

# **Studies in The Book of Nehemiah**

## **How to Rebuild a Nation**

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## **Chapter 1**

### ***Assessing the Situation and Crying Out to God Weeping, Mourning, Fasting and Praying***

#### **The Condition of Jerusalem**

*"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." (verse 3)*

The people were in great affliction and reproach  
The wall of the city was broken down  
The gates of the city were burned with fire.

The people and the city itself were in a dreadful condition, broken down and needing to be lifted up and the city needed repairs.

#### **Response of Nehemiah, the Man of God**

*"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," (verse 4)*

When Nehemiah heard of the condition of Jerusalem, he wept, mourned, fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

*"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:" (verse 5)*

Nehemiah besought God.

*"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." (verse 6)*

Nehemiah confessed his sin, the sin of his family (father's house), and the sin of Israel. Nehemiah also prayed for Israel day and night.

*"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." (verse 7)*

Nehemiah admitted corruption among the people and disobedience to God's word.

*"Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations." (verse 8)*

The people were chastened and scattered abroad among the nations because of their sin. This judgment was according to God's word.

*"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." (verse 9)*

If the people would repent and obey, God would gladly gather them back to Himself and bring them back to the place that He had chosen to set His name there.

*"<sup>10</sup>Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. <sup>11</sup>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." (verses 10,11)*

Nehemiah pleaded for God to show mercy to him and to all those who desired to fear God's name. Nehemiah also pleaded for God to cause the king to show him (Nehemiah) mercy.

## **Chapter 2**

### ***Viewing and Assessing the Situation and Motivating the People God's Hand on Nehemiah for Good***

*"<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>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," (verses 1,2)*

Nehemiah could not hide his sadness, even when he stood before the king.

*"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?" (verse 3)*

The city of Jerusalem lay waste, and its gates were consumed with fire.

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

God gave Nehemiah mercy in the presence of the king, just as Nehemiah had prayed for (See chapter one verse eleven). The king asked Nehemiah his request.

*"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." (verse 5)*

Nehemiah asked the king to send him to rebuild the city.

*"<sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>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." (verses 6,7)*

It pleased the king to send Nehemiah, and Nehemiah gave him a time when he would return. Nehemiah also asked the king for written permission to show the other authorities.

*"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." (verse 8)*

Nehemiah also asked for a letter to the keeper of the king's forest so that Asaph would give him the timber that he needed for rebuilding the city.

*"<sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>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." (verses 9,10)*

When the enemies of Israel saw that someone had come to help the children of Israel, those enemies were grieved. However, Nehemiah had with him captains of the king's army and horsemen.

*"<sup>11</sup>So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. <sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>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." (verses 11-16)*

Nehemiah took time to view and assess the situation before telling others his plans and asking them to help.

*"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." (verse 17)*

After assessing the situation, Nehemiah shared his burden with others and asked them to help.

*"<sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>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? <sup>20</sup>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." (verses 18-20)*

When God's people heard that God's hand was in this work, they said, "Let us rise up and build," and they strengthened their hands to do that good work. God's enemies mocked, laughed, and made false accusations, but Nehemiah trusted in the God of heaven. He knew that God's hand was upon him for good and that these evil men had no right or portion or memorial in Jerusalem. Evil men have no right and no part among the inheritance or work of God's people.

## **Chapter 3**

### **A Part in the Work for Everyone**

Each person repaired a part of the wall. With only one exception, the rulers took the initiative to get the work going.

*"Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel." (verse 1)*

Spiritual leadership took the initiative and led the effort to rebuild. They also made sure that things were pure and holy.

*"And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord." (verse 5)*

Sadly, not all of the leaders took proper spiritual leadership.

*"And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Haloresh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters." (verse 12)*

The women helped in the work as well.

*"But the dung gate repaired Malchiah the son of Rechab, the ruler of part of Bethhaccerem; he built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof." (verse 14)*

The Rechabites put their hand to the work too.

See Jeremiah chapter 35 for more information about the Rechabites.

*"After him repaired the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani. Next unto him repaired Hashabiah, the ruler of the half part of Keilah, in his part." (verse 17)*

The Levites also put their hand to the work.

*"After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece, from the turning of the wall unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest." (verse 20)*

Baruch was earnest in his work.

*"And after him repaired the priests, the men of the plain."* (verse 22)

The priests helped also.



## **Chapter 4**

### **God Is Stronger than the Enemy and He Will Fight for Us; but We Must Always Be Ready and Never Let Our Guard Down**

*"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." (verse 1)*

The Jew's enemy, the enemy of God's people, mocked when he heard that they planned to build the wall.

*"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?" (verse 2)*

The enemy of God's people stirred up others against them and belittled the Jews in front of others.

Whenever God's people do work for the Lord, Satan will oppose it. He will stir up the hearts of evil people against the work. God's enemies will belittle God's people, but our strength is found in God.

*"<sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>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: <sup>5</sup>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." (verses 3-5)*

Nehemiah prayed and asked God to deal with the enemies. When these enemies mocked God's people, they provoked God to anger.

In order to rebuild a nation, godly Christians must stand up against the mocking of the enemy. When evil people mock God's people, this provokes God to anger. We must leave the enemies in God's hands and allow Him to deal with them, and trust in Him to take care of us.

When we do God's work, we must be mindful of God's principles and commands.

*"<sup>17</sup>Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. <sup>18</sup>If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. <sup>19</sup>Dearly beloved,*

avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. <sup>20</sup>Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. <sup>21</sup>Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:17-21)

*"<sup>6</sup>So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work." (verse 6)*

The people worked and were not discouraged.

*"<sup>7</sup>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, <sup>8</sup>And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it." (verses 7,8)*

At first there were just one or two enemies of God's work. Then there were a few more. Soon there grew to be many enemies. When God's people work for Him, they will face opposition. The enemies of God's people decided to band together against God's work.

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

The people of God remained vigilant, watching day and night and being faithful in prayer. Faithful watching and diligent prayer are key to victory. We must never let our guard down when we are doing God's work.

*"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." (verse 10)*

Those who were bearing the burdens became discouraged. There was more work than they could do by themselves.

*"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." (verse 11)*

On top of this discouragement, the enemy said they would come in with a surprise attack and kill the people and cause God's work to cease.

Our enemy, Satan, always takes advantage of our discouragement and looks for an opening to attack. Even when we feel pressed under the burden of the work, we should

never let our guard down. Otherwise, God's work in that area may be stopped or hindered.

*"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." (verse 12)*

Besides the heaviness of the burdens and the discouragement of the people, the enemy was now against them on all sides. They were surrounded.

*"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." (verse 13)*

Because of the threat of the enemy, Nehemiah set everyone in their places, armed.

We also have armor against our enemy. We have a sword to fight with and many other things with which to defend ourselves. <sup>10</sup>Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. <sup>13</sup>Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; <sup>15</sup>And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup>Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. <sup>17</sup>And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: <sup>18</sup>Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." (Ephesians 6:10-18)

*"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." (verse 14)*

Nehemiah encouraged God's people. Be not afraid. Fight for your people.

God is stronger than the enemy.

