

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH WITH A VIEW TO
PREPARATION OF LESSON PLANS
IN RELATION TO EARLY ADOLESCENT BOYS

By

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INTRODUCTION

A. The Subject

1. The Subject Stated and Explained.

The statement of the subject is as follows: A Study of the Book of Nehemiah with a View to Preparation of Lesson Plans in Relation to Early Adolescent Boys.

The purpose of this study is: (1) to determine whether or not the Book of Nehemiah is suitable for inclusion in the church school curriculum for the early adolescent boy; and in the event it proves suitable, (2) to suggest lesson plans for the actual presentation of the material.

2. The Subject Justified.

No cry is more often heard upon the part of the church school superintendent than that concerning the impossibility of teaching early adolescent boys. It is complained that they won't listen and that they create discipline problems. Not only, it is said, do they assert themselves in class in unacceptable and often unexpected ways, but all too often it is at this age that their independence is shown by dropping from the church school.

On the part of the boys, the complaint is frequently heard that "it's all just the same old stuff."

A brief review of the Book of Nehemiah gives evidence of its spiritual richness. The neglect into which the book has fallen prompts one to desire to use it as a source of teaching material. The characteristics of the book have led the writer to hold tentatively the opinion of its suitability for instructional use with early adolescent boys.

In view of the above considerations, the study of the subject seems adequately justified.

3. The Subject Delimited.

The terms "early adolescent boys" and "intermediate boys" will be used interchangeably with reference to boys of twelve, thirteen, and fourteen years of age.

Exhaustive studies of the early adolescent boy have been published from time to time. It seems adequate, therefore, for the purposes of this study, to gather together only a summary of the characteristics of the intermediate boy.

It is also recognized that the Book of Nehemiah is inexhaustible. It is not the intention of this study to draw forth all that might be gleaned from the book, but rather those concepts which seem suitable and especially helpful to the adolescent boy.

The lesson plans will be suggestive rather than complete. The uniqueness of individual groups and the distinct personalities of teachers make necessary individual adaptation. It is, however,

intended that they be sufficiently detailed to give real aid to the teacher who attempts the study with a group of early adolescent boys.

B. The Sources for the Study

The sources will be threefold: (1) Original study of the Book of Nehemiah, (2) survey of the materials in print concerning the intermediate boy, and (3) survey of commentaries and other publications dealing with the Book of Nehemiah.

C. The Method of Procedure

First of all, it will be necessary to establish objectives suitable to early adolescent boys. These will be derived upon the basis of a summary of his characteristics and their religious implications.

A study will then be made of the Book of Nehemiah to determine its curricular value in the light of these objectives.

Finally, lesson plans will be developed which will utilize from the Book of Nehemiah those particular elements which seem closely related to the objectives.

CHAPTER I

A SURVEY OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EARLY ADOLESCENT BOY, A STATEMENT OF THEIR IMPLICATIONS, AND A STATEMENT OF SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR HIS CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

A. Introduction

As one approaches the problem of the preparation of lesson plans for the study of the Book of Nehemiah by intermediate boys, he is forced first of all to gain an adequate understanding of the prospective students.

There is some tendency today to believe that the changes that take place in the development of the adolescent are probably not so numerous, so radical, so far-reaching, or so abrupt as was assumed in the earlier psychology of adolescence.¹ However, since the process of growth brings a boy from childhood to early adolescence, and since the boy in our modern age is faced by a multiplicity of new experiences, there are certain traits which come into prominence during this particular period of his life.

Students of psychology and medicine are agreed that the total personality must be regarded as psycho-somatic.² It is therefore the total personality and not one of its separate and diversified aspects which responds to a situation. However, for the purpose of clarity in analysis of the characteristics and needs of early

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1. Hedley S. Dimock: Rediscovering the Adolescent, p. 266.
2. Caroline B. Zachry: Emotion and Conduct in Adolescence, p. 31.

adolescent boys, it seems advantageous to consider the adolescent boy with reference to his physiological characteristics, and his intellectual, emotional, and moral and volitional development, together with the religious implications of these characteristics for the individual boy, and for method in teaching the individual boy.

This analysis is intended for use in connection with the planning of lessons in Nehemiah for early intermediate boys, and material which is not relevant to this purpose will be omitted.

In the light of the evidence concerning the characteristics of the intermediate boy, a statement of the specific religious implications thereof for his personal religious experience, and for methods of instruction will be formulated, and a statement of the objectives for his religious education will be presented.

B. Physiological Characteristics

Not all boys mature at the same chronological age. Within the range of normalcy, puberty may occur by the eleventh year, or be as late as the sixteenth or seventeenth year of the boy's life. The modal age is fourteen years.¹

Accompanying and preceding puberty, many physical changes take place. There is apt to be a period of rapid growth. Within one year, a boy sometimes gains twenty-five or thirty pounds in weight and four or five inches in height.² Strength also increases markedly. There is

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1. Lawrence K. Frank, "Physical Fitness and Health Problems of the Adolescent", American Journal of Public Health, XXXV, (June, 1945), p. 575.
2. Douglas A. Thom: Normal Youth and Its Everyday Problems, p. 14.

usually apparent "physiological clumsiness."¹ The voice of the boy changes from the childish to a more masculine pitch and fulness. The appetite of the maturing boy is usually immense. Along with puberty comes also a new sex consciousness.²

The boy who does not reach puberty during his intermediate years normally continues to grow at a more or less uniform and consistent rate. His strength often seems to increase more rapidly than his height, resulting in a certain awkwardness in handling his body.

There is comparatively little sickness among early adolescent boys, and boys and girls considered together, the lowest death rate is among the ten to fourteen-year-old age grouping.³

C. Psychological Characteristics

1. Intellectual Characteristics.

a. Intellectual Capacity

Between the ages of twelve and fourteen, intelligence comes near to maturity. "Rote memory, arithmetic reasoning, and some abstract reasoning attain almost their maximum efficiency."⁴ It is, however, a practical mind fitted for handling concrete situations, but little adapted for abstract thinking.⁵ It is observed that there is often evidenced the beginning of a deepening process. The mind is beginning to grasp, especially during the latter part of early adolescence, deeper meanings.

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1. Frank, op. cit., p. 576.

2. Thom, op. cit., pp. 16-18.

3. Frank, op. cit., p. 578.

4. Ernest M. Legon: The Growth and Development of Christian Personality, a one page chart.

5. Frederick Tracy: The Psychology of Adolescence, p. 44.

"It sees more in the things that are presented to its view, begins to make profounder interpretations of its experience and to harness the products of sense-perception. ."¹

However, while the intermediate boy's capacity has in the above respects increased, it becomes more and more difficult to enlist his wavering attention for concentrated work. Anything serves to distract him. He is increasingly difficult to teach by the traditional methods.²

b. Questioning of Authority

"The mind of the early adolescent still has many of the characteristics of the child mind while it is discovering some of the modes of adult thinking."³ During childhood, most children accept the statements of parents and teachers as final. It seems not to occur to them to question their knowledge. This situation characteristically changes, sometimes rather abruptly, as the boy reaches adolescence. Though more apparent in middle and later adolescence, there is evidence of new powers of evaluation even in early adolescence.

c. Development of the Fantasy Life

Much of the intellectual activity of the early adolescent is given over to fantasies.

"Though for many people the fantasy or daydream is common throughout the entire span of life, there is no other time in life when it is so rich and varied or a source of so much satisfaction to the

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1. Ibid., p. 18.

2. Peter Blos: The Adolescent Personality, pp. 271-272.

3. Winifred V. Richmond: The Adolescent Boy, p. 51.

individual."¹

During this period of life, the mind takes hold upon ideals, builds air castles, and lays plans. It is true that there is real value in such activity; but there is also great danger that it may become an easy and pleasant substitute for doing, a refuge from the difficulties of reality, a means of compensating duties, or a reprehensible waste of time.²

d. Intellectual Bewilderment

The mind of the adolescent tends to shift rapidly from one thing to another. It lights upon reasons that are actually only prejudices. Adult conceptions are placed upon a background of childish conceptions, and the intermediate is constantly bewildered in the attempt to harmonize what he has discovered of the world of adult life with his vital memories of the child world.³

2. Emotional Characteristics

a. Instability

"... The adolescent is admitted to be the most unstable of beings."⁴ There is a proneness to be fitful and unpredictable. "It is a period of contradictions, opposite moods and tempers succeeding one another with great rapidity."⁵ The boy may be extremely vacillating. The condition of his physical being tends to cause increase and decrease in interests. It is quite possible that he will be very lifeless and dull

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1. Ibid., p. 153.

2. Layton Fraser: The Early Adolescent Boy; His Characteristics and Needs and a Plan for Meeting These Needs, an unpublished thesis, p. 18.

3. Richmond, op. cit., p. 51.

4. Tracy, op. cit., p. 108.

5. Ibid., p. 18.

one time and overflowing with energy and enthusiasm at another.¹ The adolescent boy has been described as follows:

"There is probably no other human being who can be, upon occasion, so utterly lazy and 'shiftless' as an adolescent boy, unless it be an adolescent girl. And there is probably no other human being who, if the mood takes him, can throw himself with such prodigious energy and vim, into any undertaking upon which he sets his heart."²

Therefore, if any continued effort is to be exerted along a given line, there seems to be a very definite need for strong motivation.

b. Desire for Approbation

"The desire for approbation shows itself in all sorts of wholesome and unwholesome ways. It leads to industry and worthy ambition and also to false social evaluations and dishonest means of gaining attention. It differs from the childish 'showing off' in that it has a different social background. It is not mere egoism, but the desire to adjust one's self with advantage to a social environment."³

In other words, there tends to be lacking a sufficient sense of security. The adolescent, as a result, is overly sensitive. He often feels himself misunderstood and frequently barricades himself behind an exterior of apparent indifference and even stolidity.

The adolescent may resort even to apparent laziness in the effort to gain nagging attention. Occasionally this desire for approval and attention results in a negative attitude. This attitude is sometimes manifested by the intermediate through his refusal to assume responsibility due to a fear of inadequacy in the situation.⁴

c. Acute Conscientiousness

"The conscience of adolescence is a friendly monitor and also an inquisitorial torment. It is often a Pharisaic conscience, legalistic

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1. Ibid., p. 108.

2. Loc. cit.

3. Evelyn Leigh Mudge: The Psychology of Early Adolescence, pp. 95-96.

4. Zachry, op. cit., p. 187.

and particular, castigating the boy or girl for slight infractions of law or for purely imaginary faults."¹

Often the boy seems incapable of arriving at a satisfactory standard or code of ethics.

d. Independence

As the social contacts widen, more and more of the experience of an adolescent boy lies beyond the influences and control of the family. The process of emancipation from a family-centered existence goes on usually more or less unconsciously for several years in the healthy-minded boy.² The outward manifestation of the inward change of attitude may be very marked and may even appear suddenly. The adolescent's desire to assert himself and to determine his own destiny frequently results in a variety of discipline problems. He is apt to become disobedient to parental commands and wishes. Officiousness appears, coupled with a tendency to argumentation and the "know-it-all" attitude. Frequently the boy displays open contempt for father and mother as "old fogies."³ He is inclined to say in spirit if not in actual words, "If I must, I won't."⁴ The boy is characteristically fearful of an invasion upon the territory of his newly won freedom. The early adolescent period is the age when the worst insult you can offer a boy is to say that he is "tied to his mother's apron strings".⁵

The teacher must lead rather than dictate. The adolescent needs assistance in readjusting his concept of his own place in the family

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1. Mudge, op. cit., p. 96.

2. Zachry, op. cit., p. 170.

3. Ibid., p. 171.

4. Leon C. Palmer: Youth and the Church, p. 16.

5. Ibid., pp. 15-16.

circle, and in determining his responsibility to the wider circle of which he is in the process of becoming a part.

e. Gregariousness.

It is during the period of early adolescence that the social impulses normally begin to dominate the personality. The early adolescent begins to reach out into a wider circle in the formation of friendships. Typically, he finds companions of about his own age and with more or less similar tastes and interests. Frequently they band together in a rather closely knit group often designated by them as "the gang."¹ A study reported by Hedley S. Dimock revealed, however, that the tightly knit gang is not a universal expression of the social life of adolescence. The cohesiveness of the group has a positive correlation to the socio-economic level. The more closely knit gangs appear on the whole among the less privileged classes.²

3. Moral and Volitional Characteristics

a. Altruism and Responsibility.

The characteristic conduct of a child is that of assuming little or no responsibility for determining what he shall do and what he shall leave undone, and of spending all the time not otherwise requisitioned in thoughtless play with others of his own age. The advent of adolescence marks the beginning of a change. The boy begins to see in himself a member of a social order that exists for a serious purpose, and in which each individual has his own part to play, his own course to pursue, and his own

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1. Luella Cole: Psychology of Adolescence, pp. 20-21.

2. Dimock, op. cit., p. 273.

ends to achieve. He recognizes also that he is under certain obligations touching the rights and claims of the other members of this social order.¹

"Adolescence sees a distinct development of the altruistic spirit essential to a worthy morality. Helpfulness, social loyalty, service to the world, become ruling ideas in the idealistic years of adolescence."²

It is true, nevertheless, that the dawn of responsibility and of altruism are not unadulterated. There comes side by side with them the development of the consciousness of self and also increased impulses of self-interest. With his background of child morals and his new interests and contacts, it is natural that often there develops an illogical mixture of ethical attitudes. During this paradoxical period, a boy may seem self-centered almost to heartlessness and still may at times display a loyal devotion to his chum or to his family or other social groups.³

b. Conformity

As has already been mentioned, the early adolescent identifies himself with a group of friends of about his own age and with similar interests. He becomes intensely loyal to this group. What the gang approves, he approves. It has been said that the distinguishing mark of this stage psychologically is the blind acceptance of group standards and equally intense loyalty to group interests, irrespective of higher standards and wider human horizons.⁴

c. Lack of Control

During the years from twelve to sixteen the majority of boys shift from prepubescent to postpubescent status. As has been mentioned, this period is usually accompanied by marked physical growth. Some

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1. Tracy, op. cit., p. 44.

2. Mudge, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

3. Ibid., p. 95.

4. Cole, op. cit., p. 21.

scientists hold that periods of rapid physical growth are accompanied by relative loss of emotional control. Volitional responses are therefore regarded as determined by the extent of the achievement of the individual in the rational control of movements.

Other scientists differ as to the basis of loss of control. They relate this phenomenon to society and not to biology. In other words, they state that society pressures are responsible for the design or patterns of human behavior during adolescence.¹

In any case, it may safely be stated that under existing conditions, the equilibrium of the inner life seems often to be disturbed. Feelings, impulses, desires, and appetites exert themselves with new power, and the adolescent becomes controlled at intervals primarily by his emotions. At other times intelligence seems to be on the throne and conduct becomes more genuinely volitional.² Early adolescence is a period of life characterized by opposite moods and temperaments--of actions based upon rational choices and intermittently, actions based upon irresponsible impulses.

d. Hero Worship.

Actions of adolescents often spring from the impulse to imitate. ". . . Young adolescents readily identify themselves in imagination with heroes and heroines of fact or fiction."³

There is a basic need for constructive use of this tendency. Guidance should be given the adolescent boy in the choice of worthy

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1. Dimock, op. cit., p. 276.

2. Tracy, op. cit., p. 18.

3. Zachry, op. cit., p. 256.

heroes and heroines.

D. The Relationship of the Psychological and
Physiological Characteristics of the Intermediate Boy to his
Personal Religious Development.

