

Through the Bible

NEHEMIAH

Zac Poonen



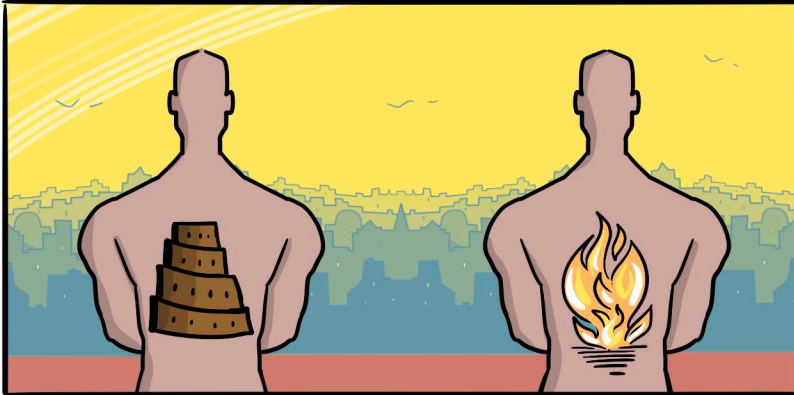
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CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

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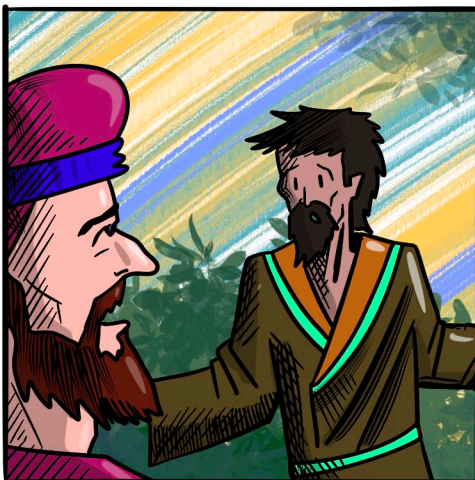
NEHEMIAH



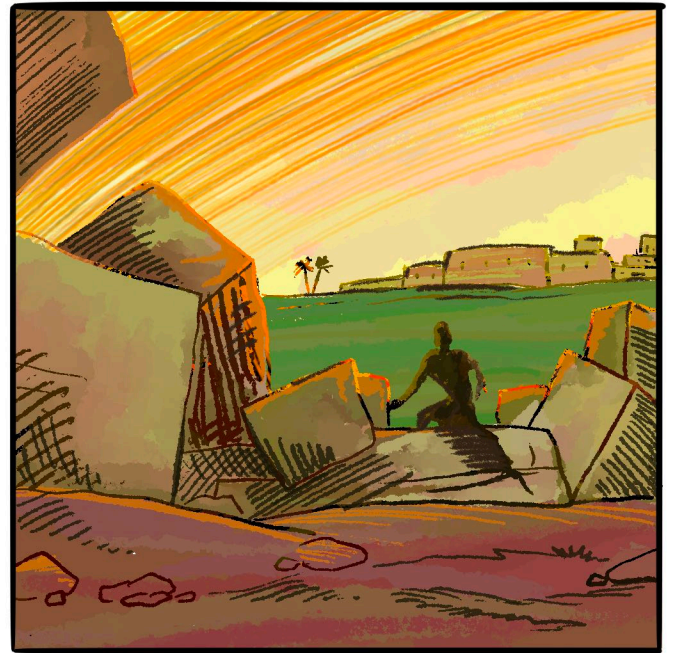
BABYLON IS A **COMMERCIAL** SYSTEM. THE PRINCIPLE OF ALL COMMERCIAL SYSTEMS IS **GAIN FOR ONESELF**. AS LONG AS A MAN IS LIVING BY THE PRINCIPLE OF "PERSONAL GAIN THROUGH CHRISTIANITY" -- WHAT HE CAN GAIN BY DOING SOMETHING FOR THE LORD, WHAT HE CAN GAIN BY JOINING A CHURCH OR ORGANISATION, ETC. -- HE IS MOTIVATED BY THE **PRINCIPLE OF BABYLON**. A CHRISTIAN WHO LIVES AFTER THE **FLESH** AND SEEKS HIS **OWN**, EVEN IF HE IS IN THE **BEST** DENOMINATION IN THE WORLD, IS **STILL** A PART OF BABYLON. THE SPIRIT OF BABYLON IS FOUND PRIMARILY **WITHIN** A MAN, AND NOT PRIMARILY IN A DENOMINATION. JERUSALEM HOWEVER IS A CITY OF **SACRIFICE**.



