

# FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:22-23

## Lesson 5

### Faithfulness

Faith To Stand For God

*Nehemiah 2:9-6:16*

Jerusalem's walls were first built around 1800 B.C. The reason walls were important during Bible times, are they were a sign of strength; security, prosperity and they kept the enemy out. Jerusalem's walls were built and destroyed many times over the centuries. Nehemiah is the hero of the book of Nehemiah. He was a wise man who patiently studied matters before acting and he was a man of prayer.

### Introduction

It was over 700 miles from Shushan to Jerusalem. The journey would take at least three months. In verse 10 of chapter 2 we read about how Sanballat and Tobiah were angry that Nehemiah was going to rebuild the wall. There are probably many reasons why they did not want the wall rebuilt. The simplest answer may be it threatened their security to control the land with the growing numbers of Hebrews returning to Jerusalem. Remind your students about the previous lesson. This is a continuation.

### Progression of Events

Nehemiah was a faithful man who was not afraid to do what was right even in the face of danger. After three days of thoughtful consideration and observance, he decided to secretly go out and inspect the walls and gates for himself. This was a prudent plan, as he did not want to bring attention to what his strategy was until he had a clear and realistic tactic in mind.

- Nehemiah spoke to the priest, nobles, rulers and all the people. "You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach" (Nehemiah 2:17). He continued telling them God had been good to him and that King Artaxerxes had granted his permission to rebuild the wall. The people were pleased with what Nehemiah told them and responded with great enthusiasm. They said, "Let us rise up and build."

- Not everyone thought it was a great idea. Two enemies, Sanballat and Tobiah, laughed at Nehemiah. They said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?" These men knew Nehemiah had permission from the king to build. They just thought they would make him afraid. It didn't work. Why were they unsuccessful in stopping Nehemiah?

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- Nehemiah answered back, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem." Even though these men were trying to be

difficult, Nehemiah was faithful and stood for what was right.

- Everyone began to pitch in and help. There were 42 groups that helped and the chapter begins with what the priests did. The priests repaired the Sheep gate. This gate was used to bring the sheep into the city for sacrifices. All the citizens of Jerusalem participated in the huge job of rebuilding the wall. There were many gates because Jerusalem was a large city. The Tekoites were lazy and they did not help rebuild. The lazy are always amongst us. Nehemiah showed great leadership in how he inspired everyone to take ownership in their part of the wall to repair.
- Sanballat and Tobiah became very angry when they heard about how the wall was beginning to go up. They made fun of the people. Sanballat said, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish—stones that are burned?” (Nehemiah 4:2). Tobiah ridiculed as well, “Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall”(verse 3).
- No one responded to these men. Nehemiah prayed, “Hear O our God, for we are despised; turn their reproach on their own heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity” (verse 4). Being teased and ridiculed can cut deep. When you are mocked for doing what is right, don’t give in and become discouraged. Pray and ask God to give you strength.
- “The entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind

to work” (verse 6). The people patiently and faithfully persevered.

- Once again Sanballat and Tobiah heard that the open places in the wall were now closed. This made them even angrier than before. These men made a secret plan to have four armies (the Arabs from the south; the Ammonites on the east, the Ashdodites on the west and the Samaritans to the north) attack the city.
- Nehemiah heard of the plan and he prayed to God for help. He put men around the wall guarding it day and night.
- The people were becoming tired and discouraged because they could see how much work still needed to be done and now they were afraid of being attacked. Nehemiah did not become discouraged. Can you think of times you are afraid, upset or discouraged? Turn to Romans 26:3 and write it on the lines below.

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Having problems does not mean God does not love you. Rather, there is an important lesson to be learned in every problem faced.

- Nehemiah said to all the people, “Do not be afraid. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses.” (Verse 14). Nehemiah was not afraid because he knew God had the power to take care of them. He demonstrated his faithfulness by continuing on even

when the job looked to hard. When the enemy heard the citizens of Jerusalem knew of their secret attack, they changed their mind.

- The work on the wall continued. While half of the men would work the other half would stand guard. Even those working carried a sword. Because they were spread thin across the wall, Nehemiah told them, “Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us”(verse 20).
- Sanballat and Tobiah were not going to give up. With the wall almost complete, they tried to get Nehemiah away from the city so they could attack. Nehemiah did not fall for their plan. He replied, “I am doing a great work. Why would I stop to come talk to you?” (Nehemiah 6:3). They tried four times to get Nehemiah to come but he would not.
- Their fifth try came in the form of an unsealed letter. The letter threatened to tell King Artaxerxes that Nehemiah was planning a revolt and that he was going to make himself king. (Verses 6, 7).
- These lies and rumors did not frighten Nehemiah. He was going to be faithful to God and do what was right. Nehemiah rebuked them. Read verses 8, 9).