The boy of twelve to fourteen is in the process of becoming a very different person. "When I was a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."¹

The psychological and physiological characteristics of the early adolescent boy have been discussed. These characteristics have an impact upon the religious life of the boy. The religious experiences and concepts of the child are not necessarily suited to the youth of twelve or fourteen.

Specifically, it has been found that the twelve, thirteen and fourteen-year-old boys are frequently concerned among other things with the following:

1. Standard or Code of Ethics--The Pharasaic or legalistic conscience of the early adolescent, his desire for conformity, and his new sense of independence all make urgent the adoption of a suitable Christian standard or code of ethics.

The Psalmist stated that God's Word was "a lamp unto my feet, and a light to my path."² The intermediate boy needs to find in actual experience that the Bible may be his "rule of faith and practice."

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1. I Cor. 13:11.
2. Psalms 119:105.

2. Instability--The commencing instability of the early adolescent has religious implications. This instability is found in the religious experience as well as in other areas of life, and is characterized in greater or less degree by loyalty to Christ alternating with waywardness and by devotion interchanging with apparent irreverence.

The intermediate boy needs to yield supreme loyalty to Christ and to His cause. He needs to surrender himself to Christ and "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."¹ There awaits also for him a stabilizing experience of fellowship with Christ in vital prayer. It has been determined that most intermediate boys "say" prayers at bed time, but in all but a few cases the bed-time prayer is "The Lord's Prayer" with a few additional petitions such as "God bless Mother and Father" or "Make me a better boy."²

3. Questioning of Authority--The awakening tendency toward questioning of authority bears a very real relation to the religious life of the boy. For example, among intermediates it has been found that there is frequently a sense of doubt regarding the value of prayer. The authority of the Bible and the problem of suffering are examined. The doctrine of life after death is also questioned.³

If in the process of readjustment and reinterpretation it is found necessary to discard any long-cherished belief, or even to recast and restate its interpretation, it may result in acute mental suffering and emotional upset.⁴

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1. Romans 12:2, King James Version.

2. International Council of Religious Education: Christian Religion in Growing Life--The International Curriculum Guide, Book III, p. 22.

3. Loc. cit.

4. Tracy, op. cit., p. 193 and p. 195.

Re-evaluation is good and necessary. It has been said that it is as impossible for one person to think for another as it would be to digest for him. There is need, however, for the teacher to be prepared to supply factual information of both secular and religious character, and to guide the student in this re-evaluation.

4. Conversion--Conversion does not commonly occur before the age of twelve. Though the high point is reached during middle adolescence, the incidence increases rapidly from the years twelve to fourteen. This does not just "happen" to be the case, but is related naturally to the psychological characteristics. If the boy is troubled by a sense of guilt arising from his conscientiousness, the way is paved for him to turn to God for forgiveness of sin. His developing independence demands that he establish his own relationship to Christ--that he no longer depend upon the faith of his parents or upon the sense of security given him through membership in a Sunday school or other organization. His awakening mind demands that he deal with the problems of eternity. The sense of altruism which he possesses is challenged by the demands of Christ upon his life.

Conversion, then, is a specifically religious phenomenon which is apt to occur during this period of development. To lead the early adolescent boy into an experience of saving faith in Christ is at once the problem, opportunity, and challenge to his teacher.

E. The Significance of the Psychological and Physiological Characteristics of the Intermediate Boy With Respect to Pedagogical Methods.

Inherent in the psychological and physiological characteristics

of the early adolescent boy are certain pedagogical implications for religious instruction.

The tendency toward hero worship suggests the importance of supplying God-fearing, realistic heroes.

The development of the fantasy life suggests the use of stories.

In the developing sense of responsibility may be seen the need for opportunities for practical expression of service to God and man. The gregarious quality suggests group service activities.

The need for approbation warns the teacher that he must be alert for honest expression of such approval.

The independence of the intermediate boy, combined with his new but immature efforts at intellectual exploration, warns the teacher that he must not think for the student, but must be a guide to him. Tactfulness and sympathetic suggestion must be the method.

The varying degrees of physiological development existing in a typical group of boys of the twelve to fourteen-year grouping gives added importance to the ever present problem of individual differences. Diverse interests and capabilities must be recognized and provision must be made for the development of the individual boy.

Finally, the mental characteristics of the intermediate boy indicate that the material must be presented as concretely as possible.

F. Specific Objectives

The characteristics of the adolescent boy, and their religious implications, suggest definite and specific objectives toward which the

Bible teacher of this boy should strive. They may be formulated as follows:

1. The experience of the forgiveness of sin through God in Christ as a personal Savior.
2. The recognition of God in Christ as Lord.
3. A sense of being a co-worker together with God.
4. The habit of looking to the Bible as a standard for conduct.
5. A growing desire to assume responsibility in the program of the church school and church.
6. "A growing ability to formulate clearly intellectual questions concerning religion and to seek through thought, prayer, and the experience of others their true answer."¹
7. An understanding of the relation of the youth to the home and to the community.
8. The experience of group worship.
9. A vital experience of personal prayer.

g. Summary

The period of early adolescence may be briefly described as a period during which an expanding personality is meeting widening vistas. It is characterized by an expanding intellect which has not yet learned to deal with the problems which it meets; by inadequate social and moral adjustment to the broadening vista of life; and withal, by imagination, fickleness, self-consciousness, and assertiveness.

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1. I. C. of R. E., op. cit., p. 54.

These characteristics of adolescent life have certain implications for the religious life of the intermediate boy. There is need for a standard of ethics, for the interpretation of this standard in terms of life, for the yielding of the entire life to Christ as Master, for the re-interpretation and establishment of beliefs, for vital prayer experiences, and for the acceptance of Christ as Savior.

The characteristics of the adolescent boy also throw light upon methods to be employed in his religious instruction. They suggest the value of the use of the hero-motive, of stories, service projects, group activities, and the expression of honest approbation.

The pedagogical and personal religious implications of the characteristics of the early adolescent boy suggest specific objectives for his Christian education. These objectives relate to the boy's attitude toward God, his Christian experience, attitude toward the Bible, and his relationship to his home, church, and community.

CHAPTER II

AN EVALUATION OF NEHEMIAH IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF INTERMEDIATE BOYS

A. Introduction

What message does the Book of Nehemiah have for intermediate boys? Is it written in such a fashion as to lend itself to pedagogical methods suitable for use in the instruction of early adolescent boys? These are the questions which it is the purpose of this chapter to answer.

In order to determine the suitability of the contents of this book, the contents will be compared with the specific objectives set up in Chapter I. Likewise, to determine the fitness of the book with respect to pedagogical method, the book will be examined with respect to its adaptability to the particular methods pointed out in the first chapter of this study as suitable for use in the instruction of intermediate boys.

Upon the basis of the findings brought to light in the course of these comparisons, a conclusion will be reached as to the suitability of this book for use in the religious education of intermediate boys.

B. The Content Value of Nehemiah in Meeting the Needs of Early Adolescent Boys

1. In Relation to the Experience of the Forgiveness of Sin through God in Christ as a Personal Savior.

At the opening of the Book of Nehemiah, the Israelites were greatly afflicted. A brief survey of the record of the history of Judah shows one

that the trouble which had come upon this people was a judgment upon them for their unfaithfulness. As the story of Nehemiah unfolds, it portrays the hand of God put forth in behalf of His people who are ready to repent and return unto Him. The writer of this book has singled out events and recorded attitudes which tell the story of the response of the people to God. It records their faith and obedience as evidenced by their works, even in the face of opposition. It tells of repentance and of a covenant made with God, and of worship purified and re-established at the center of the nation. In the twelfth chapter, the scene portrayed is one of rejoicing. The reader is thus brought face to face with the faithfulness and mercy of God in blessing an obedient people.

The attitude of heart requisite to saving faith in Christ is the heart attitude for which this book appeals. The book is not intended as a logical explanation of the plan of salvation. However, the necessary apprehension of the grace of God as revealed in Christ at the Cross will be readily acquired once the intermediate has been led through the record of this book to a sense of personal sin and true repentance.

2. In Relation to the Recognition of God in Christ as Lord.

The Book of Nehemiah is a picture book in which are sketched two pictures related to the concept of the Lordship of God. One of these pictures is drawn in the prayer of the Levites in Chapter 9 and the sealing of the covenant in Chapter 10. In this segment, a contrast is made between the repeated sin of Israel and God's great mercy. Because of past judgment upon sin, and in remembrance of God's great mercy, a covenant is sealed expressing the dedication of the Israelites to God.

The intermediate boy may be led to continue the account of God's

grace and judgment in terms of the New Testament, and to see his own need of responding to Christ as Lord even as the Israelites gave themselves in dedication to God unto the keeping of His commands.

The second picture is given us in this book in the story of the "villains" who worked against God with Sanballat as their leader, and the story of the "hero" Nehemiah who served God with his whole heart. Nehemiah heard the report concerning the need in Jerusalem, and although he himself held a comfortable position, yet he was deeply concerned for his people. He prayed for Israel. He cared sufficiently to endanger himself for their sake.¹ When he finally reached Jerusalem, it was with a sense that God had sent him and given him a work to do on its behalf.² He was a man of decision and of faith, and an able leader of men.³ His talents were spent in the service of God, and in the providence of God he was able to carry the work to completion in spite of the opposition which he faced.⁴ He was also a leader at the dedication of the walls unto God.⁵ Years later, when the priest had permitted a misuse of the temple of God, Nehemiah showed himself still a man of action and a faithful servant of God in casting forth all the household stuff of Tobiah, commanding that the chambers be cleansed, and restoring again the vessels to the house of God with the meal-offerings and the frankincense.⁶ The further corruptions which had come into the life of Jerusalem Nehemiah also set right.⁷ In contrast to the life of Nehemiah is the record made by Sanballat. He also was a leader of men, but his energies were spent opposing the purpose of God and troubling the lives of His servants. His efforts came to naught, and he is remembered only as an undesirable character.

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1. Nehemiah 2:2.
2. Nehemiah 2:12.
3. Nehemiah 2:17-20.
4. Nehemiah 6:15
5. Nehemiah 12:31
6. Nehemiah 13:4-9.
7. Nehemiah 13:15-30.

The intermediate boy may be led to see through this contrast between the lives of Nehemiah and Sanballat the futility of a life lived unto self, and the profitableness and blessedness of a life lived in the service of God.

In the fuller light of the New Testament, the believer is called to a relationship to Christ as Lord, which is somewhat different and in many respects goes beyond the dedication of the Old Testament saints to God. The basic motives for such a life, however, remain the same--God's grace first of all, and secondly, the profitableness of obedience and unprofitableness of disobedience.

3. In Relation to a Sense of being a Co-worker together with God.

It is easy to feel that only distinctly spiritual acts are service to God--that there is a definite division between the secular and the sacred areas of life. Nehemiah teaches a lesson which is much needed by many intermediate boys. He shows--not through logical argument, but by the illustration of a people working together in manual labor, cooperating with one another in the rebuilding of their city yet thereby serving God--that such labor is truly blessed of God and is a part of His total work. It required much hard work to clear away the rubble and to repair the gates and walls. The people were mocked by Sanballat as "feeble Jews".¹ He and his followers were a constant threat to safety. It even became necessary to set half of the workers apart as guards to afford protection, but still they worked on. In spite of the fact that they as workmen and guards underwent danger and expended their energy freely in the task, yet when the work was completed, even their enemies perceived that God had worked with them and had wrought the work:

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1. Nehemiah 4:2

"So the wall was finished . . . And it came to pass that when all our enemies heard thereof, that all the nations that were about us feared, and were much cast down in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God."¹

4. In Relation to the Habit of Looking to the Bible as a Standard for Conduct.

It is generally accepted among Christians that the Bible is the guide to right living. The Westminster catechism adopts the statement given in the Scriptures themselves:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."²

The intermediate boy needs to be led to see that the Word of God is the key to the understanding of the will of God for his life. The Book of Nehemiah offers to the teacher a splendid opportunity to present the Bible as a guide to an understanding of the will of God for daily living.

In Nehemiah there is pictured a people who were adrift--ignorant in a great measure of God's Word. They heard the Word of God and repented, and covenanted to keep the law as their standard for living. It is stated in Nehemiah 8 that the people gathered themselves together and requested that Ezra the scribe read to them from the Book of the Law of Moses. The assemblage learned that it was commanded that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month.³ Immediate obedience was then given to the command.⁴ The reading of the law continued for seven days. At the close of this period, there was an expression of deep repentance and the people entered voluntarily into a covenant to walk in God's law.

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1. Nehemiah 6:15-16

2. II Timothy 3:16, King James Version.

3. Nehemiah 8:14

4. Nehemiah 8:16-17

The covenant specifically mentioned marriage alliances, Sabbath observance, usury, and the temple taxes as points in daily living which were to be altered. God's commands were the standard to which Israel agreed to yield obedience. The surrender of the people to the will of God was one of the steps which led to the scene of joy described in the twelfth chapter of Nehemiah.

This example from the life of Israel may be used as an effective basis for the instruction of the intermediate boy in the use of the Bible as a standard of right and wrong.

5. In Relation to the Development of a Growing Desire to Assume Responsibility in the Program of the Church School and Church.

The intermediate boy may be taught the importance of assuming his responsibility to the church and church school through the negative example of the Israelites as recorded in Nehemiah, and through the positive example of Nehemiah.

The Israelites had personally covenanted with God to keep his commandments. One of those commandments was the keeping of the sacrifice of the first fruits, the giving of the third-part of a shekel as a temple tax, and the giving of the tithe of the crops produced.

While Nehemiah was away from Jerusalem, the commandment concerning the giving of the tithe to the Levites had been ignored. When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, he found the house of God forsaken, for the Levites had found it necessary to go to the fields and work.¹ Thus the failure to give the tithe had disrupted the worship of God.

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1. Nehemiah 13:10-11.

A second aspect of the individual's responsibility for the work of God and the worship of God is illustrated through the example of the life of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah himself was a layman. Yet as a servant of God and a leader of the people, he found it necessary to take a definite responsibility in the spiritual leadership of Jerusalem and for the work of the temple. He fulfilled his responsibility by assuming leadership in the service of dedication of the walls.¹ Later, when there was need for an additional reform in life and worship--the first reform had taken place about twelve years before--Nehemiah was ready to step in and cleanse the court of the house of God, restore the tithe and the keeping of the Sabbath, deal with the problem of mixed marriage, and purify the priesthood.

Some of the particular avenues of service for the early adolescent boy in the church school are different from the responsibilities which rested upon Nehemiah and upon the Israelitish people, but the importance of lay service in giving and in God-fearing leadership may be effectively taught from these examples from the lives of the children of Israel and from the service of Nehemiah.

6. In Relation to a Growing Ability to Formulate Clearly Intellectual Questions Concerning Religion and to Seek Through Thought, Prayer, and the Experience of Others Their True Answer.

The Book of Nehemiah speaks to the heart far more than to the head. It is not especially adapted to aid the student to formulate more clearly his intellectual problems and doubts, nor does it give much assistance in answering such doubts and questions upon an intellectual level.

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7. In Relation to an Understanding of the Relationship of the Youth to the Home and to the Community.

The Book of Nehemiah gives two illustrations which may be of assistance to the intermediate boy in gaining an understanding of the implications of citizenship. Though these portrayals of patriotism are upon an adult level, they illustrate aspects of citizenship important to youth and adult alike--self-sacrifice and individual responsibility.