NEHEMIAH WAS ONE OF THE MEN GOD USED IN THE MOVEMENT OF HIS PEOPLE FROM BABYLON TO JERUSALEM. HE LIVED ABOUT 70 YEARS AFTER ZERUBBABEL, JOSHUA, HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH. THE BURDEN GOD HAD GIVEN **HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH AND ZERUBBABEL** WAS TO BUILD THE **TEMPLE**. **EZRA'S** BURDEN WAS TO **TEACH** PEOPLE THE **WORD OF GOD**. BUT **NEHEMIAH'S** BURDEN WAS TO BUILD THE **WALLS OF JERUSALEM**, ORGANISE THE CITY'S **ADMINISTRATION**, AND BRING PEOPLE **BACK** TO THE **COVENANT** THAT THEY HAD **FORSAKEN**. HE WAS A **REFORMER**. SPIRITUALLY, HE WAS A MAN OF **VISION AND PRAYER**. PRACTICALLY, HE WAS AN **ORGANIZER AND A MOTIVATOR**.



NEHEMIAH WAS LIVING IN **SUSA**, THE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD'S ONLY **SUPER-POWER** OF THOSE DAYS -- THE **MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE**. **NEHEMIAH** WAS **CONCERNED** ENOUGH TO FIND OUT THE STATE OF THE EXILES WHO HAD RETURNED AND THE STATE OF **JERUSALEM**. THIS IS THE PRIMARY **CHARACTERISTIC** OF ANY MAN WHOM **GOD** USES -- HE HAS A **CONCERN** FOR PEOPLE AND THEN **GOD** GIVES HIM A **BURDEN**. **NEHEMIAH** ASKED **HANANI**, "HOW ARE THINGS GOING ON THERE?" AND **HANANI** TOLD HIM THAT THE **WALLS** WERE BROKEN DOWN AND THE **GATES** BURNED WITH FIRE. WHEN HE HEARD THE NEWS, HE **WEPT** AND **MOURNED** FOR MANY DAYS. **GOD** LOOKS FOR SUCH MEN.



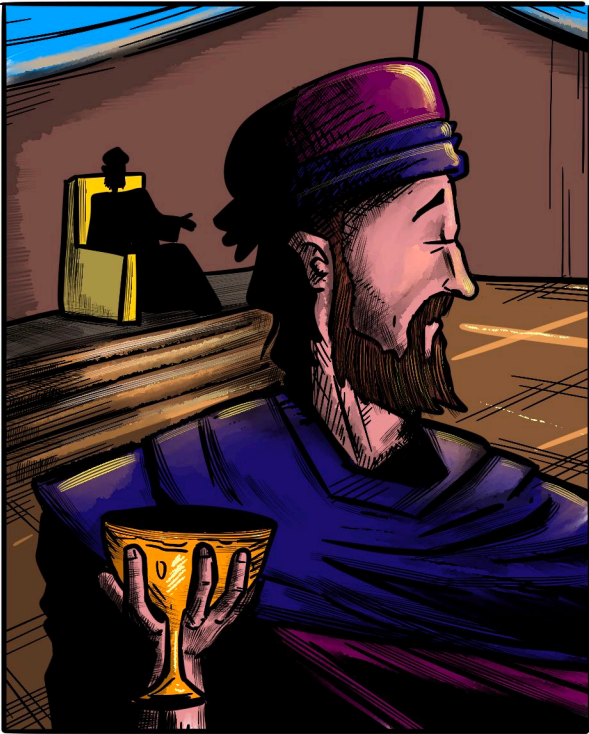
IN ISAIAH.60:18, WE READ THAT THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM SYMBOLISE **SALVATION** AND THE GATES SYMBOLISE **PRAISE**. THE WALLS SPEAK OF **SEPARATION** FROM THE WORLD AND OF SECURITY. GOD WANTS THE **CHURCH** TO BE SEPARATE FROM THE **WORLD**. THE WALLS HAVE TO BE HIGH, SO THAT A **WORLDLY-MINDED** PERSON CANNOT JOIN THE CHURCH. TO BE A PART OF JERUSALEM, ONE HAS TO BE A **DISCIPLE**, ONE WHO LOVES **JESUS MORE** THAN **ANYTHING** ELSE ON EARTH. THROUGHOUT THE LAST 20 CENTURIES, PREACHERS HAVE **LOWERED** THE STANDARDS THAT JESUS AND THE APOSTLES SO THAT NOW THE WALLS ARE SO LOW, THAT ANYONE CAN JUMP OVER THE WALL AND COME IN. JESUS ONCE SAID THAT ONE WHO CLIMBED OVER THE WALL AND CAME IN WAS A **THIEF** (JOHN 10:1). THERE IS A WAY TO COME IN , THROUGH THE GATE . THE GATE TO JERUSALEM IS VERY **NARROW**. THE GATES SYMBOLISE THE SPIRIT OF VICTORIOUS **PRAISE** THAT MUST ALWAYS BE FOUND IN THE CHURCH. THE GATES ARE ALSO THE PLACE WHERE THE ELDERS OF THE CITY SIT -- THE PLACE OF **AUTHORITY**. THE CHURCH TODAY HAS LOST THE SPIRIT OF VICTORIOUS PRAISE AND IT HAS VERY FEW MEN WITH SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY.



