

## **Bible Passages for Lesson 4 of *Politics is Driving Me Crazy!***

### **Nehemiah 1**

#### **Nehemiah's Prayer**

**1** The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, <sup>2</sup> Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."

<sup>4</sup> When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup> Then I said:

"Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, <sup>6</sup> let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. <sup>7</sup> We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

<sup>8</sup> "Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, <sup>9</sup> but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

<sup>10</sup> "They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. <sup>11</sup> Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."

I was cupbearer to the king.

### **1 Timothy 2:1-2**

**2** I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— <sup>2</sup> for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

### **Nehemiah 2:1-9**

#### **Artaxerxes Sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem**

**2** In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, <sup>2</sup> so the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart."

I was very much afraid, <sup>3</sup> but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"

<sup>4</sup> The king said to me, "What is it you want?"

Then I prayed to the God of heaven, <sup>5</sup> and I answered the king, “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it.”

<sup>6</sup> Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, “How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?” It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.

<sup>7</sup> I also said to him, “If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? <sup>8</sup> And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?” And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests. <sup>9</sup> So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king’s letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.

## **Nehemiah 6:1-15**

### **Further Opposition to the Rebuilding**

<sup>1</sup> When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates— <sup>2</sup> Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: “Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono.”

But they were scheming to harm me; <sup>3</sup> so I sent messengers to them with this reply: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?” <sup>4</sup> Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.

<sup>5</sup> Then, the fifth time, Sanballat sent his aide to me with the same message, and in his hand was an unsealed letter <sup>6</sup> in which was written:

“It is reported among the nations—and Geshem says it is true—that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall. Moreover, according to these reports you are about to become their king <sup>7</sup> and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem: ‘There is a king in Judah!’ Now this report will get back to the king; so come, let us meet together.”

<sup>8</sup> I sent him this reply: “Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head.”

<sup>9</sup> They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.”

But I prayed, “Now strengthen my hands.”

<sup>10</sup> One day I went to the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was shut in at his home. He said, “Let us meet in the house of God, inside the temple, and let us close the temple doors, because men are coming to kill you—by night they are coming to kill you.”

<sup>11</sup> But I said, “Should a man like me run away? Or should someone like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go!” <sup>12</sup> I realized that God had not sent him, but that he had prophesied against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. <sup>13</sup> He had been hired to intimidate me so that I would commit a sin by doing this, and then they would give me a bad name to discredit me.

<sup>14</sup> Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, my God, because of what they have done; remember also the prophet Noadiah and how she and the rest of the prophets have been trying to intimidate me. <sup>15</sup> So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days.

### **Nehemiah 13:15-22**

<sup>15</sup> In those days I saw people in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys, together with wine, grapes, figs and all other kinds of loads. And they were bringing all this into Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Therefore I warned them against selling food on that day. <sup>16</sup> People from Tyre who lived in Jerusalem were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them in Jerusalem on the Sabbath to the people of Judah. <sup>17</sup> I rebuked the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this wicked thing you are doing—desecrating the Sabbath day? <sup>18</sup> Didn’t your ancestors do the same things, so that our God brought all this calamity on us and on this city? Now you are stirring up more wrath against Israel by desecrating the Sabbath.”

<sup>19</sup> When evening shadows fell on the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I ordered the doors to be shut and not opened until the Sabbath was over. I stationed some of my own men at the gates so that no load could be brought in on the Sabbath day. <sup>20</sup> Once or twice the merchants and sellers of all kinds of goods spent the night outside Jerusalem. <sup>21</sup> But I warned them and said, “Why do you spend the night by the wall? If you do this again, I will arrest you.” From that time on they no longer came on the Sabbath. <sup>22</sup> Then I commanded the Levites to purify themselves and go and guard the gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy. Remember me for this also, my God, and show mercy to me according to your great love.

### **2 Kings 5:17-19**

<sup>17</sup> “If you will not,” said Naaman, “please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the Lord. <sup>18</sup> But may the Lord forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I have to bow there also—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the Lord forgive your servant for this.”

<sup>19</sup> “Go in peace,” Elisha said.

### **Acts 24:1-27**

#### **Paul’s Trial Before Felix**

<sup>1</sup> Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor. <sup>2</sup> When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: “We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation. <sup>3</sup> Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. <sup>4</sup> But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly.

<sup>5</sup> “We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect <sup>6</sup> and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we

seized him. <sup>[7]</sup> <sup>[a]</sup> <sup>8</sup> By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him.”

<sup>9</sup> The other Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true.

<sup>10</sup> When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: “I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense. <sup>11</sup> You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. <sup>12</sup> My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. <sup>13</sup> And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. <sup>14</sup> However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, <sup>15</sup> and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. <sup>16</sup> So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

<sup>17</sup> “After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings. <sup>18</sup> I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance. <sup>19</sup> But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me. <sup>20</sup> Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin— <sup>21</sup> unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: ‘It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.’”

<sup>22</sup> Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings. “When Lysias the commander comes,” he said, “I will decide your case.” <sup>23</sup> He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs.

<sup>24</sup> Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup> As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, “That’s enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you.” <sup>26</sup> At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him.

<sup>27</sup> When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.

### **Matthew 10:16**

<sup>16</sup> “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.”