Nehemiah, as the cupbearer of the king of Persia, was actually a kind of prime minister and master of ceremonies, both in one. Undoubtedly he was the recipient of royal favor beyond and above all the rest of the palace.¹ In spite of his own prosperity, he took to his heart the news of the condition of Jerusalem and the strait of the remnant dwelling there. His first step was not to call a gathering of Israelites to discuss relief matters--rather he ". . . wept, and mourned certain days; and . . . (he) fasted and prayed before the God of heaven . . ."² Then when he had prayed, he became an instrument in God's hands for the answering of that prayer. His earnest consecration is displayed in his willingness to present his request before the king in spite of the danger involved, and in his energetic and faithful leadership in carrying through the repairing of the walls.

The response of the Israelites as they were called upon to build the walls is also an illustration of genuine patriotism. They resolved to build and no opposition deterred them.³ They rallied to the

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1. Alexander Whyte; Bible Characters--Ahithophel to Nehemiah, p. 233.

2. Nehemiah 1:4.

3. Nehemiah 2:18

task, united in a great common work for the good of the whole community. Rich and poor alike gave of their time and energy for the common good.

8. In Relation to the Experience of Group Worship.

In Nehemiah there appears one of the great Biblical segments upon group worship. The people gathered themselves together, and upon their request Ezra read to them from the Book of the Law of Moses. It is described in Nehemiah as follows:

"And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: and Ezra blessed Jehovah, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with the lifting up of their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped Jehovah with their faces to the ground."¹

Another worship scene appears in the ninth chapter:

"Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackcloth, and earth upon them. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of Jehovah their God a fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped Jehovah their God."²

Then the Levites commanded the people:

"Stand up and bless Jehovah your God from everlasting to everlasting; and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise."³

There follows a great masterpiece as the record gives the prayer of contemplation of the Levites.⁴ God's faithfulness and justice is also recognized in the prayer of confession and petition.⁵

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1. Nehemiah 8:5-6
2. Nehemiah 9:1-3
3. Nehemiah 9:5
4. Nehemiah 9:6-15
5. Nehemiah 9:16-37

As in the case of all true worship and confession, this scene is followed by action--the action of making and sealing a covenant of obedience to the law of God.

The dedication of the wall was a further occasion of a great service of public worship. The Levites were brought to Jerusalem "to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps."¹ The priests and the Levites purified themselves and they purified the people, the gates, and the wall.² Then Nehemiah led the princes of Judah up upon the wall, and divided them into two great companies, which gave thanks and went in procession.³ It was a scene of great thanksgiving and praise. Nehemiah described the event in the following way:

"And they offered great sacrifices that day, and rejoiced; for God had made them rejoice with great joy; and the women also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off."⁴

Again came practical action. Officers were appointed to gather the tithes and offerings for the priests and Levites.⁵ They also separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.⁶

The intermediate may be led to understand something of the solemnity and also, at times, of the joyousness of group worship. He may also be led to see the unity of spirit which lies back of true group worship, and the implications for action which are inherent in it. Not only may he be led to see with his understanding these factors of worship, but especially as the prayer of contemplation is considered, he may be led

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1. Nehemiah 12:27
2. Nehemiah 12:30
3. Nehemiah 12:31
4. Nehemiah 12:43
5. Nehemiah 12:44
6. Nehemiah 13:3

into an actual experience of worship. The contrast between the joyous worship upon the occasion of the dedication of the wall and the scene in our own nation which followed the declaration of victory in Europe may be presented. With this contrast in mind, the place of worship in national victory, and also in lesser victories, may be discussed and made readily apparent to the early adolescent boy.

9. In Relation to a Vital Experience of Personal Prayer.

It has been said of Nehemiah that he was a man who "practiced the presence of God." Truly his prayer life was remarkable.

When Nehemiah was made aware of the need of his countrymen, he turned at once to prayer. The prayer in Nehemiah 1:4-11 commences with adoration and confession, and turns to petition and self-dedication.

The reference to the silent prayer in Nehemiah 2:4 is significant in any consideration of the spiritual life of Nehemiah, and it should serve as an encouragement to intermediate boys to pray when in a "tight spot". In connection with this prayer, there is recorded the answer, for Nehemiah did not lose favor with the king, but was permitted to travel to Jerusalem and undertake the work there with the approval of the king. The teacher should make plain to the intermediate boy that when he prays aright, he too may expect a definite answer.

Running through the prayers in the Book of Nehemiah is a definite consciousness of the responsibility to work toward the goal, even though prayer has been offered. The close relationship of prayer and work is especially apparent in Nehemiah 4:9 and 6:9. It will prove helpful to the intermediate boy if he can grasp this relationship.

Nehemiah's prayer for God's mercy in view of his, Nehemiah's, own faithfulness in service is given in Nehemiah 13:22. This prayer affords

an opportunity for the teacher to point out the close connection between obedience and steadfastness, and the outpouring of the grace and mercy of God.

C. The Adaptability of Nehemiah with Respect
to Pedagogical Methods Suitable in the Instruction of Intermediate Boys.

The Book of Nehemiah is a simply-told, straight-forward record. The record does not give arguments concerning abstract philosophical or theological points. Rather, it records how God moved and man responded. That is to say, the message of the book is presented in terms of actual life experiences with glimpses given behind stage which show the hand of God at work in behalf of His people. Such an approach to spiritual truths is aptly suited to the concrete-mindedness of early adolescent boys.

The account given in the Book of Nehemiah is narrative in form. A good story, and especially a good, true story with plenty of action has a great appeal for the intermediate boy. In this respect, the Book of Nehemiah again lends itself well to instructional purposes. The story moves rapidly--a cause, a courageous leader, enemies and opposition with final victory, spiritual reconstruction, a great pageant at the dedication of the walls, and then an additional reformation. The masses of people in the story are grouped as Samaritans and Israelites. Singled out by name are only a comparatively few characters. For this reason, the story is comparatively easy to follow. The scenes portrayed in the early portion of the story are of a type sufficiently familiar to be readily understood by the intermediate boy. As the story progresses, it portrays

scenes of a less familiar type and refers to customs and regulations with which the average intermediate boy is slightly or not at all acquainted. Early adolescent boys will therefore need assistance in picturing and understanding the latter portion of the story, but the interest built up in the first portion of the story, and the continued action in the second portion should be sufficient to overcome this difficulty. Furthermore, for some boys, the very strangeness of the material will only increase the interest.

The leading figure in the story is that of Nehemiah. He is colorful, energetic, courageous, discerning, honest, and successful--the type of man readily accepted by the intermediate boy as his hero. From the point of view of the instructor, Nehemiah is a worthy hero to present to intermediate boys, for in addition to his appeal to their imaginations, he stands as an example of a man who faithfully served and obeyed God.

The tendency of intermediate boys to act in groups, their need for guided study and thinking, combined with the great individual differences in early adolescent boys makes the project method an especially fine method for use in their instruction. The Book of Nehemiah lends itself peculiarly well to this type of presentation.

The story contained in Nehemiah is not only a good story, but portions of it may readily be dramatized. The story of the reconstruction of the city¹ and the story of the dedication of the walls² are both aptly suited for presentation in this form. Musical, artistic, manual, literary and dramatic talents may all be utilized in such a project.

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1. Nehemiah 1:1-6:16
2. Nehemiah 12:27-47

The historical setting of the Book of Nehemiah, its story and message may readily be presented through a "newspaper" project. The story abounds in headline material. The nature of the events which transpired leave ample opportunity for editorial comment. A "funny paper" may be included as the entire story may be represented in comic strip form. In addition, scenes from the Book of Nehemiah may be modeled and photographed for the "newspaper."

The idealism of the intermediate boy and his urge to "do" may be channeled into a community service project which might fittingly accompany the study of the portion of Nehemiah concerning civil reconstruction.

Early adolescent boys characteristically are concrete minded. It is therefore especially helpful to use pictures to aid the students in objectifying the stories and concepts presented. The teacher of the Book of Nehemiah is fortunate in that several of the scenes from this book have been the subject of masterpieces. Reprints often may be secured from public libraries or they may be purchased cheaply in slide or reprint form.

D. Summary

Nehemiah contains much material which has teaching value for the early adolescent boy. The book teaches largely through example. From the experience of the Israelites, the intermediate boy may be led to see the consequences of sin and the blessedness of repentance and recognition of the lordship of God. The boy may be led to see that all acts, if done to the glory of God, are service to God. The stress in the Book of Nehemiah upon the reading of the Book of the Law of Moses, and the key

part the words of this book played in the reconstruction of the lives of the people points up the lesson for the intermediate boy of the place of the Word of God as a standard of faith and practice. The worship scenes in the Book of Nehemiah may be used to give rise to an experience of true worship and to consequent impulses for right living. The intermediate boy's faith in prayer, and his understanding of the relationship of prayer and personal effort may be strengthened and deepened through a study of the prayer experiences of Nehemiah. Through the example of the Israelites, the intermediate boy may be led to see the importance of faithfulness in his responsibility to his church school and church, and to understand something of the implications of citizenship.

The Book of Nehemiah makes little or no contribution to the need of the intermediate boy with respect to the formulation and answering of intellectual problems concerning the authority of the Scriptures or the validity of Christianity.

Nehemiah lends itself readily to presentation by pedagogical methods suitable to early adolescent boys. This book is a picture book teaching spiritual truths through the medium of actual life experiences. Because of this concrete approach to spiritual problems, the message of the book is comparatively easily understood by early adolescent boys. The book may be readily presented through the use of the project method. The story method also may be employed. The rapid movement of events and action, combined with the hero qualities of Nehemiah make the story contained in the Book of Nehemiah of special interest to intermediate boys.

E. Conclusion

The examination of the message of the Book of Nehemiah has shown that the teachings of this book correspond quite closely with the specific objectives for the religious instruction of intermediate boys.

The book has been examined and found to be readily adaptable to methods of teaching suitable for use in the instruction of early adolescent boys.

Therefore, it is concluded that the Book of Nehemiah is adaptable for use in the religious education of early adolescent boys.

CHAPTER III

SUGGESTED LESSON PLANS FOR THE TEACHING OF NEHEMIAH TO EARLY ADOLESCENT BOYS

A. Introduction

It is the purpose of this chapter to present a series of lesson plans for the guidance of the teacher in teaching the Book of Nehemiah to early adolescent boys. Since much of the detail of a class period hinges upon the particular turn of a discussion or the spontaneous suggestions of the pupils, it is not possible to outline the lessons in full detail.

The attempt is made in these lessons to present the major emphasis of the Biblical material and to draw present-day applications. There are many gems of truth in this book which emerge as one grasps the writer's point of view. Many of them have been passed by in the belief that, in a brief study of the book, more is accomplished through concentration upon a few central teachings than by hasty consideration of many diverse truths.

The lessons are planned for a class period of about one hour and fifteen minutes. They may be used in a Sunday School which follows an extended time schedule, or in a Daily Vacation Bible School.

The American Revised Version is recommended as the text for this study.

B. Lesson I

- AIMS: 1. To create interest and motivate pupils for a unit of study in Nehemiah.
2. To give the students historical perspective.
3. To emphasize the faithfulness of God in judgment.
4. To point out the importance of choosing to obey God in the initial step of acceptance of Christ as Savior.
5. To aid the pupils in relating prayer and works.

ROOM: Before the time for the opening of the class session, the teacher should sketch on a blackboard a map of the ancient world, with Palestine blocked in with white chalk. The blackboard should be placed in a central position where all the pupils may see it readily. The teacher should also post the painting, "Nehemiah Petitions Artaxerxes," by William Hole.

BIBLICAL MATERIAL: Nehemiah 1:1 to 2:9 and 9:26-31. Additional references: Genesis 13:14-16, Deuteronomy 30:1-5, 15-20; II Kings 25:1-21; Romans 4:8; and Hebrews 10:31.

PROCEDURE:

Discussion and Story of Nehemiah, Section I

Did you ever get so interested in a story that you just couldn't help turning over to the last chapter to find out how it all came out? Frequently the last chapter or even the last page of a book is the key to the whole story.

Let's turn the clock back to about 450 B. C. The Old Testament story of the Israelites is almost finished, but not quite. The Book of Nehemiah is missing. The events recorded in that book have not as yet

taken place, but they soon will! What will **happen** that will complete this Old Testament story of the Israelites?

Remember that it is 450 years before the birth of Christ. An eagle is soaring over the land of Palestine. He sees with his sharp eyes that some of the streets of the city of Jerusalem are **choked** with rubble. He sees, too, that the gateways are burned and the walls are broken down. There is a temple in the city. It, at least, is new and undamaged. But as the eagle circles once again over the city, he notices that there are Samaritans, enemies of the Jews, apparently enjoying the fat of the land while the Jews are poor and are laughed at by these Samaritans. As the eagle circles wider and wider and finally flies far away to the east, he sees Jews living far from their homeland--even in **Shushan**, the capitol of the Persian Empire. (The teacher should point out on the map the city of **Shushan**, the boundaries of the Persian Empire, and the land of Palestine.)

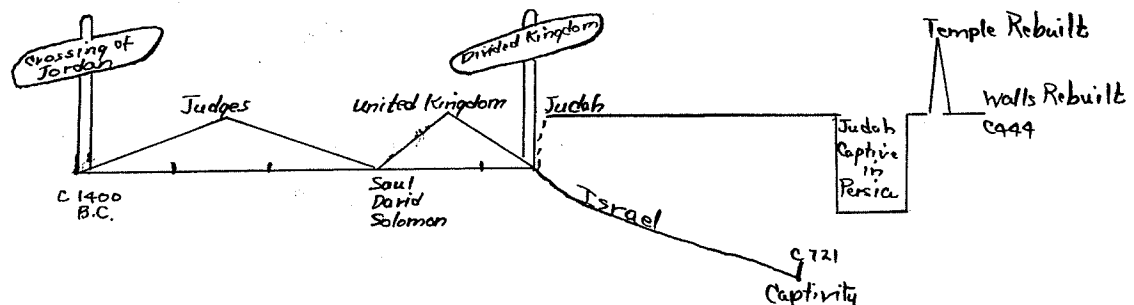
Imagine, now, that you are one of those Jews living in Shushan. Let us say that you are a certain Jewish man named Nehemiah. Right away we know, then, that as Nehemiah, you are living in the palace. But how can that be? Is it not strange that you, a Jew, should be so far from Palestine? (The teacher should call upon one of the pupils to read Genesis 13:14-16). Nehemiah, why are you so far from the land that God promised to his Chosen People, and Nehemiah, why are there so many of your countrymen also far from the land God provided? Did God go back on his promise? What did He actually promise your people? Was it that you would always be permitted to live in the land He gave you? (The teacher should assign to the pupils the following references; one reference to each pupil or group of pupils: Deuteronomy 30:15-20, II Kings 25:1-7, II Kings 25:8-12, II Kings 25:13-17, II Kings 25:18-21, and Nehemiah 9:26-31. The pupils should be instructed to read these references silently, and to

prepare to give a resume to the class.)

Let us hear first from the students who read Deuteronomy 30:15-20. Did God actually promise that the Children of Israel would always be permitted to dwell in the Promised Land? (Answer: No. Though the land was given them as an inheritance, they were told that they might occupy it only upon condition that they loved and obeyed God.)

In what way did God remove the Jews from Palestine and scatter them throughout the Persian Empire? Let us hear the reports of the students who read the story in II Kings 25:1-31.

It must be, then, that the Jews were not always faithful to their God. What do you know of their history? (Chart briefly on the blackboard the history of the Israelites from the crossing of the Jordan to the captivity in Persia. Draw as much information from the class as possible. A chart similar to the following is suggested.)



What does Nehemiah 9:26-31 tell us concerning the actions of the Jews during the many years that they were permitted to live in Judea?