Even so, in our work for the Lord today, God is stronger than the devil who opposes it. "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4) Even little children can overcome if they know the Lord because greater is He that is in them than he that is in the world. God is still stronger than the enemy,

*"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." (verse 15)*

God brought the counsel of the enemies of His people to nought, to nothing. He revealed the enemies' plans to God's people and made their strategy of no avail.

*"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." (verse 16)*

Even though the enemy had drawn back for the time being, the people did not let down their guard. While one half of the people did the work, the other half stood guard.

*"<sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me." (verses 17,18)*

Everyone was armed -- the workers, and those who were standing guard. Everyone had their sword girded on their side. Even so, we must have our loins girded with truth and our sword, the word of God, by our side ready for use at a moment's notice. We must be fully armed and prepared, even if we are not on the front lines of the battle.

*"<sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us." (verses 19,20)*

The work was great and the people were separated as each had his or her job in a specific place. But they could all resort together when there was trouble. God would fight for them.

As we work to help and restore our nation, we may be separated in the work, each one in a different place. But we all can resort together at the mercy seat before the throne of grace, our place of refuge, if there is trouble. God will fight for us. God is still stronger than the enemy.

*"<sup>21</sup>So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. <sup>22</sup>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. <sup>23</sup>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." (verses 21-23)*

Everyone remained armed, clothed and ready. They did not let their guard down. A watch was set night and day.

The work of God never ceases. Likewise, opposition to the work of God never ceases. We must never let our guard down, but always have people in their places armed, clothed, and ready for battle, ready at a moment's notice.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Improper Leadership versus Right Leadership**

*"<sup>1</sup>And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. <sup>2</sup>For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. <sup>3</sup>Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. <sup>4</sup>There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. <sup>5</sup>Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards. <sup>6</sup>And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words." (verses 1-6)*

The rulers of the people were oppressing them during difficult times. They exacted a tribute from the people; and, in some cases, enslaved them. Those who were enslaved remained slaves because their family did not have the means to redeem them. The abuse of power by these rulers made Nehemiah angry, and he took steps to deal with it.

*"<sup>7</sup>Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. <sup>8</sup>And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer." (verses 7,8)*

Nehemiah rebuked the nobles who were charging interest when people had to sell their lands and vineyards to get food during the famine. They could not buy their property back at its value but had to pay tribute. Though the people were already in distress, the rulers were oppressing them more. The people had spent all their resources to redeem their brethren who had been sold to the heathen, and now they were being traded as slaves by their own leaders. The nobles should have been helping them, not oppressing and enslaving them.

*"Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?" (verse 9)*

The leaders of God's people were being a poor testimony to the heathen around them.

*"I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury." (verse 10)*

It was in the power of the rulers to exact taxes; but, during difficult times, they should forgo heavy taxes and the charging of interest for the sake of the people.

*"Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them." (verse 11)*

Nehemiah urged the rulers to restore to people their property, and their food, wine, and oil. They were also to restore part of the interest that they had charged. The rulers had not only laid on heavy taxes and charged interest, but they also took away possessions and food and other things if the people could not pay,

*"Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise." (verse 12)*

Even the spiritual leaders were taking advantage of the people. Nehemiah had to take an oath from them that they would keep their promise.

*"Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise." (verse 13)*

Those who refused to restore houses and lands to others would lose their houses too. Instead of being rich, they would be empty. So they said "Amen" and praised the Lord and did as they had promised.

*"Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor." (verse 14)*

Rulers should sacrifice to help the people, not make the people sacrifice to help them.

*"But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God." (verse 15)*

Some governors had taken advantage of the people, demanding heavy labor and tribute. Nehemiah would not do this because he feared God.

*"Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work." (verse 16)*

Leaders should help in the work if the people have need. They should not buy up land for their own sake and to fulfill their own desires.

*"<sup>17</sup>Moreover there were at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us. <sup>18</sup>Now that which was prepared for me daily was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people." (verses 17,18)*

Nehemiah helped to feed other people, and he required only what was necessary. He did not require what was usually due the governor because the people were in heavy bondage.

Right rulers will do as Nehemiah did. They will consider the people first and put their own needs last. One thing to do when restoring a nation is to look for right leaders who fear God. If the leaders are doing wrong or abusing their power, they should be held accountable and or removed according to the proper procedure under the laws.

*"Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people." (verse 19)*

Nehemiah asked God to remember him for all that he did to help his people. He did not seek for himself in this life but left the rewards up to God.



## **Chapter 6**

### **Victory Over God's Enemies; God Will Always Have the Victory**

*"<sup>1</sup>Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) <sup>2</sup>That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. <sup>3</sup>And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? <sup>4</sup>Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner." (verses 1-4)*

God's enemies tried to make the man of God stumble and fall.

*"<sup>5</sup>Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; <sup>6</sup>Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. <sup>7</sup>And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. <sup>8</sup>Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. <sup>9</sup>For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands." (verses 5-9)*

God's enemies tried to make God's people afraid. Nehemiah, God's man cried out to God for help and strength. When our enemies try to tell us that the work God gave us to do is impossible; and when they try to entice us to come over to their side, we must cry out to God for His help and strength. God can give us strength over the enemy.

*"Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee." (verse 10)*

Since God's enemies could not deceive God's man, they tried to make him afraid. They tried to trick him into doing wrong. We must never be afraid of God's enemies or allow them to trick us into doing wrong. If God allows us to do the work of restoring a nation, He will bring that work to pass no matter what the enemy tries to do.

"<sup>13</sup>And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? <sup>14</sup>But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; <sup>15</sup>But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: <sup>16</sup>Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." (I Peter 3:13-16)

*"<sup>11</sup>And I said, 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. <sup>12</sup>And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. <sup>13</sup>Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me." (verses 11-13)*

God's enemies hired a false prophet to make the man of God sin. We must always be alert and depending upon God to show us whether someone who gives us counsel is from God or from the enemy. Nehemiah recognized that this man was not from God. A prophet of God would not tell him to go into the temple to save his life. A prophet of God would not tell him to do something contrary to God's word or its principles.

I Kings 13 tells the story of another man of God who was not as wise as Nehemiah. He believed the word of a false prophet. God had told the man not to eat or drink in that place. The false prophet came to him and said that he was also a prophet and an angel had spoken to him and told him to bring him back to his house to eat and drink. But the false prophet had lied to the man of God. The man of God believed the lie and disobeyed God. The consequence was that the man of God died, he was slain by a lion.

We must be very aware and in tune with God so that we are not deceived by anything that looks good but is not the truth. If we are deceived and sin against God, that may be the end of the work God gave us to do. Lord, help us be alert, and have great wisdom from You.

*"<sup>14</sup>My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear. <sup>15</sup>So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days." (verses 14,15)*

God helped the people, and they did not give up. They were able to finish the wall, and it was finished in fifty-two days. If God gives us a work to do, the enemy cannot defeat this work. We should not be afraid of those who oppose God's work, even false teachers and false spiritual leaders.

*"And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God." (verse 16)*

God's enemies were cast down when they were unable to defeat God and His people and His work.

*"<sup>17</sup>Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. <sup>18</sup>For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah." (verses 17,18)*

There were traitors among the people, especially among the leaders of the Jews. They should have been helping Nehemiah and helping the Jews. Instead, they were siding with Tobiah and helping Tobiah with his evil plans.

