

THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

J. F. JOHNSON Editor & Publisher
 MISS EMMA P. JOHNSON News Reporter
 L. A. WISE Staff Photographer

Make all checks payable to and mail to:

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PTA Ward Systems Solve Traffic Problems

If Ward Systems were organized and sponsored by the Parent-Teacher Associations, they would help to curtail quite a bit of traffic hazards during inclement weather. Ward means just this: an organization of neighborhoods with members having similar ideas. For example, if Wards were set up by the PTA's of Lincoln and Dudley High School and the neighborhoods of Morningside Homes, Dudley Heights, Clinton Hills, Benbow Park, and the like, the leaders of each Ward would assume a responsibility like this. Of course you know that each family has one or more cars. When there are five children going to the same school and living on the same street or a block apart, the Ward leader could suggest that one parent assume responsibility of pooling these children during inclement weather. That would eliminate four cars on the same street.

During this time, much construction work is being done near the schools, especially Dudley High, where ground work is being done for a stadium. Several types of vehicles are being used. These vehicles interfere with traffic during fair weather. What would happen if a gala windstorm took place when classes were being dismissed in the afternoon?

On the other hand, at the intersection of Lincoln and Lee Streets, there are pupils leaving five different schools, namely the Catholic School, Lutheran, Dudley, Lincoln and Bluford. Prior to this time, some women would go to their husbands' jobs to secure their cars for the sole purpose of picking up one child. This was to show others that the family owned a car. How much easier it would be if the parent knew somebody in her Ward who could be responsible for carrying her child home, thusly eliminating the traffic hazard.

We criticize our teenagers as being careless and reckless drivers, but they will go back and forth to pick up their friends. Most of them will say, "Look how it's raining. There is Mrs. Jones' son. He lives next door to us." They will pick them up. After one trip has been made, they will even return to the school to pick up others.

In thinking about a PTA Ward System to curtail traffic, a teacher expressed the opinion that female faculty members would be the first to criticize this type of system, because they live next door to some of their co-workers. If something were to happen to their automobiles, like battery or tire trouble, they would find some type of excuse to curtail a conversation between the two. There is a law which states that teachers should not transport students to and from school, but it doesn't apply to adults. Why can't five teachers ride in the same car and reduce the number of cars on the streets? It has been observed that a layman or a teenager would do this with no trouble, but what about the professionals? Why can't teachers in the same school do the same thing? Is it purely a matter of trying to show off a car or is it just selfishness?

This editorial will be continued in the next edition.

Poet's Corner

I shall have peace, when I go home."

"When I go home may quiet reign

And nothing will I say or do —

To cause regret or needless pain

In those I love when I go home.

When I go home, my glory Crown

When heaven's host to Him bow down,

Will be that Christ is there enthroned;

I. NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALL

What Is Our Concern?

How many times have you heard some say, "God helps those who help themselves"? Or when did you last hear someone say, "God gave us a mind to think with, and he won't save us from our own stupidity"? Both these statements are accepted as common sense by many Christians.

Like so many other common-sense statements, however, these points of view must not be accepted uncritically. Does the Bible really teach that God helps those who help themselves? Is it really accurate to say that God will not deliver us from our mistakes? Most such statements are only partly true, and we must learn to recognize in what sense they are true and also how they may be misleading.

We often assume that God treats us the way a mother bird treats her young. That is, we assume that God has shoved us out of the nest and left us to fly or fall on our own. One of the chief reasons inclining us toward acceptance of such views as biblical is that they appeal to our pride. They suggest that God expects us to be able to go it alone, to manage our lives without help. We say that all we need to do is use the minds God gave us.

The question with which this lesson is concerned is how a person can face setbacks and difficult decisions in life. One common danger is the assumption that the future depends upon our own decisions alone. The contrasting danger is assuming that our own actions are pointless. The lesson seeks a third alternative.

Before You Read The Scripture

We have already seen that in actual chronology Nehemiah almost surely preceded Ezra. We do not know why the order was reversed in the Chronicler's tradition. Perhaps he wanted to show that Ezra's work (begun about 397 B.C.) was more important than Nehemiah's (begun about 444 B.C.).

In any case, for our next two lessons we will be dealing with events that occurred approximately forty years before those events studied for the last three lessons. However, the historical background of Ezra and Nehemiah is the same—the late Persian period. Nehemiah was an official in the court of Artaxerxes I (Artuh-zurk-seez).

