

NEHEMIAH ... a man constrained  
NEHEMIAH ... a man constrained  
(NEHEMIAH 2-4)

Something was wrong! The animated, joyous butler was stricken by sorrow. The sparkle had gone from his eyes; his movements were listless. The king watched his servant; yes, something was wrong! "Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart." And Nehemiah trembled. His sun was in eclipse; a chill of fear sent dread through his soul. The business of restoring a sin-sick sanctuary was never easy!

#### How Weak

We do well to consider that the task confronting this butler was far too great for a man of his type. It was inconceivable that a slave should build a city. Vast quantities of materials had to be supplied, considerable sums of money would be required, and numerous craftsmen employed to complete the task. The whole project seemed ridiculous. Nehemiah was a wise man; he ceased looking at the difficulties, and turned his eyes heavenward. Sometimes the longest way around is the shortest way home! With men, certain things are impossible; but with God, all things are possible. Nehemiah's quick prayer, his exceeding great requests, his undeniable passion to rebuild God's city, revealed the fact that for him nothing else mattered. He had put his hand to a plough; he could not look back.

#### How Willing

The night was still; the city ruins, ugly and grotesque in the moonlight, were monuments to the savagery of bygone days. The scene was utterly desolate as Nehemiah gloved between the piles of fallen masonry. The tragic news which had reached him in Babylon had been an under-statement. The position beggared description; but this was no time for tears. Nehemiah squared his shoulders and went to challenge the elders; and God was with him. Soon, the son of one of the chemists had commenced building. Probably his hands became sore and grimy, but his heart was singing. Not far away, one of the rulers had put aside his robes of office; his working clothes revealed he was still a man. Among the men laboured the daughters of yet another ruler, and never were Old Testament women seen in a better light. Eliashib the high priest put God first, and was paid double rate! See Bible Cameos, page 67. The fact that the nobles put not their necks to the work should make us search our hearts, lest their descendants be hiding there!

#### How Worrying

Rome was not built in a day; neither was any other city. The restoration of a ruined sanctuary is not a sudden decision made at the communion table. It is not the inspiring flash of resolution thrilling the soul in a consecration meeting. This is a crusade; a holy effort leading to struggle, bitter resolve, tears, perspiration, and perhaps blood. Sometimes a wise builder will see the need to make haste slowly. He will build faster by digging deeper! Rubbish was never a good foundation for a church steeple; broken vows were never able to support a sanctuary reaching to the sky. Soon the whispers of criticism became shouts of scorn, "What do these feeble Jews? . . . will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish which are burned? . . . if a fox go up, he

NEHEMIAH ... a man constrained  
shall even break down their stone wall " (4: 2, 3). Several  
items may be listed as rubbish. David's rubbish covered illicit  
love affairs. Demas had to face the challenge of worldliness;  
Achan saw his temple crash because of secret sins. It is very  
dangerous to stand beneath toppling walls!

#### How Watchful

"They which builded on the wall, and they that bare  
burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his  
hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held  
a weapon" (4:17). The builders had both hands occupied;  
there was no third hand! With one hand they erected the  
wall; with the other they preserved their work. Their great  
task was sufficient to keep both hands occupied; they had  
no fingers for other pies! To change the simile, some builders  
have many irons in the fire, but none ever got hot! No  
man can be effective in God's work if the multitudinous nature  
of his duties runs him off his feet. The minister who is too  
busy to linger in the holy place may increase his popularity,  
but his soul becomes parched. The preacher who spends his  
week running between Dan and Beersheba will seldom visit  
the holy mount. Sermons hastily thrown together on a  
Saturday night resemble dry hash; they are very difficult to  
digest.