We should not be afraid of those that are against us, even those in authority. They cannot fight against God or His work and win. God will bring their evil plans to nothing. God will always have the victory.

*"Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear." (verse 19)*

Do not fear Satan's men. God is greater than Satan and his men. Do not believe the lies that Satan's men tell you. If they say something to try to make you afraid, it is very likely that they are lying. They work for their father the Devil, and you work for your Father, the Almighty God. Your Father will win.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Work Completed**

*"Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed." (verse 1)*

The task was completed, the doors were set up, and the workers were appointed to their places.

*"That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many." (verse 2)*

Those who were faithful and feared God were put in charge. Those who rule and lead should be faithful and should have the fear of God.

*"<sup>3</sup>And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar them: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one to be over against his house. <sup>4</sup>Now the city was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded." (verses 3,4)*

The gates were to stay closed at night, and always under guard. The city was large and great, but there were not many people in the city, and their houses were not built. It was very important that someone be always on guard to protect the city and the people.

One day there will be a new Jerusalem. In the new Jerusalem, there will be perfect peace and rest. The gates will never be shut. There will not have to be a guard day and night, because no evil thing will ever enter its gates. Also, there will be no more night. <sup>22</sup>And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband... <sup>22</sup>And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. <sup>23</sup>And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. <sup>24</sup>And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. <sup>25</sup>And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. <sup>26</sup>And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. <sup>27</sup>And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they

which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21:1 & 22-26) Oh, what a wonderful day that will be -- for Jerusalem and for the nations of them that are saved!

*"And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and found written therein." (verse 5)*

God put into Nehemiah's heart to go through the genealogy of all those who were in leadership. This would be very important later.

*"<sup>64</sup>These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. <sup>65</sup>And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim." (verses 64,65)*

There were some serving in the priesthood who could not show their genealogy. Therefore, they were no longer allowed to serve in the priesthood. The priesthood must be kept pure. One day a priest may come who has Urim and Thummim and perhaps he will talk with the Lord and find out if these who could not show their genealogy were perhaps truly part of the priestly line; but for now, they must not continue in this work.

It is very important to keep the work of God pure. It must **always** be kept pure.

*"<sup>66</sup>The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, <sup>67</sup>Beside their manservants and their maidservants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred forty and five singing men and singing women." (verses 66,67)*

Such a large congregation the Lord put together. Also, there was a choir of 245 singing men and women.

*"<sup>70</sup>And some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work. The Tirshatha gave to the treasure a thousand drams of gold, fifty basons, five hundred and thirty priests' garments. <sup>71</sup>And some of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of the work twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand and two hundred pound of silver." (verses 70,71)*

The governor and some of the chief of the fathers gave to the Lord's work. The rulers and elders of the people were first in giving to the work of God.

*"And that which the rest of the people gave was twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand pound of silver, and threescore and seven priests' garments." (verse 72)*

The people gave generously to the work of the Lord. Remember, in a previous chapter, we learned that the people had been oppressed. They could not even buy back their own land or their family members that had been sold into slavery. Nehemiah had rebuked the rulers, and he made them give land back to the people and part of their money as well. The people were not selfish with their money but gave freely to the work of the Lord.

*"So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and some of the people, and the Nethinims, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities; and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities." (verse 73)*

Finally, the work was complete and everyone was in their places, and the children of Israel were able to dwell in their cities. With God's help, they had completed the work.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Obedience to God's Word Brings Joy**

*"<sup>1</sup>And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. <sup>2</sup>And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month." (verses 1,2)*

All that could hear with understanding attended the reading of God's word.

*"And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law." (verse 3)*

Ezra read God's word for hours, yet all were attentive.

*"And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up" (verse 5)*

Ezra opened the word of God in the sight of all the people. When he opened it, all the people stood up. There was great respect and honor for God's word.

*"And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground." (verse 6)*

The people acknowledged God's greatness and humbled themselves before the Lord.

*"<sup>7</sup>Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. <sup>8</sup>So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." (verses 7,8)*

The spiritual leaders and the leaders of the people did not simply read the word of God to the people; they also gave the sense of the word of God and caused the people to understand what the word of God was saying.

*"<sup>10</sup>Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength. <sup>11</sup>So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. <sup>12</sup>And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them." (verses 10-12)*

When the people acknowledged God's greatness and humbled themselves before Him, and when they had understood God's words, they had great joy. This great joy turned into a day of feasting and fellowship. They were full of joy because they understood the words that were declared to them, and they knew that the LORD was their strength.

*"<sup>17</sup>And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. <sup>18</sup>Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner." (verses 17,18)*

There were things that the people saw were written in the word of God, and they knew that these things that were written had not been obeyed for a long time. The people made a point to do them and to obey the word of God. They celebrated the feast, and Ezra read to them every day out of the word of God. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day they got together in a solemn assembly as the word of God described. When the people obeyed the word of God, there was very great gladness. Obedience to God's word brings joy



## **Chapter 9**

### **Separation and Confession**

*"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." (verse 1)*

When the word of God was found and obeyed, there was great joy and rejoicing. People had very great gladness and feasting. However, the word of God reveals what is in the heart. Now that they had the word of God, the people knew that they had sin in their lives. Their sin was causing God to bring judgment upon them. The response of these people was not to try to find a way out of their trouble or to plead with the king or work out something diplomatically with the government that was over them. No, the people fasted with sackcloth and earth upon them. They humbled themselves with fasting and sorrow because they knew they had sinned against a holy God.

Many today are looking to someone to save them. In our nation, some are looking to the President. They think he will be able to make peace with the nations of the world and prevent wars that will destroy our nation. But have we looked at ourselves and seen our dirty hearts? Have we looked at God and seen His holiness? Have we humbled ourselves before Him and sorrowed because of our sin? The arm of flesh will fail us. When will we turn to lean on the arm of God?

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

The children of Israel had broken God's law and intermarried with the heathen. They intermingled with them as well, in the affairs of life. Now it was time to separate.

When will we Christians in America see that we have intermingled with the world and begin to separate ourselves?

The children of Israel stood before God and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. Have we confessed our sins to God? We should confess the sins we have now and the sins of our fathers that have never been taken care of. When these sins are brought up, there is often a great reaction. Some tend to blame others. Others try to prove how one group was hurt more than the other by the sins of our fathers. The truth is, all the wrong things that were done were sin. If there is sin of our fathers that has not been taken care of, it should all be confessed before God without making excuses for it

and without trying to show that some sins were worse than others. All sin will receive the judgment of God, and it all needs to be confessed and repented of.

*"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." (verse 3)*

The children of Israel read God's word, confessed their sin, and worshipped.

It took the children of Israel one fourth part of the day to confess their sins and the sins of their fathers. If we took time to examine our hearts and to examine what was done in the history of our nation and held these things up in light of God's word, do you think it would take a fourth part of the day to confess our sins too? Do you think it might take longer?

After the children of Israel confessed their sins, they worshiped God. They kept their minds and hearts focused on God. Where is the focus of our minds and hearts?