THE MOVEMENT OF GOD'S PEOPLE FROM BABYLON TO JERUSALEM BEGAN WITH DANIEL. DANIEL WAS A MAN WHO FASTED AND PRAYED IN BABYLON. THE MOVEMENT CONTINUED THROUGH JOSHUA, ZERUBBABEL, HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH. ALL OF THEM HAD A BURDEN FOR THE BUILDING OF JERUSALEM. **FASTING** AND **PRAYER** ARE MENTIONED FREQUENTLY IN THE BOOKS CONNECTED WITH THIS MOVEMENT OUT OF BABYLON. EZRA AND NEHEMIAH ALSO FASTED AND PRAYED. SOME OF US MAY FAST AND PRAY WHEN WE NEED AN ANSWER TO PRAYER DESPERATELY -- TO GET HEALING FOR SOME FAMILY-MEMBER , TO GET A JOB OR TO FIND A MARRIAGE-PARTNER. THAT IS GOOD. BUT EZRA AND NEHEMIAH DID **NOT** FAST AND PRAY TO GET SOMETHING FOR **THEMSELVES**. THEY DID SO FOR GOD'S NAME TO BE **HONOURED** ..



ONE OF NEHEMIAH'S JOBS WAS TO **TASTE** THE **WINE** THAT THE **KING** DRANK. KINGS IN THOSE DAYS WERE AFRAID OF THEIR ENEMIES TRYING TO **POISON** THEM. SO THEY HAD SOMEONE TO TASTE THEIR WINE FIRST BEFORE IT WAS GIVEN TO THEM. OBVIOUSLY, SUCH A MAN WOULD HAVE TO BE AN ABSOLUTELY **LOYAL** AND **INCORRUPTIBLE** MAN. IT IS **AMAZING** THAT THIS **HEATHEN** KING CHOSE FOR THIS **IMPORTANT** TASK, **NOT** ONE OF HIS **OWN** MEN, BUT A **JEW!** THAT GIVES US A LITTLE INDICATION OF THE **TESTIMONY** THAT NEHEMIAH HAD AS A MAN OF **INTEGRITY**. THE KING RELIED 100% ON NEHEMIAH -- AND AS A RESULT, NEHEMIAH BECAME A MAN WITH GREAT **INFLUENCE** IN THE PALACE



NEHEMIAH HAD **NEVER** BEEN SAD IN THE KING'S PRESENCE BEFORE (2:1). HE WAS NOT A GLOOMY TYPE OF PERSON. THE KING HAD ALWAYS SEEN HIM **HAPPY**. AND NOW HE WAS SAD. BUT HE WAS NOT SAD CONCERNING **HIMSELF** OR HIS FAMILY. HE WAS SAD BECAUSE **JERUSALEM** WAS IN SUCH SHAMBLES. O THAT THERE WERE MORE PEOPLE LIKE THAT TODAY WHO ARE **SAD** BECAUSE THEY SEE THE SAD STATE OF THE **CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST!** THE KING SAID, "YOUR FACE LOOKS SO SAD! THIS IS NOTHING BUT SADNESS OF THE HEART." AND NEHEMIAH WAS **AFRAID** (2:2). IT WAS A **TERRIBLE** THING TO **RUFFLE** THE OPINIONS OF A KING IN THOSE DAYS. I LOVE TO SEE NEHEMIAH'S **HONESTY** IN ADMITTING THAT HE WAS AFRAID. FEAR IS **NOT** SOMETHING THAT WE CAN **ELIMINATE** COMPLETELY FROM OUR LIVES. WE WILL FEEL FEAR AS LONG AS WE ARE HERE ON EARTH, BUT WE MUST **NEVER ACT** ON FEAR. WE DON'T HAVE TO BE **ASHAMED** OF FEELING FEAR. WE CAN BE CAREFUL AND ACT WITH **CAUTION**, BUT NOT WITH FEAR. FEAR IS THE **OPPOSITE** OF FAITH, AND WHEN WE ACT IN FEAR, WE ARE ACTING IN UNBELIEF. WE SHOULD **NEVER FORGET** THAT **GOD CARES** FOR US. ALTHOUGH NEHEMIAH WAS AFRAID, HE STILL TOLD THE KING THE CONDITION OF THE WALLS AND GATES. THE KING ALLOWED HIM TO GO AND REBUILD



