

Rebuilding the Walls (Under Nehemiah)

(1:4-11) A long period of petition to the Lord

Now it came about when I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah 1:4

Although Nehemiah often (4:4-5; 5:19; 6:9, 14; 13:14, 22, 29, 31) sent one of his quick “telegraph” prayers to the Lord, keep in mind these “emergency prayers” were backed up by four months of fasting and praying.²

I said to the king, “Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?” Nehemiah 2:3

Nehemiah requests leave (from cupbearer to the king) to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

(2:1-10) The commission of Artaxerxes

And the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me. Nehemiah 2:8

(2:11-20) Nehemiah’s nocturnal reconnaissance – the inspection of the walls

When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about it, it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel. Nehemiah 2:10

(3:1-3:32) Each worker – named and anonymous – was assigned a place and a task.²

(4:1-6:14) The work attacked – by mockery, conspiracy, extortion, compromise, slander, and treachery

It came about from that day on, that half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows and the breastplates; and the captains were behind the whole house of Judah.

Nehemiah 4:16

(6:15-7:3) The wall was completed in fifty-two days

It came about when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work has been accomplished with the help of our God.

Nehemiah 6:16

(7:4-7:73) God put it into Nehemiah’s heart to enroll the people by genealogy, likely the basis for populating Jerusalem with those of pure ancestry.

Renewing the Covenant (Under Ezra)

(8:1-8) The Reading of the Law

Ezra the scribe held a “Bible conference”. Other Levites (v. 7) assisted Ezra in teaching the law to the people while the people remained in their place.

They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading. Nehemiah 8:8

(8:9-18) The Response of the People

Three festivals occurred in the seventh month (Tishri, Sept.–Oct.): those of Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles (Booths).¹

Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.
Nehemiah 8:10b

Conviction of sin caused the people to weep, appropriate for the Day of Atonement (the tenth day of the month) but not to the Feast of Trumpets (the first day of the month) and the celebration of the completion of the wall.

(9:1-38) The Repentance of the People

Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and lovingkindness, Do not let all the hardship seem insignificant before You, Nehemiah 9:32a

Ezra’s prayer began with an acknowledgment of God’s majesty and continued with a recital of the major points of Israel’s history. It concluded with a confession of sin and a commitment to keep God’s laws.¹

(10:1-27) The Ratification of the Covenant

Nehemiah the governor, plus other head (or firstborn) of households signed the document.

(10:28-39) The Responsibilities of the Covenant – the people made an oath with God including a curse

are joining with their kinsmen, their nobles, and are taking on themselves a curse and an oath to walk in God’s law, which was given through Moses, God’s servant, and to keep and to observe all the commandments of GOD our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes;
Nehemiah 10:29

The people agreed (1) not to marry heathens, (2) to keep the Sabbath and holy days free of commercial activity, (3) to observe the sabbatical year, and (4) to support the Temple.¹

Reforming the Nation

(11:1-24) Jerusalem

Lots were cast to bring one-tenth of the country's population into the city.

(12:1-26) Priests and Levites

The priests and Levites who returned with Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Ezra 2:2, 36-40) almost 100 years before (538 B.C.) are listed in this section.

(12:27-47) Rededicating the Wall

Nehemiah organized two groups to encircle the city. The walls and the gates were being dedicated. Half the people marched on the wall.

(13:1-31) Reviving the People – reforms in relation to non-Jews, the priesthood, the Sabbath, and marriage

Nehemiah's first term as governor lasted for twelve years, after which he returned to the palace to report to the king. He was gone perhaps a year, but when he returned to Jerusalem he discovered that the situation had deteriorated dramatically.

*"To be a Christian without prayer," said Martin Luther, "is no more possible than to be alive without breathing."*²

Twelve Qualities that made Nehemiah a Successful Leader²

1. He knew he was called of God

I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem ... Nehemiah 1:12

2. He depended on prayer

But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night. Nehemiah 4:9

3. He had vision and saw the greatness of the work

So I sent messengers to them, saying "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?" Nehemiah 6:3

4. He submitted to Authority

I said to the king, "If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it." Nehemiah 2:5

5. He was organized in his work

"If it please the king, let letters be given me .., and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, for the wall of the city and for the house to which I go." Nehemiah 2:7-8

6. He was able to discern the tactics of the enemy

All of them conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it. Nehemiah 4:8

7. He worked hard

*"Do not be afraid of hard work for Christ;" said Charles Spurgeon, "a terrible reckoning awaits those who have an easy time in the ministry, but a great reward is in reserve for those who endure all things for the elect's sake."*²

8. He lived an exemplary life

But I did not do so because of the fear of God. Nehemiah 5:15b

Then I sent a message to him saying, "Such things as you are saying have not been done, but you are inventing them in your own mind." Nehemiah 6:8

9. He sought to glorify God alone

Then I said to them, "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach." Nehemiah 2:17

10. He had courage

And I came to Jerusalem and learned about the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, by preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God. It was very displeasing to me, so I threw all of Tobiah's household goods out of the room. Nehemiah 13:7-8

11. He enlisted others to work

So they put their hands to the good work. Nehemiah 2:18b

12. He was determined

For the Lord GOD helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I shall not be ashamed. Isaiah 50:7

References

¹ *Ryrie Study Bible –NASB*, Moody Press, 1995, pp. 738-762.

² *Be Determined*, Warren W. Wiersbe, 1992.