*"<sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, 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." (verses 4,5)*

Blessing and praise were offered to God because of His glorious name. God's glorious name is exalted above all blessing and praise. He is worthy of this blessing and praise.

Lately, much praise has been heaped upon our President for the things that he seems to have accomplished. He is given credit for many things; including, in some cases, saving our nation. Some think he will even be able to help change and save the world. It looks like, as a nation, we are looking to the wrong one to help. While we should honor our President because of his position and be pleased when he does right, we should not be heaping upon him the praise and greatness that is often attributed to him. Even those who call themselves Christians have been heaping much of this praise on our President. Our President is unable to do anything without the help of God. Frighteningly, it seems many are holding the President almost in a god-like esteem. The higher we hold our man-made god, the farther he will fall. When will we look to the right Person -- holy and Almighty and omnipotent God?

*"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." (verse 6)*

God is LORD alone. He made heaven, even the heaven of heavens. He made all their host. He made the earth and the sea and everything that is in them. God is worshipped by the host of heaven. God made everything, and one day everything will bring praise to God. Revelation 5:12,13 says, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."<sup>13</sup> And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

No one deserves honor, blessing, and praise like our God. Will we, as a nation, give it to Him today? He alone is worthy.

*"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." (verse 7)*

Thou art the LORD the God - the only LORD and the only God. This LORD God is the one who chose Abram and gave him the name Abraham.

*"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." (verse 8)*

God found Abraham's heart to be faithful. God promised to give the land of the Canaanites to Abraham and to his seed. God fulfilled this promise because God is righteous.

*"And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea." (verse 9)*

God saw the affliction of the children of Israel in Egypt. He heard their cry by the Red Sea. God had compassion on them and helped them.

God is a God of compassion. He is ready to help when we need it. He will help our nation just like He helped Israel if only we will cry to Him when we are in trouble. "The LORD *is* gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy." (Psalm 145:8)

*"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."* (verse 10)

Pharaoh and all his dealt proudly with God's people, and God judged them. God showed great signs and wonders upon them. In this way God got Him a name.

If only our nation would realize that this great God of wonders is just the same today! Instead, we depend on a President to deliver us. We see the things it seems like he has been able to accomplish, and he gets himself a name. Credit goes to him instead of glory going to God.

Do we realize that God can show great signs and wonders upon our enemies if we but humble ourselves before Him, pour out our needs to Him, and seek His face? We could see a great deliverance, just like the people of Moses' day and the people of Hezekiah's day.

Sadly, our President has gone and signed a declaration of friendship with the President of the most repressive regime on earth. He allowed the US flag to be flown next to the flag of that repressive regime. He made some compromises to try to appease the President of that other country, and did not confront that nation about its human rights violations, really its outright atrocities, because he was afraid we would be hit by a nuclear weapon. During Bible days, the nation of Israel did the same thing. They were afraid of nations that would come against them, and they went and made agreements with these nations. This may have "bought" them some time, but it only brought them more trouble in the future.

If we had only humbled ourselves before God and besought His mercy, maybe He would have destroyed the power and nuclear weapons and might of this other nation. Instead, we looked to a man and depended on the arm of flesh. We have forgotten that, "<sup>8</sup>With him *is* an arm of flesh; but with us *is* the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles." (See II Chronicles 32:8) We have forgotten that, if we only rest in Him, the eternal God is our refuge, and underneath us are His everlasting arms. (See Deuteronomy 33:27a)

*"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." (verse 11)*

God made a way for His people, but He overthrew their persecutors.

*"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." (verse 12)*

God led His people and gave them light for their way. God has not changed. He will do that for His people today.

*"Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments." (verse 13)*

God came down from heaven and spoke to His people. God's judgments, laws, statutes, and commandments are right. We have a record of those judgments, laws, statutes, and commandments; and they are still right today. This record is found in the Bible. God still speaks to us through the words He gave His people long ago.

*"And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant." (verse 14)*

God made known to His people His holy sabbath, a time set aside to rest and worship Him. He commanded them the things He wanted them to know and do. And He gave them His servant Moses to teach them these precepts, statutes, and laws.

*"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." (verse 15)*

God not only provided for the spiritual needs of His people. He also provided for their physical needs -- bread for their hunger and water for their thirst. He provided what they needed for the time and promised them that better was yet to come.

God does the same for His people today. He has given us His holy word, the Bible. We have all that we need for life and godliness, and we can live by the words that proceed forth from His mouth. God also provides for our physical needs, providing food and water. And He has promised us that the best is yet to come. Thank You, God, for caring for Your children.

*"But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments." (verse 16)*

Sadly, God's people were not grateful for His provision. They dealt proudly against God and would not listen to what His word had to say.

*"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." (verse 17)*

God's people refused to obey. They forgot all the wonders God had done among them. When things got difficult, they thought they could find their own solution. In trying to go their own way, they appointed a captain that would return them again to their bondage. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death." (Proverbs 16:25)

But God, is ready to pardon. He is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness. God had patience with them and treated them kindly and did not forsake them and leave them to go their own way. He took care of them even though they had forgotten Him.

God is the same in all ages. He is ready to pardon, always waiting, with open arms, for the opportunity to bestow His mercy on us. Daniel said, "To the Lord our God *belong* mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him." (Daniel 9:9)

*"<sup>18</sup>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; <sup>19</sup>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." (verses 18,19)*

Even when God's people went after other gods, He did not forsake them but extended to them His manifold mercies. God does the same for us today. Even when we do not believe Him, He remains faithful. "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." (II Timothy 2:13)

God is a faithful God.

*"Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst." (verse 20)*

God continued to lead and protect His people (see verse 19). He gave them His Spirit to instruct them. He gave them food for their hunger and water to quench their thirst.

*"Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not." (verse 21)*

God sustained His people in the wilderness for forty years. During all that time, they lacked nothing. Even their clothes did not grow old. Also, their feet did not swell; their shoes stayed good as well.

*"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." (verse 22)*

On top of all their other blessings, God gave His people kingdoms and nations, lands to possess.

*"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." (verse 23)*

God multiplied their children. He gave His people the land He had promised them, and He also gave them children to inhabit that land.

*"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." (verse 24)*

God subdued the inhabitants of the land before the children of His people, and He gave this land to His people and their children instead.

*"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." (verse 25)*

God poured out upon His people manifold blessings -- houses full of all goods; wells that had already been digged; vineyards and oliveyards and fruit trees that had already been planted. All these things did God give them in abundance, and they were filled, and delighted themselves with the great goodness that God had bestowed upon them.

*"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." (verse 26)*

Even though God had given His people everything they needed and much more, they did not seem grateful. They cast his law behind their backs. They did not think it was important to hear or obey God's word. When God sent prophets to testify to them of their sin, they just killed the prophets. Instead of turning to God, they continued more and more in their sin and provoked Him greatly.

What about us as Americans? Are we thankful for what God has provided, or do we think that we always need more? Do we follow our own way and find ourselves unsatisfied even though we have more than most of the rest of the people in the world? Do we listen when God tries to speak to us, or do we try to find some other reason and solution for the problems of society? Do we continue to go astray, going our own way, and therefore provoke God to anger?