HE WENT TO JERUSALEM AND STAYED ALONE THREE DAYS WITHOUT GOING ANYWHERE -- PROBABLY FASTING AND PRAYING (2:11). THEN HE ROSE AT **NIGHT** AND TOOK A FEW MEN WITH HIM. HE HAD NOT TOLD ANYONE WHAT GOD HAD PUT INTO HIS MIND, BECAUSE HE KNEW THAT THERE WERE ENEMIES WHO WOULD TRY AND HINDER HIM (2:10). HE KNEW IT WAS NO USE GATHERING PEOPLE TOGETHER WHO HAD NO **BURDEN** FOR GOD'S WORK. SO HE WENT WITH JUST A **FEW** AND INSPECTED THE WALLS AND GATES.

AS **SOON** AS THIS WAS KNOWN, **OPPOSITION** BEGAN, JUST AS IN EZRA'S TIME. AS SOON AS SOMEONE IS **CONCERNED** THAT THE NAME OF **JESUS** SHOULD BE **HONOURED**, **OPPOSITION** BEGINS IMMEDIATELY. THE **DEVIL** IS **ALERT** TO SUCH MOVES AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE. THAT IS ONE REASON WHY MANY PEOPLE NEVER SEEK TO LIVE **WHOLLY** FOR GOD AND **SERVE** HIM. THEY ARE **AFRAID** OF **OPPOSITION** FROM THE **DEVIL**. BUT **ACTUALLY** ONE WAY OF **KNOWING** THAT YOU ARE IN THE **WILL** OF **GOD** IS TO FIND YOURSELF BEING **CONFRONTED** BY THE **DEVIL** **FREQUENTLY**. IF THE **DEVIL** LEAVES YOU ALONE, YOU CAN BE **FAIRLY SURE** THAT YOU ARE **COMPLETELY OUTSIDE** THE **WILL** OF **GOD**. THROUGHOUT CHURCH HISTORY, THIS HAS BEEN THE **EXPERIENCE** OF ALL WHO HAVE **SOUGHT** TO **SERVE** THE **LORD** IN **SINCERITY**.



AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED, ONE OF THE INDICATIONS THAT I AM ON THE **RIGHT** PATH IS THAT THE **DEVIL** STIRS UP PEOPLE AGAINST ME AND CREATES ALL TYPES OF SITUATIONS TO **HINDER** ME. THROUGHOUT CHURCH HISTORY, THIS HAS BEEN THE EXPERIENCE OF **ALL** WHO HAVE SOUGHT TO **SERVE** THE **LORD** IN SINCERITY. SANBALLAT AND TOBIAH MOCKED AND **DESPISED** THE JEWS AND SAID, "WHAT IS THIS YOU ARE DOING? YOU ARE REBELLING AGAINST THE KING" (2:19). BUT NEHEMIAH REPLIED SAYING, "THE **GOD** OF HEAVEN WILL GIVE US **SUCCESS**. WE ARE GOING TO **ARISE** AND **BUILD**. BUT YOU PEOPLE HAVE **NO PORTION** OR **RIGHT** OR **MEMORIAL** IN JERUSALEM. WE DO **NOT** WORK TOGETHER WITH YOU" (2:20). SANBALLAT THEN TRIED TO INFLUENCE THE **RICH** PEOPLE TO **OPPOSE** THE **WORK** OF THE JEWS AND **TOBIAH** MADE **FUN** OF THE WORK. WHAT DID NEHEMIAH HE DID **NOT ARGUE** BUT HE PRAYED SAYING "O **GOD**, WE ARE **DESPISED**. THESE PEOPLE ARE AGAINST US. WE ARE ONLY **BUILDING** THE WALL AND THESE PEOPLE ARE AGAINST US"