Perhaps the people of Judea felt that they were "getting away with it" for their nation looked strong, outwardly. However, the crash was sure and inevitable. Our God is a righteous God, faithful to His promises. The Israelites were offered a wonderful opportunity, but they did not meet the conditions, and the judgment of God had to come upon them. Are you like the disobedient and forgetful Israelites who forgot God, or

are you remembering and acting upon the promises God has made to you?

It was up to Israel to choose blessing or cursing. It is up to you to decide whether you will have the mercy of God or His judgment. God offers you salvation through faith in Christ.¹ Every boy must choose for himself. If you have not chosen His mercy, choose it today. Remember, boys, God is faithful both in blessing and in judgment.

During the many years the Jewish captives spent in Persia they suffered many hardships. However, the time came at last when God moved the king of Persia to permit the captives to return to the homeland. They did not all leave for Palestine. They had no firsthand memory of the days of Israel's glory in Judea. The difficult days in Persia were a thing of the past, and many of them chose to remain in the land of their captivity. Nehemiah was one of those Jews who stayed on in the foreign country. He held an important position--that of cupbearer to the king. With dignity and quiet cheerfulness he served the mighty monarch. It was the cupbearer's responsibility to guard the entrance to the royal apartment and to allow or forbid persons to enter according to his own judgment. He also was charged with the responsibility of filling the royal winecup from the vase which stood nearby, and of handing it gracefully to the king, supporting it with three fingers and presenting it in such a way that the king could readily take it from his hand without spilling a single drop. Before offering the wine to the king, a small quantity was removed from the cup by the cupbearer and swallowed to show that so far as the cupbearer knew, the wine was not poisoned.²

Nehemiah was content. His work was pleasant, the king seemed pleased with him, he had a very real and satisfying faith in the true God and was given freedom to worship Him--life was good in the land of Persia.

Nehemiah's contentment was shortly to be shattered. His

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1. John 3:16-18.

2. George Rawlinson: Ezra and Nehemiah: Their Lives and Times, p. 86.

brother, Hanani, and some other men who had been in Judea, returned to the royal Persian city. They brought a firsthand report of the condition of the Jews in Judea. Nehemiah had not even dreamed conditions there were so bad. The walls of the Jerusalem of his parents and of his parent's parents--the Jerusalem where all his forefathers lay buried, was broken down! His people were defenseless! They were scorned and treated contemptuously by the Samaritans! The heart of Nehemiah was deeply moved. He "sat down and wept."¹ For some days he mourned and fasted. He prayed, "I confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee. Yea, I and my father's house have sinned."² There came to the mind of Nehemiah the word of God spoken to Moses; His promise that if Israel returned to Him and obeyed Him, He would bless them.³ As Nehemiah prayed and thought, a plan came to him. He believed it was God's way of helping Israel--but it was dangerous. He might easily lose his life if it didn't work. Dared he ask the aid of the King of Persia? But the walls of Jerusalem must be rebuilt! He would do it! He lifted his heart to his God: "Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."⁴

Nehemiah waited his opportunity, and finally it came. King Artaxerxes was in his royal palace. Probably he was reclining upon a beautiful couch. The queen was at his side. Nehemiah took up the wine and gave it to the king. His long fast and his concern for his fellow countrymen in Judea had left their imprint upon his face. It was unthinkable to

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1. Nehemiah 1:4
2. Nehemiah 1:8
3. Nehemiah 1:9
4. Nehemiah 1:11

appear thus before the king! Quickly the king noticed, and spoke,
 "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing
 else but sorrow of heart".¹

Nehemiah was afraid, very much afraid, but the die had been
 cast. With his voice as steady as he could make it, he replied, "Let
 the king live forever: Why should not my countenance be sad, when the
 city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates
 thereof are consumed with fire?"²

The king answered very pleasantly, "What is it that you
 desire?"³

Nehemiah "prayed to the God of heaven,"⁴ and answered, "If
 it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, I request
 that you send me to Judah to the city where my fathers are buried, so
 that I may build it up."⁵

"How long will it take, and when will you return?"⁶ questioned
 the king.

Soon the interview was over. The king had granted Nehemiah's
 request! And in addition, he had given him letters to the governors of
 the countries through which he must pass to assure him safety in travel,
 and a letter addressed to the keeper of the king's forest, directing
 him to give the Jews timber to build the walls, and a palace for the
 governor. Nehemiah himself was appointed to be that governor.

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1. Nehemiah 2:2
2. Nehemiah 2:3
3. Nehemiah 2:4, paraphrased.
4. Loc. cit.
5. Nehemiah 2:5, paraphrased
6. Nehemiah 2:6, paraphrased

The day of departure arrived. It was a long journey which lay ahead--almost 1000 miles. Armed with his letters of safe conduct he started out. He was not alone, for the king had arranged for another safeguard upon his journey. Riding with him were captains of the army and horsemen. Nehemiah let his eyes follow the narrow road till it disappeared in the distance. His heart throbbed with anticipation of his arrival in Jerusalem. Deep within him was the confidence that he was God's servant, and that God was with him.

Imagine for the moment that you are faced with a situation similar to that which faced Nehemiah when as cupbearer to the king, he received word of the need in Jerusalem. Probably as you first hear the report, you feel helpless. Suppose, though, that you turn to the Book of Nehemiah and read the story up to the point where Nehemiah started on the journey to Jerusalem. What might it be possible for you to learn from the experience of Nehemiah that would help you in your situation? (The pupils may make various valid suggestions. It is to be hoped that they will include among their suggestions the thought that while it is true that God answers prayer, yet it is also true that God often uses the man who prays to answer his own prayer. It is important that intermediate boys grasp the relation between prayer and work. If this distinction is not brought out spontaneously, a few leading questions will undoubtedly serve to draw forth this truth.)

Lesson Summary:

God was faithful to His promise to the Israelites that if they failed to honor Him, he would send them out from the land of Palestine. Sometimes today we hear people say that God never has punished anyone, and

never will, but God has punished people. He is faithful to His promise even though the promise is to curse.

The day came that the Israelites had learned their lesson, and God permitted them to return to Palestine. However, many of the buildings had been destroyed, the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, and the Samaritans had come to live in their land. There were many difficulties to be faced, but now that the hearts of the Israelites were right toward God, God was faithful in blessing them. He had ready the "man of the hour" to lead them. When God's man Nehemiah heard word of the need in Jerusalem, he prayed and he acted. Without God, Nehemiah could have accomplished nothing, but God gave Nehemiah a plan, showed him what to do, and opened the way for him to return to Jerusalem with authority and resources to carry out the plan. God does not leave His servants to work for Him single-handed. He leads them and opens the way for them when they trust Him and go to work.

Unit Planning

Draw from the class suggestions for a project which they would care to undertake as a unifying activity for this series of lessons. If the group is not accustomed to such activities, it may prove necessary for the teacher to make suggestions. Throughout the remainder of this presentation of a lesson series, it will be assumed that the activity agreed upon by the group is that of the writing of an issue of a newspaper published on the day of the dedication of the walls.¹

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1. An alternative project which should prove equally valuable is that of the development and presentation of a dramatization based upon the study of Nehemiah.

At this time the class should elect a chief editor, associate editor, religious columnist, current events reporters, historical reporters, and a society news reporter. An artist also should be elected and arrangements made for the "printing" (typing) of the paper. The number of "positions" should be adjusted to equal the number of students in the class.

Have the group plan the general outline of the first article or articles for the newspaper. Encourage the pupils to make the articles short but vivid.

Dismissal

C. Lesson II

- AIMS:
1. To review the first portion of the Book of Nehemiah and its historical background.
 2. To acquaint the pupils with a second portion of the Book of Nehemiah.
 3. To make plain the truth that even in the tasks of every day life we may serve God acceptably: that we are co-workers with Him.
 4. To teach the pupils that a sinful man is weak when opposed to a man who is serving God.

ROOM: Copies of the following pictures should be posted: (1) "Nehemiah Surveys Jerusalem," Harold Copping, and (2) "Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem," Julius Schnorr, or "Nehemiah Rebuilds Walls," William Hole. The classroom should be set up to represent a radio studio.

SCRIPTURE PORTION: Nehemiah 2:11-6:16.

PROCEDURE: (Note to the teacher: It is planned that during this class period a "radio play" be presented. Sufficient copies of the play should be prepared in advance in order that a copy may be given to each pupil. As the students arrive, parts for the play should be assigned. It is important to select a boy who reads fluently as the "reader". If possible, the part of Nehemiah should be given to a boy with a deep voice. About four boys should be asked to work out together the sound effects. They may have suggestions for creating the sounds, and, if so, they should be encouraged to use their own originality. If possible, the sound effects should be produced from behind a screen. Sanballat should be selected, and the remainder of the class should be asked to take the part of "The People" and they should read their part in unison.)

Review:

Ask some pupil to place on the blackboard from memory a chart similar to the one given in the first lesson period, indicating the principal historical events from the crossing of the River Jordan to the

rebuilding of the wall. If the student has difficulty, permit the class to supply needed information.

Call on a student to give a brief summary of the events in the story of Nehemiah as given thus far.

Section II of the Story of Nehemiah--A Radio Play

Reader: Men and women passing through the broken down rubble of the Eastern gates of Jerusalem looked up to see a strange cavalcade approaching--soldiers, horsemen--a large company of them. Those close to the strangers could hear the crunch of hoofs and the squeaking of saddles. Listen!

Sound Effects: Blocks may be tapped together or against some solid object for the effect of horse's hoofs, and paper bags or crumpled cellophane may be manipulated to simulate the sound of saddles.

Reader: It was the end of a long journey. Almost four months had passed since Nehemiah had left the Persian palace. The letters the king had granted him had given him safe conduct through the countries through which he had traveled. It was well that he was protected, for when Sanballat and his servant Tobiah heard that someone was coming to help the Jews, they were very distressed. Sanballat was a leader in Samaria, and for generations, his people had been enemies of Israel.

Now that Nehemiah had safely reached Jerusalem, his purpose in coming had to be made known. First, however, he rested a day or two, and then he and a few other men slipped out of Jerusalem in the depth of night on horseback. From gate to gate they traveled. Then they went up to the brook.

Sound Effects: Blocks for sound of horse's feet. A pan of water emptied into

a kettle which is already half full of water will give a good facsimile of water running in a brook.

Reader: The horsemen turned and looked back toward the city.

Nehemiah: It's as bad; yes, I think it is even worse than was reported to me at the palace. How I hoped Hanani and his companions had exaggerated!

Reader: The riders returned to the city. After a short stay of possibly a few days in Jerusalem, Nehemiah sensed that the time for action had come. Nehemiah came before a gathering of the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the deputies, and the workmen and spoke to them of the plan that God had put in his heart.

Nehemiah: You see how Jerusalem is in bad condition, but God has made it possible for me to come. Let us build the walls.¹

Reader: This was good news. The people to whom he spoke loved their city. They were eager to begin the work, and they answered Nehemiah:

The People: "Let us rise up and build."²

Reader: When Sanballat and his fellows heard of the decision to rebuild the walls, they laughed and jeered.

Sanballat: "What is this thing that ye do? Will ye rebel against the king?"³

Reader: But Nehemiah answered Sanballat:

Nehemiah: "The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build."⁴

Reader: Soon the sound of hammers echoed through the city, and the walls began to rise. Hear the workmen as they work!

Sound Effects: The open palm of the hand slapped against solid woodwork will

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1. Nehemiah 2:17-18 abridged and paraphrased.
2. Nehemiah 2:18
3. Nehemiah 2:19
4. Nehemiah 2:20

give the effect of pounding. The making of tears in a newspaper with a quick motion will approximate the sound of sawing in the distance.

Reader: The responsibility for rebuilding the wall and gates was divided among forty-four leaders of the people. Each was responsible for a particular part of the work. Many men entered into the work. However, as the walls grew, Sanballat's anger and scorn increased.

Sanballat: "What are those futile Jews doing? will they fortify themselves?"¹

Reader: And others of the Samaritans added that if a fox were to run up the construction, it would break down their stone wall.

However, in the face of the opposition, Nehemiah prayed, and continued the work. The enemy, though, was not through. Mockery and jeers had failed. Now they would fight. How slow were Sanballat and his followers to learn that the God of heaven was with Nehemiah and his workmen! The enemy plotted to attack, but Nehemiah was not to be caught asleep. He prayed, and set a watch night and day. Still Sanballat was not discouraged. "After all," the enemy reasoned, "we can slip in unseen." Listen to Sanballat instruct his men:

Sanballat: We can sneak in. They won't know till we are in among them and ready to kill them!

Reader: Did Sanballat talk too loudly, or didn't he realize that there were many Jews not at Jerusalem who loved their city and their people? Some of the Jewish people learned of Sanballat's plan and brought word to Jerusalem. Nehemiah and his men made ready.

Nehemiah: "Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your

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wives and your houses.¹

Reader: When Sanballat realized the plot was discovered, he did not dare attack. The work went on. From this time on, Nehemiah called upon half the men to work with their swords by their sides, and half to stand by with spears, shields, bows and coats of mail. As these guards paced to and fro, or stood watch upon the highest portions of the wall, their arms caught the sunshine, and glinted forth a constant warning to Sanballat and his men. None of the workmen nor the soldiers even took off their clothes at night. Like a trumpet call in the midst of all the danger and hard work rang out the words of Nehemiah's confident faith:

Nehemiah: "Our God will fight for us."²

Reader: His words brought new courage to his brethren.

At last the walls were completed. Only the doors remained to be put in the gates. Still Sanballat and his followers plotted. They tried to get Nehemiah to come out on the plain to meet them so that they might harm him. Four times they requested him to come, but each time he refused.

Nehemiah: "Why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?"³

Reader: Then Sanballat sent a servant with an open letter. In it was the message: "It is reported among the nations . . . that you and the Jews plan to rebel; that for this reason you are building the wall: and you expect to be their king. This matter will be reported to the king."⁴

Even in the face of this message Nehemiah refused to listen or to be frightened. He only prayed:

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1. Nehemiah 4:14

2. Nehemiah 4:20

3. Nehemiah 6:3

4. Nehemiah 6:6-7 paraphrased and abridged.

Nehemiah: "O God, strengthen thou my hands."¹

Reader: Finally the hammers were silent; the work was finished. It had taken less than two months. The wall was a mighty one--high and wide enough even at the top for a chariot to travel upon it. Sanballat had failed. When the enemy heard the news of the completion of the work, even he realized that this tremendous task had been wrought of God.

Class Discussion:

1. Name the chapters of Nehemiah through chapter six. The boys should be encouraged to glance through the chapters and to suggest appropriate brief descriptive titles.

2. Each division of workmen were assigned their particular task and carried out their responsibility. Had groups of citizens gone "on strike," what would probably have been the consequences? Are strikes the ideal method of settling labor trouble today?

3. Chapter V may be quickly summarized as the description of the action taken by Nehemiah to abolish usury, and of his own generosity in serving without compensation from the people. This section adds to our knowledge of the character of Nehemiah.

4. Sanballat and Nehemiah are presented in contrast the one to the other in the first portion of Nehemiah. Both held responsible positions of leadership. Nehemiah forfeited personal comfort and even risked his life in the service of his countrymen and in obedience to his God. His efforts were directed to a constructive task, his faith was placed in God for His blessing upon the work, and God gave him success. Sanballat, because of a spirit of hatred toward the Jews, and possibly because of

personal ambition, fought against the purpose of God. He was dishonest and discourteous. All his efforts to stop the building of the wall came to nothing. God is able to protect and to bring to fulfillment the work of the one whose sole purpose is to do the will of God.