*"Therefore thou deliveredst 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." (verse 27)*

Because His people were ungrateful and would not listen to or obey His word, God delivered them into the hand of their enemies. If we are ungrateful for what God gives us and we will not listen to or obey Him, God can take away all those wonderful blessings He has given us and bring judgment upon us instead.



Nevertheless, when His people cried to Him, God, according to His manifold mercies, heard their cry and sent someone to deliver them. When God takes away His blessings and sends judgment, He does so to cause us to realize that we have nothing without Him and to cause us to turn and cry to Him. He is very merciful and ready to hear and help.

*"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 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."* (verse 28)

When God's people had rest, they quickly forgot Him and went back to their evil ways. He gave them over to their enemies, but He had mercy again when they returned to Him. Many times He delivered them according to His mercies.

*"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."* (verse 29)

Sadly, God's people rebelled again. They refused to hear when God warned them and would not obey His word.

*"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."* (verse 30)

God waited and had mercy and long forbearance for many years. Yet, God's people refused to hear, so He let them be given into the hands of their enemies.

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

Though God's people had turned their back on Him and He had brought judgment upon them; yet God did not forsake them and allow them to be destroyed completely because He is a gracious and merciful God.

*"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." (verse 32)*

Once more God's people entreated Him to look upon their trouble and help them. God - their great, mighty, and terrible God -- was (and still is) a God that keeps His covenant and a God of mercy. They asked that He hear them one more time and that He look upon their trouble and that this trouble would not seem little to Him.

*"Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly." (verse 33)*

God's people acknowledged that He was right and they were wicked. God was just in all the judgment He had allowed to come upon His people. They understood that they were only getting what they deserved.

*"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." (verse 34)*

God's people acknowledged that neither they nor their fathers had listened to God's word or obeyed it. Their kings and their princes, and even their priests who were supposed to be their spiritual leaders, did not listen to or obey God's word.

*"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." (verse 35)*

God blessed His people with great goodness. He gave them more than they needed and also a large and fat land in which to dwell. Yet, they did not serve Him. The kings and princes did not serve Him in their kingdom. They forgot that it was God who had brought them to power and had given them all the wonderful things in their kingdom.

*"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." (verse 36)*

Because God's people did not remember that it was God who had given them their wonderful land, and because they did not serve God in their land, because they were

not grateful to Him for His great goodness, God gave their land to others. God had given this land to their fathers to eat the fruit of the land and experience the goodness of the land, but now they were servants in their own land.

*"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." (verse 37)*

Now the enemies of God's people possessed the land. God's people acknowledged that God had set these kings over them because of their sin. Now these kings had dominion over every part of their lives. They could do anything with them or demand anything of them at their pleasure. God's people were in great distress.

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

Because of all these things, God's people made a sure covenant with Him and put it in writing. Their leaders and their spiritual leaders signed to this covenant.

How we need leaders in our government and spiritual leaders of our people that are serious about God and acknowledging Him and thanking Him and serving Him! When a nation returns to the Lord, that results in right leadership -- both the national leaders and the spiritual leaders will acknowledge and fear and serve God. Until we see these things in our nation, we have not "taken our nation back." We cannot **take** it back. We can only humble ourselves before God and entreat Him to **give** it back. He gave it to us in the first place, and He can take it away at any time. He also has the power to give it back again, a power that neither our President, nor any other person, possesses. We must acknowledge God's righteousness and our great wickedness and entreat Him because of His great mercies. We must ask Him for godly and righteous leaders -- both national and spiritual.

## **Chapter 10**

### **The Signing of the Covenant**

Chapter 10 lists those who signed the covenant with the Lord. This list contains the names of many of the leaders of the people -- both national and spiritual leaders, beginning with Nehemiah the governor.

The men, their wives, their sons, and their daughters all signed; everyone that had separated themselves from the people of the land unto the law of God signed; everyone that had knowledge and understanding signed this covenant. (See verse 28)

What agreements did the covenant contain? What did those who signed it promise to do?

1. Walk in God's law, observe and do all the commandments of the LORD their Lord, observe His judgments and statutes. (See verse 29)
2. Not to intermarry with the heathen. (See verse 30)
3. To keep the sabbath day holy and not do any business on the Lord's day. (verse 31)
4. To give faithfully to God's work. (verse 32)
5. To maintain God's house. (verses 33,34)
6. To faithfully give their tithes and firstfruits.  
To give their tithes for the Levites.  
(See verses 35-37)
7. To not forsake the house of their God. (verse 39)

When we look at this list, do we see these things in our country? If not, can we perceive that we have not "taken our country back" and that we are not right with the Lord as a nation.

1. Do our nobles and national leaders acknowledge and fear God and desire to walk in His ways? Or are they afraid to mention God and encouraged not to have Him as part of their work because "religion should not be mixed with politics." Where are the leaders with courage, those who are willing to stand up, even if they are criticized and persecuted, even if it does not seem popular?

2. Do we and our leaders and wives and sons and daughters and all who can understand, separate from the world, listen to God's word, and walk in His ways? "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort *you* by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more." (I Thessalonians 4:1)

3. Do we intermarry or become unequally yoked in other ways with the lost or with those who are not walking with God? Do our leaders do this?

"<sup>14</sup>Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? <sup>15</sup>And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? <sup>16</sup>And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>17</sup>Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, <sup>18</sup>And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (II Corinthians 6:14-18)

4. Do we, and our spiritual leaders, give faithfully to God's work?

"<sup>3</sup>For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they were* willing of themselves; <sup>4</sup>Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. <sup>5</sup>And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." (II Corinthians 8:3-5)

5. Do we, in our churches, make an effort to maintain God's house? That is one way we can be a testimony to the lost who come in. I've heard some say that they should have a say or a part in certain things. After all, it is partly theirs because their tithes helped pay for it. Our tithes are given to God. Once they are given away, they belong to Him. None

of those tithes, and nothing those tithes help to do belongs to us. We may benefit from it; but the tithes are the Lord's, His house of worship is His, and the work is His as well. Let us give, like the Macedonians, with a willing heart -- not just our money, but our time and effort too.

6. Do we faithfully give our tithes and firstfruits?

According to [sharefaith.com](http://sharefaith.com), Christians in America give less today per capita than they gave during the Great Depression. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves. Those who make less than \$20 thousand are eight times more likely to give than those who make \$75 thousand or more. Eight out of ten tithers have no credit card debt. In the average church, only 3 - 5% of people actually tithe. And, if we do not tithe, what about firstfruits and offerings above our tithe?

7. Are we faithful to the house of our God, or do we fail to attend church in order to stay home or to do other things that please ourselves?

According to a recent "Pew Study," about 247 million Americans claim to be Christian. Of those 247 million, only about 40% or 98 million actually go to church. Many of those attend only a few times a year. Are we truly Christians, or are we just playing a game? Do we truly care about God and other believers, or do we really just care about ourselves?