#### Sunday Morning Sickness

Spiritual enthusiasm on a Sunday morning is a rare jewel.  
Some years ago a Detroit newspaper printed the following  
prayer: " Almighty God, as I lie here on this sofa this  
Sunday morning, surrounded by the Sunday newspapers, and  
half listening to one of the radio preachers, it has come to  
me that I have lied to Thee and to myself. I said I did not  
feel well enough to go to church. That was not true. I was  
not ambitious enough. I would have gone to the office had it  
been Monday. I would have played golf had it been Wednes-  
day afternoon. I would have gone to a picture show had it  
been Friday night. But it is Sunday morning, and Sunday  
illness covers a multitude of sins. God have mercy on me.  
I have lied to Thee. I was only lazy and indifferent! "

When I was a student, my studies often kept me out of my  
bed until two or even three o'clock in the morning. It became  
my common practice to study until that late hour, and then  
to sleep for a short while before going to work in the coal-  
mine. Consequently when Sunday arrived, I was tired and  
stayed in bed until lunch-time. One day I asked one of the  
church girls to write something in my autograph album, and  
undoubtedly desiring to cure my bad habit, she wrote a new  
verse for " Stand up, stand up for Jesus

Get up, get up for Jesus,  
Ye soldiers of the cross:  
A lazy Sunday morning  
Means certain harm and loss.  
The church bells call to worship,  
In duty be not slack;  
You cannot fight the good fight  
By lying on your back!

#### He Desired Grape Juice

B. 1. Davidson, a missionary in India, told a thrilling story  
of one of his native evangelists who came for the first time  
to visit the city of Calcutta. The man had saved the equiva-  
lent of ten dollars, and seemed excited as he accompanied his

NEHEMIAH ... a man constrained  
friend to see the sights. Together they visited the bazaars,  
and examined the treasures offered for sale. They went into  
great buildings, and saw many things which amazed the  
inexperienced visitor. Yet all the while the missionary won-  
dered what the Indian would purchase with his savings. When  
the tour was almost completed, the evangelist gave the money  
to Mr. Davidson, saying, " Please buy as much grape juice  
as you can, so that we shall have enough wine for the com-  
munion for many months to come." He could have asked  
for clothing, shoes, anything; but his delightful request indi-  
cated his greatest interest lay in the work of his church.  
Within his heart burned a fire, and he was determined it  
should never go out.

#### The Negro's Secret

A negro minister was once asked the secret of his power.  
He thought for a moment and then replied, " I reads myself  
full; I thinks myself clear; I prays myself hot; and then I  
lets go." It would be a most challenging task if we were  
asked to decide the order of importance with then four  
phases. Some people speak for thirty minutes and with  
compelling eloquence say nothing! Descendants of Solomon,  
they have no need " to read themselves full." Others, who  
are always too busy to think, are experts at leading congre-  
gations into a fog! " I prays myself hot." Naturally he had  
to " let himself go," or he might have burst! I shall always  
remember the bitterly cold Sunday afternoon in the north  
of Scotland when I complained to the stolid elder of the  
Presbyterian church. Outside, the snow lay deep on the  
ground; inside the building was no heating apparatus. My  
teeth were chattering when I said, Brother, it is very cold  
in this church." " Yes," he replied, we always get our heat  
from the pulpit."

Yet another Negro preacher in the Southern States of  
America was asked how he planned and delivered his sermon.  
His quaint reply deserves consideration. " First, I  
expostulates the Word. Then I illustrafies the point. Finally, I  
makes the arousement." In this modern age, many sincere people  
are asking if it is wise to sacrifice enthusiasm upon the altar  
of refinement. We seem to get enthusiastic about everything  
except the Gospel. When I hear people objecting to the  
urgency in the preacher's message, I wonder if the critics  
would speak in whispers to warn a man about to fall to his  
death. It is written that God originally kindled the blaze  
upon the altar at Shiloh. Afterward it became the sacred  
duty of the priests to keep the fires burning. It is well that  
we should consider the implication of the ancient Scripture.

O Thou who camest from above  
The pure celestial fire to impart,  
Kindle a flame of sacred love  
On the mean altar of my heart.

There let it for Thy glory burn  
With inextinguishable blaze  
And trembling to its source return,  
In humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire  
To work and speak and think for Thee;  
Still let me guard the sacred fire,  
And still stir up Thy gift in me.

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.  
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.