The contrast between these two men is good material for a cartoon. The teacher should place the names of Nehemiah and of Sanballat on the blackboard, and call upon the pupils to think through the contrast and to suggest descriptive adjectives which might be appropriately written under each name. Some of the boys may have suggestions to make to the class artist which he may incorporate in a cartoon during the activity period.

If the intermediate boys prove interested in this discussion, it might be well at this time to face them with the alternative which lies before each individual--supreme loyalty to God or vain efforts to establish oneself and to carry out one's own purposes. The teacher may find the following poem usable in this connection:

The Ways¹

"To every man there openeth
A Way, and ways, and a way;
And the high soul climbs the high way,
And the low soul gropes the low,
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A high way, and a low.
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go."

5. Ask for suggestions from the class as to possible reasons for the inclusion of Chapter III in Nehemiah's record. What does this

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1. John Oxenham, The Ways, in The Home Book of Modern Verse, compiled and arranged by Burton Stevenson, p. 727.

detailed account add to the record as given by Nehemiah? Does it tend to magnify the importance of Nehemiah, or of the workmen?

Today we have a tendency to give more honor and respect to a banker than to a store clerk, to a doctor than to a plumber, to a teacher than to a garbage collector. Why do many people feel this way? Is it right? The doctor could not operate if someone had not manufactured his tools. Woodcutters, truckmen, printers, book binders--all must work before an author can present to the public his writings. Show the students the picture, "Praying Hands," by Albrecht Dürer.

The artist who drew "Praying Hands" had found it necessary to work at his father's trade while he was a boy because the family was large and money was short. Always, though, he wanted to draw and paint. Finally his opportunity came to leave home and study with a great artist. Still, however, he was poor, and he found it necessary to work for a living while he studied. During these days of struggle, Dürer found a friend, a man somewhat older than himself, who also had a desire to become a great artist. The two of them decided to live together, and one day when the struggle to earn enough money had discouraged both of them almost to the point of giving up their dreams, Dürer's friend made a suggestion.

"This way of working and trying to study," he said, "is unbearable. We are neither making a living nor are we mastering our art. Let us try another way. One of us could make the living for us both while the other continues to study. Then when the paintings begin to sell, the one who has worked may have his chance."

"True," answered Dürer. "But let me be the first to work."

"No," responded the friend, "I must be the one to work because

I have already a place to work in the restaurant."

The older man won his point. Dürer worked faithfully to master his art while his friend scrubbed floors at the restaurant and worked at any other jobs he could find. The work was hard and he spent long hours, but he did it faithfully because he was helping his friend and looking forward to the time when he would be able to use his brush again.

At last the day came when Dürer came home bringing the money which he had received for the sale of a wood carving. It was sufficient to buy food and to pay their rent for a considerable length of time.

"Now," he said, "the time has come when I will be the bread-winner and you shall study. You need no longer work, but I will care for both of us."

The older man left his serving and dishwashing and scrubbing and took up his brush. But something had happened in those days during which he had worked so hard with his hands. The hard work had stiffened his muscles, enlarged his joints, and twisted his fingers so that they could no longer hold the brush with mastery and skill. He worked long and hard, only to find that his art would have to be sacrificed forever.

When Dürer learned what had happened to his friend, he was filled with a great sorrow. Of course he would always care for him and give him a friend's love, but he could not give him back his skill. One day Dürer returned to his room unexpectedly and heard the voice of his friend in prayer. He entered softly, and seeing the work-worn hands folded reverently, a great thought came to him.

"I can never give back the lost skill of those hands," he thought, "but I can show the world the feeling of love and gratitude

which is in my heart for his noble deed. I will paint his hands as they are, folded in prayer, and the world shall know my appreciation for a noble, unselfish character. It may be that when people look at the picture they will remember with love and devotion all hands that toil for others."

As we look at the picture, we can read the story. They are toil-worn hands. You can see evidences of the hard labor that earned the living for both artists. Notice the broken finger nails and the enlarged joints. Yet they are beautiful hands.¹ Let us pray that God will bless not only the preachers and the statesmen and the artists who serve Him faithfully; but also those who work with their hands, but whose hearts are faithful and obedient to their God.

Assignment

The pupils should be encouraged to read the Book of Nehemiah for themselves that they may secure a firsthand acquaintance with it. Give this as a specific assignment for the following week. To some of the boys it may seem a large assignment. Point out that fifteen minutes a day, each day during the week, should be a sufficient time allowance for the average intermediate for reading the entire book.

The special activity period of the following class will be devoted in part to a quiz program. If this is announced, captains appointed, and teams chosen at this time, it will prove an incentive to the fulfillment of the assignment.

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1. Adapted from the interpretation of the painting "Praying Hands" by Albrecht (Albert) Dürer which is given, though reprinted and adapted, in "Christ and the Fine Arts," by Cynthia Pearl Maus, pp. 668-72.

Special Activity

The pupil selected as artist for the paper may use this time to draw the cartoon which has been discussed during an earlier portion of the class period.

Articles ~~planned~~ the preceding week should now be written by the appropriate editors.

Boys of this age will find it interesting to make a soap carving of the city of Jerusalem showing the completed walls and the several gates. The soap carving should be carried out by a group of boys. The completed "city" should then be photographed and the picture included in the "newspaper." Several boys may at this time be assigned the task of laying out the city on paper and estimating the proportions to be used.¹

If there are additional boys who have not been assigned a definite responsibility, they should meet with the editor and make definite plans for further articles to be included in the paper, and the space to be allowed to each. The teacher will probably find it advisable to give close supervision to this group.

Dismissal

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1. The teacher should have available a map of the city of Jerusalem. Such a map may be found in the back of many Bibles or in almost any standard Bible atlas. Opposite page 328 in the "Cambridge Bible" are two colored maps, one showing the Jerusalem of Nehemiah and the other its environs.

D. Lesson III

- AIMS: 1. To acquaint the students with the final portion of the Book of Nehemiah.
2. To aid the students to think through the Book of Nehemiah chapter by chapter.
3. To assist the students to see that the Word of God is the key to the understanding of the will of God.
4. To assist the pupils to gain an understanding of the importance of confession of sin.

ROOM: The teacher should post on the bulletin board before the opening of the class period a skeleton outline for a simple chart of the Book of Nehemiah. A scoreboard for the Bible quiz should be drawn in advance on the blackboard.

BIBLICAL MATERIAL: Nehemiah 6:17-13:31. Scripture to be stressed: Neh. 8, 9:1-3, and 10:28-39.

PROCEDURE:

Review: Call on the pupils to recall from memory the names assigned to the first six chapters of Nehemiah during the preceding class period. Record these names in the space allowed for chapter names in the skeleton chart.

Story of Nehemiah--Section III.

It was the first day of the seventh month of the Jewish calendar year. This day was set aside as a special rest, "a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation."¹ According to Jewish law, a special offering was to be made on this day to the Lord.² From all directions the people came. They gathered in a broad open place before the water gate. It must have been a great crowd, for Nehemiah had seen

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1. Leviticus 23:24
2. Numbers 29:2-6

that a count was made of as many of the children of Israel as had now returned to their homeland, and he had found that there were 42,360 men. That did not include the women and children.

When the people were assembled together, they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the "Book of the Law of Moses." Ezra mounted a high wooden tower which had been prepared for the occasion. A hush spread over the crowd. The word of God was to be read! Many of them had never heard the words of the "Book of the Law of Moses." As Ezra opened the Book in the sight of all the people, they rose as one man to their feet. Ezra blessed Jehovah the great God, and all the people lifted up their hands toward heaven and answered, "Amen, Amen."¹ And then they bowed their heads, and worshipped Jehovah with their faces to the ground.

Ezra commenced to read. From early morning till mid-day he continued to read from the "Book of the Law", and the people listened very carefully. At first the people were so moved that they wept, but the leaders told the people that they should not do so, as the day was holy to the Lord. They were not to be grieved, but were to be glad in it. From time to time the reading would be stopped while the Levites would make plain to the people the word which had been read. As the reading came to a close, the people went to eat, and to drink, and to send gifts, and to make great mirth because they understood the words which had been declared to them.²

On the second day, the heads of the houses gathered together again that Ezra might continue to read to them from the "Law". And they

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1. Nehemiah 8:6.

2. Nehemiah 8:12.

found written in the "Law" that Jehovah had commanded by Moses that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month; and that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and branches of wild olive, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths."¹ Therefore, the people went in search of the materials. They brought them and made booths. Some were built on the roofs of the flat-topped houses, and some were in the courts and in the broad place by the gate of Ephraim. When the booths were complete, all the Israelites home from the captivity lived in them for seven days. For many, many years the Israelites had failed to keep this feast and so had broken the command of God. Now there was great gladness, and during all the seven days of the feast, Ezra read to the people from the "Book of the Law of God."

A little over two weeks later, when the Feast of Trumpets and a second feast, the Feast of Tabernacles, were both past, the people once more gathered together. Their hearts were sick within them. They were disgusted with the sin which they had seen in their lives as they listened to the reading of the Law of God. It was not fitting to have a sad face and to show their sorrow of heart during the joyous feast days, but now that those days were past, they were free to weep. As they came together, they fasted, they dressed in sackcloth, and they put earth upon their heads as a sign of their sorrow. Together they stood before God and confessed their sin and the sin of their forefathers. Once more they listened to the reading of God's holy word. Then the Levites led them

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1. Nehemiah 8:15

in a prayer of praise to God, of confession, and of promise to keep the law from henceforth. All those who were Israelites, who accepted the law of God, and who had separated themselves from the foreigners whom God had commanded them not to marry, entered into an oath to keep His commandments.

Though the wall had been completed before the Feast of Trumpets, even yet it had not been dedicated. It was time for this service. Nehemiah brought the princes of Judah up upon the top of the wall. Two large companies were appointed. One marched to the left--the other to the right--and as they marched, they gave thanks. Following one group were half of the princes of Judah and some of the priests' sons with their trumpets. The other group that gave thanks as they traveled atop the wall the opposite way around the city were followed by Nehemiah as well as the other half of the rulers. At the gate of the guard the two companies met. The singers sang loudly. "They offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced; for God had made them rejoice with great joy; and the women also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off."¹

Officers were appointed to gather the offering for the keeping of the sacrifices and the tithes.

For a time Israel kept the covenant made with God. The sacrifices were made. The tithes were given to the Levites. But it was not long before once again Israel fell into sin. Tobiah, the ally of Sanballat, became an ally of the high priest. A place in the courts of the temple of God to which were brought portions set aside for the Levites was made

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1. Nehemiah 12:43

over into a residence for this foreigner. The rulers neglected to see that the Levites received their living. As a result, they had to leave the temple and the service of God and go to their fields to get their living. Trade was carried on on the Sabbath day. Jews inter-married foreigners--even the grandsons of the high priest married a daughter of Sanballat. Every part of the vow so solemnly entered into a few years earlier was broken.

Some time before this, Nehemiah had returned to Shushan. Perhaps he heard reports of the sin in Jerusalem. At any rate, he came back to the city of Jerusalem. What a condition to find! But he would not compromise nor tolerate such sin. The household stuff of Tobiah was thrown out of the court of the temple. Rulers were rebuked. Faithful men were placed in charge of the gathering of offerings and tithes. His own servants were placed at the gates of the city to see that the gates were kept shut from dark before the Sabbath till the morning following the Sabbath, and that no merchandise was brought in during this time. Those who had married foreign women were severely dealt with, and concerning the grandson of the high priest who had married the daughter of Sanballat, Nehemiah records, "I chased him from me".¹

Once more Jerusalem was freed of her sin of disobedience to God. Nehemiah had served his God faithfully and courageously. He closed his record with the prayer, "Remember me, O my God, for good."²

Class Discussion:

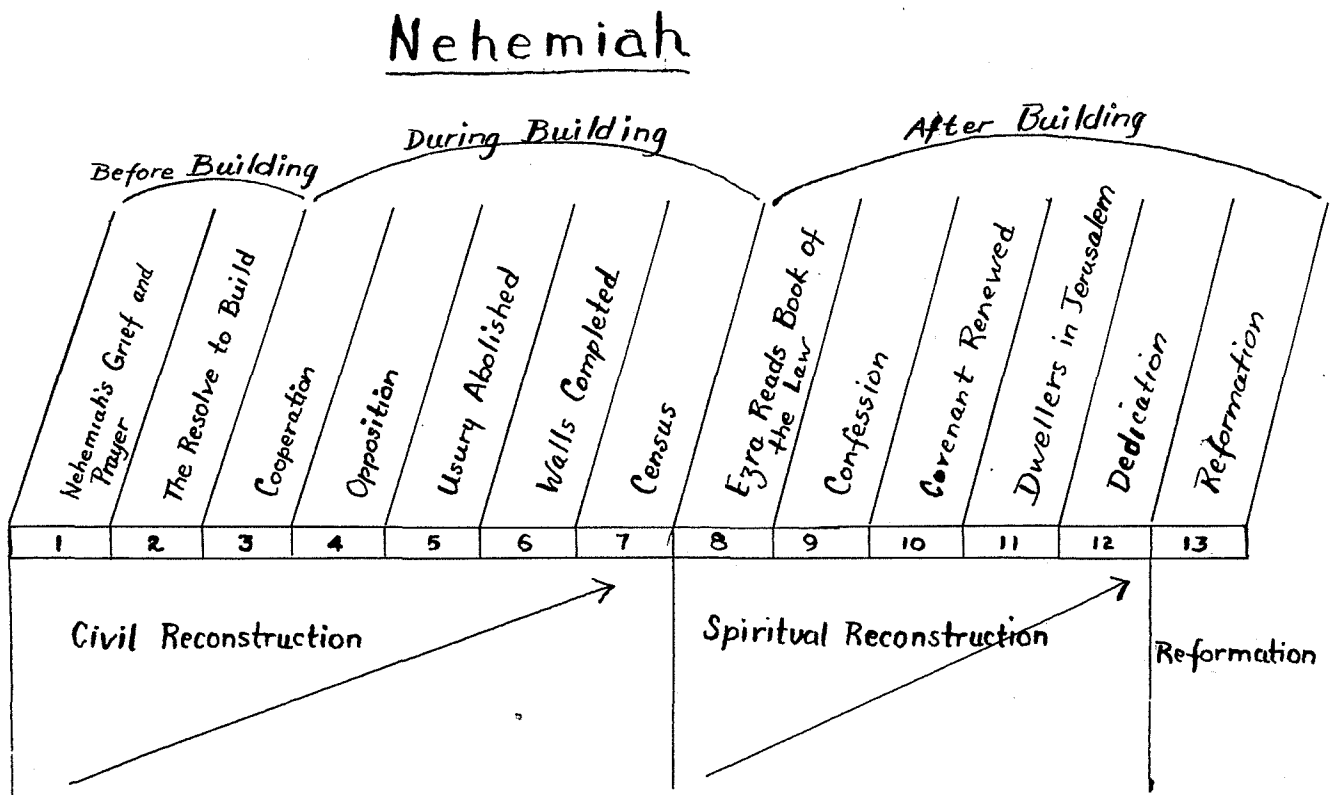
1. Call upon the boys to glance through chapters 7-13 of the Book of Nehemiah and suggest descriptive titles for each of these

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1. Nehemiah 13:28
2. Nehemiah 13:31

chapters. Using insofar as possible the chapter titles suggested by the boys, fill in the spaces allowed for titles in the skeleton chart.

2. Draw from the students suggestions for basic divisions of the book, and for titles for those divisions. If the pupils have had no former experience in charting a book, they will need considerable assistance. A chart similar to the following is suggested:¹



3. Through the reading of the Law by Ezra, of what sins were the Jews made aware? Refer the class to the following:

Nehemiah 8:14, 17----Non-observance of the
Feast of Tabernacles

Nehemiah 10:30-----Violation of the Marriage
Regulations

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1. Acknowledgment is made to Dr. Emily Werner, instructor at the Biblical Seminary in New York, for suggestions made by her in regard to the charting of this book.