<sup>23</sup>Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) <sup>24</sup>And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: <sup>25</sup>Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:23-25)

<sup>16</sup>Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. <sup>17</sup>And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." (Malachi 3:16,17a)

## **Chapter 11**

### **They Offered Themselves Willingly**

*"<sup>1</sup>And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts to dwell in other cities. <sup>2</sup>And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem." (Nehemiah 11:1,2)*

The rulers of the people cast lots to decide who would dwell at Jerusalem, but the men who went also offered themselves willingly. When they offered themselves willingly, the rest of the people blessed them.

Those who went willingly to Jerusalem were like the Macedonians who gave to God's work. Even though it was hard, they were able to do it because they first gave themselves. The apostle Paul said of the Macedonians, "And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." (II Corinthians 8:5)

How much could we see accomplished for the Lord if the men of our nation willingly gave themselves to God and to His will and to the service of God's work and people?

*"Now these are the chief of the province that dwelt in Jerusalem: but in the cities of Judah dwelt every one in his possession in their cities, to wit, Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants." (verse 3)*

The chief of the people were the first to give of themselves to the work. Many people dwelt in their possessions. Some chose to go to Jerusalem even though living there would not be easy. Although the wall was built by this time, the city was still largely in disrepair. It needed to be rebuilt. Also, enemies were nearby, and people had to be constantly on watch to guard against the enemy. However, the chief of the people went anyway, and they went willingly.

Not only did the chief of the people give themselves to go to Jerusalem, mighty men of valor gave themselves to go as well (See verse 14) Some among the priests and Levites went as well.

Everyone that was important to the work of the house of God went. That included porters, a man appointed to begin the thanksgiving in prayer, and singers. The singers were over the business of the house of God and were given a portion daily according to the king's commandment. Door keeping, thanksgiving, and singing seem to be very important to God in the place set aside to worship Him. (See verses 17, 18, 22, and 23)

In all, there were 3,044 men who willingly gave themselves to go to Jerusalem. Besides this were the women and children and those who dwelt in the villages.



## **Chapter 12**

### **Thanksgiving, Watchfulness, Purity, Holiness, and Singing**

*"<sup>7</sup>Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah. These were the chief of the priests and of their brethren in the days of Jeshua. <sup>8</sup>Moreover the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, which was over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren." (verses 7,8)*

Notice that it was the chief of the people -- the chief of the priests and also the Levites -- who offered themselves willingly to go up to Jerusalem.

There, at the work of God, Mattaniah was put over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren. Such a prominent place was given to thanksgiving! It has been mentioned in this book several times. Now it is mentioned again. Of holiness, purity, watchfulness, thanksgiving and singing, thanksgiving is mentioned first. It must be very important to God.

*"Also Bakkukiah and Unni, their brethren, were over against them in the watches." (verse 9)*

The brethren of those who were over the thanksgiving helped to stand watch. Standing watch is very important for any work of God. Mostly, these men were watching to protect from the enemy. We need to watch for attacks from the enemy too. "<sup>8</sup>Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: <sup>9</sup>Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." (1 Peter 5:8,9) See also Revelation 3:11, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." It is very important to be vigilant and always watching.

*"The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, were recorded chief of the fathers: also the priests, to the reign of Darius the Persian." (verse 22)*

Many of those who returned to Jerusalem to serve the Lord there were old men who had survived the captivity. Through many years of captivity, they had remained strong and faithful. Now they got the opportunity to serve the Lord in their own land once again. See also verse twenty three. These men were written in the book of the chronicles. It seems some of them were very aged men.

*"And the chief of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brethren over against them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, ward over against ward." (verse 24)*

Again, the ministry of praise and thanksgiving was mentioned. The men were set over this ministry according to the commandment of David, the man of God. Each ward in the house of God had someone over that ward who was in charge of praise and thanksgiving.

*"Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, were porters keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gates." (verse 25)*

Again, here are some that are keeping watch -- the porters. They were to be at the doors of each ward and to keep the ward at the threshold of the gates. They were to make sure nothing or no one entered those gates that was not permitted to do so.

What about our ministries in America? Do we keep watch to make sure nothing gets in that compromises the word of God or that hinders the work or the growth of the saints in any way? Or do we let in many things, doing so in the name of "trying something new" or "trying something different"? In the work of God and ministry for Him, there is nothing better than the old paths. "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." (Jeremiah 6:16a)

*"<sup>27</sup>And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps. <sup>28</sup>And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Netophathi; <sup>29</sup>Also from the house of Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Azmaveth: for the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem." (verses 27-30)*

The Levites kept the dedication of the wall with gladness, thanksgivings, and singing. The singing was accompanied by cymbals, psalteries, and harps. The singers lived in the villages around Jerusalem; and when they came to sing, their sons gathered together with them.

*"And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the wall." (verse 30)*

The priests and the Levites made sure everything and everyone was pure before the great thanksgiving celebration of the dedication of the wall.

Every year, we here in America, have a Thanksgiving celebration for the wonderful things God has done for us throughout the years and for how He has blessed us. Do we make sure our hearts and lives are pure before we give God thanks?

### **The Great Thanksgiving Celebration**

*"Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great companies of them that gave thanks, whereof one went on the right hand upon the wall toward the dung gate." (verse 31)*

Nehemiah appointed two great companies to give thanks. Apparently he set the princes of Judah over these companies. One of the companies went on the right hand side of the wall.

*"<sup>32</sup>And after them went Hoshai, and half of the princes of Judah, <sup>33</sup>And Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam, <sup>34</sup>Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, <sup>35</sup>And certain of the priests' sons with trumpets; namely, Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph: <sup>36</sup>And his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azarael, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them. <sup>37</sup>And at the fountain gate, which was over against them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the water gate eastward." (verses 32-37)*

These verses explain how the company was divided up and arranged on the wall. They took with them musical instruments to use in their thanksgiving celebration.

*"<sup>38</sup>And the other company of them that gave thanks went over against them, and I after them, and the half of the people upon the wall, from beyond the tower of the furnaces even unto the broad wall; <sup>39</sup>And from above the gate of Ephraim, and above the old gate, and above the fish gate, and the tower of Hananeel, and the tower of Meah, even unto the sheep gate: and they stood still in the prison gate." (verses 38,39)*

The companies of those that gave thanks went all around the wall and the gates. They even went to the prison gate. Everyone got to have a part in the celebration of thanksgiving or to at least be blessed by the hearing of it. The companies of people lined up along the wall and the stairs of the wall.

*"So stood the two companies of them that gave thanks in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me." (verse 40)*

Half of the rulers went with each company.

*"And the priests; Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets." (verse 41)*

The priests played the trumpets.

*"And Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer." (verse 42)*

Jezrahiah was over the singers, who sang loudly.

*"Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off." (verse 43)*

Great sacrifices were offered because of the great joy of the people. Everyone had part in the thanksgiving celebration. The wives and the children rejoiced along with the men so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard a long way off because God had made them to rejoice.

When a nation returns to God, sacrifices and great joy, singing, and thanksgiving are the result because God makes that nation to rejoice.

*"And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited." (verse 44)*

When revival came, proper order was restored to the house of God. People rejoiced in their leaders and happily gave their firstfruits and tithes to provide for the priests and Levites as they did the work of God.

When revival comes to this land, proper order will be restored to the house of God. People will rejoice in their leaders and care for them. People will be faithful to give tithes and offerings and firstfruits so that the work of God can be done continually.

