

Life Lesson 97  
*Nehemiah*  
Text: Nehemiah

Introduction

The Jews who had been carried away captive had settled down in their new homes. Many had important jobs. Nehemiah was a cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. That means he was his special trusted assistant. He was called a cupbearer, because he was in charge of making sure that no one poisoned the king's wine. Even though the Jews were at home in their new land, they still thought of their home in the land of Israel. They especially thought a lot about Ezra and Zerubabel and their attempts to rebuild in Jerusalem.

The Story

“How are things back home in Jerusalem?” Nehemiah asked his brother Hanani. Hanani and some of the other Jews had just come back to Assyria from a visit to Jerusalem.

“Not good at all,” Hanani replied. “It's just terrible. The walls are all broken down and there are piles of rubbish everywhere.”

Nehemiah was sad to hear this news. He was sad that the beautiful city of Jerusalem was still broken down and ugly. It had been several years since Zerubabel and Ezra had returned to Jerusalem with some of the captive Israelites. Nehemiah was disappointed that so little rebuilding had been done.

Not only was it sad because of its ugliness, it was dangerous to have broken down walls around a city. The walls protected the people. Without walls any of their neighboring enemies could come right in and attack them.

Nehemiah was sad and he was worried about his people. He prayed that God would let his boss be merciful so that he could go and help rebuild the city. He had good reason to pray about his boss, because he was a special assistant to the king.

He was so concerned about Jerusalem that he couldn't eat or sleep. He prayed and fasted and asked God to help His people rebuild their city. After four months he was called in to help the king. The king hadn't seen him for a while, so he was surprised to see Nehemiah looking so pale and sad.

"What's the matter, Nehemiah?" King Artaxerxes asked. "Are you sick?"

Nehemiah was afraid, because it was against the law to be sad in the presence of the king. The king could even sentence him to death for that crime! But Nehemiah prayed for God's help and spoke right up to tell his trouble to the king.

"I'm sad because my home, Jerusalem, is broken down," Nehemiah said.

"What do you want me to do about it?" the king asked.

"Would you let me go back to Jerusalem to help rebuild it?" Nehemiah boldly asked.

The king agreed, because God had worked in his heart to make him agreeable. He even sent his soldiers to guide and protect Nehemiah on the trip.

A sad sight awaited Nehemiah, but he wasn't discouraged. He spoke encouraging words to the other Jews and soon the people were at work on the walls.

The Bible tells us the names of the people who worked on the wall and the part of the wall where they repaired. There is a lesson for us in this part of the story. Can the pastor do all of the church work by himself? Of course not. It takes more than one person to do the church job. It takes all of us with each of us doing our own job the best we can.

If we all work hard on our own part, all the work will be done. If just one person is lazy or quits it makes it much harder on everyone else.

The Israelites were happy to see the city being repaired. There were some people who weren't so happy, though. Sanballat and Tobiah were two leaders of heathen tribes who were angry when they saw Israel being strengthened. They decided to try and stop them.

Any time we work for the Lord, we will have angry enemies. The devil doesn't like to see us doing what is pleasing God. Just like Sanballat and Tobiah did all they could to stop the Israelites, the devil tries to stop us from doing God's will.

Sanballat and Tobiah made fun of the Israelites. They said, "That city is such a mess. You are all crazy to try to fix it up."

Nehemiah and the others just ignored them. They prayed about it and kept right on working.

Does anyone ever make fun of you for doing right? What should you do about it?

When Sanballat and Tobiah found they couldn't discourage the Israelites with their words, they decided to fight them. Nehemiah set guards up to watch for attackers and the men carried their weapons along with their tools so they would be ready to fight. Still, the Israelites kept working on the walls.

Sanballat and Tobiah kept on trying to discourage and defeat God's people. Nehemiah kept on encouraging them. At last, they finished the wall. Can you imagine how excited and happy they were to see their work finished? The Israelites still were ruled by a heathen king and they still had lots of problems, but at least they were safe from attack. Their city was no longer ugly and embarrassing. They had a new governor, too. The king appointed Nehemiah as governor over the Israelites who had returned to their land.

### The Life Lesson

I'm sure Nehemiah was a good ruler because he had learned an important truth: God is bigger than any of our enemies. If God wants us to do a job, we should do it, no matter who opposes us.

## Review Questions

What was Nehemiah's job?

*He was cupbearer to the king.*

Why was Nehemiah sad?

*Because he heard that the rebuilding in Jerusalem was not going well.*

What did the king do when Nehemiah asked permission to go help rebuild the city?

*He said "yes" and even sent an armed guard with Nehemiah.*

Who tried to stop the rebuilding work?

*Sanballat and Tobiah, leaders of heathen tribes.*

What did they do at first to try to stop the work?

*They made fun of the Israelites.*

What did the the heathen leaders do when making fun didn't stop them?

*They attacked and fought the Israelites.*

What did the Israelites do when they were attacked?

*They carried swords along with their tools and kept working.*

What new job did King Artaxerxes give Nehemiah?

*He became the new governor in the land of Israel.*