SO THE WORK CONTINUED. EVEN SUCH **LEADERS** AS THE HIGH PRIEST WERE GIVEN A TASK TO DO (3:1). THE HIGH PRIEST WAS THE MOST RESPECTED MAN IN THE CITY. BUT HE WAS **NOT** ALLOWED TO SIT DOWN AND SUPERVISE THE WORK. NO. HE ALSO HAD TO TAKE THE **BRICKS** AND **MORTAR** AND WORK WITH HIS OWN **HANDS** TO HELP **REBUILD** THE CITY. IT IS AMAZING TO SEE HOW **NEHEMIAH** COULD GET SUCH LEADERS ALSO TO WORK WITH THEIR OWN HANDS. THERE WE SEE SOMETHING OF THE GREATNESS OF NEHEMIAH. HE GAVE PEOPLE THE FEELING THAT NO-ONE WAS **TOO BIG** TO DO **MANUAL** WORK. ALL OF THEM WERE **BROTHERS** AND **SISTERS**. THIS IS THE SPIRIT THAT WE NEED IN THE CHURCH TOO. NOTICE AN EXPRESSION THAT OCCURS OFTEN IN THIS CHAPTER: "NEXT TO HIM" (3:2, 4, 7, 8). THAT MEANS THAT THE WALL WAS BUILT **WITHOUT A GAP** ANYWHERE. THEY WERE ALL **DIFFERENT TYPES** OF PEOPLE, BUT THEY ALL WORKED **TOGETHER**, COOPERATING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT THERE WOULD NOT BE AN **INCH** OF A GAP IN THE WALL. EVEN THE WOMEN WORKED WITH THEIR **HANDS** (3:12). SHALLUM WAS A SENIOR OFFICIAL IN JERUSALEM. HIS DAUGHTERS ALSO **DIRTIED** THEIR HANDS **WORKING** ..



SANBALLAT WAS **FURIOUS** AS HE SAW THE WALL COMING UP. THE WALL DIDN'T CAUSE ANY PROBLEMS FOR SANBALLAT PERSONALLY. **WHY** THEN WAS HE BOTHERED? HE WAS **INSTIGATED** BY **SATAN**. WE SEE THE SAME THING TODAY TOO. WHEN AS CHRISTIANS, WE DO A WORK FOR THE LORD IN SOME AREA, WE **DON'T HARM** ANYONE IN ANY WAY. YET **MANY** OF THE PEOPLE THERE **OPPOSE US** VIGOROUSLY! WE WONDER WHY! WE ARE DOING GOOD TO ALL OF THEM AND BEING A **BLESSING** TO SOCIETY. THEN WHY ARE THE PEOPLE ANGRY? THE ONLY WAY WE CAN EXPLAIN THE OPPOSITION AND ANGER OF SUCH PEOPLE IS THAT THEY ARE BEING INSTIGATED BY **SATAN**. THEY ARE ANGRY BECAUSE **SATAN** HATES ANYONE WHO **GLORIFIES** THE NAME OF **CHRIST** IN ANY WAY. WE FIND THIS PRINCIPLE THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE. IN NEHEMIAH'S TIME, THE ENEMIES OF THE JEWS BECAME FURIOUS AND TRIED TO BRING **GOVERNMENTAL PRESSURE** ON THE JEWS. WE SEE THE **SAME THING** TODAY.



SANBALLAT AND TOBIAH THEN CONSPIRED TO FIGHT AGAINST JERUSALEM AND TO CAUSE A **DISTURBANCE** IN IT (VERSES 7, 8). **NEHEMIAH**, HOWEVER, CONTINUED TO **PRAY** AND SET UP A **GUARD** AGAINST THEIR ENEMIES **DAY** AND **NIGHT** (VERSE 9). THEY BOTH **WATCHED** AND **PRAYED**. THEY WERE **ALERT** AND **WATCHED** FOR THE ENEMY, AND THEY ALSO **PRAYED**. THIS IS HOW WE MUST **WORK** TOO.



