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Nehemiah!
by Bill Lockwood

If you wish to be inspired to be more compassionate or prayerful; or to become a bolder spokesman for God; or to be instilled with greater strength of sterling godly character—*study the life of Nehemiah!*

Israel returned from Babylonian captivity in three different groups.

- (1) Under the leadership of Zerubbabel whose task was to rebuild the Temple (536 BC).
- (2) Following Ezra the Scribe who returned in 457 BC in order to re-teach the law of God to the refugees.
- (3) Led by Nehemiah, the final company of Jews came back to their ancient homeland (444 BC). Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem to give it adequate fortification against enemies was his task.

Nehemiah served two terms as governor over Judea, having come from the throne room (cup-bearer to the king) of Artaxerxes, one of the world's greatest monarchs. But Judea desperately needed an inspiring leader. And *inspire he did!* Causing the people to “rise up and build!” (2:18) the text reads that “Baruch, the son of Zabbai *earnestly repaired his portion of the wall*” (3:20). What a leader! Enthusiasm builds under leaders like this.

Nehemiah humbles us in prayer as well. He addressed God as “the great and awesome God” (1:5) when facing insurmountable obstacles. Boldness of character was the result. He faced incredible odds as well as opposition both within the community of the Jews and without amongst the Samaritans.

This incredible leader finishes his book with this short burst of prayer: “Remember me, O my God, for good!” (13:31c).

If you are lacking in spiritual vitality in any way—make plans to participate in a Bible study of Nehemiah. Make sure it is a STUDY! Any person can organize a feel-good rap session in which we share experiences. *But to instill solid principles for a lifetime of service requires diligence in the Book of Books.* I personally challenge each reader to be involved in a personal way more tomorrow than in the past.