THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

"Seeking the Welfare of Israel"

Nehemiah 2:9-16

Introduction

1. God uses all kinds of men (cf. Ro. 12, 1 Cor. 12). It is "gifted men" in the New Testament who are already seen in the Old Testament. Nehemiah is such a man!

2. Having learned in captivity about his own people in Jerusalem and the devastation of the walls and gates of the City, he did something about it. So our Lord, when He saw a need, He did something about it (cf. Mt. 9:35-38).

3. Nehemiah was moved in his soul (1:4), confessed to God (l:6) and prayed to the Lord (l:8, 9, 11). The situation surrounding Nehemiah is disclosed (2:1-3), then his earnest supplication (vv. 4-8). His requests included:

a. Send me geographically (v. 5)

b. Send me purposefully (v. 5)

c. Send me chronologically (v. 6)

d. Send me protectively (v. 7)

e. Send me materially (v. 8)

4. So the text concludes "and the king granted me (Hebrew: gave --) according to the good hand of my God upon me (v. 8). Thus Nehemiah was "God's man with God's message for God's people" (Haggai 1:13).

5. Elements involved in the service of the Lord are illustrated in the life of Nehemiah. These essentials have their parallels for the believer today who desires to serve the Lord. Mark them:

1. ESSENTIAL #1 AUTHORIZATION

While not questioning the "hand of my God upon me" (v. 8) nor in any wise diminishing the "mighty God we serve," the prayer of Nehemiah to God (v. 4) prevailed with the king Artaxexres (v. 6). Therefore it is recorded:

a. Nehemiah Escorted

Incredibly, Nehemiah has "captains of the army" and "horseman (plural) with me." All of these are sent ( ) by the king as an escort for God's servant (cf. Ezra 8:22).

b. Nehemiah Came

The text declares an historical event. Nehemiah "came" to the governors. These were the prefects of the Persians ( ). Nehemiah held this office (5:14).

c. Nehemiah Gave

To demonstrate his approved mission, Nehemiah conveyed the letters ( ) provided by the king (2:7, 8, 9). Here was earthly royal approval for Nehemiah's mission. Read how God called Jeremiah (1:5), Isaiah (6), and Paul (Acts 13:1-4).

2. ESSENTIAL #2 PREPARATION v. 11

Briefly and pointedly the Scripture states that "I came" (same verb as v. 9) and "I was" (verb "to be"). Having arrived in Jerusalem, God prepared His servant for three days. This gave opportunity for the Lord to work in His heart. Others who worked with God had periods of preparation (cf. Moses, Ex. 3; Joshua, Deut. 31:14ff; Paul, Gal. 1:18). Waiting time is not wasted time. God knows best how to prepare His men.

3. ESSENTIAL #3 OPPOSITION v. 10

Let it be written in granite that there is no place in all of God's service (quite clearly in all disciplines of life) which does not have its problems of one sort or another. Pity the Lord's child who looks and expects the millennium now!

a. Who Opposed?

Two are mentioned: 1) Sanballat the Horonite. Apparently he came from Beth-Horon, eight miles N.W. of Jerusalem. He was Governor of Samaria and may have hoped to have Jerusalem under his administration. His name appears in the Elaphantine Papyri, discovered in Egypt, dated 408/7. He had two sons. 2) Tobiah the Ammonite was Governor of the province of Ammon, east of the Jordan. He is called a "servant" because he was a special official of the king. So these two men were hostile to the Jews (cf. Ammon, Moab in Deut. 23:3-6).

b. What Opposed?

The figures mentioned "heard" ( ) the recorded events (v. 9). Consequently they were "grieved . . . exceedingly." The verb "grieved" means to cry with a loud voice of evil. The great annoyance which Nehemiah's coming caused Sanballat and Tobiah is clear, but it is a way of hinting how these men would delay the future fortifications of Jerusalem (cf. 4:1-3).

c. Why Opposed?

Nehemiah was myopic. Totally focused to "seek" ( ) the "good" of the children of Israel. Mark this down -- whether you are seeking the welfare of Jew or Gentile, so long as you are doing God's work, you can count on opposition from the enemy! In this case, the opposition came from relatives (cf. Gen. 19:30-38).

4. ESSENTIAL #4 INSPECTION vv. 12-15

a. Nehemiah's Action vv. 12-15

The verbs tell the story: "I rose" (v. 12). "I went out" (v. 13). "I went on" (v. 14). "I went up" (v. 15). All these verbs clearly note the movements of God's servant. He was not slack in doing what "God had put in his heart to do at Jerusalem" (v. 12). What a faithful man! He did his work at night (vv. 12, 13, 15). No rest for God's servant.

b. Nehemiah's Destination vv. 13-15

Count them. There are seven gates to which he went. In addition, he was at the walls which were broken down and consumed (eaten) with fire (v. 13 cf. 1:3). He did a full inspection on one mule/horse (v. 12) and this with difficulty (v. 14).

c. Nehemiah's Intention vv. 13, 15

The verb "viewed" ( ) shows he took a careful look at every gate and wall section which needed repair. This same verb is used of one who examines a wound, a fitting verb since the walls were broken and the gates burned (v. 13).

Conclusion

The Bible teaches the Lord's work is to be desired (1 Tim. 3:1). To be called to His service is a trust (1 Tim. 1:12). It is well, however, to know the essentials of the work. The man of God with a heart will have a heart for the work.