. The Levites had been wronged; their portions had not been given them.

They were gone to get livelihoods for themselves and their families, for their profession would not maintain them. A maintenance not sufficient, makes a poor ministry.

The work is neglected, because the workmen are. Nehemiah laid the fault upon the rulers. Both ministers and people, who forsake religion and the services of it, and magistrates, who do not what they can to keep them to it, will have much to answer for.

He delayed not to bring the Levites to their places again, and that just payment should be made. Nehemiah on every occasion looked up to God, and committed himself and all his affairs to Him. It pleased him to think that he had been of use to revive and support religion in his country.

He here refers to God, not in pride, but with a humble appeal concerning his honest intention in what he had done. He prays, "Remember me;" not, Reward me. "Wipe not out my good deeds;" not, Publish them, or record them.

Yet he was rewarded, and his good deeds recorded. God does more than we are able to ask.

Sabbath-Breaking Restrained

Nehemiah 13:15-22

The keeping holy the Lord's Day forms an important object for their attention who would promote true godliness. Religion never prospers while Sabbaths are trodden under foot.

No wonder there was a general decay of religion, and corruption of manners among the Jews, when they forsook the sanctuary and profaned the Sabbath.

Those little consider what an evil they do, who profane the Sabbath. We must answer for the sins others are led to commit by our example.

Nehemiah charges it on them as an evil thing, for so it is, proceeding from contempt of God and our own souls.

He shows that Sabbath-breaking was one of the sins for which God had brought judgments upon them; and if they did not take warning, but returned to the same sins again, they had to expect further judgments.

The courage, zeal, and prudence of Nehemiah in this matter, are recorded for us to do likewise; and we have reason to think, that the cure he wrought was lasting.

He felt and confessed himself a sinner, who could demand nothing from God as justice, when he thus cried unto him for mercy.

The Dismissal of Strange Wives

Nehemiah 13:23-31

If either parent be ungodly, corrupt nature will incline the children to take after that one; which is a strong reason why Christians should not be unequally yoked.

In the education of children, great care should be taken about the government of their tongues; that they learn not the language of Ashdod, no impious or impure talk, no corrupt communication.

Nehemiah showed the evil of these marriages. Some, more obstinate than the rest, he smote, that is, ordered them to be beaten by the officers according to the law, De 25:2,3.

Here are Nehemiah's prayers on this occasion He prays, "Remember them, O my God." Lord, convince and convert them; put them in mind of what they should be and do.

The best services to the public have been forgotten by those for whom they were done, therefore Nehemiah refers himself to God, to recompense him.

This may well be the summary of our petitions; we need no more to make us happy than this; Remember me, O my God, for good.

We may humbly hope that the Lord will remember us and our services, although, after lives of unwearied activity and usefulness, we shall still see cause to abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes, and to cry out with Nehemiah, Spare me, O my God, according to the greatness of thy mercy.

Life Application

You may not have Nehemiah's unique abilities or feel that you are in a position where you can do anything great for God, but there are two ways you can become useful to God.

First, be a person who *talks* to God. Welcome him into your thoughts and share yourself with him—your concerns, feelings, and dreams. Second, be a person who *walks* with God. Put what you learn from his Word into action. God may have an “impossible” mission that he wants to do through you.

Key verse:

“I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, Let us start rebuilding. So they began this good work” (Neh. 2:18).

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*.

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