NEHEMIAH ALSO HAD TO HANDLE **MURMURING** AND **DISCOURAGEMENT FROM WITHIN**. THE **JEWS** WHO LIVED NEAR THEM WERE TERRIBLY **FRIGHTENED** AND SHARED THEIR FEAR WITH OTHERS TEN TIMES SAYING, "THEY WILL COME AGAINST YOU FROM EVERY SIDE, BE CAREFUL" (VERSE 12). IN THE **CHURCH** TOO, WE WILL FIND MANY WHO SEEK TO PUT **FEAR** AND **DISCOURAGEMENT** INTO OUR HEARTS. BUT **NEHEMIAH** WAS NOT FRIGHTENED. HE TOLD THE PEOPLE, "DON'T BE **AFRAID**. REMEMBER THE LORD WHO IS **GREAT** AND **AWESOME**, AND FIGHT FOR YOUR BROTHERS AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS" (VERSE 14). "IF WE **FEAR** GOD, WE NEED FEAR **NOTHING** ELSE" (ISAIAH 8:12, 13 - LIVING). IF WE REALLY **BELIEVE** THAT **GOD ALMIGHTY** IS SUPPORTING US IN WHAT WE DO, WE NEED FEAR NONE ELSE.



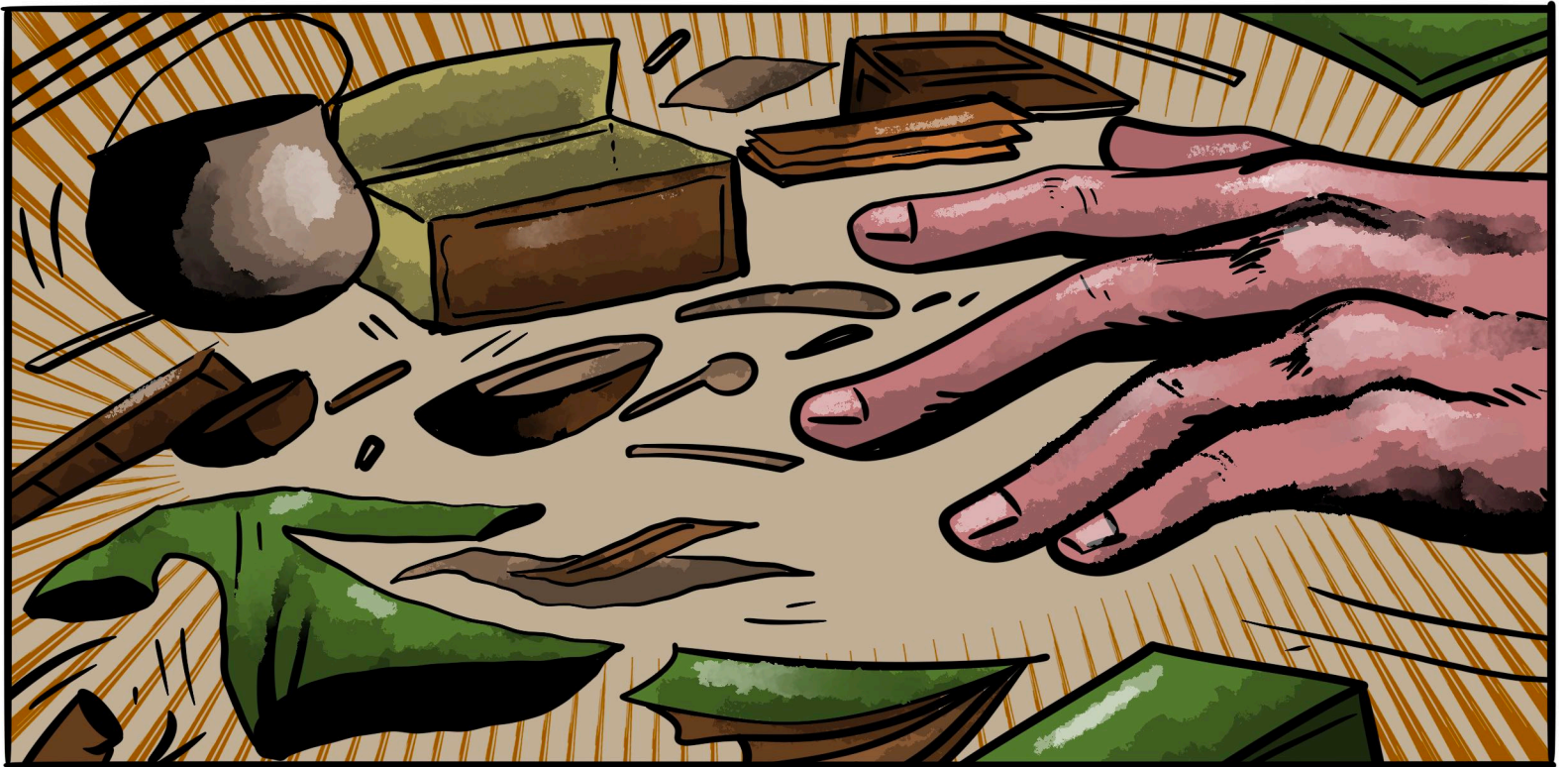
IN CHAPTER 5:1-13, WE SEE NEHEMIAH'S GREAT CARE FOR THE **POOR** AND THE **OPPRESSED** AND THOSE WHO WERE IN **DEBT**, IN THEIR MIDST. HE SPOKE TO THEIR **CREDITORS** AND GOT THEM ALL **RELEASED** FROM THEIR DEBTS. IN VERSE 18, WE SEE NEHEMIAH'S WONDERFUL EXAMPLE IN **NOT TAKING** ANY OF THE **MONEY** HE WAS **ENTITLED** TO, AS **GOVERNOR** OF THE PROVINCE -- EVEN THOUGH HE WAS WORKING SO **HARD** AND **FEEDING 150 JEWS** AND **MANY** FROM OTHER **NATIONS** AT HIS **TABLE** DAILY! HE WAS A **HOSPITABLE** MAN WHO SERVED **GOD**, LIKE **NOAH** AND **PAUL** DID, AT HIS **OWN** EXPENSE. HE USED ALL THE **MONEY** AVAILABLE JUST FOR **BUILDING** THE WALL. HERE WAS A MAN WHO LIVED WITH GREAT **SACRIFICE** AND DID NOT USE ANY OF THE **MONEY** GIVEN FOR **GOD'S** WORK FOR **HIMSELF**.



