

The Most Courageous Man in the Old Testament¹

Nehemiah 1-6

PROPOSITION: The most courageous man in the Old Testament could have been Nehemiah.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Courage is everywhere admired, approved, and acknowledged.
2. The seventy years of captivity were passed, and Nehemiah was cupbearer of Persian king, Artaxerxes.

DISCUSSION:

I. Nehemiah's Desire

- A. His heart was heavy and his countenance was sad (1:3, 4).
- B. The sad state of God's people in Judah affected him physically as well as mentally and spiritually. Even the king took notice (2:2).
- C. Nehemiah asked the king to send him to Judah (2:5).
- D. Three days after arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah inspected the ruined walls (2:11-13, 16).
- E. He then called the rulers of the people together to challenge them (2:17, 18).

II. Nehemiah's Difficulties

- A. The enemies of God and God's people sought to stop the work by ridicule (sarcasm; 2:19; 4:2, 3), but Nehemiah refused to be drawn into an argument.
- B. Unable to halt the construction, the enemies threatened force (4:8), but Nehemiah prayed and kept on working (4:9, 19-23).
- C. The enemies of God next sought to use words again to affect compromise (6:2), but the governor said, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down" (6:3).
- D. Nehemiah stood valiantly against the opposition, and the wall was completed in fifty-two days. The opposition "...fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of God" (6:16).

III. Nehemiah's Determination

- A. We need Nehemiah's courage to do right even in the face of caustic and cutting criticism.
- B. We need to keep our heads up when others have given up.
- C. Some of the nobles in Judah would not support the work (3:5), yet Nehemiah refused to be intimidated by their lack of concern. "We carried on the work," he said (4:21).
- D. The church lives every day on the battlefield, knowing that "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12).
- E. Nehemiah fearlessly faced his opposition by continuing fervently in prayer (1:4-6, 11).

CONCLUSION:

1. We who serve the Lord are involved in a greater ministry than that of Nehemiah.
2. We must manifest the courage of Nehemiah wherever we are for as long as we can.

¹ Paul Rogers, *Truth for Today*, Vol. 3, No. 12, May 1988, pp. 48-51. Adapted by Andy Kizer.