

Rebuilding the walls – Nehemiah 1-13

Nehemiah was a Jewish man who served the king of Persia. One day he received news of Judah, “The survivors who escaped captivity are in great trouble. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates have been destroyed by fire.” Nehemiah wept and mourned for days, fasting and praying before God.

One day, Nehemiah was serving wine to the king, who asked, “Why is your face so sad since you aren’t sick? This can only be sadness of the heart. How can I help?”

“If it pleases the king, send me to Judah, to the city of my ancestors graves and give me permission to rebuild the walls.”

“Go. I will give you letters for safe travel.”

When he arrived at Jerusalem, he didn’t tell the people why he had come. Instead, he spent three days looking over the situation. Finally, he brought the leaders together and explained “We can’t live with this disgrace any longer. It’s time to rebuild the walls.” The king of Persia had given him permission to rebuild the city walls.

The leaders agreed to the project. It was decided that each leader would choose a section of the wall as his personal responsibility. They immediately organized their families to start building.

The non-Jewish people of the area were angry when they saw what was happening. They laughed and told jokes. “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they revive stones from the heaps of burnt rubbish? Ha! I can see it now. They will build a section of wall, and it will fall down when a little fox jumps on it”

Still, the builders were determined and worked faster. Soon the wall was halfway up, and they began joining the various sections. This made their enemies furious. They realized they had to stop this construction. They

threatened to sneak up and kill the workers. They said, “We’ll do whatever it takes to stop this wall.”

Fear gripped the hearts of the builders, so they set up guards to watch day and night. Nehemiah said, “Don’t be afraid. God is stronger than your enemies. Be prepared to fight. Fight for your fellow Jews. Fight for your sons and daughters. Fight for your wives and your homes.”

The workers set up a warning system in case there would be an attack on any section of the wall. Men were prepared to rush to that area and fight.

Everyone worked together and soon the walls became one, except for the gates. The enemy decided their only hope of stopping the project was to kill Nehemiah. To do this, they had to get him out of the city. So, they sent a message asking him to meet them in a nearby village.

Nehemiah, knowing they planned to harm him, said, “I’m doing a great work here. Why should it stop so we can talk?”

They begged him to meet with them. Finally, they sent a message, “People are saying you’re building the wall so you can rebel against the empire and make yourself king. Unless you meet with us, we’re going to tell the king of Persia about your rebellion.”

Nehemiah ignored their threats and continued working until the wall and the gates were finished. It took 52 days to complete the project. At last, the city was protected.

The people rejoiced and sang praise to God. Ezra stood before them and read the Law of Moses so all could hear. The people dedicated themselves to follow God’s commandments. The Jews who lived in the surrounding towns decided that one out of every ten families would move into the city. God had done great things for Israel, and even their enemies were amazed.