

Nehemiah, a Divine Portrayal of Leadership¹

Nehemiah 1-6

INTRODUCTION:

1. Jerusalem was destroyed! Yet, in fifty-two days, the walls were rebuilt (6:15).
2. How was this made possible? Why did the people succeed?
3. God's people had a leadership that led.
4. When Nehemiah's characteristics are found in today's leaders, success is assured.

DISCUSSION: Nehemiah was a leader...

I. Who was concerned with the welfare of his brethren.

- A. Nehemiah said, "I asked..." (1:2).
- B. Paul was such a man saying, "I sent to learn..." (2 Thes. 3:5).
- C. Leaders are concerned about those who have been entrusted to their care (cf. Heb. 13:17).

II. Who had a heart of compassion.

- A. When he learned of the desolation of the walls and of the affliction of the people, he wept and prayed (1:1-4).
- B. Had his heart not been so moved, he would not have done the work he subsequently performed.
- C. Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41).
- D. David, too, had a heart of compassion (Psa. 119:136).
- E. When we love God, His word, His people, and the lost, we, too, are moved by sin.

III. Who believed in the power of prayer and was prayerful.

- A. Upon hearing of the condition of the people in the city of God, Nehemiah prayed (2:4).
- B. In his prayer we see...
 1. Earnestness (1:5),
 2. Knowledge (1:5),
 3. Importunity (1:6),
 4. Confession (1:7),
 5. Faith (1:8, 9), and
 6. Consecration (1:11).
- C. Through His providence, God answered his prayer (2:8).
- D. The truly great men of God have been men of prayer.

IV. Who forgot himself.

- A. He appeared before the king with a sad countenance (2:1-8).
- B. We must deny self (Matt. 16:24; cf. Gal. 2:20).

¹ Wendell Winkler, Class Notes, Brown Trail School of Preaching, Hurst, Texas, 1977. Adapted by Andy Kizer.

- C. One who has forgotten himself is no longer concerned about his own will but about God's will and the ideas, concepts, and suggestions of his fellow workers.

V. Who was wise enough to survey the situation.

- A. He "inspected the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down..." (2:13), then he prescribed (2:17).
- B. A wise physician always makes a thorough diagnosis of his patient before he prescribes.
- C. Leaders of God's people need to conduct some surveys today.
 - 1. We need to survey the world (1 John 5:19; 2 Tim. 3:1-5).
 - 2. We need to survey our mission program (Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8).
 - 3. We need to survey our benevolent work (James 1:27).
 - 4. We need to survey our local congregational situations.

VI. Who appealed for helpers.

- A. Nehemiah said, "Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem" (2:17).
- B. The work of restoring spiritual Zion will take "all at it and always at it."
- C. It cannot be done by just a few dedicated preachers and consecrated elders.

VII. Who was concerned about the image of God and His people in the hearts of others.

- A. With Jerusalem laying in waste and the gates burned with fire, Nehemiah said to his fellow laborers, "Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision" (2:17).
- B. We should be concerned with what others think and say, since our influence is predicated upon our reputation.
- C. However, we should not be so concerned with what others think that we will surrender principles of truth (cf. Luke 2:52; Acts 2:47).
- D. The way to remove reproach is to put displaced stones in their proper places.

VIII. Who would not be stopped by opposition.

- A. Nehemiah and his associates were mocked...
 - 1. Concerning their motives (4:2).
 - 2. Concerning their enthusiasm (4:2).
 - 3. Concerning the task they were attempting (4:2).
 - 4. Concerning the work they were doing (4:3).
- B. They also faced threats of open warfare with the combined forces of the Arabians, Ammonites, and Ashdodites (4:7-9).
- C. As in the case of Nehemiah and his coworkers (2:20; 4:4-6, 9), the forces of hell itself cannot impede the progress of God's people as long as they put their implicit trust and confidence in Him and do His will explicitly.

IX. Who took God into his plans.

- A. Nehemiah declared, "The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build..." (2:20).

- B. God was for them, with them, and in them. The same is true of His people today (Eph. 4:6).
- C. We cannot help but succeed (Rom. 8:31; Matt. 28:18-20).
- D. The faith that God is in you is a powerful motivating force (2:20; 4:20; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:6-8; Psa. 27:13).

X. Who would not compromise.

- A. When Sanballat and Geshem invited Nehemiah down to the plains of Ono, Nehemiah answered with, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down..." (6:3).
- B. Satan knows how to play the fox when it does not suit him to roar like a lion.
- C. To compromise with error will mean that we are partakers of evil (2 John 9-11).
- D. The tactics Stan used in the case of Nehemiah are the same he uses in our day.
 - 1. Sometimes God's people are ridiculed (2:19; Luke 6:26).
 - 2. Sometimes God's people are threatened with warfare (4:7-9).
 - 3. Sometimes God's people are urged to compromise (6:2-4).
 - 4. Sometimes God's people are misrepresented (6:6-9).

XI. Who was humble.

- A. Nehemiah conceived of himself as a servant (2:20).
- B. For the building of the wall, he gave the glory to God (6:16).

XII. Who continued to encourage.

- A. His encouraging words were such as: "...Our God will fight for us" (4:20; cf. 2:20).
- B. One of the great needs in the Lord's church today is to have more Barnabases, i.e. sons of exhortation (Acts 4:36).
- C. We are to exhort and encourage one another "that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13).
- D. Workers of the Lord should be particularly sensitive to encouraging...
 - 1. Those who are bearing heavy burdens of sickness, death, doubt, disillusionment, and financial reverses.
 - 2. Babes in Christ and those who are weak, but who are making the effort to succeed in living for Christ.

XIII. Who led.

- A. Of a truth, Nehemiah was a great leader.
- B. He was one of those great men whose footprints have been left behind in the sands of time to inspire, to incite, and to encourage us to attain great heights in the service of Christ.

CONCLUSION:

- 1. The cry of the day is: "Give us men, men who are leaders indeed!"
- 2. We need men who are leaders like Nehemiah!