

four months (compare ch. 1: 1 with ch. 2: 1). (b) His view of God's character, v. 5. See titles used to express God's exaltation, might, faithfulness, mercy. (c) His confession of sin, vs. 6, 7. Sin was the cause of the Jews' troubles, both social and individual. Refer to the corruption of the people (compare chs. 5: 1-7, 10, 11; 13: 15; Ezra 9: 1; 2 Chron. 36: 14-17).

3. He pleads the promises to Moses, and fulfils the conditions, vs. 9, 10. (Compare Lev. 26: 27-30; Deut. 28: 45-52.) For the promise of acceptance, see Lev. 26: 40, 45; Deut. 30: 1-10. Notice how he pleads with God on behalf of a people to whom God had especially manifested His goodness,—“redeemed by thy great power.” Study history in confirmation, as Egypt, Samson, Deborah, Sennacherib, etc.

4. The request for favor before the king (v. 11), when he would make known his petition. The answer should be briefly noted. It came in many ways (compare chs. 2: 1-8; 4: 7-20).

This Lesson is an illustration of a patriot at prayer. Compare him with Abraham (Gen. 18: 23-33), Moses (Ex. 32: 11-14) and Daniel (Dan. 9: 3-27). As a patriotic prayer it has some special features. Note: (a) Nehemiah's identification with his country, so that he bears its burdens; (b) his identification with the sin and responsibility of the people; (c) his invincible faith in the God of Israel; (d) his self-denying efforts in the interests of the people.

Apply this to the needs of our country. The privilege and duty of intercession and work for our country should be especially prominent. Christian statesmanship is much to be desired, and should command the support of every patriot. The present condition of our country educationally and politically will afford material for profitable discussion.

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

A man who is of the right sort says as little as he can about his own honors. This is why we have to go to the very last verse of the lesson to find out who Nehemiah was. What was the king's name? Of what country was he king? How came a Jew to

be there? What were the duties of the king's cupbearer? How did his office rank? Of what character must he be? Was this young cupbearer rich or poor? (See ch. 15: 16-18.)

How does Nehemiah introduce himself? This question will make way for verses 1-3. Explain the month, the year, (“twentieth year” of what?), the place. Visitors come: Who? Whence? Why was Nehemiah interested in them? And in the people there? Quote a Psalm showing how the Jews loved Jerusalem (Ps. 137: 5, 6). What was the report? (v. 3.) See that the words are understood—“remnant,” “captivity,” “the province,” “affliction and reproach.” How had the destruction come about? 2 Kgs. 25: 10. Account for Nehemiah's sympathy. (Compare Heb. 11: 24, 25.) Use this as an argument for Home Missions.

What effect on Nehemiah had the sad news? v. 4. Did the king and courtiers worship this God? Why then does Nehemiah seek His help? What lesson here as to holding true to our convictions in any surroundings? Recall similar conduct in Daniel. Does prayer seem the direct way to help his fellow-countrymen? Why then did he resort to it? We shall see in the verses that follow.

The prayer is worth examining closely. It is a model prayer: First, in the way it addresses God. Let the scholars pick out the names and attributes of God here used—“Lord,” Jehovah, the God of their nation; “God of heaven,” above the earth but controlling it; “great and terrible,” of might to render largest help and crush their strongest foe; “keeping covenant and mercy,” faithful and compassionate;—just the sort of God to give the aid of which Nehemiah stood in need. We learn, that, in prayer, we should address God by the name appropriate to what we are about to ask. Let the teacher work this out.

What is the most urgent thought in vs. 6, 7? The sins of the people. Why does Nehemiah put this in the foreground in his prayer? Because there is no blessing when sin is unacknowledged. Sin is a non-conductor—it shuts out our prayer from God, and God's blessing from us.

What does Nehemiah ask God to do?