

Proclaiming the Gospel

Message
of
Jesus Christ

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;
But unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1.18).

Edifying the Body of Christ (Eph. 4.10-16)

March, 2012

The Wise Still Seek Him

Vol. IV.03

Lift High Your Defense

Are you satisfied that you are faithful to the Lord? You are in His Word; you praise and worship Him; and you spend time consistently in prayer. So – why are you fighting such a battle with doubts, discouragement, *seeming* weakness and failure? How is it that the enemy can attack and affect you so strongly?

January's message was "Build the Temple" (Ezra 1-6). Let us look at the Israelites after they finished building the temple. They "...kept the dedication of this house of God with joy..." and kept the Passover, offered sacrifices for a sin offering for Israel. The priests and Levites were set in their places for God's service; they worshipped God with rejoicing (Ezra 6.14-22).

That was then. What happened? Fifty-nine years later, Nehemiah received word that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down, the gates were burned with fire, and the city of Jerusalem lay in waste (Neh 1.3; 2.3). He wept before the Lord and interceded for Israel.

They had the temple, the place of God's presence, their place of worship. But, it seemed that once the temple was finished, they failed to consider the need for cleanup, defense and protection; the work of building should have continued. Nehemiah went to Jerusalem to encourage the people to rebuild the walls with God's blessing and the king's permission and help.

Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for *[this] good [work]* (Neh 2.18).

The Israelites made a decision to build up their defenses against the enemy; they said, "...Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands [for the work]." Read Nehemiah 1-4. Notice that as soon as the Israelites were encouraged to build up their defenses, the enemy knew he was losing the battle. His initial strategy was to mock them and falsely accuse them.

But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard *[it]*, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What *[is]* this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? (Neh 2.19)

Not only did Nehemiah speak in faith that God would help them, but he declared that they **would arise and build**; Nehemiah made it clear that the enemy

Saints, know that Satan has a storehouse of accusations, lies, disturbing thoughts which he uses freely against us in an effort to destroy us and God's purpose in our lives. If you have a vivid imagination, he will try to fill it with "filth." If you are a light sleeper, he will keep you awake enough to exhaust you. If your temper is a problem, he will arrange situations to make it worse.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: (1Pe 5:8)

He knows what to use against us; but Jesus **is** our defense against Satan. We build our wall of defense when we do as did Nehemiah, and run to the Lord Jesus in prayer, then carry our swords (the Bible) by our sides (and in our hearts), and keep on serving God with our whole heart.

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Co-laborers together for Jesus Christ

Come apart and rest (Mark 6.31).

has no place with God's people: "but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem" (Neh 2.20).

As God's people began to build the walls, the enemy became wroth. His mocking became worse. The greater the Israelite's accomplishment, the greater the enemy's opposition.

When the wall was half built and being joined together, Sanballat, together with the surrounding nations, planned a surprise attack against Jerusalem; but his plan became known; and the Israelites set a watch and prepared to defend themselves while continuing the work.

Let us look at the mocking attitude of the enemy in Nehemiah 4.2, 3. It gives us a picture of some of Satan's ploys to hinder us and stop the Lord's work in our lives and in His ministry through us. Satan attacks our minds and emotions with lies and discouragement.

And [Sanballat] spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said,
"What do these feeble Jews?...." (Neh 4.2)

Satan plants thoughts of weakness and uselessness in our minds. He attempts to discourage us and discredit Jesus' ministry through us with his mocking lies, making us feel that we are feeble and our work for the Lord worthless. But when we are weak, the Lord through us is strong.

"Will they fortify themselves?"

The implication is, How could these "feeble" Jews fortify themselves? It seems Sanballat's opinion is that they would not be able to build the wall against the opposition of the enemy. He failed to consider the strength of the Lord in and through His people. Satan plants thoughts of discouragement and doubt, but in Jesus Christ we are fortified. We go in the strength of the Lord!

"Will they sacrifice?"

How Satan loves to hinder our worship and prevent our spending time with Jesus in prayer and in the written Word and! Sometimes, it is necessary to defy Satan and do what he tells us **not** to do: walk in obedience to God even in hard times. Offer the sacrifice of praise; offer the sacrifice of righteousness (Ps 4.5; Jer 33.11; Heb 13.15).

"Will they make an end in a day?"

The Israelites were stirred to build the wall. They must have begun with their whole being, eager to get the job done quickly. Satan tells us that we are foolish to think we can accomplish anything for the Lord; he says he will destroy it before we can get started. Lies! God calls, and God equips for the work.

"Will they revive the stones out of the heap of the rubbish which was burned?"

After listening to Sanballat's mocking comments (Neh 4.3), his servant Tobiah gave his opinion that even if the Israelites could build the wall, a fox would be able to tear it down – not knowing what God can do with burned-out, *seemingly* useless left-over material.

The Israelites were not dependent on the rubbish which was left to them. The fire-weakened stones God would make strong or replace with new ones. God said build. That was sufficient.

Saints, when you feel destroyed, and Satan has been pounding your mind and emotions with his lies, when you are unable to pull yourself out of it, know that Jesus is there with you. Jesus experienced Satan's attacks and has won the battle for you already.

Look at these chapters and consider the response, encouragement, and strategy of Nehemiah.

Encouragement: when faced with the distressful condition of Jerusalem:

Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for *[this]* good *[work]* (Neh 2.18).

His response to the mocking of the enemy:

Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem (Neh 2.20).

His response to their increased mocking: He prayed for God's intervention.

Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity:

And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked *[thee]* to anger before the builders.

So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work (Neh 4.4-6).

His action when the enemy devised an attack on Jerusalem:

Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them (Neh 4.9).

And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, *[which is]* great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

And it came to pass from that time forth, *[that]* the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers *[were]* behind all the house of Judah. They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, *[every one]* with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other *[hand]* held a weapon.

For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and *[so]* builded. And he that sounded the trumpet *[was]* by me (Neh 4.14-18).