#### **Climax**

- Shemaiah pretended to want to protect Nehemiah. He was a priest that claimed he had a message from God and Nehemiah was to hide in the Temple. Nehemiah did not fall for it. Only a priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place in the temple. If anyone else did they would die (Numbers 18:7). Nehemiah was not a priest.

- Nehemiah refused to give into fear by running and hiding. God helped Nehemiah see that this was a trick. Nehemiah knew that if he ran in fear, he would not be setting a good example for the people of Jerusalem.

#### **Conclusion**

- Finally, the wall was finished and each gate was hung in place in just fifty-two days.
- It was said that it couldn't be done. Together the men and women of Jerusalem joined together and with God's help made the impossible possible. Nehemiah was a man of great character. He was persistent, motivated and organized. The three main lessons we learn from Nehemiah are; always pray impossible tasks may be accomplished when God is in control and truly serving God means you are willing to talk to Him and walk with Him even when adversity hits.

#### **Faithfulness**

The only way we may possess faithfulness in our life is through hearing and study. An essential element in faith is knowledge. Faith is the sure knowledge that God exists and that He will accomplish those things He has promised. Faith in God—trust in His promises and belief that He is in overall control—is a major element in the Christian life and is absolutely necessary for salvation. Faith cannot be “worked up” or self-generated. Faith may grow in ones life through experience, trials, (Romans 5:1-5) reading the inspired word of God (Romans 10:17) and through interacting with the faith of others.

#### **Memory Verse**

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

Answer the following questions:

1. Even when the enemy made fun of Nehemiah, why did he do what was right?

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2. What were the names of the two men who ridiculed Nehemiah and the Hebrew people?

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3. Why didn't they want the wall rebuilt?

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4. What was the first thing Nehemiah did when the mocking began?

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5. Sanballat and Tobia decided to get an army together to attack Jerusalem. Did their plan succeed? Why or Why not?

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6. The people kept working faithfully on the wall. True or False

7. How many days did it take to complete the wall?

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8. How did Nehemiah demonstrate faithfulness?

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9. What does faithfulness mean?

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10. What were some discouraging things that Nehemiah faced?

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11. Why weren't Nehemiah's enemies successful in stopping him?

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12. How did God help Nehemiah?

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13. Is it important to be faithful in all that you do? Explain why.

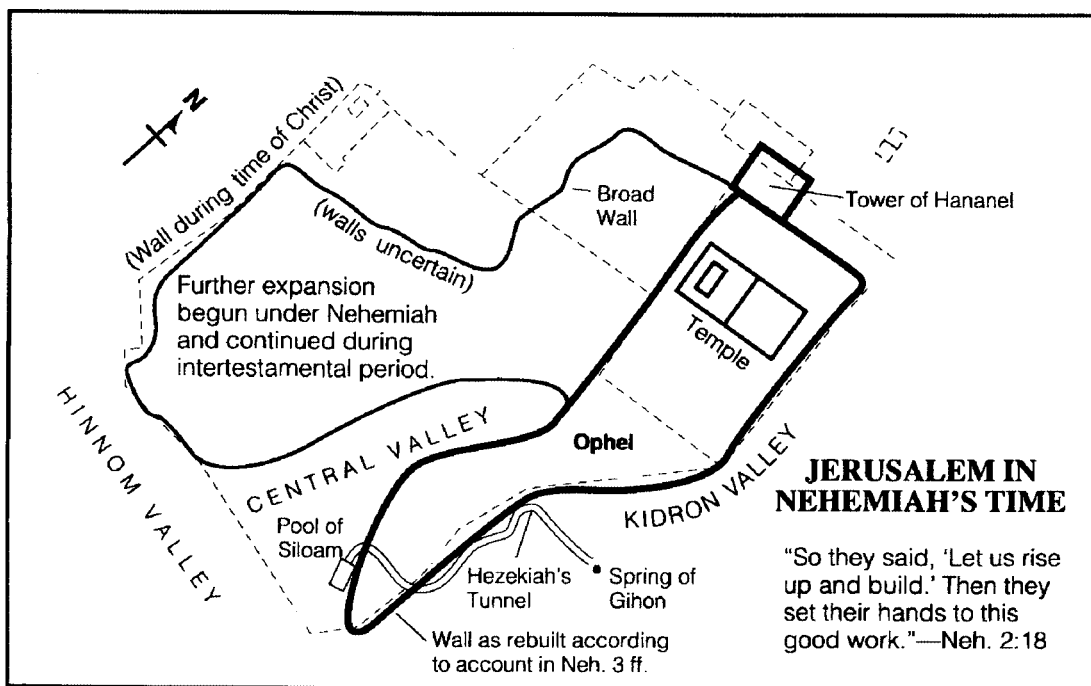
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Many geographical landmarks in the city of Jerusalem are mentioned in the book of Nehemiah (3:12-18; 12:27-39). As reconstructed by Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah, the postexilic city of Jerusalem was considerably smaller and less grand than the city, which fell to Babylon in 586 B.C.

## Jerusalem in Nehemiah's Time



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