*"<sup>45</sup>And both the singers and the porters kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, according to the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son. <sup>46</sup>For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God." (verses 45,46)*

It seems that singing and thanksgiving had been lost for many years.

Look around. Singing and thanksgiving are fast fading away in our churches today. We have lost our perspective of singing, rejoicing, and thanksgiving; and we have gotten into a mode of wanting everything to please ourselves. The more things are changed to please us, the less content we become, and the more change we want. All the while, good singing and thanksgiving are dwindling away.

*"And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, every day his portion: and they sanctified holy things unto the Levites; and the Levites sanctified them unto the children of Aaron." (verse 47)*

When revival came, everyone that did the work of the Lord was provided for, even the singers and porters. Nobody gave and said, "Well, I gave my tithes, so part of this belongs to me, and I have a say in how things are to be done." No, they understood that tithes and firstfruits went to those who were given the task to oversee God's work. Other offerings went to others who ministered in the work of God. Tithes, firstfruits and offerings were given to God, not given to see what benefits one could get back.

## **Chapter 13**

### **Importance of Purity and Faithfulness Among Believers and In the Work of God**

*"On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever." (verse 1)*

"Therein was found written." Attention was paid to the written word of God.

*"<sup>2</sup>Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing. <sup>3</sup>Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude." (verses 2,3)*

The Ammonites and the Moabites were not supposed to come into the congregation of God because they did not meet the children of Israel with bread and water. Not only did they not treat Israel right, but they also hired Balaam to curse Israel. However, God turned that curse into a blessing.

Sadly, over the years, the children of Israel forgot about God's word and the Ammonites and Moabites mixed with them. Now, as they heard God's word, they separated from the mixed multitude.

So sadly, many of our churches in America have gone the same way. We have begun to mix with the world until it seems there is a "mixed multitude" among us. We have forgotten purity and proper separation. Someone has written a poem about compromise in the church, and this poem could well describe the state of American churches today.

There are different variations of this old poem. This particular version is copied from a tract printed by Rod and Staff Publishers. I do not know the origin of the poem. The poem is rather long, but the message is good and very heart searching.

What about me? Have I given my hand to the world to walk with the world instead of walking with Jesus?

## The Church Walking with the World

The Church and the World walked far apart  
On the changing shore of time;  
The World was singing a giddy song,  
And the Church a hymn sublime.  
"Come, give your hand," said the merry World,  
"And walk with me this way!"  
But the good Church hid her snowy hand  
And solemnly answered, "Nay.  
I will not give you my hand at all,  
And I will not walk with you;  
Your way is the way of eternal death,  
And your words are all untrue."

"Nay, walk with me a little space,"  
Said the World with a kindly air.  
"The road I walk is a pleasant road,  
And sun shines always there.  
Your way is narrow and thorny and rough,  
While mine is flowery and smooth;  
Your lot is sad with reproach and toil,  
But in rounds of joy I move.  
My way, you can see, is a broad, fair one,  
And my gate is high and wide;  
There is room enough for you and me,  
And we'll travel side by side."

Half shyly the Church approached the World  
And gave him her hand of snow;  
And the false World grasped it, and walked along  
And whispered in accents low,  
"Your dress is too simple to please my taste;  
I have gold and pearls to wear --  
Rich velvets and silks for your graceful form  
And diamonds to deck your hair."

The Church looked down at her plain, white robes  
And then at the dazzling World,  
And blushed as she saw his handsome lip,  
With a smile contemptuous curled.  
"I will change my dress for a costlier one,"  
Said the Church with a smile of grace;  
Then her pure, white garment drifted away,  
And the World gave, in their place,  
Beautiful satins and fashionable silks,  
And roses and gems and pearls;  
And over her forehead her bright hair fell  
And waved in a thousand curls.

"Your house is too plain," said the proud old World,  
"Let us build you one like mine,  
With kitchen for feasting and parlor for play  
And furniture never so fine."  
So he built her a costly and beautiful house --  
Splendid it was to behold;  
Her sons and her daughters met frequently there,  
Shining in purple and gold.  
Rich fairs and shows in the halls were held,  
And the World and his children were there.  
Laughter and music and feasting were heard  
In the place that was meant for prayer.

The angel in mercy rebuked the Church,  
And whispered, "I know thy sin."  
Then the Church looked sad, and anxiously longed  
To gather the children in.  
But some were away at the midnight ball,  
And others were at the play,  
And some were drinking in gay saloons,  
And the angel went away.

And then said the World in soothing tones,  
"Your loved ones mean no harm,  
Merely indulging in innocent sport."  
So she leaned on his proffered arm,  
And smiled and chatted and gathered flowers,



And walked along with the World,  
While countless millions of precious souls  
Were hungering for truth untold.

"Your preachers are all too old and plain,"  
Said the gay World with a sneer.  
"They frighten my children with dreadful tales  
Which I do not like to hear.  
They talk of judgment and fire and pain,  
And the doom of the darkest night.  
They warn of a place that should not be  
Thus spoken to ears polite!  
I will send you some of a better stamp,  
More brilliant and gay and fast,  
Who will show how men may live as they please  
And go to heaven at last.  
The Father is merciful, great and good,  
Loving and tender and kind.  
Do you think He'd take one child to heaven  
And leave another behind?"

So she called for pleasing gay divines,  
Deemed gifted and great and learned;  
And the plain, old men who had preached the cross  
Were out of their pulpits turned.  
Then Mammon came in and supported the Church  
And rented a prominent pew;  
And preaching and signing and floral display  
Soon proclaimed a gospel new.

"You give too much to the poor," said the World,  
"Far more than you ought to do;  
Though the poor need shelter, food, and clothes,  
Why thus need it trouble you?  
Go take your money and buy rich robes  
And horses and carriages fine;  
And pearls and jewels and dainty food,  
The rarest and costliest wine.  
My children, they dote on such things,  
And if you their love would win,

You must do as they do, and walk in the way --  
The flowery way they're in."

The Church her purse strings tightly held  
And gracefully lowered her head --  
And simpered, "I've given too much away.  
I will do, sir, as you have said."  
So the poor were turned from the door in scorn;  
She heard not the orphan's cry;  
And she drew her beautiful robes aside  
As the widows went weeping by.

Thus they of the Church and they of the World  
Journeyed closely, hand and heart.  
And none but the Master, who knoweth all,  
Understood that they had been apart.  
Then the Church sat down with ease and said,  
"I am rich and in goods increased.  
I have need of nothing, and naught to do,  
But to laugh and dance and feast."

The sly World heard her and laughed within,  
And mockingly said aside,  
"The Church has fallen, the beautiful Church;  
Her shame is her boast and pride."

Thus her witnessing power, alas, was lost,  
And perilous times came in;  
The times of the end, so oft foretold,  
Of form and pleasure and sin.

Then the angel drew near the mercy seat  
And whispered in sighs her name,  
And the saints their anthems of rapture hushed  
And covered their heads with shame.