CHAPTER 6: HERE WE READ CLEARLY THAT THE WALL WAS **COMPLETED WITHOUT ANY GAPS** WHATSOEVER. NOW SANBALLAT TRIED ANOTHER **TACTIC**. HE SAID, "COME, LET US HAVE A **DISCUSSION** TOGETHER IN THE PLAIN OF ONO" (6:2). BUT NEHEMIAH WAS **NOT GOING TO BE DECEIVED**. HE **SENSED** IN HIS **SPIRIT** THAT THEY WERE GOING TO **HARM** HIM. **GOD TAKES CARE OF HIS SERVANTS AND PROTECTS THEM**. NEHEMIAH GAVE THEM A WONDERFUL **REPLY**, WHICH WE SHOULD GIVE AS WELL, IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES: "I AM DOING A **GREAT WORK**, AND I **CANNOT LEAVE IT AND COME DOWN TO YOU**" (6:3). WHEN GOD HAS GIVEN US A TASK TO DO, WE MUST **STICK TO THAT**, AND NEVER **WASTE OUR TIME IN USELESS DISCUSSIONS**. WITH THAT **ATTITUDE NEHEMIAH FINISHED** THE WALL IN JUST **52 DAYS** (VERSE 15). FOR **90 YEARS**, FROM THE TIME THAT THE FIRST **EXILES** HAD COME BACK TO JERUSALEM, THIS **WALL HAD NOT BEEN BUILT**. GOD HAD TO WAIT UNTIL HE FOUND ONE **MAN**. WHEN THAT ONE MAN WAS FOUND, HE DID THE JOB IN **LESS THAN TWO MONTHS**. MANY THINGS THAT GOD WANTS **DONE TODAY** ARE NOT BEING DONE. MANY YEARS GO BY. WHAT IS GOD WAITING FOR? HE IS **WAITING** FOR A MAN WHO HAS A **BURDEN**, WHO WILL **NOT BE DISCOURAGED** BY OPPOSITION, AND WHO WILL DO THE WORK AT HIS **OWN COST**.