Some persons feel that Nehemiah's reaction to the news about the plight of Jerusalem was rather extreme if its condition was the result of the destruction in 586 B.C. They suggest that some attempt had already been made to rebuild the city walls and that a fresh catastrophe had left the city defenseless once more. Whatever the facts may be, the Chronicler's main concern was that the Holy City, Jerusalem, was in a deplorable state of devastation.

Under the Persians the former kingdom of Judah was a province of Samaria. This fact helps us see part of the reason for the conflict that arose when Nehemiah was sent to Jerusalem. By sending Nehemiah as his direct representative, the king was un-

dermining part of the Samaritan governor's authority.

The information in Nehemiah is undoubtedly from a diary or journal that Nehemiah kept. How the Chronicler gained access to it is uncertain. The community may have preserved it for the same reason that we preserve the journals and diaries of men whose work has been significant for our times.

What the Scripture Says

The Scripture for today is Nehemiah 1 through 6. Selected verses are printed below. See Home Bible Study suggestions in the back of the quarterly. Nehemiah 2:17-18

17 Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer disgrace."

18 And I told them of the hand of my God which had been upon me for good, and also of the words which the king had spoken to me. And they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work.

Nehemiah 4:15-20

15 When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work. 16 From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail; and the leaders stood behind all the house of Judah, 17 who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were laden in such a way that each with one hand labored on the work and with the other held his weapon. 18 And each of the builders had his sword girded at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. 19 And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. 20 In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."

Nehemiah 6:1-3, 15-16

1 Now when it was reported to Sanballat and Tobiah and to Geshem the Arab and to the rest of our enemies that I had built the wall and that there was no breach left in it (although up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), 2 Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come and let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono." But they intended to do me harm. 3 And I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?"

15 So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. 16 And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations round about us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem; for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

Memory Selection: The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build. —Nehemiah 2:20

How We Understand the

Scripture

The purification of the people by dissolving all the mixed marriages (Ezra 9 and 10) is followed in the Chronicler's history by the rebuilding of the city walls of Jerusalem. This order may have been determined by theological concerns. Did the Chronicler wish to assert the necessity of purification before the rebuilding could take place? The right of the pure alone to engage in the work of God is one viewpoint represented in the Old Testament.

Nehemiah 1: The Chronicler seems merely to have inserted Nehemiah's diary into his account. The name Nehemiah is composed of a verb meaning "to comfort" or "to console" and the name of God, Yahweh (in its short form, Yah). Thus it suggests one who brings Yahweh's comfort to Israel.

Nehemiah appealed to God as one who is faithful to his people who keep the covenant. This faithfulness called for the execution of judgment upon the disobedient, but it also called for forgiveness and renewal to the penitent. (1:8-9) Nehemiah's prayer was not merely a prayer of personal repentance. It was a prayer of national guilt.

Chapter 2:1-8: Nehemiah was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes I. Many scholars think he must have been a eunuch, which was usually true of persons in his position. If so, the Chronicler's regard for Nehemiah is especially interesting, for Deuteronomy 23:1 excluded eunuchs from the assembly of Israel. It may be that several modifications in Israelite custom were accepted as necessary after the Exile.

Nehemiah interpreted the events in his life as the result of the work of God, and the Chronicler preserved this affirmation. The king's response to Nehemiah's plea was understood as the answer to Nehemiah's prayer referred to in 2:4. The rebuilding of Jerusalem was under the protection of Yahweh.

Chapter 2:9-20: When the Samaritan officials saw Nehemiah gathering men to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, they were displeased. This was a sign to them that part of their authority was about to be removed.

The interesting interplay between the work of God and the work of man is especially evident in the picture of Nehemiah's the hand of God was upon him. On the other hand, Nehemiah worked by human cunning and skill, going by night and carefully examining the condition of the wall.

Chapter 3: The people who rebuilt the walls should be remembered, for they were Yahweh's faithful people. But the rebuilding of the wall ultimately was God's work.

Chapter 4: The builders had to contend with ridicule, which Nehemiah took with utmost seriousness. Because he knew his work to be God's will, he was able to pray that the taunts against that work would fall back and frustrate the efforts of the taunters. God answered this prayer. Again, however, Nehemiah's own efforts were involved, for he set up a military defense force.

Chapter 5: Among the faith-

(Continued on Page 3)