A voice came down from the hush of heaven,  
From Him who sat on the throne;  
"I know thy works and what thou hast said --  
But alas! Thou hast not known

That thou art poor and naked and blind,  
With pride and ruin enthralled;  
The expectant bride of a heavenly Groom  
Is the harlot of the World!  
Thou hast ceased to watch for that blessed hope,  
Hast fallen from zeal and grace;  
So now, alas! I must cast thee out  
And blot thy name from its place."

But out from the side of the harlot Church,  
While she sleeps in indolent shame,  
Will flee the Remnant who keep God's Word,  
And honor His holy Name.  
By faith they walk in the ways of the Lord,  
Unmoved by the scorn at them hurled;  
By the blood of the Lamb and their witness sincere,  
They overcome the World.

For those who keep their garment clean,  
Shall walk with Him in white,  
In the day when He comes to claim His own,  
To make them His jewels bright.

~Adapted

*"<sup>4</sup>And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah: <sup>5</sup>And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests." (verses 4,5)*

Among the priesthood there was corruption, and Eliashib the priest, who was supposed to be overseeing the chamber of the house of God, was allied to Tobiah, the enemy of Israel. The chamber was supposed to be for storing the meat offerings, frankincense, the vessels, and the tithes of corn and new wine and oil. The tithes were supposed to be given to the Levites, the singers, and the porters. This chamber was also for the offerings of the priests.

Instead of using the chamber for the purpose God had laid out for it, Eliashib the priest was allowing a false leader to use it and to use God's things, the tithes, and the portions of God's workers for themselves.

Sobering to think about. Where are our offerings going? Are we caught up and involved in the affairs of the day and allowing the money to be used for worldly things instead of being used to further the work of the Lord? Why don't we have enough for God's work? Why don't we have enough for missions? Where is the money going?

Another thought: think of all the false teachers and false prophets, especially some of the tele-evangelists, who are extorting money from people and using it for themselves and for their own pleasure. Yet, many of God's people give their money to these false teachers. We must be very careful and ask God for wisdom so that our money and goods that we offer to Him really are used for His work.

*"<sup>6</sup>But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king: <sup>7</sup>And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. <sup>8</sup>And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber." (verses 6-8)*

Nehemiah was grieved that such a wicked person was using the chamber in the courts of God's house for his own use. Nehemiah cast forth the belongings of that wicked person and got them out of the chamber.

Maybe it is time we examine our places of worship and see if there are any belongings of the wicked one there. If there are, maybe it is time to clean some things up and cast them out.

*"Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense." (verse 9)*

The chamber had to be cleansed and purified before it could once again hold the things used for worship and the service of the Lord.

Do our places of worship need cleansing? Are they fit for worship and service of the Lord? Purity in God's work is very important.

*"And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field." (verse 10)*

Evil men were cared for, but God's servants were fled because they did not receive the portions for their work. How many evangelists and pastors in our day have quit because of the way they were treated and because they were not provided for as they did God's work? How much will we, as God's people, have to be accountable for?

*"Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place." (verse 11)*

When Nehemiah saw that the house of God was forsaken, he contended with the rulers, with the leadership. He set the leaders in their places to do the work right.

*"Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries." (verse 12)*

Now that the evil man and his household belongings were removed from the chamber in the courts of the house of God, the people were able to bring the tithes of corn, new wine, and oil. Now the tithes could be stored in the chamber where they belonged.

*"And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and their office was to distribute unto their brethren." (verse 13)*

Nehemiah appointed faithful men to be over the treasuries.

**Clean and Undefined** (see verses 15-31)

*"In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals." (verse 15)*

Some were buying and selling on the sabbath day instead of keeping the sabbath day holy, keeping it a day of rest and worship of God. Nehemiah testified against them.

*"<sup>16</sup>There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. <sup>17</sup>Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?" (verses 16,17)*

The sabbath day should be kept holy and set aside to the Lord. When Nehemiah saw that the sabbath day was profaned, he contended with the nobles. Again, the blame and responsibility fell upon the leadership.

*"Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath." (verse 18)*

Profaning the sabbath had brought God's wrath upon Jerusalem; and yet, the nobles of Jerusalem were bringing more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath again.

*"<sup>19</sup>And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day. <sup>20</sup>So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. <sup>21</sup>Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath." (verses 19-21)*

To keep people from buying and selling on the sabbath, Nehemiah commanded that the gates be shut when darkness began to fall before the sabbath and that these gates not be opened again until the sabbath was over. However, the merchants did not go home to their places. They stayed outside Jerusalem, just waiting for the gates to open. Nehemiah sent them home, telling them that, if they did that again, he would lay hands on them. Nehemiah took the sabbath day very seriously and kept it holy and set apart to the Lord.

*"And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy." (verse 22)*

The Levites should have been keeping the gates and sanctifying the sabbath; but they were not fulfilling their responsibilities. The spiritual leaders did not do their work, and thus the sabbath, the Lord's holy day, was profaned.

*"<sup>23</sup>In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: <sup>24</sup>And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people." (verses 23,24)*

In those days there were Jews that had intermarried with the heathen. Their children could not even speak the Hebrew language, but spoke half in Hebrew and half in the language of their other parent.

*"<sup>25</sup>And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying , Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. <sup>26</sup>Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin. <sup>27</sup>Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?" (verses 25-27)*

Solomon, king of Israel, had sinned against the Lord by intermarrying with the heathen. Solomon was a great king, and beloved of God, but that did not keep him from being drawn away from God by the heathen women. Now many of the Jews had intermarried with the heathen. This was contrary to the law of their God. Nehemiah cursed them and smote some of them and plucked off their hair. He took this disobedience very seriously.

*"<sup>25</sup>And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying , Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. <sup>26</sup>Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin. <sup>27</sup>Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?" (verses 25 -27)*

To Nehemiah, the problem of God's people intermarrying with the heathen was a serious thing. He took strong measures to deal with it. He reminded them that Solomon was a great king and beloved of God, yet outlandish women caused him to sin. If Solomon were drawn away by heathen wives, the others would be drawn away by intermarrying with the heathen as well.

In the same way, we today should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers in marriage or in our daily walk. We should spend time with the lost if the purpose is to win them to

Christ; but we should not be yoked with them. If the heathen drew Solomon into sin, they will surely draw us away from God as well if we fellowship with or intermarry with them.

*"Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites." (Nehemiah 13:29)*

The son of Joiada, who was the son of Eliashib the high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite, the enemy of God's people. This man and those like him had defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood. (See verse 28) The office of priesthood should have been holy and set apart to God only. How many people in our churches today have defiled the pastorate or other church offices? Is it time for cleansing in the house of God? Do we have unholy things in the offices of leadership that oversee our churches?

*"Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business." (verse 30)*

Nehemiah cleansed the priests and the Levites from all strangers and appointed them to do their work. The work of God cannot be properly done when it is defiled by the heathen. It is important to keep that work pure.

This book of Nehemiah gives a good overview of all the things that take place when a nation returns to God. How important it is to be pure, separated, holy! How important to sing the songs of our Lord, not the songs of the world or the songs of the Lord in a worldly way! How important it is to have a glad and thankful heart and to give much thanks to the Lord! These things are evidence of a true revival. May God grant that such could be the case in our nation once again.