

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Fourth Quarter 2019: *Ezra and Nehemiah*

Lesson 2 “Nehemiah”

Read for this week’s study

Nehemiah 1–2; Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 23:1–6; Numbers 23:19.

Memory Text

“So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. And I said: ‘I pray, Lord God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments’ ” (Nehemiah 1:4, 5, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Nehemiah Receives Bad News
- III. Nehemiah’s Prayer
- IV. Nehemiah Speaks Out
- V. Nehemiah Sent
- VI. Nehemiah Prepares for His Task
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read Nehemiah 1:4-5. What is your understanding of the word “covenant?” What does it tell us about God that He would “keep” His own covenant with Israel? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read Nehemiah 1:1-4. Why was Nehemiah so distressed? What was his response to the bad news that he received? The date of this text is about 444-445 BC and 13 years after Ezra moved to Judea. What is the balance between prayer and action in times of crisis? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Nehemiah 1:5-11. What are the different components of Nehemiah’s prayer? How is this prayer similar or different from the prayer of Daniel in Daniel 9? What is the point of claiming the promises of God? How would one do that effectively today? When Nehemiah speaks of praying “day and night” what would that actually mean in reality? (Monday’s lesson)
4. Read Nehemiah 2:1-9. What happened as a result of Nehemiah’s prayer and fasting? What is the role of fasting in spiritual life? Have you ever tried it? How did it go?

How is Nehemiah's position in the court of Persia similar or different from Daniel's? (Tuesday's lesson)

5. Read Nehemiah 2:9-10. What do these verses tell us about the opposition Nehemiah and the Jews in general were going to face? Note that Nehemiah accepted a military escort as part of his mission to Judea. Ezra, on the other hand, refused to accept one (Ezra 8:22). Could both of these be right for different reasons? How do you handle these kinds of discrepancies in Scripture? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Nehemiah 2:11-20. What does Nehemiah do to prepare for the project of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem? Why does he keep his mission a secret from local officials and even the Jewish people of Jerusalem? Is silence a form of lying or is telling less than you know sometimes appropriate? (Thursday's lesson)
7. What does it mean that throughout the Bible those called by God faced tremendous opposition? Can you think of a single instance in Scripture where someone called by God didn't face opposition? What can we learn from this about the difficulties in our own experience? (Friday's lesson)
8. The men of God in these two Bible books worked in co-operation with pagan political authorities. What can we learn from this about the church's relationship with secular authorities? What are the positives and negatives in such relationships? Under what circumstances should followers of Jesus fight for their rights, whether in court or even on the battlefield? (Friday's lesson)

Further Study with Ellen White

He who took humanity upon Himself knows how to sympathize with the sufferings of humanity. Not only does Christ know every soul, and the peculiar needs and trials of that soul, but He knows all the circumstances that chafe and perplex the spirit. His hand is outstretched in pitying tenderness to every suffering child. Those who suffer most have most of His sympathy and pity. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and He desires us to lay our perplexities and troubles at His feet and leave them there. {MH 249.3}

At all times and in all places, in all sorrows and in all afflictions, when the outlook seems dark and the future perplexing, and we feel helpless and alone, the Comforter will be sent in answer to the prayer of faith. Circumstances may separate us from every earthly friend; but no circumstance, no distance, can separate us from the heavenly Comforter. Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is always at our right hand to support, sustain, uphold, and cheer. {DA 669.4}

God has provided divine assistance for all the emergencies to which our human resources are unequal. He gives the Holy Spirit to help in every strait, to strengthen our hope and assurance, to illuminate our minds and purify our hearts. He provides opportunities and opens channels of

working. If His people are watching the indications of His providence, and are ready to cooperate with Him, they will see mighty results. {PK 660.3}

The people of God will not be free from suffering; but while persecuted and distressed, while they endure privation and suffer for want of food they will not be left to perish. That God who cared for Elijah will not pass by one of His self-sacrificing children. He who numbers the hairs of their head will care for them, and in time of famine they shall be satisfied. While the wicked are dying from hunger and pestilence, angels will shield the righteous and supply their wants. To him that "walketh righteously" is the promise: "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." Isaiah 33:15, 16; 41:17. {GC 629.2}

Amidst great discouragement, Nehemiah made God his trust, his sure defense. And He who was the support of His servant then has been the dependence of His people in every age. In every crisis His people may confidently declare, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Romans 8:31. However craftily the plots of Satan and his agents may be laid, God can detect them, and bring to nought all their counsels. The response of faith today will be the response made by Nehemiah, "Our God shall fight for us;" for God is in the work, and no man can prevent its ultimate success. {PK 645.2}

Never is one repulsed who comes to Him with a contrite heart. Not one sincere prayer is lost. Amid the anthems of the celestial choir, God hears the cries of the weakest human being. We pour out our heart's desire in our closets, we breathe a prayer as we walk by the way, and our words reach the throne of the Monarch of the universe. They may be inaudible to any human ear, but they cannot die away into silence, nor can they be lost through the activities of business that are going on. Nothing can drown the soul's desire. It rises above the din of the street, above the confusion of the multitude, to the heavenly courts. It is God to whom we are speaking, and our prayer is heard. {COL 174.1}

The Lord does not leave His wounded and bruised sheep to the power of Satan to be torn in pieces. He is ever strengthening His own when they are weak. He delivers the tried and tempted ones from the enemy's power. The Lord Jesus never forsakes any soul that puts his trust in Him. {UL 150.4}

Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." James 5:11. His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace

is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Psalm 147:3. The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son. {SC 100.1}

Every earnest petition for grace and strength will be answered. . . . Ask God to do for you those things that you cannot do for yourselves. Tell Jesus everything. Lay open before Him the secrets of your heart; for His eye searches the inmost recesses of the soul, and He reads your thoughts as an open book. When you have asked for the things that are necessary for your soul's good, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them. Accept His gifts with your whole heart; for Jesus has died that you might have the precious things of heaven as your own, and at last find a home with the heavenly angels in the kingdom of God. {ML 16.4}

The way to the throne of God is always open. You cannot always be on your knees in prayer, but your silent petitions may constantly ascend to God for strength and guidance. When tempted, as you will be, you may flee to the secret place of the Most High. His everlasting arms will be underneath you.—(*Counsels on Health*, 362.) {Pr 179.4}

There is a mighty power in prayer. Our great adversary is constantly seeking to keep the troubled soul away from God. An appeal to Heaven by the humblest saint is more to be dreaded by Satan than the decrees of cabinets or the mandates of kings. {HP 82.5}

In the secret place of prayer, where no eye but God's can see, no ear but His can hear, we may pour out our most hidden desires and longings to the Father of infinite pity, and in the hush and silence of the soul that voice which never fails to answer the cry of human need will speak to our hearts. {MB 84.3}

It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask. {ML 15.5}

When the Christian takes his baptismal vow, divine help is pledged to him. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit stand ready to work in his behalf. God places at his command the resources of heaven, that he may be an overcomer. His own power is small; but God is omnipotent, and God is his helper. Daily he is to make known his wants at the throne of grace. By faith and trust, by availing himself of the resources provided, he can be more than a conqueror. {OHC 157.5}

God's abounding love and presence will give you the power of self-control. He will mold and fashion your mind and character. He will direct your aims and purposes and capabilities in a channel that will give you moral and spiritual power which you will not have to leave here in this world but can carry with you and retain through eternal ages. {TMK 53.6}