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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1929 ~ Nehemiah a Man with a Purpose.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

Nehemiah, Judah's new governor, had travelled from Babylon to help the Jewish exiles who'd returned to Jerusalem build the city walls again. He organised the workers to build sections of wall near their homes so that they would do a good job for their families' security and be close by them if the city was attacked by enemies.

When the walls around the entire city had been built to half their height, Sanballat, Tobiah and their friends, became very angry that the work was proceeding so well. They made plans to come and fight against Jerusalem to stop it from being rebuilt. But Nehemiah prayed to God and guarded the city both day and night to protect all the people.

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In Chapter 4 of Nehemiah's book, Sanballat and his friends tried to stop the work on the rebuilding the wall by using insults and mocking.

Nehemiah realised that those trouble makers were trying to turn the people against himself. When these enemies insulted the Judeans, they were also insulting their God because they had hardened themselves against God and His people.

So, Nehemiah, in his position as a leader of God's people, prayed that God would punish these Judean enemies. In God's authority, Nehemiah called on the Lord to render judgments and assign punishments on those who hated him, although not hating them back.

Christians today who are under the New Covenant of Jesus Christ's forgiveness and grace, don't need to pray in this way, as we have assurance of victory over sin in Christ that the godly leaders of the Old Testament didn't have. The New Testament focuses on personal forgiveness and not paying back the wrongs done against us; for if we harbour anger or hostility towards anyone, Jesus taught that we need to forgive that person from our heart, not wanting personal revenge on them.

The Jewish workers building the wall weren't distracted by the insults of their enemies. The best way they dealt with the mockery and insults was to ignore them. When Sanballat realised that he and his friends had failed to stop the work plan, he decided to attack the workers from all directions. Nehemiah encouraged the people not to be fearful.

"Remember the Lord," he said. But he also directed the people to remain armed with weapons at all times, which meant that only half the workers were actually building as the other half kept watch. A guard was put on watch each night to prevent a surprise night-time attack.

We Christians also have enemies who would threaten to attack us spiritually, and sometimes, even physically as well. However, our weapons are spiritual and not earthly swords or spears. In Ephesians, Chapter 6, it says: "Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armour so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil."

Christians are engaged in a spiritual battle as well as a building program for God's kingdom. The more time we spend in God's Word, the stronger is our resistance to the devil and his armies. Nehemiah remained close to the people when they were facing hardships and dangers, for he believed that nothing would overtake him while God and he worked all things out together.

In Chapter 5 of his book, Nehemiah received complaints from the poor people against the rich Judeans. Some landless people, who usually worked as labourers or tenant farmers, found that food was scarce yet the prices too high for them to pay to feed their families. Other small landowners were mortgaging their land so that they could pay for food, while other families were tragically having to sell their own children into slavery to be able to pay their taxes. In all these cases, it was the wealthy Judeans who were taking advantage of their poorer countrymen. And to make the situation worse, there was also a famine in the land at that very time.

When Nehemiah heard their complaints, he became very angry. The rich Judeans, nobles and officials, were charging interest from their poor neighbours. While it was legal to charge interest for commercial loans, the Law of Moses forbade charging interest on personal loans to fellow Jews, especially when this could cause hardship for the poor. It was also against the law for a creditor to force a fellow Jew into slavery for failing to repay a debt. The debtor was to be treated as a hired worker and not as a slave. And worse still, the wealthy Judeans were even selling their own fellow people as slaves to non-Israelites, and this was also forbidden.

There seems to be no limit on the consequences of greed in a person's life. Each person who already has the necessities of life and much more, needs to ask themselves: "Who owns my possessions? Is it me or God" Such people need to be reminded that everything they have comes from the hand of God, and therefore, it all belongs to God. Knowing this truth changes a person's perspective on how their belongings should be used.

Greed is the exact opposite of generosity, giving and graciousness. Envy and coveting are further forms of greed, and people need to recognise that greed is dangerous. If left unchecked in a person's life, it can grow to become so powerful, that it will take over and control your life, causing you to become obsessed with gaining something you want, even if you know it's harmful for you.

Ask yourself: "How long do I want to enjoy the good things in life?" If you want to enjoy them temporarily and just in this life, you'll have trouble with greed. But if you want to enjoy them for eternity, you will be inclined to invest in different things now so that you can enjoy God's rewards one day forever. Again, ask yourself: "What do I think about most?" Jesus instructs us to redirect our thoughts from material things on earth that don't last, to things that last forever – like your relationship with God and others.

In Matthew, Chapter 6, the Lord Jesus gave this important advice: "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven ... Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be."

The nobles and officials of Judah kept quiet when Nehemiah rebuked them because they knew they were doing wrong. Nehemiah demanded that the rich Judeans give back the land they'd taken and that they stop charging interest on the loans they'd made.

The rich Judeans agreed to do what Nehemiah told them to do. Throughout the Bible, those who exploit the poor are repeatedly condemned. God is grieved when greedy rich people take advantage of the poor. The poor, especially poor believers, are watched over by their heavenly Father; to mistreat them is to insult God. Christians must stand up against every form of injustice and exploitation.

When we disregard any of God's rules for living, we expose ourselves to trouble. We either take God's way or the consequences of not doing so.

The wealthy Judeans did what they had promised to God and Nehemiah. So Nehemiah gave a good testimony about his 12 years of ruling as governor. In every way Nehemiah acted without self-interest and for the good of the people. This is the essence of godly leadership. Nehemiah knew that he himself was just a servant of God and as such, he was required to treat those under him with God's justice and kindness the same as he would to those higher to him. Let all those of us in authority never forget that they, too, have a Master they serve who's in heaven.

The New Testament of the Bible is where the Lord Jesus Christ ushered in a New Covenant with all Jewish and non-Jewish people who desire God's forgiveness of their sins by trusting in Jesus's death and resurrection on their behalf. No person can really think that they can work their way to heaven by doing many good deeds. For no one can add anything to the sacrifice that the Lord Jesus paid himself for the penalty of sin. Once a person has asked the Lord Jesus to be Lord and Saviour of their lives, they will do many good deeds through the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit living within, but such deeds are not part of being accepted by God for their salvation.

In Romans, Chapter 6, Verse 23, it says: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."

Place your life and spirit into the hands of sovereign Jesus, who loves you and is always trustworthy.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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