

of opportunities to do and be great things. When these opportunities rise up before us face to face with all the challenge to heroism and painstaking that they contain, it is not quite so easy to face the music. In such an hour may God help us all to "strive and hold cheap the strain."

*Every individual should become a public soul*, v. 3. Nehemiah tells the mighty monarch that he is sad because the place of his fathers' sepulchres was lying waste. Mr. Deakin, ex-premier of Australia, said some time ago: "The thing that touched me most in London when I came over to the coronation of King Edward was this: One night I had been to a great function and was wending my way home at midnight when I turned aside into a dark, narrow alley. On a doorstep there I saw a lad about twelve years of age, without any coat on. In his arms was a little girl of about three. This lad had taken off his coat and wrapped it round her and he had taken the cap off his head and put it on her bare feet." This one little scene gives us a peep into the woes of the world.

*Then we have to pray*, v. 4. The apostle bids us pray without ceasing. But then, when sudden dangers and opportunities cross our track, we do well to lift up our hearts to God for special aid with renewed importunity. This has been called ejaculatory prayers. It consumes no time and hinders no business and imparts to the user a central calm. It has been said that the great Gladstone habitually lifted up his heart to God in prayer as he was about to rise and deliver one of his famous speeches in the House of Commons.

*Do your bit*, v. 5. Nehemiah had a soft snap where he was; nevertheless he asked that he might be sent into Judah, into the city of his fathers' sepulchres to build it. He was the dead opposite of the man who says, "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost." Like that incomparably greater one who was to come after, he conse-

crated himself for the sake of others. Rev. Thomas Law, when chairman of the Free Church Council of England, made a tour of this country and upon his return gave his impressions, one of which was this: "A new day would dawn for America if every member of the church were to become a public soul."

*Work and pray*, vs. 7, 8. Nehemiah prayed at the first as if work were no good and then he worked as if prayer were no good. He worked and prayed. It will not do for us to work or pray. We must work and pray. Work and prayer are the two oars of the little boat on the ocean great. Pull one oar only and we circle round to the right. Pull the other oar and we circle round to the left; but pull for the shore with both oars and we shall leave behind us a white wake pointing straight like an arrowhead to the goal of progress.

*Watch Sanballat*, v. 10. Men should rejoice in each other's prosperity but they are often envious. It is a terrible thing to be glad because others are sad and sad because others are glad. There is in every heart a budding Sanballat who must be taught his proper place, which of course is without the camp.

*We shall arrive by God's grace*, v. 11. When General Gordon went out upon his desperate mission to Khartoum against the insurgent Sudanese, he was said to have leaned heavily upon Browning's great saying:

"I go to prove my soul,

I see my way as birds their trackless way.

I shall arrive! What time, what circuit first,

I ask not; . . . . . I shall arrive

He guides me and the bird. In his good time."

"Ask, and it shall be given you" (Golden Text). He who spoke these words prayed constantly himself. His habit in this regard is an argument. Surely we may safely trust our instincts and pray. Phillips Brooks speaks somewhere of "the gracious mercy that binds omnipotence a willing servant to every humble human prayer."

### THE LESSON GRADED

This section embraces teaching material for the various grades in the School.

#### For Teachers of Bible Classes

Review the main features of the previous

lesson. Nehemiah had been trained as a statesman, Ezra as a religious leader. Each was able to make his own contribution to the life of the Jews at Jerusalem. What special