

NEHEMIAH
LEADERSHIP WOES

Wednesday, October 7

Reading: Nehemiah 4-5

Nehemiah 5:19 *Remember me with favor, O my God, for all I have done for these people.*

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah saw this would be no easy task. His nighttime inspection of the city revealed the extent of the destruction and there were already enemies preparing to oppose the work (2:11-20). As he and the people begin to build the wall, they face several discouragements that could have derailed their mission.

First, their enemies ridicule the Jews and attempt to convince them that rebuilding the wall is a foolish and useless task. Nehemiah prays for God to see and act against their enemies. They continue to build “with all their heart” until the wall reaches half its final height (4:1-6). This alarms their enemies into taking the next step.

Sanballat and his cronies now plan to physically assault the workers on the wall. When Nehemiah hears of their plot, he again prays but also posts guards to protect themselves. When the threats intensify so do Nehemiah’s plans. He stations armed men all around the construction and has every worker armed and ready to fight if an attack occurred. Most importantly, he reminds the people to trust in the Lord who had called them to this work (4:11-23; emphasis on v. 14).

Nehemiah’s problems did not only come from the outside. The Jewish nobles and officials had taken advantage of the people they ruled over. In order to pay their taxes, debts, and the interest the rich Jews were charging, the poor people had to sell their land and even sell their children into slavery. The leaders were lining their own pockets while the people struggled to survive. When Nehemiah confronted the nobles and officials, they had nothing to say because they realized they were in the wrong (5:1-13). Not only did Nehemiah end this abuse, but he became an example of how a true leader helps the less fortunate (5:14-19).

LESSON ONE: Throughout this book, we read little prayers of Nehemiah as he faces the stress and hardships of leadership. He prayed and worked and waited for God’s best. Are you patient in your prayers or do you want an answer NOW? Is your relationship with God strengthened through constant “little” prayers to Him throughout the day?

LESSON TWO: There is no such thing as a leader who does not face problems and opposition. How do you deal with criticism and ridicule? How do you handle disappointment? What can we learn from Nehemiah to help us?

LESSON THREE: How do we deal with Christians who are mistreating others? It might be by gossip, hateful attitudes, lack of forgiveness, etc. What can we learn from Nehemiah’s response in 5:9? How might our bad behavior bring the reproach of unbelievers?

LESSON FOUR: Nehemiah became an example by helping those in need and not using his position as governor to make himself wealthy as others had done. How is your lifestyle an example to others of how a Christian should live and act?