CHAPTERS 8 AND 9 SHOW US THE **TREMENDOUS** REVIVAL THAT GOD BROUGHT AMONG THE JEWS THROUGH THE **INFLUENCE** THAT TWO **GODLY MEN** -- **EZRA AND NEHEMIAH** -- HAD OVER AN **ENTIRE NATION**. IN CHAPTER 9, WE READ WHAT GOD DID THROUGH **NEHEMIAH**. THE CHAPTER BEGINS WITH THE ISRAELITES **FASTING, CONFESSING THEIR SINS** AND **SEPARATING** THEMSELVES FROM THE **HEATHEN** (VERSES 1, 2). THEN THEY HAD A THREE-HOUR **BIBLE-STUDY** TIME AND THREE HOURS OF **PRAISING** THE LORD AND CONFESSING THEIR SINS. IT WAS **REVIVAL** ALL OVER AGAIN (VERSE 3). THEN THE LEVITES STOOD UP AND **CRIED TO THE LORD** WITH A **LOUD VOICE** (VERSE 4). IN VERSES 6 TO 31, WE HAVE THE **LONGEST** RECORDED PRAYER IN THE WHOLE BIBLE. THE LEVITES THEN **REHEARSED** THE **HISTORY** OF ISRAEL FROM ABRAHAM'S TIME, AND THEIR **FAILURE** DURING THE **FORTY YEARS** OF WANDERING IN THE WILDERNESS AND DURING THE TIMES OF THE **JUDGES** AND THE **KINGS** AND ACKNOWLEDGING THAT EVERY JUDGE- MENT THAT GOD HAD SENT WAS **JUST AND RIGHT**. THEY **REPENTED** AND **SIGNED** A DOCUMENT BEFORE GOD, WITH **NEHEMIAH SIGNING FIRST** OF ALL (10:1).



IN CHAPTER 13, WE SEE NEHEMIAH'S **ZEAL** FOR **PURITY** IN **GOD'S** HOUSE. HE WENT INTO THE **TEMPLE** AND DID SOMETHING SIMILAR TO WHAT **JESUS** DID WHEN HE CLEANSED THE **TEMPLE** IN JERUSALEM. NEHEMIAH **FOUND** THAT PEOPLE HAD **ALLOWED** THEIR **UNCONVERTED RELATIVES** TO **STAY** IN THE TEMPLE. ELIASHIB THE PRIEST WAS **RELATED** TO **TOBIAH** (13:4) AND HAD PREPARED A LARGE ROOM FOR HIM. NEHEMIAH **CHASED** THEM ALL OUT. HE "**THREW OUT ALL OF TOBIAH'S HOUSEHOLD GOODS AND CLEANED UP THE HOUSE OF GOD**" (13:8). HE ALSO NOTICED THAT MANY PEOPLE WERE MAKING **MONEY** BY SELLING THINGS ON THE **SABBATH** (13:15). HE **REBUKED** THEM AND **WARNED** THEM AND EVEN **THREATENED** TO USE **FORCE** AGAINST THEM (13:21). IF PEOPLE **DON'T FEAR GOD** THEN THEY MUST **FEAR A MAN OF GOD**.



HE ALSO DISCOVERED THAT SOME OF THE **JEWS** HAD MARRIED **NON-JEWISH** WOMEN. NEHEMIAH "**CONTENDED** WITH THEM, **CURSED** THEM, **SLAPPED** THEM, AND **PULLED OUT** THEIR HAIR AND THEIR BEARDS, AND MADE THEM **SWEAR** NEVER TO GIVE THEIR **CHILDREN** IN **MARRIAGE** TO **NON-JEWS** AGAIN." (13:25). THUS NEHEMIAH **PURIFIED** THE **PRIESTHOOD** WITHOUT ANY **PARTIALITY**, APPOINTED DUTIES FOR THE PRIESTS AND EVEN GOT DOWN TO THE **NITTY-GRITTY** OF ARRANGING FOR THE SUPPLY OF **WOOD** FOR THE **SACRIFICES** (13:30, 31)! NEHEMIAH WAS A **FEARLESS** MAN WHO WAS **NOT SEEKING** FOR A **REPUTATION** AS A KIND, GENTLE PERSON. MANY **CHRISTIAN LEADERS** ARE **NOT FIRM** AND **AUTHORITATIVE** WHEN IT COMES TO MAINTAINING **GOD'S** STANDARDS IN THE CHURCH. WHEN GOD CANNOT FIND A MAN WHO IS **STRONG** AND **AUTHORITATIVE**, IN A **SPIRITUAL** CHRISTLIKE WAY, **GOD'S** WORK **SUFFERS**. THAT IS HOW **BABYLON** IS BUILT. **NEHEMIAH** WAS NOT A MAN LIKE THAT. HE WAS **NOT** CONCERNED ABOUT HIS OWN **REPUTATION** -- AND SO **GOD** COULD **USE** HIM.