

within the "nobles" of Jerusalem communicated back and forth with Tobiah and the enemies of Nehemiah (v.17). Because of marriage ties some in Jerusalem tried to speak in glowing terms of Tobiah and reported to Tobiah every word of Nehemiah (18-19).

Nehemiah was wise enough to discern who the enemy was and didn't allow "fair words" to deceive him about the real kind of rascal Tobiah was.

8. Faithful Leaders Will Accomplish Great Feats -- 6:15-16

The wall is finished! Within the relatively short time of only 52 days the wall and gates are finished and in place. The enemy is devastated by such victories (v.16). Even they realized this work was wrought of God.

9. Leaders Want People to Rejoice in a Work Well Done -- Nehemiah 12:27, 31, 38, 42-43

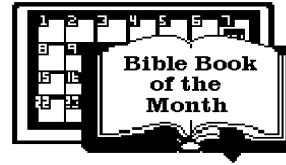
With the work completed soon came the time for the dedication of the wall and the time to rejoice in their completed work. People from all around Judah came for the dedication. The occasion was well planned.

Two great companies went upon the wall, one marched clock-wise and the other counter clock-wise until the two parties met in the vicinity of the temple. "And the singers sang loud."

"And they offered great sacrifices that day, and rejoiced; for God had made them rejoice with great joy; and the women also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off."

And we can imagine the consternation of the enemies of God's people as they heard the great joy in Jerusalem. Have you ever thought how the devil will feel when God's people enter into the joy of heaven? May we all be among those who will hear the Lord say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

-- Windell Gann



Nehemiah

Lesson #4

Text: Nehemiah 5:1 - 7:4

Nehemiah - - The Governor

Introduction

Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem to serve as governor and rebuild the walls. The book of Nehemiah provides a great example of good leadership and records the many instances of prayer in Nehemiah. The first three lessons on Nehemiah can be reviewed to see some of the earlier lessons for leaders.

1. Leaders Must Face Internal Problems -- 5:1-13

Not only did Nehemiah meet opposition to the rebuilding program from Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem enemies of God's people, but also internal strife encumbered the work.

Because of a drought some were having to mortgage their fields, vineyards, and houses in order to buy grain and food. Some borrowed money from their Jewish brethren at exorbitant interest rates to pay the king's tax on their fields and houses. To repay their creditors they had to sell their children into servitude.

The people cried out to Nehemiah that though they had come out of Babylonian captivity now their own flesh was in bondage to countrymen.

Can leaders ever afford to become angry? Well, Nehemiah did in verse 6 "*And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words.*" This intense emotion was directed at certain people's selfishness, greed, and insensitivity. Some people were hurting and suffering, and those who should have been the most compassionate (the nobles and officials) were most guilty of exploitation.

Nehemiah didn't act in his angry, but says "I consulted with myself" (ASV), that is, after regaining his emotional equilibrium he confronted the situation head-on.

Nehemiah called a great assembly and "preached" to the Jews who were exploiting their brothers (vs. 8-11). "The thing that ye do is not good!" He

exhorted them to leave off the interest charges and restore to the people their fields and vineyards so they would have resources to pay their debts.

The guilty "nobles and rulers" responded favorably to Nehemiah's words. But knowing that words are cheap and easy to say on the spur of the moment under public pressure, he made the guilty leaders take another step - **to take an oath** affirming that they would do what they had said. Nehemiah visualized for them the grave consequences if they lied to God. Shaking out the folds of his robe, which served as pockets, he said that God would shake them out of His house if they failed to keep their oaths.

2. Leaders Must Be Moral and Ethical - - 5:16

As governor Nehemiah would have been in a position to secure fields, vineyards, houses, and slaves through the loaning of money and foreclosure of mortgages but he had a great love for God and his brothers.

3. Leaders Must Not Use Their Positions For Personal Advantage - - 5:14-18

One of the benefits of being governor was a food allowance granted by the Persian officials. However, Nehemiah did not take advantage of what was rightfully his. In providing food for many Jews and in entertaining dignitaries from other nations (v.17), the expenses came from his own pocket and not from taxes on the people.

God's leaders must do things right and honorably in the sight of all men.

4. Leaders Must Not Compromise With Wickedness-- 6:1-9

As the wall took shape and no gaps were to be found, though the gates were not yet in place, Sanballat and Geshem sent to Nehemiah asking him to meet with them in one of the villages on the plain of Ono. They wanted it to appear as if they wanted a peace conference in one of the border towns of Samaria but apparently they intended to kidnap or assassinate him.

Nehemiah would not leave his important work unsupervised to go talk about compromising with evil men. Nehemiah did not respond hatefully or openly question their motives but was kind and courteous while not yielding to their repeated requests.

5. Leaders May Be Slandered By the Opposition - - 6:5-9

When Nehemiah refused to compromise, the enemy sent him an unsealed message. This letter was filled with untrue accusations and was intended to start rumors against Nehemiah. The letter accused him of fermenting a rebellion against Persia and planning to set himself up as king.

Nehemiah met the rumors with plain denials and exposed the source and motive of the rumor instigators. He told his fellow workers that the letter was designed to frighten them into thinking their wall-building would bring Artaxerxes' wrath down on them. And then, as he always did with every problem, he prayed.

6. Leaders May Meet Plots to Discredit Them-- 6:10-14

Sanballat and Tobiah then hired an "insider" to help them in their next scheme. Apparently Shemaiah was someone Nehemiah trusted, for it would have been illogical for him to meet secretly with someone he did not trust knowing the situation. But in desperate times the enemy will employ trusted "insiders."

Shemaiah was a prophet. He called Nehemiah to his house to share advice he pretended would protect Nehemiah from would-be nighttime assassins. His suggestion was that the two of them hide in the sanctuary in the temple and lock the doors.

To Nehemiah it was unthinkable to flee and hide. What about the work? What would the people think of a coward? And would a man like himself (not a priest) dare to enter the temple?! "And I discerned, and lo, God had not sent him; but he pronounced this prophecy against me:"

The truth that tipped Nehemiah to this false-prophet should also tip people today to false-preachers in the pulpits. God never contradicts Himself! Only priests were allowed in the sanctuary (Num. 3:10; 18:7) and a message contrary to that truth was not from God! And when we hear someone preaching something today that contradicts what God has revealed in the Bible, we can immediately mark that man as a false-teacher!

7. Leaders Can Expect Spies and Traitors Within the Ranks -- 6:15-19

Not only did Nehemiah have the false-prophet Shemaiah, but others