Nehemiah 10:31-----Non-observance of the Sabbath

Nehemiah 10:32-----Failure to pay the temple tax.

Nehemiah 10:34-40----Failure to bring the sacrifices
and to provide for the Levites.

Would it have been possible for the Jews to have recognized these sins apart from a knowledge of the Word of God? No. They had no way of knowing these things were sin until they heard and understood the commandments of God. In Cuba, less than two hundred miles from the United States, many of the country people are taught that they must make human sacrifices to the sun god. They believe it is right to make these sacrifices. In some tribes in the South Sea Islands, boys are taught that it is a real achievement to be able to steal and not get caught. How do you fellows know they are wrong? Some boys feel that it is a real accomplishment to be able to swear fluently. Are they right? Do you ever lie to help someone out of trouble? Many, many people right here in our own city feel that it is right to lie in certain cases. Do you know what you believe about this? Many of our questions God has answered for us. We can look into the Word of God and find out what God has commanded. Other things God has not told us in so many words, but He has given us principles by which we can judge for ourselves. We need to know these principles. A Bible on the bookshelf is not enough. We need to learn God's word so that we will not sin.

3. The children of Israel came together "with fasting, and with sackcloth, and earth upon them."¹ This was their way of showing their great sorrow for their sin. These sins they confessed to God.² The Levites then made a general confession for all the people of their nation's sin.³ They recognized that the trouble which had come upon the nation was a just judgment from God for the sin of their nation.⁴ Nehemiah gives a quite detailed report of this confession of sin. Why may he have felt it of sufficient importance to give so much space to the recording of it? Would the covenant made by the people to keep the commandments of God have been meaningful apart from a confession that they had broken

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1. Nehemiah 9:1

2. Nehemiah 9:2-3

3. Nehemiah 9:16-31

4. Nehemiah 9:33,37

God's commands and received just judgment? Would you expect a judge in one of our juvenile courts to be lenient to a boy who, though clearly a lawbreaker, would not admit he had done wrong?

Are there things which you fellows have done which are contrary to the commandments of God? Have you told jokes which shouldn't have been told? Have you lost your temper? Have you let your mind think about things which you wish you could hide from God? Find a place sometime today where you can be by yourself, and take these things out and admit to Jesus Christ that you have sinned. He is waiting to forgive you.

After the Israelites had asked for forgiveness, they made a covenant to obey God from that time onward. It does not mean anything to simply ask for forgiveness and then to go right ahead and do the same things over again. Each of us, when we have asked for forgiveness, should make a solemn promise to God that we will do our very best to obey Him in the future.

Special Activity

During the preceding class session, captains were selected and teams chosen for a quiz program. Make any necessary adjustments due to absences.

The following questions are suggested. Members of a team need not be required to take turns in answering the questions. It is recommended that the captain of each team be responsible for calling on a member of the team to answer the question. If it is apparent that one or two pupils will be permitted to dominate the contest, limit the captains so that they will not be permitted to call upon any one boy more than three times. Only one trial should be allowed.

1. What office did Nehemiah hold in the palace of King Artaxerxes?
2. What was one of the duties of a cupbearer?
3. How did Nehemiah secure wood for the gates of the city?
4. What was Nehemiah's position in Jerusalem?
5. Who was the priest who read the word of God to the people?
6. What was the name of the leader of the Samaritans?
7. Why did the Levites go to work in the fields?

8. What was the name of the foreigner who was permitted for a time to live in a portion of the Temple?
9. Give one reason why Nehemiah was anxious that the walls be rebuilt?
10. When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, why did he command that the doors of the city should be shut from Friday evening through Saturday each week?
11. For what cause had God permitted the Jews to be taken captive?
12. In what country were the Jews held captive?
13. In about what year were the walls of Jerusalem rebuilt?
14. Nehemiah records that he chased the grandson of the high priest from him. Why did he do this?
15. In what way did Nehemiah receive word of conditions in Jerusalem?
16. What threat did Sanballat make to Nehemiah?
17. Nehemiah states that due to the reading of the law by Ezra, the children of Israel observed a feast which they had failed to observe for many years. What was the name of that feast?
18. How many chapters of Nehemiah are devoted to events which took place after the walls were completed and the census taken?
19. In what city was the palace of King Artaxerxes?
20. On what occasion are we told that Nehemiah rode horseback at night?

All the activity assignments commenced during the preceding activity periods should be completed during this period. It is probable, however, that the greater part of the boys will be ready to start on the soap carving which was planned during the second activity period. It would be well to appoint as "governor" one of the boys who laid out the plans for the soap carving. He will be in charge of the project, even as Nehemiah. Each boy should construct his particular portion of the wall. Those finishing first may be given the task of carving simple cubes to represent the houses within the city. A larger cube may be carved to

represent the temple. When the work is complete, the photograph of the "city" should be taken for the "newspaper."

Dismissal

E. LESSON IV

- AIMS: 1. To review the story of the Book of Nehemiah.
2. To acquaint the boys with the danger in which a nation stands, which refuses to obey God.
3. To lead the intermediate boy to a supreme allegiance to the will of God.

BIBLICAL MATERIAL: Nehemiah 9:5-38.

PROCEDURE:

Supervised Study:

(Each boy should have in his possession a copy of the questions as given below. Space should be provided beneath each question for its answer. In addition, each boy should be equipped with pencil, Bible, and colored pencils.)

1. We found in our last lesson that the Israelites of Nehemiah's day fell into sin because they did not know the commands of God. When Ezra read to them from the Book of the Law of Moses, they heard the things God had shown to their forefathers about Himself. Turn to Nehemiah 9:5-15 and see if you can fill in the diagram given below with words which will indicate the knowledge of God possessed by the Israelites.

(Note: It would be well for the instructor to work out the first blank with the class as a whole in order that each pupil will understand what is expected of him. The completed diagram should appear something as given below. The breakdown by verses should be indicated in advance upon the form given to the pupils.)

Bless Jehovah who is:

5-6 Creator and Sustainer	7-8 Covenant Maker and Covenant Keeper	9-11 Merciful and Just	13-14 Lawgiver	15 Provider
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2. What is the meaning of "but" in verse sixteen? Here is a clue to help you. Notice that in the verses before this "but" you read about the knowledge of God possessed by the Israelites. In the verses which follow, you read of their disobedience. (Note: The answer which should be given is that the "but" signifies "in spite of")

3. Mark with a colored pencil each occurrence in Nehemiah 9:16-38 of the words "but," "yet," "nevertheless", and "therefore." Do you see any relationship between forgiveness, the troubles of Israel, wrongdoing, and repentance? (The following cycle should be apparent to the intermediate boys: Sin→Judgment→Repentance→Mercy and Blessing.)

(When sufficient time has been allowed for the majority of the pupils to complete their work, the teacher should call upon several of the boys to read aloud their answer to the first question. After discussion, the same procedure should be followed for the second question, and then the third.)

As the Israelites reviewed their history, they could not help but realize that they had been blessed when they served God, and that trouble came upon them as a nation when they forgot God's commandments. God has not changed. A nation which disregards the commandments of God still today will be judged of Him. These stories of the Israelites have been written down in the Bible for us that we might learn from their experiences.¹ Our own country needs to listen to the warning. This country was brought into being by people, many of whom worshipped and obeyed God. They had a fuller knowledge of God than the Israelites of Nehemiah's day, for they possessed a knowledge of the revelation of God as given through Christ. They were especially blessed in that they had a deeper understanding of God's mercy as it was fully revealed through the Cross. The blessing of God was upon these forefathers of our nation. Recognition of this fact appears in the words of our National Anthem: "Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the Heav'n-rescued land praise the Pow'r that hath made and preserved us a nation!" Today the attitude of our nation is different from that in the days of its beginnings. The World

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1. I Corinthians 10:11

War II victory has given rise to no such hymn of praise as this, which was given birth through the victory of our Revolutionary War. Our recent celebration of victory was a national disgrace. Crime reports now fill our newspapers. America seems to have forgotten the commandments of God. Unless we repent, is it reasonable to expect that God will continue to bless our land?

Sometimes we are tempted to feel that we can do nothing about a nation so large as our own United States, but the nation is made up of individuals, and the government of the nation rests in the hands of the people. It is necessary for the individual person to choose whether he as an individual will obey God in his private life, and whether he will vote in such a way as to produce a government which will honor God. The choice is not always an easy one. The people of Nehemiah's day may have wondered how they could possibly live should they promise to bring their tithes and offerings to the Temple. Yet they made this choice.¹ What heartaches must have come into the homes of many of the Jews through the pledge that they would not give their daughters to the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for wives of their sons!² Yet they made that choice. The choices which we must make are not always between that which is in itself evil and that which is good. We are sometimes forced to choose between two things which are good; one we desire, and the other we know to be God's plan and purpose for us. God required of Israel that they love Him.³ He also requires this of us. If we do love Him, we will choose His plan and not our own.

A young Russian by the name of Basil Malof was faced with such

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1. Nehemiah 10:32-39

2. Nehemiah 10:30.

3. Deuteronomy 30:16

a choice--a choice between two things which seemed good. Consider, as you listen to the story, whether the choice made by Basil was worth the cost.¹

(At the close of the story, the teacher should challenge the intermediate boys to decide to give to God their full allegiance. If a reverent and thoughtful attitude is manifest by the students, close this portion of the lesson with prayer.)

Special Activity Period

If time permits, discuss with the pupils articles to be written during the activity period of the following session. The articles should cover such subjects as the dedication of the wall, activities of Sanballat, changes resulting from the signing of the covenant, and an article featuring Nehemiah as the self-sacrificing leader. Topics should be selected by the students with a limited amount of guidance by the teacher. Encourage originality and the use of a certain amount of imagination. Stress that the articles must be brief.

Dismissal

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1. The story of Basil Malof is entitled "A Prophet in Exile" and will be found in the Appendix, page 87. In most cases, it will probably prove necessary for the teacher to adapt the story for the particular class, especially with respect to length.

F. Lesson V

- AIMS:
1. To aid the students in examining the Book of Nehemiah as a whole with a view to discovering its central message: that is, God's faithfulness in blessing an obedient people.
 2. To assist the students in seeing the relationship of the points brought out in the previous lessons to the central message of the book.
 3. To stress the joy which arises in the hearts of a people whom God blesses.
 4. To make plain to the pupils God's hand in history.

ROOM: Before the class convenes, the teacher should place on the blackboard a copy of the chart of the Book of Nehemiah as developed thus far. The instructor should also place the soap carving of Jerusalem on display.

BIBLICAL MATERIAL: The entire Book of Nehemiah, with special emphasis upon Nehemiah 12:27-43.

PROCEDURE:

General Class Session:

1. Call upon the students to describe the scene of the dedication, tracing out the movement of events on the soap carving of the city of Jerusalem. Refer the pupils to Nehemiah 12:27-43.
2. Ask one of the pupils to read aloud the second portion of Nehemiah 12:42 and 12:43. Call upon another pupil to read Nehemiah 1:3. The one verse describes the Jews in Jerusalem as in great trouble. The other portion of Scripture tells of these same Jews rejoicing greatly. As a clue to the cause of this great change, read to the class Nehemiah 1:9. Here Nehemiah claims a promise that God had made to the children of Israel that if they would return unto Him and obey Him, he would bless them.

3. Does the record in Nehemiah indicate that the people obeyed God during the period of civil reconstruction? What was involved in this obedience? The following is suggestive of the material which should be drawn from the class: (a) A willingness to accept the leader God had sent them,¹ (b) A resolve to do the work God called them to through his spokesman, Nehemiah,² (c) Persistence in the face of ridicule and danger,³ (d) Cooperation in the God-given task,⁴ and (e) the righting of social injustices.⁵

4. Nehemiah records the return to God and the obedience of the people during the period of spiritual reconstruction. What actions on the part of the people were described by Nehemiah in his report of this return to God and new obedience? Draw from the class suggestions similar to the following: (a) The people asked to hear the word of God,⁶ (b) The word of God was accepted as the expression of the will of God,⁷ (c) The people confessed their sin,⁸ (d) The people chose to obey the will of God and made a covenant to this effect,⁹ and (e) Arrangements were made for the carrying out of the provisions of the covenant with respect to worship.¹⁰

5. Does the Book of Nehemiah show that God actually did bless the Jews in Judea when they obeyed Him and returned to Him? Refer the class to Nehemiah 6:15-16, and to Nehemiah 12:43.

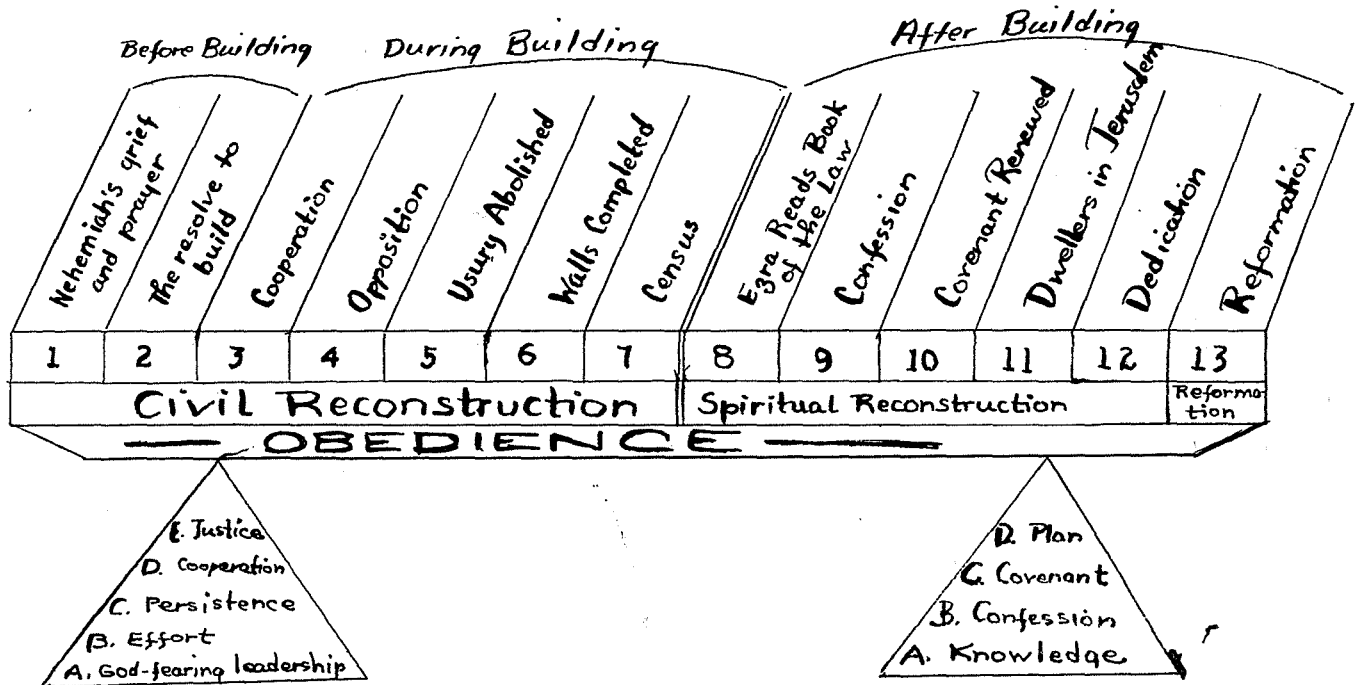
6. The findings which have been brought out through the class discussion should be recorded on the blackboard chart. The completed chart

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1. Nehemiah 2:12 and 2:18.
2. Nehemiah 2:18.
3. Nehemiah 2:19, 4:1-3, and 4:7-23.
4. Nehemiah, Chapter 3.
5. Nehemiah, Chapter 5.
6. Nehemiah 8:1.
7. Nehemiah 8:9.
8. Nehemiah 9:2-3, and 16-31.
9. Nehemiah 9:38 and 10:28-29.
10. Nehemiah 10:32-39.

should appear similar to the following:

Nehemiah



Lesson Summary:

God is always faithful to His promises. The Israelites could not seem to realize this truth apart from sad experience. Often they heard God calling, but they went their own way. Many times they found themselves in difficulty, repented, and again received God's blessing. The time came when because of disobedience they were taken captive in Persia. Finally God gave them the opportunity to return to their own

land, but even then they were still in trouble. Nehemiah's heart was touched by the need of his people, and God sent Nehemiah, and also Ezra, to lead them. Trouble had softened the hearts of the Israelites, and they were ready to listen to the leaders God gave them, and to the words of the Book of the Law of Moses. They were really sorry for their sins and turned to God, and God blessed them and gave them great joy.

