

From Faithful Follower to Legendary Leader

Nehemiah 7:1-4; cf. 1:1-3

INTRODUCTION:

1. The obscure men and women of the Bible provide a study that is as interesting as it is inexhaustible.
2. The brother of Nehemiah is one of those men.
3. Nehemiah and Hanani were two brothers whose paths diverged.
 - a. One arose to stand on the steps of the throne. The other moved in the quiet valleys of everyday life.
 - b. They both retained allegiance to God and loyalty to conscience.
4. In Nehemiah 7, we have a brother's testimony to a brother's virtue.
 - a. "And a person's enemies will be those of his own household" (Matt. 10:36).
 - b. "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household" (Matt. 13:57).
5. Nehemiah honored himself by honoring Hanani and Hananiah.

DISCUSSION:

I. Hanani's Relationship to God

- A. "...for he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many" (v. 2).
- B. Reverence for God was the basis of his character.
- C. Life has its center not in self, but in God.
- D. Rulers of the earth are warned, "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Psa. 2:11).
- E. Paul counseled, "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

II. Hanani's Relationship to His Fellowman

- A. Hanani "was more faithful...than many" (v. 2).
- B. Fear and faithfulness are inseparable.
- C. The word translated "faithfulness" "carries underlying sense of certainty, dependability" (*The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1:52). Hanani was a trustworthy man.
- D. The path reveals the purpose.
- E. "So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17).
- F. "...whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:21).

III. Hanani's Reward in this World

- A. "I gave my brother Hanani...charge over Jerusalem" (v. 2).
- B. Those who would lead must first learn to follow.
- C. "You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much..." (Matt. 25:21, 23).
- D. No vote of thanks was given, only higher work and more of it.
- E. "...to the one who has, more will be given..." (Luke 8:18).

CONCLUSION:

1. Fear God above many.
2. Look for virtues in your brothers.
 - a. About Israel, Isaiah wrote, “He sees many things, but does not observe them...” (42:20).
 - b. Some flowers grow in the shade.
 - c. Many men like Hanani are hidden until some Nehemiah finds them
3. Reverence and respect good wherever you find it (cf. John 1:46).