Sometimes we are just like those Israelites, and our nation just like theirs. We hear God calling, but we go our own way. Why do we not learn from them, listen to our God, and not make it necessary for Him to punish us? If there is no joy in our hearts, He is waiting to give us that joy. If we are ready to obey Him with our whole heart, He will forgive our sin through the Lord Jesus, and take us into fellowship with Himself.

(The teacher should give opportunity to the boys to express in prayer their desire to be obedient to God, and to receive His forgiveness and blessing.)

Special Activity

1. Write the articles for the "newspaper" as planned during the preceding class session.

2. The class artist should prepare a copy of the chart of the book of Nehemiah as worked out in class, on blueprint paper. One assistant should be assigned to help him with the blueprinting. When the work is completed, a blueprint copy should be given to each pupil as his own record of his study in Nehemiah.

3. If there are students who are not occupied with the writing of articles or blueprinting, they should be given the opportunity

of selecting from a hymn book a song of praise, the words of which are appropriate for inclusion in the "newspaper." Two well-known hymns, either of which would be appropriate are: "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," and "Day is Dying in the West." The pupils may make still a different selection.

4. When the reporters complete their work on the articles, conduct a report period during which time each reporter should read his brief article.

5. The materials which have been prepared for the "newspaper" should be gathered together and a "dummy" arranged. The "editor" should take charge of this task. (Note: Before the next session of the class, the teacher should type, or arrange to have typed, a copy of the newspaper. The completed paper should be photographed, and enlargements made for distribution, one to each pupil, at the next class session.)

Dismissal

G. Lesson VI

- AIMS: 1. To lead the pupils to recognize the proneness of human nature to break the covenants made with God.
2. To challenge the intermediate boys to carry into daily living their resolutions of loyalty to God.
3. To point out to the students the opportunity of service to God through giving of their means to support the work of the Kingdom.
4. To review some of the lessons which have been learned through the study of the Book of Nehemiah.

BIBLICAL MATERIAL: Nehemiah 13.

PROCEDURE:

Review: A film covering the Book of Nehemiah should be shown.¹ Following the showing of the film, the instructor should discuss with the pupils how the Book of Nehemiah helps to answer the following questions:

1. Is it true that because a man is a religious leader, he is more a servant of God than one who is equally devoted to God, but is the holder of a public office? Support your answer from the Book of Nehemiah.

2. Must one be willing to work to bring about the answer to his prayer? Illustrate your answer from the Book of Nehemiah.

3. Sometimes in Sunday School there is sung a song entitled "It Pays to Serve Jesus." Does the Book of Nehemiah show that it is wise and profitable to serve God? What evidence can you give in support of your answer?

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1. Such a film, according to present plans, soon will be released by the Church-Craft Pictures, Inc., St. Louis, Missouri.

General Lesson Period:

In Chapter 13, Nehemiah tells that the Levites and the singers had to go to the fields to work, as they did not receive sufficient support in other ways.¹ However, in Nehemiah 10, it is recorded that the Jews of Jerusalem covenanted "to bring the first-fruits of . . . (their) ground, and the first-fruits of all fruit of all manner of trees, year by year, unto the house of Jehovah . . ."² The people had also promised that they would bring the first-fruits of their dough, offerings, wine and oil.³ Probably about twelve years had elapsed from the time of the making of the covenant and the events recorded in Chapter 13, but in this comparatively short time, the people had broken their promises to God with respect to the bringing of their offerings to the Temple. The Levites and singers had found it necessary to leave their work in the Temple. The service in the Temple suffered as a result.

Sometimes today one sees a sign posted upon a church, "for sale." Of course it is possible that the congregation have grown too large for the building or have found it advisable to move to another location. But often the reason is an altogether different one. The membership of the church have failed to meet the payments on the building. There are many cases, too, where missionaries have been forced to return home because they did not receive enough money to support them on the mission field. Sometimes pastors of churches work with their hands or accept other types of employment to supplement the very small salary which comes to them from their church. God has chosen them to give their full time to the work of

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1. Nehemiah 13:10
2. Nehemiah 10:35
3. Nehemiah 10:37

the ministry, but they find it impossible to do so. Because the pastor cannot give his time to the work of the church, the people lose interest. The Sunday School becomes smaller. Many do not hear about Christ who otherwise would hear. Many sick people are not visited.

God could Himself see that every minister of His received the money he needed. He could send a bird to drop a large diamond right in the minister's yard. He could see to it that the minister's one little piece of property had a fine oil well on it; or that each minister had some great natural ability through which he could earn his support by spending just a few hours a week. God could--but instead He has given His own people the privilege of supporting the ministers and of paying the bills of the church. When the people of the churches do not accept this opportunity for service to God, the whole program of the church is hindered.

Most boys of intermediate age earn some money. One very real opportunity for serving God is to give a part of that money to the church of God.

Ask the pupils to examine Nehemiah 13 and to point out respects, in addition to the failure to bring the offerings to the Temple, in which the covenant of Chapter 10 was broken. Was it broken only by the common run of the people? Refer the pupils to Nehemiah 13:4-5 and 13:11.

Ask the pupils to suggest reasons why these Jews so soon broke their solemn covenant. Perhaps these people could not see why they were forbidden to marry with foreigners, so they set up their own reason against the commandments of God. Probably many of the people felt that there were circumstances which made it all right for them to trade on the Sabbath. No doubt these Israelites liked the beautiful things the traders brought

to their city on the Sabbath. Perhaps there was opportunity to make money, and the Israelites chose to put the making of money before the commandment of God. There is a very real reason why it was necessary for God to say "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world,"¹ and "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."² These people were very much the same as we are today. If they could so quickly forget their covenant with God, we too must be on our guard.

There is a story, based on true incidents, told concerning a young Chinese Christian who was faced by one of these "so-reasonable-looking" temptations to sin. (The instructor should tell the story entitled "Just a Little Thing."³)

Special Activity

The completed "newspaper," the blueprint charts, and the model of the City of Jerusalem should be placed on display. The pastor of the church; the Sunday School superintendent or superintendent of the Daily Vacation Bible School, as the case may be; the director of religious education; and other interested leaders should be invited to examine the display. Selected boys should be called upon to explain to the guests the various features of the project.

Dismissal

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1. 1 John 2:15a, King James Version
2. Matthew 22:37b, King James Version
3. The story "Just a Little Thing" is included in the Appendix and will be found on page 95.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A. Summary

In the course of the preparation and the writing of this thesis, a brief survey was made of books and other publications which dealt with the characteristics of the intermediate boy. The findings of this survey have been analysed under the headings, "Physiological Characteristics," and "Psychological Characteristics." The portion of the analysis entitled "Psychological Characteristics" was broken down and treated under the captions, "emotional characteristics," "physical characteristics," and "moral and volitional characteristics."

It was found through this survey that during the intermediate years the boy is apt to be growing rapidly and gaining rapidly in strength. His voice may change, and he is characteristically clumsy, healthy, and hungry. During this time of physiological change, the intermediate boy also changes psychologically. The early adolescent boy comes near to maturity intellectually. However, he is very easily distracted, and his mind is best prepared to deal with that which is concrete. He is beginning to question and explore truth for himself, to lay plans, build air castles, and adopt ideals. With respect to the emotional characteristics of the intermediate boy, he is often instable, desires approbation, is acutely conscientious, is developing a spirit of independence, and yet clings for support to membership in a tightly knit gang. With regard to moral and volitional characteristics, the intermediate boy may be described as one who is developing a sense of responsibility and altruism, yet, regardless of altruism, approves blindly that which his gang approves. Sometimes his actions are based upon his emotions, sometimes upon intellectual choice, and sometimes upon the impulse to imitate one who is

to him a hero.

The implications of the findings of the survey of the characteristics of the early adolescent boy for the personal religious life of the boy, and for the methods to be used in his instruction were also considered and set forth in Chapter I.

The implications of the findings of the survey with respect to the personal religious life of the boy may be summarized as follows:

(a) The intermediate boy urgently needs to adopt a suitable Christian standard of ethics. He needs to find in his own experience that the Bible may fill this place in his life. (b) Instability is found in the religious experience as well as in other areas of life, and in order to meet and master this instability, the intermediate needs to yield supreme loyalty to Christ and to His cause. He needs also to experience fellowship with Christ through vital prayer. (c) In order to avoid emotional upheaval, there is need for guidance of the intermediate as he commences to re-evaluate that which has been taught him in his younger days. (d) In many instances, conversion is the basic answer for the problems of the intermediate boy, and frequently this step is the outcome, under God, of the conflicts experienced and the characteristics manifested during this period of development.

With respect to pedagogical method, the implications of the survey which was made may be set forth as indicating (a) the importance of supplying God-fearing, realistic heroes, (b) the use of stories, (c) the opportunity for practical service to God and man through individual and group activity, (d) the need for honest expression of approbation,

(e) the need for guidance of the pupil in his study and thinking, (f) the importance of making provision for individual differences, and finally, (g) the need for concrete presentation of material.

Suitable specific objectives for the religious instruction of the intermediate boy became apparent as the characteristics of the boy, and their religious and pedagogical implications were carefully examined. These objectives were stated in Chapter I, and they are as follows:

1. The experience of the forgiveness of sin through God in Christ as a personal Savior.
2. The recognition of God in Christ as Lord.
3. A sense of being a co-worker together with God.
4. The habit of looking to the Bible as a standard for conduct.
5. A growing desire to assume responsibility in the program of the church school and church.
6. A growing ability to formulate clearly intellectual questions concerning religion and to seek through thought, prayer, and the experience of others their true answer.
7. An understanding of the relation of the youth to the home and to the community.
8. The experience of group worship.
9. A vital experience of personal prayer.

In the light of the objectives stated in the first chapter, the attempt was made in Chapter II to evaluate the message of the Book of Nehemiah with respect to its suitability for inclusion in the church school curriculum of the early adolescent boy. Likewise, the attempt was made to determine the fitness of the book with respect to pedagogical methods suitable for the intermediate boy, and yet at the same time adapted to the

presentation of the truths as taught in this book.

It was determined that the Book of Nehemiah contains much material which has teaching value for the intermediate boy--in fact, with but two exceptions, point by point truths shine forth in Nehemiah which correspond with the objectives as set forth. The exceptions are (1) that Nehemiah gives little or no help in the problem of the relation of the youth to his own family, and (2) that Nehemiah does not contribute materially to the formulation and solution of intellectual questions concerning religion.

In regard to the fitness of the Book of Nehemiah with respect to its adaptability to suitable pedagogical methods for early adolescent boys, it was found that this book is virtually ideal. It teaches spiritual truths concretely through a record of how God moved and man responded. The account is given through an interesting narrative, and the central figure of the narrative is a suitable and challenging subject for the hero worship of an intermediate boy. The book is adapted for presentation through the project method, and in addition, the urge to "do" may be channeled into community service projects which may fittingly accompany the study of portions of this book.

The third chapter is devoted to a presentation of lesson plans for use as a guide in the instruction of intermediate boys. These lesson plans were developed in such a way as to lay a foundation for, and challenge the intermediate boy to give supreme loyalty to Christ as Savior and Lord. Though the primary emphasis was placed upon this point, yet a degree of emphasis was given to a variety of concepts, each closely related to the specific objectives as set forth in the first chapter. The pedagogical implications of the characteristics of the early adolescent boy were kept

in mind throughout the development of these lesson plans, and the suggested pedagogical methods and procedure were geared to fit with these implications.

A series of six lessons has been planned. In the first lesson, the student was acquainted with the historical setting of the Book of Nehemiah and with the story of the book itself to the point of the departure of Nehemiah for Jerusalem. The faithfulness of God in judgment, and the importance of choosing to obey God in the acceptance of Christ as Savior were considered, and the relation of prayer and works was discussed.

The second lesson carried on the story of the Book of Nehemiah to the completion of the building of the walls. The effort was made to make plain the truth that even in the tasks of every day life we may serve God acceptably--that we are co-workers with Him; and to teach the pupils that a sinful man is weak when opposed to a man who is serving God.

In Lesson III the story of the Book of Nehemiah was concluded. The students were encouraged to think through the Book of Nehemiah chapter by chapter. Chapter VII, and portions of Chapters IX and X were stressed. Through the study of these portions, the effort was made to assist the students to see that the word of God is the key to the understanding of the will of God, and to assist them to gain an understanding of the importance of confession of sin.

Lesson IV gave special consideration to Nehemiah 9:5-38. In this lesson stress was placed upon the danger in which a nation stands which refuses to obey God. The challenge was made to the intermediate boy to yield supreme allegiance to the will of God.

Lesson V presented the Book of Nehemiah as a whole, and pointed out the central message of the book: God's faithfulness in blessing an

obedient people. Emphasis was placed upon the joy which arises in the hearts of a people whom God blesses. The effort was also made to make plain to the intermediate boy God's hand in history.

Lesson VI was centered in Chapter XIII. In this lesson the emphasis was placed upon the proneness of people to break the covenants made with God, and the challenge was extended to the intermediate boys to carry into daily living their resolutions of loyalty to God. The effort was also made to review the outstanding lessons which were learned through the study of the Book of Nehemiah.

B. Conclusions

1. The Book of Nehemiah presents religious concepts and experiences coinciding closely with most of the concepts and experiences set up as the teaching objectives in the religious instruction of intermediate boys.

2. The Book of Nehemiah does not present all the concepts included in the teaching objectives as formulated. In the first place, there is little or no connection between the message of Nehemiah and "a growing ability to formulate clearly intellectual questions concerning religion" and the seeking "through thought, prayer, and the experience of others their true answer." In the second place, there is little connection between the message of this book and "the understanding of the relation of the youth to the home."

3. With respect to the objectives relating directly to a relationship with God the Son, the message of the Book of Nehemiah is limited to the expression of foundational concepts and experiences. It is necessary for the teacher to supplement the teaching of this book with New Testament

truth for a complete fulfillment of this teaching objective.

4. The Book of Nehemiah lends itself readily to presentation to intermediate boys through pedagogical methods suitable to his characteristics. This is evident because of the following facts: (a) The Book of Nehemiah portrays a hero, is filled with action, concrete, and contains elements of humor. (b) The book is written primarily in narrative form and is a comparatively brief record. (c) Group activities such as stories, drama, handwork, excursions, and special projects may be readily used in teaching this book.

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APPENDIX A

A PROPHET IN EXILE¹

It was in Riga, one of the great seaports of the Russian Empire. A young man sat at an office desk in a large business building, pencil in hand, his eyes running up and down columns of figures. The afternoon's shadows were lengthening, and the day's work was drawing to a close.

The young man was worried. The expression on his face betrayed the fact that something of an unusual nature was bothering him. For some reason the figures refused to total correctly. Two or three times he lifted his head and stirred restlessly as he glanced toward the window.

At last, throwing down his pencil, he rose and walked to the window, where he stood gazing out on the street. Russian and Lettish workmen were trudging toward their homes. Now and then a droshky drove past, the driver cracking his whip and yelling at his horse as he sought to steer through the traffic. Women in bright-colored garments hurried along.

"Basil Malof!"

The young man turned to see who had spoken, but saw no one. His face was a study as he again turned to the window to watch the busy street.

"Basil Malof!"

Again he turned quickly, but saw nothing. The office staff appeared unconcerned. No one looked up. Once more he focused his attention on the passing traffic in the street before him.

"Basil Malof!"

For the third time he heard his name, and now, as he listened, it seemed as though the Voice spoke and said: "Basil Malof, if you were not in this office, helping to make a rich, unconverted manufacturer richer still, you could go into the streets to tell others of Christ. Your employer can easily find other unconverted young men to do your work here as well as you, but if you, who have been saved, will not go, no one can take your place."

Frightened by this Voice, Basil tried to brush it aside. "No," he said, "I cannot be a missionary. I have no gift for preaching; I cannot go." And he went back to his desk.

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1. Oswald J. Smith: Oswald Smith's Short Stories, pp. 59-75.

A day or two later the same Voice within him spoke again, and he was forced to get up from his chair and look out of the window. Hundreds of people were passing by: workmen in their factory blouses black with smoke, women with napkins or colored handkerchiefs on their heads and all kinds of other people, riding in vehicles.

"Thinking that it might be his own imagination, he turned and resumed his work at his desk.

"Two times two make four. Eight times seven are fifty-six. Seven from twelve leaves five. Nine and three are--let me see--nine and no one to take your place. Oh, what am I doing? Whatever ails me?"

Again he stole from his desk to the window and watched once more the throngs that seemed to ever pass along the street.

"Basil Malof," said the Voice once more. "Basil Malof, do you see those hungry multitudes?"

Yes, he saw them. His vision was now penetrating farther and farther. All Latvia spread itself before him. Russia with its teeming millions loomed up in a moment of time. . .

"Basil Malof," pleaded the Voice within his soul, "if you don't go, no one will. I have no other. There are many who can do your work here, but none there."

Basil Malof was a man of quick action. In a moment his mind was made up. The Voice could not be ignored. . . .

He made his decision to respond and turned his eyes toward mission fields. His knowledge of them was as yet limited. He knew something of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the Prince of Preachers in London. . . . His knowledge of English, however, was limited to a few words. Procuring a dictionary, he looked up the words he needed and the next mail carried a letter to the Rev. Thomas Spurgeon, President of the Pastors' College. Another letter he sent in the same mail to his parents in Tukum, . . (telling) them his decision.

A reply from London soon came back with the laconic summons, "Come at once." He was to be the first student from Russia ever to enter a British theological college.

There was also a reply to the other letter. It was from his mother. Taking it with him to a nearby cemetery, where it was his custom to eat his noonday lunch and to meditate, he sat down near a tombstone and hesitatingly read his mother's letter:

"Dear Basil"--he was still the little boy to his mother, even though he had grown to manhood--"Dear Basil, are you going to leave us?"

Don't you love us any more? Please don't leave us, Basil, my boy; don't go away. We need you, now that we are getting old. What are we going to do without you, Basil? Don't go away.'

Thus the letter read. As he was slowly making out the words he noticed on the sheet that there were big spots caused by teardrops which had fallen from his mother's eyes as she wrote.

For awhile he sat looking off into space, rigid as the tombstones about him. His poverty-stricken parents needed his aid. . . he was about to leave them to go away to a faraway land, perhaps never to see them again.

Basil's mind was wandering to the old home in Tukum. Only one room--a dining-room, kitchen, parlor, study and bedroom all combined in one . . . A great lump rose in Basil's throat as his eyes suddenly filled with tears. For some minutes he sobbed as if his heart would break. Then he . . . (prayed).

A moment later he stood up and, taking the letter of Jesus, the New Testament, from his pocket, he read: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." . . .

These words were burning in his soul. Parents or God? Should he listen to his mother's appeal or should he obey God? Oh, what a battle! Fiercely the struggle raged within him . . . Surely he loved his parents. He would like to make himself responsible for them in their old age . . . But again, he seemed to see before him, as if illuminated, the words "He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me." . . .

. . . "Finally the victory was won. . . slowly his left hand with his mother's letter went down and his right hand with the New Testament was lifted up high toward heaven. The decision was reached in his heart . . . and the Light of the Guiding Presence filled his soul as gently his . . . (sorrow) was changed to comfort.

. . . "in 1903 he became a student in Spurgeon's Pastors' College, London, England.

The years passed quickly in England. He spoke about Russia as opportunity offered, but gave himself to his studies in Spurgeon's College, burning the candle at both ends as he pored over his books far into the night.

. . . The English word "the" . . . (was hard to say).

"It almost broke my jaw," he declared in telling of it later. "I threw the book under the table or across the room many a time."

. . "Finally his stay in England was over. . (He had gone to) St. Petersburg. The great Dom Evangelia, built to accommodate some 2,000 people, had been completed, and Basil Malof, . . . was its pastor. It was the talk of the city. Nothing like it had ever been seen in Russia before. Large crowds were attending and listening eagerly to the fiery messages of the young pastor who was still in his twenties. Many were accepting Jesus Christ and renouncing the dead and empty religion of the Greek Orthodox Church in which they had been nurtured all their lives. .

Pastor Malof, as he was now called, had made two covenants as he entered upon his great work.

First: "I will be loyal to God even to martyrdom."

Second: "I will never parley with the devil."

It was not long before he was put to the test. The devil was busy.

"If only this disturber of the peace could be forever silenced! Can we banish him from Russia? How can we get rid of him?" Such were the questions discussed by the priests behind closed doors.

The first temptation came in the form of a golden carriage. It happened this way:

Basil Malof one day, while preaching in Moscow, received a telegram. It was from His Excellency. Now, His Excellency had always been a bitter foe of the work. But this telegram invited Pastor Malof to St. Petersburg for an interview.

"What did it mean? Would he go? Had His Excellency been converted? Something must surely have happened. Possibly he had better go." Thus he reasoned.

His Excellency sat behind a desk in a beautifully furnished room. His face was all smiles, like the face of a cat when it wants to catch a mouse.

Pastor Malof sat opposite him and waited.

. . .

"Come, join the State Church of which His Majesty, the Czar, is the head, and we will make you a bishop," he said in his most friendly tone.

So that was the game, was it? Pastor Malof smiled. His Excellency, thinking he had won, put his hand to his mouth and whispered, "Archbishop!"

There was no need to explain what such an offer meant. Pastor Malof already knew. It meant a carriage drawn by four horses. People would

kiss the corner of his coat and do him the highest honor.

Slowly he shook his head as the plot dawned on him. His Excellency was now beaming, as he waited for his answer. At last it came.

"Your Excellency," began Pastor Malof in a quiet tone of voice, smiling a little, "if you would make me the Pope, perhaps I might consider."

In a moment the face of the great official clouded over. He was quickly disillusioned. He saw that he was being mocked, and his offer spurned.

"Go," he cried, "go, but remember you will some day pay dearly for your actions."

And His Excellency was right. The cross was just ahead, though little did the brave preacher know it then; but the golden carriage to bribe him to deny his Lord had failed.

It was Saturday evening. Pastor Malof was leading the believers' prayer meeting in the Dom Evangelia.

. . . .

Suddenly the chief usher came along the aisle and beckoned. Pastor Malof immediately came forward, thinking it was some trivial matter.

"Pastor, the police want you," whispered the usher, his face blanched with fear. But still the pastor thought little of it and quietly walked out to see what was wrong.

"By the order of the Military Chief of Petrograd," read the officer from a paper in his hand, "Pastor Malof is to be immediately arrested and exiled to Siberia."

"But won't you give me at least three hours to get ready? There must be some fearful mistake," exclaimed the pastor.

"Don't you see, Sir, it says 'immediately'? I will give you ten minutes and no more," responded the official.

. . . .

(A small pack was made. A blanket for the cold nights, some bread, and, on top, the Bible.)

"Ready!" cried the officer. "The ten minutes are up."

"Won't you permit me, Sir, to say good-bye to my dear people first?" pleaded the pastor.

"No! Never! You must come at once," responded the official in an authoritative voice.

"Sir, will you then allow my secretary here to go and tell the people what is happening to their pastor, that they may stand outside and watch me go?"

"No. If you do that I will close up the church," was the reply.

For one brief moment Pastor Malof hesitated, while a look of inexpressible anguish overspread his face, as a score of sacred memories flashed through his mind.

. . . There was no church when he came. He was the founder . .

"March on!"

The order brought him back in a moment, and picking up his small pack, . . . he stepped into the street.

Oh, what a change! Often had he walked down that same street as an honored citizen. Now he was a culprit under guard. For some minutes no word was spoken. The street was in darkness and his heart was even darker. There seemed to be no star of hope to which he might cling. He saw nothing but exile and dreary Siberian prisons, lifelong separation from those he loved, and at the end--death. .

Heavy at heart, sad and perplexed, he walked on and on . .

"Jesus, tell me, oh, tell me why," at last cried the prisoner within his own heart. "Why must I be taken away? Please tell me."

And as though from the darkened sky above came the answer: "Let not your heart be troubled."

"Ah! thank God! "Let not your heart be troubled." "Oh! it's all right."

. . .

(He stepped within the prison and the iron gate closed behind him.)

"Where will I sleep?" inquired the prisoner, turning to the policeman.

The light of the lantern showed him three prisoners, filthy, and probably alive with vermin, lying on three cots. There were no other beds in the cell.

"With one of them," answered the officer gruffly.

For a moment his courage failed. Never had he slept in such dirt and with such companions before. Then he took courage.

"Lord," he cried, "You were crucified between two thieves and surely I can sleep between two."

Then the officer left the cell and he was alone in the company of thieves, perhaps murderers.

Presently the door opened and a soldier called him by name. He had not yet lain down.

"Follow me," was the command. And he found himself in the office.

"If you will sign these papers agreeing to go to Siberia at your own expense, you may have three days to settle up your business affairs."

Such was the offer. It did not take him long to write his name. God, he knew, had intervened. The church must have prayed steadily from the time of his arrest. And prayer had been answered.

Returning to his cell, he picked up his bundle and started back for the church.

What it all meant he did not know, but convinced that God was working, he stepped along at a brisk pace, with a great joy bubbling in his heart.

After proceeding for some distance, he suddenly saw two men coming toward him. Their figures looked familiar and as they drew nearer he recognized them as his two leading deacons. Their heads were down. Neither was speaking. They appeared to be completely disheartened. Their steps were slow and heavy . . . (as) they approached their pastor, whom they had not yet observed . . .

"Brethren, hallelujah? I am back!"

With startled looks they stopped suddenly and stood gazing at the man before them. The next moment their faces whitened as they clasped hands in terror.

"A ghost!"

The words were not uttered aloud, but, as they confessed later, that was what each exclaimed in his heart. Pastor Malof had already read their thoughts.

"No! No, brethren!" he cried, coming closer. "It's I, your pastor."

They felt him, welcomed him, cried over him, and finally, one on either side, they escorted him back to the church. The people had not yet left. They were still praying.

. . he entered the church . .

"Brothers and sisters," he exclaimed, "the Lord has brought me out of the prison house!"

. . .

Oh, the joy as they welcomed him back, as it were, from the dead! It seemed as though the separation had lasted for years. Pastor and people were again united, for a time at least.

Two days later by special decree of the Czar's Cabinet, in answer to the pastor's appeal, the sentence to Siberian exile was changed to banishment abroad. Thus by way of Sweden he came to the United States, where a great work was accomplished for Russian war prisoners, and, later, the Russian missionary movement was organized. Thus the devil banished one preacher and the Lord sent back an army in his place.

APPENDIX B

JUST A LITTLE THING¹

The most profitable season for bandits in North China is when the millet, or "robber's green curtain", is high. No one can tell where the bandits may be moving behind the tall green grain.

One spring the bandits were particularly bad. The churches in the villages and towns of North China announced that their doors were open to Christians who felt it necessary to flee from their homes but that they must leave their money and valuables at the city bank. As it was known that this was the regulation, the churches were unmolested for weeks.

Fung Goa, a young high-school student, was acting as gatekeeper in one of the village churches. It was his duty to meet people at the gate and make sure that they had no valuables with them.

One day Fung Goa was surprised to see a friend come to the gate, leading a donkey on which sat his wife and children.

"Why, Wang San Ga! Is it you?" cried Fung Goa.

"Yes, we, too, have had to flee," answered Wang.

"I am sorry about that," said Fung Goa. "But I am glad you came here. Come right in. No, wait. You have not brought any money or jewels with you? You know our rule. They must be deposited at the city bank."

Wang replied hesitantly: "Well, yes, we have some family jewels but we should hate to put them in the custody of a dishonest merchant or banker. No one will know that we have them, for they are sewed in a bed quilt."

"I am sorry," said Fung Goa. "I am on my honor not to let in anything of value. This rule keeps the church safe."

"Oh, come on! You are too conscientious. Why, when we leave here, our home may have been destroyed. These jewels may be all we have with which to begin life again. You wouldn't put an old friend in a position like that, would you?"

"I don't want to, but--"

"But, for friendship's sake!" cried Wang. "Just this once. No one will know."

"All right, then. Come in." And Fung Goa led the way into the church grounds. All the houses were full, so Wang built a mat shed under

.

1. Agnes Peery and Emily Werner: The Child and the Book, Book I, pp. 55-57, a story based upon incidents originally told by Miss Irene Forsythe, a missionary to China, and reprinted from Westminster Departmental Graded Materials.

a pomegranate tree, while some friends played with the children and others helped Mrs. Wang to get supper.

Fung Goa went back to the gate but for the rest of the day he felt rather uncomfortable.

"Bandits sacked the next town," said a man who came at dusk. "I won't be surprised if we have trouble here before morning."

"Well, we are safe," said another. "The last group of bandits passed by when they heard we had nothing of value. The word of a Christian counts, even with them."

All evening the noise of bandit shots could be heard. The bandits seemed to be coming closer and closer. When at last they broke into the town, Fung Goa had decided to put up as brave a front as possible and ignore the thing he had done. After all, it was "just a little thing." There really wasn't enough jewelry in the church to make the robbing of the place worth while.

"There is nothing of value within," said Fung Goa when the bandits demanded entrance. "We are just a group of Christians with only our food and clothing."

"We shall see," said the bandits gruffly as, with bayonets brandished dangerously, they rushed into the courts. They looked everywhere, overturning boxes, tearing up beds, and searching the people's clothes. Soon they came to Wang's corner of the court and before long, had the jewels in their hands.

"Ha! Nothing of value!" they cried. "These Christians are liars! Search everything! More is hidden!"

The bandits grew infuriated when they could find nothing more. "Burn the old church!" they shouted. And they did.

Down through the country went the angry band, attacking the churches in every town with the cry: "Christians are liars! Get the hidden money of the Christians!"

Fung Goa, left behind to guard the smoldering ruins of his own church, could not put out the fires of regret in his heart.

"It was such a little thing," he sighed over and over again. "I thought that it was such a little thing."